

Department of Mathematical and Computer Sciences

How Facebook is Anonymized

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Friday, February 11th, 3:00 pm, Chauvenet Hall 143

Abstract:

It is sometimes said that in the same way a car needs brakes to go fast (who would go fast without brakes?) personal data repositories need privacy for their true value to be mined. This work discusses how the inherent relationships between data can be measured and manipulated to achieve privacy and personalization at the same time.

At its core this is a problem of reconciling personal privacy expectations with market forces and application functional requirements. In particular, the author will discuss an ongoing project at the University of Colorado, AnonyGraph, which presents a framework for relating information utility to anonymity.

The system is currently being tested with Facebook as an anonymity layer on top of the Facebook API which supports Facebook applications that never know who their users are. The author will discuss current results of applying anonymity to real-time Facebook applications, including what seems to work and what does not, along with a discussion of what he sees as the next big challenges for anonymity research.

Bio:

Aaron Beach grew up in Denver, got his bachelors in Computer Science from the Northwestern University and plans to finish a PhD at the University of Colorado this spring. While he has worked in wireless, sensor, and mobile computing systems for many years, his recent work and thesis focus on the privacy issues involved in personalizing these systems. His work on mobile systems has resulted in two mobile/social computing patents and a start-up company called Techoshark, inc. in Boulder, CO. More can be learned about his work at aaronbeach.com

Please join us for Coffee and Cookies at 2:45