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All in for Privacy: Cultivating a Community of Information Privacy Awareness

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All In for Privacy: Cultivating a Community of Information Privacy Awareness

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Project Overview

As part of an academic community which strongly values privacy, intellectual freedom, and fighting censorship, the FIMS-GRC Library aims to secure and promote these values through advocacy, instruction, and implementation of technology. Our initiative is a cooperative project within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS), and in alliance with the Library Freedom Project (LFP).

Our approach is to prioritize ethical considerations of privacy and intellectual freedom, where procedural issues come second. About the FIMS-GRC Library: The Graduate Resource Center (GRC) Library is a special academic library serving the FIMS graduate community, including Masters and PhD students in Library and Information Science, Media Studies, Journalism & Communication, and Health Information Science. Privacy is a core issue to what students are currently studying across all graduate programming. Many graduates are information workers, who will deal in sensitive information and/or vulnerable communities.

Information Privacy in Libraries

The Library Freedom Project (LFP) “is a partnership among librarians, technologists, attorneys, and privacy advocates which aims to address the problems of surveillance by making real the promise of intellectual freedom in libraries” by providing relevant tools and education on technical, legal, and ethical issues to LIS professionals.

Purpose

To create learning opportunities for FIMS graduate students to develop digital literacy skills and promote critical thinking in the areas of information privacy and security.

To demonstrate implementation of technology which supports a more secure digital environment both in our academic community and the global community which our students enter after graduation.

Guidelines

Provide hands-on experience with open source and information privacy tools.

Encourage reexamination of current digital practices, eg, software licensing, personal data retention, and unencrypted communications.

Feature applications highly relevant to students, eg, use of secure, encrypted communications when working with vulnerable groups.

Encourage students to think critically by sharing their own conclusions.

Library Programming

The Librarian’s Open Source Toolbox

Interactive display on open source software, with focus on information privacy tools and issues.

Students compare a computer running Windows and proprietary software against a computer running Ubuntu Linux OS and open source information software.

Highlighted tools include Tor Browser for online anonymity, Tutanota encrypted email client, Zookanga open source reference management software, etc.

Hands-On Workshops

Practical workshops for students to gain more advanced skills through guided use of digital privacy tools.

Linux workshop by Software Carpentry

Workshops on Tor, encrypted email and password protection by Matthew Ward.

Outreach

• We support the right to privacy within our broader academic community, and set an example for our students to advocate for secure and private practices in their own communities.

• We support graduate programming within FIMS classes, as well as open presentations on topics such as Digital Citizenship.

• We promote Tor Browser in Western’s volunteer-run Pride Library, as a safe browsing space for patrons and for privacy in LGBTQ+ research.

Future Steps

• Encourage more Tor relays and use of Tor browser on Western’s campus.

• Develop community partnerships eg. share knowledge with local libraries and women’s community centres.

• Create Privacy in the Library website for information about Tor in our library, including our Tor relay safeguards for liability purposes.

• Refresh the Librarian’s Open Source Toolbox passive programming to re-engage the FIMS community.

• Continue to work with computing services on campus to address their liability concerns (e.g. reiterate that data is not stored on Western’s servers).

References


5. 2016. Tor: Overview. Tor Project: Anonymity Online.

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