Professional Computing Ethics Essay

The issue of collecting and mining data from the Internet has been the subject of much discussion, both on Internet fora and also in the mainstream press. While data mining by companies of store-related data sources is now common-place, though sometimes with unexpected and unintended consequences, e.g. http://www.forbes.com/sites/kashmirhill/2012/02/16/how-target-figured-out-a-teen-girl-was-pregnant-before-her-father-did, collecting of third-party interactions, e.g. via cookies, is now also increasingly common and being discussed, e.g. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2058205,00.html. More recently, there has been considerable controversy over the revelation that the U.S. (and presumably other countries' agencies) has been extensively mining Internet usage data by U.S. citizens and the citizens of other countries.

In this essay you are to explore the ethical issues that arise in recording and mining web data outside of court-sanctioned surveillance. If you were a computer consultant assigned to help draft legislation, or to advise on implementing data-mining procedures, what action would you take?

Making use of the Australian Computer Society Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct and the relevant literature, justify your proposed actions.

Some points to note for your essay:

- Your essay should be approximately 1500-2000 words.
- For readability please typeset the text and use a serifed font, e.g. Times rather than Arial.
- Considering the question as if you were asked to work on such a system, use the ACS Code of Ethics and ACS Code of Professional Conduct, where appropriate, as a guide, listing the relevant items as you go.
- Use 1.5 line or double spacing (in MS Word: Format → Paragraph → Line Spacing). Margins should be at least 2cm.
- Use Harvard format for your references. For assistance with this see: http://libguides.library.uwa.edu.au/harvard
- Don't forget to put your name and student number on the front.
- Please understand that if you refer to someone else's work you will normally paraphrase their remarks and include a citation (in Harvard format). If you use the authors' exact words that is a quotation, so should be surrounded by quotation marks and include a citation. Cutting and pasting without quotation marks, and particularly without a citation, is plagiarism. BTW, paraphrasing involves reading something, understanding it (which may involve reading background documents) and then summarising the main points in your own words. Minor syntactic transformations on the starting text is not paraphrasing. If you are unsure of the difference I suggest you go to: http://www.studentservices.uwa.edu.au/ss/learning/online_services/plagiarism_portal In particular, follow the link to the FAQs and the link to the examples of what not to do.

A sample essay may be found at:

Finally, please hand in a paper copy of the essay (plus a signed cover sheet) to the CSSE office and also submit the electronic version using cssubmit, pdf preferred. See the Unit Timetable on the Project web page for the date and time that the submissions close.

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