



Free Press Viewpoint

Where does privacy start on Internet?

When we put information on a social website, should we have a say in how much of that gets sent out to the rest of the Internet?

That’s the question that users and employees of social giant Facebook have been wrestling with since, well, ever. The site has met with a lot of criticism lately over how users choose what information goes out to their friends, to other users and to the Internet at large.

Since it became a multi-million dollar company, Facebook has had something of a tenuous relationship with its users. The site wants to keep adding more gadgets and gizmos to the website and they have caught on in a big way. Unfortunately, they have also added the other trappings of large companies like ads, and sending users information to ad agencies so that they can tailor the ads to each user.

That’s where they raise eyebrows among users and the media. People join Facebook and these other social networking sites because they want to share information and because they want information shared with them. However, what they want is to share with people – not with advertising agencies – which is the distinction that Facebook doesn’t seem to get. That’s why there’s a backlash every time Facebook or one of the others alters its privacy agreements.

It seems to happen a lot when a website goes from a small one- or two-person-run site to a big company. A corporate mentality tells them to make money at all costs and the users – the people who made the site popular enough to go this far – are forgotten. Well, not forgotten, just treated like a means to more money.

Facebook isn’t the only site with privacy concerns. Google in particular has been a constant privacy worry. Everyone hears the rumors that Google sends information on what you’re searching for to the government. Whether that’s true or not, just recently Google Buzz – a Twitter/Facebook clone – got slammed for giving personal information to third parties without users’ permission and without even informing them. Google changed their privacy policy as soon as it became public.

Several days ago, Facebook amended their privacy settings yet again, but technology pundits have called it a mixed bag: still not great, but better.

Technology and information sharing will only continue to grow, and as it does, we as users need to be actively concerned for our privacy. Services like Facebook can be a lot of fun, but there is the potential for them to be very harmful to ordinary people if the companies running them try too hard to make a profit. They need to remember that without their users, they’re nothing. – Kevin Bottrell

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

WE MONITOR
EVERY
SINGLE
SCOTT BROWN
VOTE

TO
MAKE
SURE HE'S
VOTING
OUR WAY

ON
EVERY
ISSUE

BECAUSE
IT'S
SOOOO
IMPORTANT

THAT HE
REMAINS
INDEPENDENT!



Free market doesn't solve all problems

Today's Republicans and libertarians place a lot of importance on certain types of individual rights.

These rights reflect a world view that disapproves of intervention by the federal government in the workings of the free market. Many libertarians and small-government Republicans would argue that freedom should be seen as giving people the right to make their own decisions in the marketplace without outside interference. This is certainly a facet of freedom; you don't have to be a devout believer in all libertarian principles to see the importance of autonomy without fear of government encroachment.

While many of libertarianism's critics would acknowledge the importance of giving people autonomy, they remain troubled by how consequence-independent the ideology is. Libertarians solely focus on procedures, while placing no importance on the outcomes of their market-oriented policies.

In his book, "Rationality and Freedom," Nobel-winning economist Amartya Sen raises important questions about whether strictly market-oriented systems would be ethically acceptable.

Sen writes, "The issue becomes particularly important when the consequences resulting from the exercise of libertarian rights and market allocation are especially poor in terms of individual well-being, or in terms of individual freedoms judged in the perspective of 'opportunity to achieve.' Indeed it's possible for even large-scale famines to occur without violating anyone's libertarian rights...."



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

In laymen's terms, Sen's argument is that free market economics does a sufficient job of giving people autonomy over their decisions and preventing outside forces from interfering with those decisions, but it fails to give everyone an opportunity to achieve the things they value in life.

I think Sen makes a valid point. Despite the shortcomings of government policies, it's hard to see how the free market alone will give everyone the capability to achieve their goals, or for some, even maintain a decent standard of living.

For example, the standard of living for older people, physically disabled people and people with chronic diseases could worsen if their only means income relied on getting a decent-paying job in the free market. In fact, they could get caught in a vicious poverty trap where trouble earning a decent income is intensified by the struggle to use that income to achieve the things they value.

Sen writes, "The same factors that may make a person unable to find a good job and a good income may put a person at a disadvantage in achieving a good quality of life even for the same job and the same income."

Build power lines smartly, safely and fairly

Few will argue electric transmission lines are a necessary part of our everyday lives. They've helped us see in the dark, powered our appliances and made life easier.

But as with many things, there comes a point when upgrades or additional lines and infrastructure are necessary.

Last year the Kansas Corporation Commission decided to invest in the future of our state's transmission lines. When completed it will provide energy from Spearville to Knoll (a couple miles northwest of Hays) and from Knoll to Axtell, Neb.

This project will be the largest electrical infrastructure investment in Kansas for nearly 25 years. Construction is slated to begin next spring. The line will be energized in 2012.

ITC Great Plains (electric transmission company and subsidiary of ITC Holdings Corp. from Michigan) will see to it the new transmission lines are built that are designed to help further expand wind energy in the region.

While most people understand the need for additional power and upgrades in the older power grid, they have concerns about the construction of the 345,000-volt power line.

Rooks County farmer/stockman Jerry McReynolds wants to ensure that this project is done smartly, safely and fairly.

The McReynolds family has farmed in Rooks County for three generations. Like his neighbors, friends and family, he is concerned about individual landowner rights. This farmer/stockman of more than 40 years knows, if approved, this transmission line will impact numerous landowners.

"The rights you bestow on this utility company through the Certificate of Public Conve-



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

nience will allow them to build, operate and maintain the transmission line not for 50 or 100 years, but forever," McReynolds said.

As part of this process, ITC Great Plains must negotiate with landowners and provide compensation for easement rights. Also available in this process is eminent domain – the power to force the sale of land at fair market value. This avenue of securing access for transmission line expansion with eminent domain has been granted to ITC by state regulators.

"We just want to ensure this power is not abused," McReynolds says.

Along with compensation, other areas of concern weigh on the minds of those in the region of this proposed power line. They include intrusive land use, safety and legal liability.

High voltage electric transmission lines have a substantial footprint. They require rights-of-way with a width of 150 feet or more and structures can reach 100 feet into the sky. The impact on the properties these lines cross, and the impact on cultural and economic interests in this region cannot be ignored.

Transmission lines may result in increased risks to health from electromagnetic fields. Because of this, transmission lines should not be permitted close to communities, residences and workplaces, as proposed by ITC Great

Plains, especially when there are other reasonable and potentially less harmful alternatives.

"I have been approached by young farm couples with children who are worried about the effects of these lines," McReynolds says. "We'd like to see reasonable setback requirements imposed."

Property owners could also be hit in their pocketbooks when ITC Great Plains seeks condemnation of their land to create new easements along the route. Some property owners may face reductions in land values with the installation of large transmission towers and substations in and near their homes or farmland. In other cases, landowners may be deprived of their right to use irrigation to grow crops and be forced to return to dry-land farming.

Landowners worry they will not be offered fair compensation for the use of their property. Some are already being paid \$4,000 to \$15,000 annually for wind development and from \$5,000 to \$6,000 for cell phone towers.

"ITC Great Plains is offering a one-time payment that pales in comparison to these other markets," McReynolds says.

The burden and responsibility rests on ITC Great Plains to do the right thing and provide comparably fair compensation for the right to build electric transmission lines on Kansas land. And when ITC Great Plains moves into our Kansas communities, state regulators must ensure intrusive land use, safety, legal liability and fair compensation are addressed.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

