

Privacy Myth Buster

MYTH: Online services are totally free.

TRUTH: Many ostensibly free online services are paid for by advertising that relies on the collection of your personal information, including tracking your information searches.

MYTH: Government surveillance keeps us safe by stopping crime.

TRUTH: Surveillance cameras can help solve crimes after the fact, but rarely prevent crimes.

MYTH: My personal data is secure with devices that use radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology, like my transit and ID cards.

TRUTH: Without privacy and security standards for RFID technology, RFID tags can be read without your knowledge or consent, gathering sensitive personal data.

MYTH: Only people with something to hide need to worry about privacy.

TRUTH: The issue of privacy is not about what an individual has to hide, but what society stands to lose: freedom and control.

MYTH: Privacy costs too much.

TRUTH: A similar argument was made about safety in the 1950s, when automakers balked at consumer advocates' calls for seat belts in cars. The Internet is maturing, and establishing privacy norms is a necessary part of making it a safe, sustainable, environment for information exchange.

MYTH: Privacy standards will impede the free flow of information and make the Web less convenient.

TRUTH: The Web has proven to have enormous capacity to adapt technologically. It's our social and political culture that must evolve to offer some form of self-determination about who is allowed to see what information.

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