

Data Privacy Day: Dealing with Digital Bread Crumbs

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Just walking down a city street these days leaves behind enough digital bread crumbs to make [Hansel and Gretel](#) [1] envious. Surveillance cameras capture your image, your mobile phone is playing its self-identified part as a [personal tracking device](#) [2] every time it "pings" the nearest cell tower. That awesome picture of the street musician you snapped with your camera phone and just sent to Instagram likely contains enough GPS and meta data to point-point your location with dazzling accuracy.

What happens to all those digital "bread crumbs"? Where does it all go? Who has access to it? And can you control any of that? Enter [Data Privacy Day](#) [3].

Data Privacy Day--begun in 2008 and held each year on this day--strives to make people "aware of the personal and private data others have entrusted to us and remain vigilant and proactive about protecting it." The official website defines the goal for the day as: "An effort to empower people to protect their privacy and control their digital footprint and escalate the protection of privacy and data as everyone's priority."

David Hoffman, Intel's Director of Security Policy and Global Privacy Officer, [writing](#) [4] about Data Privacy Day, reaches into the Batman Dark Knight Trilogy and pulls out a Catwoman scene to make his point:

[A]s we approach Data Privacy Day... it is useful to look at the creation of the global permanent record on the internet. In the movie, the Catwoman wants to obtain access to the "Clean Slate" software, which will erase all record of her crimes from any public database, allowing her to 'start over'. The Catwoman's situation raises important social questions about the degree to which individuals should forever carry a mark for mistakes they have made.

To help keep tabs on your personal information, the Data Privacy Day website has an abundance of reference material, how-to's, videos and more, such as:

- A calendar of special [events](#) [5]
- Ways to get involved, from easy social media tasks to "[Becoming a Champion](#) [6]"
- [Privacy Tips](#) [7]

Also, Intel and Reed Elsevier have teamed up and are offering a [free download](#) [8] of the digital citizenship book, LOL...OMG! by Matt Ivester. The book has been updated with a special section just for high school kids.

While you're casting about giving yourself a refresher course on how to protect personal data, I'd suggest taking a few minutes to learn about efforts to [reform the federal law](#) [9] that governs how and when law enforcement officers can gain access to your stored emails and virtually any other digital information you have stored online.

The need for reform is urgent; the law, called the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA), was passed in 1986, when there was no such thing as "cloud storage" and cell phones were size of bricks. Head on over the the [Vanishing Rights website](#) [10], of which CDT is an active participant, and help press Congress to make the changes needed to protect all our digital information.

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- [location privacy](#)
- [ECPA](#)
- [Consumer Privacy](#)

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Links:

- [1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hansel_and_Gretel
- [2] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/jim-dempsey/privacy-age-big-data>
- [3] <http://www.staysafeonline.org/data-privacy-day/about>
- [4] <http://blogs.intel.com/policy/2013/01/23/lol-omg-the-caped-crusader-of-privacy/>
- [5] <http://www.staysafeonline.org/data-privacy-day/events/>
- [6] <http://www.staysafeonline.org/data-privacy-day/champions>
- [7] <http://www.staysafeonline.org/data-privacy-day/privacy-tips/businesses>
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- [10] <http://www.vanishingrights.com/>