

Privacy advocates craft social media 'bill of rights'

June 22 2010, By Mike Swift

Two decades after the first Conference on Computers, Freedom and Privacy, a group of privacy advocates, computer scientists and others hope to wrap up a four-day conference here with what organizers hope will be a milestone for the social Web -- a "bill of rights" for social network users.

Amid a string of privacy snarls this spring by Facebook, Google, AT&T and others, and the phenomenal adoption of online social networks not just by the most computer-savvy but by the rest of society, [privacy advocates](#) say it is time to set out a basic set of common principles that consumers could expect social websites to honor.

"Everybody agrees the value of a social network is its users," said Jon Pincus, chief technology officer of Qworky, a Seattle company that makes meeting software for small businesses, and co-chairman of the 20th CFP conference, which is sponsored by the Association for Computing Machinery. "How do we declare our rights, the minimum that we expect, in a way that sets expectations with site operators, and provides a context for discussions about legislation?"

One possible answer to that rhetorical question, said Pincus, is the proposed social network bill of rights, which Pincus said grew out of the furor involving Facebook privacy policy changes in April, and efforts by a number of tech journalists and pundits in recent months and years to delineate a set of rules to govern online social networks.

Unfortunately, "none of these have really gone anywhere, so it's a great chance to build on that, and also bring in an international focus," Pincus said.

The conference at San Jose State University is being attended by representatives from more than a dozen countries. With political dissidents and citizen journalists in other countries using social services like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as avenues to claim free speech under sometimes repressive regimes, Pincus said the bill of rights needed to include the concerns of dissidents, such as the ability to have multiple identities on the site.

As the computers and privacy conference wraps up, participants are expected to debate the proposed principles Friday afternoon with a vote to follow. The conference is being streamed live at www.cfp2010.org, where people are free to enter a comment or vote via Twitter, and there is also place for online discussion and voting on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CFPBillOfRights .

The draft hammered out Thursday evening includes a dozen key principles that users would expect from social networks in their handling of consumer data and their rules for operation, including honesty, clarity, freedom of speech, security of data stored on the network, minimization of data collected on users, and the ability for users to leave the service and take all of their data with them.

While [Google](http://www.google.com) and Microsoft are supporters of the conference, and Facebook has also participated, the companies have not been part of the actual deliberations on the bill of rights, Pincus said.

WHAT THE BILL SAYS:

Here is the full text of the proposed Bill of Rights:

"We the users expect social network sites to provide us the following rights in their Terms of Service, Privacy Policies, and implementations of their system:

1. **Honesty:** Honor your privacy policy and terms of service.
2. **Clarity:** Ensure that policies and terms of service are easy to understand.
3. **Freedom of speech:** Don't censor without a clear policy and justification.
4. **Empowerment:** Support privacy-enhancing and assistive technologies.
5. **Security:** Treat my data as securely as your own, and notify me if it is compromised.
6. **Data minimization:** Minimize the information I am required to provide and share with others.
7. **Control:** Let me control my data, and don't share it with others unless I agree first.
8. **Predictability:** Don't change who or what sees my data without my consent.
9. **Right to know:** Show me how you are using my data and allow me to see who and what has access to it.
10. **Right to self-define:** Let me create more than one identity and use pseudonyms. Do not link them without my permission.

11. Right to appeal: Allow me to appeal disciplinary actions.

12. Right to leave: Allow me to delete my account, and take my data with me."

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