

Call for Papers

Ethics of Big Data

edited by Klaus Wieglering, Michael Nerukar, Christian Wadeuhl

Call for Papers for Vol. 24 (12/2015)

- Deadline for extended abstracts: **September 30, 2015**
- Notification of acceptance to authors: **October 15, 2015**
- Deadline for full articles: **November 15, 2015**
- Deadline for revised articles: **December 31, 2015**
- Publication: **January 2016.**

On February 16, 2012, the *New York Times* published an article entitled 'How Companies Learn Your Secrets' in which it was revealed that the American retailing giant Target had developed a range of predictive analysis tools which could potentially assist in identifying pregnant customers. The article told the story of a man who inadvertently discovered his teenage daughter's pregnancy only after seeing the company's directed marketing offers to her. When the subsequent, primarily online squabble about corporate malfeasance and business overreach subsided, the article seemed to confirm what we already suspected: our most mundane, everyday activities leave extensive and valuable 'digital footprints' which are in turn used to monitor consumer behaviour, market products and so on. The "capacity to search aggregate and cross-reference" (Boyd and Crawford, 2012, p.663) these seemingly innocuous footprints has come to be labelled "big data", an innovation that seems to increasingly complicate the distinction between the digital and the physical. Given such circumstances people are beginning to wonder whether it is possible, desirable or necessary to be able to disconnect one from the other. Should a "right to be forgotten" be the very precondition upon which privacy is constructed for the digital age? Is it even possible to be forgotten? Who owns these footprints and how are they managed? Does the commodification of digital footprints represent a transition towards a kind of 'algorithmic capitalism' or 'algorithmic governmentality'?

Capturing data in order to more efficiently sell goods and services is obviously just one aspect of the application of big data. Edward Snowden's leaked documents revealed, amongst other things, the uneasy relationship between the expansion of big data processes and intensifying global regimes of surveillance. Indeed, the seemingly innocuous activities of searching, aggregating and cross-referencing information combined with the vagueness of the term "big data" itself seems only to obscure and undermine the complexity of the broad range of methods and applications necessarily required for the accumulation, retention and analysis of such "data". One such practice highlighted by the Snowden revelations is the capturing of metadata—informational by-products generated by online activity including recording of IP addresses, identities of contacts, geo-locational data, durations of calls and so forth.

Such metadata is disclosed unknowingly and recorded automatically and retains centrality in the generalization of what Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013) call “datafication”— the rendering of all human behaviour into an analysable form in order to predict and pre-empt human action. As well as being used by states to identify possible threats to security, big data can also be made productive for the public good: researchers can undoubtedly see the potential benefits of gaining access to such vast and detailed records but gaining access is itself beset with profound ethical complexities. Perhaps this is the reason why the EU Court of Justice has recently suggested that expansive metadata retention “interferes in a particularly serious manner with the fundamental rights to respect for private life and to the protection of personal data”. Still many corporations, governments and universities are keen to continue to explore and exploit big data for their own ends. The question that we invariably have to ask is, at what cost?

Possible Topics

This issue of IRIE attempts to explore the political, social, and ethical dimensions of big data. We welcome the exploration of, while not restricting to, the following subject areas:

- Big data and emerging regimes of mass surveillance
- Big data and mass marketing
- Big data and mass communication
- Big data and biopolitical control
- Big data and counter-terrorism, policing and national security
- Online privacy
- The political economy of big data/metadata
- The relationship between information ethics and big data practices
- Historical perspectives on big data
- Comparative policy analysis
- Changing relations between state and citizen as a consequence of big data

Bibliography

boyd, d & Crawford, K 2012, Critical Questions for Big Data: Provocations for a Cultural, Technological and Scholarly Phenomenon, *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 662-679.

Duhigg, C 2012, 'How Companies Learn Your Secrets', *The New York Times*, 16 February. Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html?_r=0. [22 March 2015]

Mayer-Schönberger, V and Cukier, K 2013, *Big Data: A Revolution that will transform How we Live, Work and Think*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston.

Guest Editor

Prof. Dr. Klaus Wiegerling, Dr. Michael Nerurkar, Christian Wadephul

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)

Email: michael.nerurkar@kit.edu

Abstracts and Submissions

Potential authors are requested to provide an extended abstract (max. 1,500 words) by **September 30, 2015** to the guest editor. Abstracts may be submitted in the native language of the author though an English translation of the abstract must be included if the chosen language is not English. IRIE will publish articles in English, French, German, Portuguese or Spanish. The author(s) of contributions in French, Portuguese, or Spanish must nominate at least two potential peer reviewers.

Abstracts will be evaluated by the guest editors. The authors will be informed of acceptance or rejection.

All submissions will then be subject to peer review. Therefore, the acceptance of an extended abstract does not imply the publication of the final text unless the article has passed the peer review and revisions (if required) have been included in the text.

All submissions should be sent by email with 'IRIE Submission' in the header directly to the guest editor.

For more information about the journal see: <http://www.i-r-i-e.net>