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PANEL 15

RESEARCHING PRIVACY: FROM COMPUTERIZED WORKPLACES TO THE MARKETSPACE

Panel Chair: **Joey F. George**, Florida State University

Panelists: **Mary J. Culnan**, Georgetown University
H. Jeff Smith, Georgetown University
Martin W. Abrams, Director, Information Policy and Privacy, Experian, Inc.¹

The spectacular increases in worldwide networking, the formation of electronic communities, and the growth of electronic commerce create both increased benefits and increased risks. The benefits, from increased access to information from one's desktop to the competitive advantages to business, are well publicized. The risks — especially the risks to personal privacy — tend to be downplayed or overlooked. Yet the extensive interconnection that exists in a networked world dramatically increases the amount of personal information that can potentially be collected by third parties, raising new sets of privacy concerns.

A growing number of information systems researchers have begun to devote more time to the study of privacy and threats to it in the traditional workplace, the corporate boardroom, and marketspace. Within this group of researchers, there are competing approaches to studying privacy issues. These approaches include procedural justice and equity theory, models of the ways corporations have addressed privacy as a business policy issue, and models of performance evaluation and computer-based monitoring.

At each level of analysis, the issues worthy of study are different. In the traditional workplace, recognized limits to the privacy of employees at work are slowly eroded by such practices as unannounced searches of voice-mail and computer files. At the corporate level, firms collect vast amounts of data but only develop policies regarding its use when forced to by outside constituencies. In the marketspace, electronic transactions provide a trail of personal data not possible with cash or even credit card transactions. The Internet also makes information relatively easy to access, whereas traditionally people seeking that information had to work hard to obtain it.

The purpose of this panel is to identify the research issues related to privacy that result from computer use in the workplace and in marketspace; to discuss some of the approaches IS researchers can employ to study these issues; to suggest emerging privacy issues that may serve as fertile areas for future research; and to relate the implications of privacy research to teaching, policy making, and ethics.

The panel will be structured as follows: After an introduction of the panel and the panelists, each panelist will speak for about ten minutes, beginning with a synopsis of his/her past work related to privacy and the particular approach he/she has taken. Each presentation will end with a discussion of the implications of privacy research for teaching, policy making, and/or ethics. Mary Culnan, well-known expert on privacy and direct marketing, will discuss consumer issues, with a special focus on marketspace and the Internet. Joey George will discuss computer-based monitoring in the workplace, based on a study he conducted in the early 1990s. Jeff Smith, author of *Managing Privacy* (UNC Press, 1994), will focus on corporate responses to privacy issues. Martin Abrams, of Experian, Inc., will talk about the importance of privacy as a real-world topic, the specific areas he feels deserve research attention, and cross-cultural privacy issues.

The remaining time (at least thirty minutes) will be devoted to an open discussion among panelists and audience participants, aimed at identifying a research agenda of issues and methods for increasing our understanding of how organizations should address privacy issues in an increasingly computerized world, as well as discussion of the implications of privacy research.

¹Formerly known as TRW Information Systems and Services.