The Issue of Privacy in the World Today

The definition of the word 'privacy' can be stated as: 'The ability of an individual or group to stop information about themselves from becoming known to people other than those they choose to give the information to.' With modern day technology like the internet, with its wide range of applications such as blogs, forums and video uploading sites like Utube, it can be quite hard to achieve this. As the internet has become a part of many of our lives, many have used it to replace things like journals, where we now post our personal feelings online on blogs as it is more convenient as friends can easily access it. However, unless blogs and video clips are put on private, millions of internet users from all around the world will be able to view it.

People have to be careful what they upload or post onto a site. If you decide to put your video or blog on public, the content that you have uploaded will be viewed by millions of people and if the clip could potentially offend a group or organisation, your video could be known to even more people and so will you.

Privacy is one of those things that people don't tend to think about that much until it's lost. Online databases out there are full of heaps of information about everyone and people are thinking of ways of how to use them either against you or to their own financial advantage.

Even if you don't disclose your personal details online, if your computer isn't well protected, there are many e-mail snooping programs and spywares out there that are bound to find something if you are not careful. Personal e-mail communications should be kept private and personal with the sender and the recipient only being allowed to read the e-mail messages.

Privacy can be a very serious matter so an effort to keep it should be made. In order to help protect privacy, users should:

1. Avoid giving out personal e-mail addresses and personally identifiable information with suspicious looking advertisement sites.
2. Make sure that your computer and internet is well protected with programs such as Norton Internet Security, Pop-up blocker and Ad Aware.

Other than e-mail snooping programs and spy wares, privacy can be dangerous in other ways if it not kept. For example, in online chat rooms or forums, you should never give out your personal information out to strangers.

The internet seems to never allow for complete privacy as even with most of the sites you visit, there are trackers on the site which can see who has been visiting them. This includes giving out your IP address or a log of your current country location or site user name.

When you search for something on search engines, they have the ability to track each one of your searches; this includes recording your IP address, the search terms you have used, the time of your search and other information.

Another popular application is instant messaging. Of the millions of teens who use the internet, 75 percent use instant messaging. IM conversations can bring about a feel of casualness about them, which can lead some to let down their guard. Although seemingly informal, IM conversations can be archived, stored, and recorded on your computer as easily as e-mails. Because these IM conversations can be saved, this means that private information can easily be sent to other people, also with the authenticity that the conversation was true. When talking to someone on IM, there a variety of programs on the internet which can easily tell if someone is really online or not. Because this can be done, people can easily tell whether or not someone has blocked them or not which was supposed to be an anonymous and private tool and has now become a tool that is very easy to tell what views the other person has on you. IM has also become a target for spammers. Often there is a case of someone called a 'spimmer' which is someone who uses get-rich-quick schemes or pornography included in a link in the message, which could cause spyware to be installed on your computer if you click on the link. You can avoid spim by adjusting your IM account to only allow messages from specified people or, if you see a suspicious link on an IM message, don't open it.

Luckily, there are some tips which can help safeguard privacy online:

1. Learn how to tell if a web site is secure
2. Learn how to secure your personal computer
3. Start reading privacy policies

Privacy can also take forms today in ways other than on the computer and the internet. For teenagers, it can be at school, where telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are on a majority not given out easily. This is because of a concern for not knowing the person well enough. If everyone got a hold of your e-mail address or mobile number, even people that you don't want to talk to; it wouldn't be very pleasant for the person. This is why a certain amount of privacy is needed and if a mobile phone or e-mail address is needed to give to someone by someone else, the person should be asked first.

Privacy is critical because, when our own privacy is invaded, respect can be lost and respect is hard to gain back again. An invasion of privacy can lead to humiliation, distrust and embarrassment. So, people should consider what privacy impacts could happen when they decide to give out information. Also, if people decide to do something, they should consider what they are doing from the other person's point of view and see if there is likely to be privacy damage and the results of it. Privacy is something that needs to be looked out for in today's world.

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