DEMYSTIFYING YOUR DATA

Workshop Outline

CONTENTS

On this page, you will find the following:

* Description
* Learning Goals
* Workshop Outline
* Further Reading and Resources

DESCRIPTION

This workshop defines and explores various types of “data” which are commonly shared and collected online. Group activities encourage participants to talk openly about data concerns, investigate browser history, and deny unnecessary app permissions on their smartphones.

* Duration: 80-90 minutes
* Ideal for 10-25 participants

LEARNING GOALS

* Define “data”
* Explore common examples of data
* Take steps to reduce data traces

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Below is an overview of the workshop outline:

* Opening
* Warm Up: What’s your signal strength?
* Discussion: What does "data" mean to you?
* Presentation: All about data
* Activity: Mr. J's Browser History
* Presentation: Revealing Mr. J's story
* Activity: Take control of your data
* Reflection: Takeaways
* Closing

OPENING

**Time needed:** 5 minutes+  
**Purpose:** to welcome participants as well as setting expectations and goals.

1. Introductions:
   * Introduce workshop title
   * Facilitator introduces themselves
2. Explain the learning goals
3. Review the ground rules

**Variations:**

* Develop collaborative ground rules along with participants if there is time.
* Ask participants to go around and introduce themselves if there is time.

WARM UP: WHAT’S YOUR SIGNAL STRENGTH?

**Time needed:** 10 minutes  
**Purpose:** to engage participants and encourage them to begin speaking up and sharing their thoughts and concerns.

In this warm up, based on **[Spectogram](https://myshadow.org/train" \t "_blank)** you will read a statement and ask participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with it or how confident or insecure they feel.

Instructions if *online*:

1. Participants will use their hands in the video to show their answer:
   * Fist: indicates very little or no confidence or disagreeing
   * Two fingers: indicates medium confidence
   * Open hand: indicates agreement or have the most confidence
2. For each statement, select a person at various points of the spectrum to explain why they feel that way.

**Variation:** Participants can also type their answers in the chat, or using a virtual whiteboard can draw or mark their response that way.

Instructions if *in-person*:

1. Participants will move their bodies to one end of the room or the other, depending on their answer along the spectrum. For example, the facilitator may indicate one wall is strongly agree, the opposite wall is strongly disagree, and then the middle is the full spectrum.
2. For each statement, select a person at various points of the spectrum to explain why they feel that way.

Statements you can use (or come up with your own!):

* I know how to explain what "data" is.
* I know how my data is used.
* I feel in control of my data.

**Tips:**

* Describe what you observe out loud “I see most people have their fists showing, meaning there is little confidence in this statement”. This can be helpful for visually impaired participants, as well as in engaging the room.
* Allow people to answer anywhere along the spectrum.
* If you are online and there are people who prefer to remain off camera, that’s okay! Let’s respect their right to privacy (or internet connection issues). They can type their answers in the chat box.

DISCUSSION: WHAT DOES "DATA" MEAN TO YOU?

**Time needed:** 5 minutes  
**Purpose:** to get a sense of the knowledge levels within the room and identify gaps and specific areas to explore.

Ask participants write on sticky notes for one minute all of what data includes and then put their notes up on a board.

**Tip:** In case the participants already express here a strong understanding of data, you could skip the next section, which covers in detail all about data.

**Variation:** You can also expand this part by holding a discussion and writing the inputs of the participants on the board.

PRESENTATION: ALL ABOUT DATA

**Time needed:** 5 minutes  
**Purpose:** to expand upon the previous section and fill in the knowledge gaps.

1. Explain that data can include a number of different details:

* **Who** you are/know
* **What** you do/value, look like
* **Where** you go
* **When** you watch/text/post
* **Why** you like something
* **How** you choose/vote/think
* Who, what, where, when... these are all straightforward and are based on basic information
* “What you look like” refers to AI and facial recognition
* Why and How: this is trickier because these are quite heavily based on conclusions about your values and personality. This is the point where computer systems can target you with ads with total accuracy, or can even predict your future behaviors.

**Examples of data**

* What information or “data” do you typically see on a flight ticket or boarding pass?
* On Facebook, and some other platforms, you can actually request from their help center the full collection of data they have about you. This is how it may look. As you can see in the picture there are many types of information they collect from you: comments, location, messages, search history, and more.
* Some people might be thinking that metadata (like geographical location which is embedded in the data of photos) is not important or impactful, but I may be able to convince you otherwise. **[Click here to see a photo shared in 2014](https://imgur.com/gallery/WitowGf" \t "_blank)** taken at a Rhino Sanctuary with the message on the sign that says "Please be careful when sharing photos on social media. They can lead poachers to our rhino. Turn off geotag function and do not disclose where this photo was taken." As you can see, metadata is critical in some circumstances.

1. Now, connect back the who, what, where, when, why, and how with their sticky notes. Was there anything missing that they didn't identify? Can you add more sticky notes?

ACTIVITY: MR. J'S BROWSER HISTORY

**Time needed:** 15 minutes  
**Purpose:** to encourage participants to analyse the data included within URLs which can uncover significant details.

1. Introduce the activity: “In 2017, someone who we will refer to as “Mr. J” (to protect his identity) approached Share Lab and Tactical Tech and asked the question “what does my browser history reveal about me?” He had been growing worried for some time and reached out for help.”
2. Explain the purpose of the activity: “Today, we will help Mr. J. By looking at the clues, what is revealed about Mr. J's life, job, and plans?”
3. Divide the participants into small groups (in breakout rooms if online).
4. Ask participants to work together and try to figure out everything you can about Mr. J based only on those URLs.

**Tip:** Do not visit the links—they’ve been altered so they may not work. Furthermore, the aim of this activity is for participants to practice visually analyzing URLs. Participants should talk to each other to problem solve.

After a few moments, we will come back together, you’ll share your notes, and I will tell you the rest of the story.

Below is the list of URLs to analyze:

1. http://www.20min.ch/switzerland/news/story/Swiss-Italian-Border-will-close-30130071
2. http://www.mediajobs.ch/openings/index1.html?sk=mj&category=219&searchtype=angebot&Media-Journalism-Publishing
3. https://www.google.com.hk/search?q=brew+house&oq=Brew+House&aqs=chrome..61i57j0l5.j0j4&sour ceid=chrome&es\_sm=91
4. https://www.google.com.sg/search?q=30+Merchant+Road&oq=30+Merchant+Road&aqs=chrome..67i77. j0j7&sourceid=chrome&es\_sm=91
5. https://www.google.com.sg/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF- 8#q=marina%20bay%20room
6. https://www.google.com.sg/maps/place/ Lee+Kuan+Yew+School+of+Public+Policy/ @1.19011,15z/data=!4m2!1m1!1s0x0

**Variations:**

* If you're online: give all breakout rooms no more than 10 minutes, 2-3 people per group.
* If you're in-person: you could print out the URL list for each group, so they can highlight or underline clues.

**Tips:**

* If you have time, ask people to speak up and describe why they came to these conclusions.
* If you don’t have time, you can speed up this part and you can quickly read out a few of the notes you see.

PRESENTATION: REVEALING MR. J'S STORY

**Time needed:** 10 minutes  
**Purpose:** to give participants more details and context surrounding the story of Mr. J.

Mr. J's browser history included:

* 21500 URLs from his activities between April-June of that year
* Exact time and date
* Number of times visited
* Last time visited

In an average week:

* Mr. J starts browsing on his computer around 9am
* On the weekend he sleeps in and starts around midday
* On Thursday and Saturday evenings he leaves the house, returning to browsing around midnight or late the next morning

Furthermore, you can see that he is a journalist researching a story.

Mr. J's location:

* His life patterns were out of the ordinary in the first two weeks of April
* Taking a closer look at the URL revealed that he was traveling from Switzerland to Hong Kong and Singapore (.ch, .hk, .sg).

His Google Map searches revealed which places he intended, desired, or preferred to go in Hong Kong and Singapore, such as:

* google.com.hk/[...]Brew+House
* google.com.sg/[...]30+Merchant+Road
* google.com.sg/[...]marina%20bay%20room
* google.com.sg/[...]Lee+Kuan+Yew+School+of+Public+Policy

In fact, within just a few minutes of analyzing this browser history data set, Mr. J's Facebook visits revealed his real name and enabled the researchers to reconstruct part of his social connections.

ACTIVITY: TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR DATA

**Time needed:** 10 minutes  
**Purpose:** to give participants the chance to explore their own phones and start taking steps which can reduce the amount of data which is collected about them.

*Does your photo filter app need access to your location?* Turn off any permissions that an app doesn’t need to function.

Your first reaction now must be: “I need to clear my browsing history!” and yes, you are totally right to do that. But it might be less obvious to you that your apps, not only your browser but also your weather app, your gaming apps, your photo filter apps, and your social media apps (to name just a few) might be collecting quite a lot of data about you.

**Android**:

* *Settings* →
* *Apps* →
* Manage permissions on a per-app basis

**iPhone**:

* *Settings* →
* *Privacy* →
* Select the permission you'd like to manage →
* Manage access on a per-app basis

**Tip:** We recommend that you encourage participants to explore and adjust settings on their phones themselves. We strongly discourage facilitators from touching the phones of others. This should be an open space for participants to learn skills which they can apply on their own in the future.

REFLECTION: TAKEAWAYS

**Time needed:** 10-15 minutes  
**Purpose:** to get a sense of what your participants have learned.

1. Ask participants to create a takeaway poster by sharing their answers to the following question in the shared whiteboard / drawing board: What are your main takeaways from today's workshop?
2. Give participants a few minutes to write and/or draw their thoughts.
3. Ask participants to share their posters, either by presenting or hanging them on the wall.
4. Highlight some of the points brought up to the group.

CLOSING

**Time needed:** 5 minutes  
**Purpose:** to give a chance for participants to review what has been covered.

1. Wrap up the workshop and sum up its contents.
2. Run a quick feedback session to gather participants' reactions. Each participant can share:
   * one thing they found very good about the session and
   * one thing they would improve for the next time
3. Encourage participants to ask questions or give some final tips.
4. Share resources and any follow-up details.

**Tips:**

* Take notes of the feedback points.
* In case you have trouble accepting critical feedback, try to respond with a simple "thank you" and think about it later when you have the headspace for it.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

* [**Data Detox Kit: Declutter Your Phone with an App Cleanse**](https://datadetoxkit.org/en/privacy/appcleanse)
* [**Data Detox Kit: Fortify Your Browser to Reduce Your Traces**](https://datadetoxkit.org/en/privacy/browser)
* [**Browsing Histories: Metadata Explorations [external icon](https://labs.rs/en/browsing-histories/)**](https://labs.rs/en/browsing-histories/)
* **[Check this link for downloadable content, including print-outs](https://datadetoxkit.org/en/downloads/)**

*Last updated on: 1/20/2023*

↑ TOP