
PRESS RELEASE

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**The Common Data Project Releases “How to Read a Privacy Policy,”
A Report Analyzing the Online Privacy Policies of the Largest Internet Companies**

New York City: The Common Data Project has published its report, “How to Read a Privacy Policy,” available on the organization’s website at <http://commondataport.org/paper-policies-intro>.

The Common Data Project is a new not-for-profit organization dedicated to changing the way we think about and use personal data. The organization actively supports the development of new technologies and standards that will allow us to share valuable, sensitive data without jeopardizing our individual privacy.

As part of its mission to educate the public on online privacy issues, CDP surveyed the online privacy policies of the largest Internet companies, like Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo, to established online communities and social networks such as Facebook, Craigslist and Wikipedia, as well as a few start-ups that seek to compete on the basis of privacy, like Cuil and Ixquick. Unlike existing privacy policy analyses, CDP’s report seeks to provide a “how to read” guide for the user who is curious about what is happening to his or her data online, but has little understanding of the technological and legal mechanisms at work.

The report walks through seven questions meant to pinpoint the issues CDP believes are most crucial for a user’s privacy, from questions on how “personal information” is defined to the kind of choices offered to users regarding how their information is shared.

Alex Selkirk, the Director of CDP, stated, “We weren’t surprised that these policies were so hard to read and understand. But it was instructive for us, as an organization trying to create new norms around data collection and privacy, to see precisely what companies today think are adequate promises to make to their users.”

Mimi Yin, a board member, stated, “Few people actually read privacy policies, but as people become more and more aware of the privacy problems in online data collection today, the ones that do decide to read Google or Microsoft’s policy should know what they actually mean.”

The Common Data Project believes the report provides the kind of information users need to participate in the public debate about how online data collection should change, and it welcomes questions and comments.