

Turtles, Locks, and Bathrooms: Understanding Mental Models of Privacy Through Illustration

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12:00 – 1:00pm

CIC 2201



Speaker: Maggie Oates

Maggie Oates is a 2nd-year PhD student in the Institute for Software Research, advised by Lorrie Cranor. Her research interests are in privacy theory, industry self-regulation, and usable security. She graduated from Indiana University with a B.S. in Computer Science and currently sits on the Board of Trustees for AnitaB.org.

Talk Abstract:

Are the many formal definitions and frameworks of privacy consistent with a layperson's understanding of privacy? We explored this question and identified mental models and metaphors of privacy, conceptual tools that can be used to improve privacy tools, communication, and design for everyday users. Our investigation focused on a qualitative analysis of 366 drawings of privacy from laypeople, privacy experts, children, and adults. Illustrators all responded to the prompt "What does privacy mean to you?" We coded each image for content, identifying themes from established privacy frameworks and defining the visual and conceptual metaphors illustrators used to model privacy. We found that many non-expert drawings illustrated a strong divide between public and private physical spaces, while experts were more likely to draw nuanced data privacy spaces. Young children's drawings focused on bedrooms, bathrooms, or cheating on schoolwork, and seldom addressed data privacy. The metaphors, themes, and symbols identified by these findings can be used for improving privacy communication, education, and design by inspiring and informing visual and conceptual strategies for reaching laypeople.

This is a practice talk for PoPETS 2018.