In Their Own Words: Student Perspectives on Privacy and Library Participation in Learning Analytics Initiatives

Sunday, June 23
10:30 AM
WCC Rm 145A

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Because of LITA's commitment to upholding the ALA Code of Ethics, we want to remind everyone present about the importance of dismantling systemic oppression within the profession, understanding differences, valuing those differences, and ultimately, learning how to communicate in an inclusive manner that welcomes diverse perspectives.

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In Their Own Words: Student Perspectives on Privacy and Library Participation in Learning Analytics Initiatives

ALA Annual LITA 2019
June 23, 2019
The Data Doubles Research Project
The Data Doubles research team is comprised of scholars and practitioners at seven institutions. Find out more about each researcher at datadoubles.org/team.

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This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) (LG-96-18-0044-18)

The views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this website and other artifacts stemming from this research project do not necessarily represent those of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.
Grant Overview

A student-centered, three-year research project to study student perspectives of privacy issues associated with academic library participation in learning analytics initiatives

- **Phase One: Student Interviews**
- **Phase Two: Multi-institution Student Survey**
- **Phase Three: Scenario-Based Focus Groups**
Guiding Research Questions

**RQ 1:** What privacy issues do students identify when informed about library learning analytics initiatives, practices, data types, and data sources?

**RQ 2:** How do the identified privacy issues map to particular goals of learning analytics initiatives by specific stakeholders (e.g., librarians, instructors, advisors, etc.)?

**RQ 3:** How do privacy perceptions change according to relevant student demographics and academic experiences?

**RQ 4:** With regard to their privacy expectations, what library and non-library learning analytics scenarios are acceptable to students, how do they explain the variations in acceptability, and what recommendations would students make to resolve existing privacy problems?
Background
What are Learning Analytics?

“measurement, collection, analysis, and reporting of [student and other data] for the purposes of understanding and optimising learning and the environments in which it occurs.”

To What Degree are Libraries Participating in Learning Analytics?

- **SPEC Kit 360: Learning Analytics**, a survey of Association of Research Library members (https://doi.org/10.29242/spec.360)

83%
Why is Student Privacy an Issue?
What do We Know About Student Perceptions of their Privacy?

- Undergraduate students had a fairly positive view of learning analytics, yet were concerned that it could be dehumanizing, autonomy-reducing, and an invasion of privacy (Roberts et al., 2016)

- Positive views towards learning analytics depended in part on students’ ability to manage their privacy (Schumacher et al., 2018)

- Students will share identifiable data if learning analytics return useful information (Ifenthaler et al., 2016)

- Consent remains a thorny, important issue for students, policy, and technological design (Prinsloo et al., 2015; Bomas, 2014)
Why Care About Student Privacy as it Relates to Learning Analytics?

- Autonomy
  - Others Access Changes Our Behavior
Phase One Methods: Student Interviews
Semi-Structured Undergraduate Interviews

120
15 per site / 8 sites.

112
COMPLETED

105
INCLUDED IN ANALYSIS
Interview Sites

- Indiana University-Bloomington; Bloomington, Indiana
- Indiana University-Indianapolis (IUPUI); Indianapolis, Indiana
- Linn-Benton Community College; Albany, Oregon
- Northwestern University; Evanston, Illinois
- Oregon State University; Corvallis, Oregon
- University of Illinois at Chicago; Chicago, Illinois
- University of Wisconsin-Madison; Madison, Wisconsin
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Structure

3 Core Questions

Privacy
Data Sharing & Use
Data Protections
LA Awareness
Libraries and LA

Follow Up Questions
30 Minutes
Data Analysis

- Case Summaries → Rough Themes → Open Coding → Closed Coding

169

4,176 Excerpts
Emerging Findings
Information Access by Institutions

• Students are generally unaware of the data and information to which their institutions have access when initially asked.

• Some students were able to identify that campus information systems were likely to track their digital behaviors.
“I don’t know what information [my institution] is necessarily taking from me.”

“[The LMS knows] every move a student is making.”

Created by JHgram
from Noun Project
Information Access by Libraries

- **MOST**: Students overwhelmingly believed that their library tracked which physical materials they checked out

- **SOME**: Yes to Major/College —but Not their course grades and grade point average (GPA)

- **A FEW**: Library Website/Database Tracking
Perceptions of Information Access by Libraries
Information Restrictions

• Students expressed some nuanced arguments about when access should be restricted, especially concerning third parties

• Some students recognized that their liberal perspective on information access should not determine the privacy rights of their peers

• Some information is especially sensitive, and that information deserves rigorous access limitations

• Students primarily referred to GPA, but there were other notable examples about healthcare records
“So, me personally, I don’t search things that are really like too out there. **I could see where someone else might do that and that would be like a problem; I definitely understand that.** Maybe, for me since I personally don’t do anything that would embarrass me, I wouldn’t be worried about the school seeing; it’s not a problem for me… **for other students who might not be able to do what I’m doing, give them some privacy.** Because who knows if [when] they go home that they even have WiFi, so they come to the school to utilize WiFi and do whatever they do in their free time.”
Information Restrictions and Third Parties

Student concerns about third-party data access lessened under two conditions:

1) When data are presented in statistical form without identifying characteristics, students perceived fewer chances of downstream harms.

2) Students expressed that they would like the opportunity to review the reasons for such sharing and the ability to consent to specific data practices.
“So I guess that’s a good point. So if you’re actually helping the students get an article that they need for like a research paper, then I feel like that would be fine.... [If] it’s not benefitting the student in any way or may harm them, then I think that’s where you kind of have to draw the line.”
Library Privacy

• Even though students were generally positive about library learning analytics, they did express a number of questions about the practices, especially since they had never been informed that their library had access to or was analyzing certain types of data.
“I guess it comes back to what type of data are they looking at? Is it more personal stuff or is it solely looking at, well, **what are they researching for this, or what are they doing?**”
Trust in Libraries

- Their concerns, however, were allayed in part by their trust in their library.

- Students expressed that libraries should have “protocols” and “data classifications” in place, which would define sensitive data types and guide data uses.
“And, I feel like since there’s kind of like a trust in libraries, like libraries should kind of like return that like gesture in a way. Like, I trust the institution of a library. I don’t trust Facebook. So, it’s like when you’re on Facebook, you know it’s kind of like the Wild West…. Yeah, so I feel like the types of data that like a university would collect is different, the purpose of it is completely different. The implicit kind of feeling that people have towards libraries, the library should not betray that trust.”
A Brief Discussion
Privacy Literacy

- Students became more forthcoming with their perspectives and privacy expectations as they worked through interviews.

- However, many students struggled to even come up with ideas regarding basic information to which their institution may have access and use for analytic purposes.
A Lack of Awareness and Informed Consent

- The data indicate that students’ lack awareness about their institution’s data practices stems in part from the latter’s minimal—if not nonexistent—informe consent processes.

- By informing students of an institution’s data practices, protections, and their related privacy rights, student understanding of how particular data practices intersect with privacy issues is likely to increase.

- Treat informed consent as an educational process—not a policy burden.
Questions?

- Follow our research progress at:

@datadoubles
datadoubles.org