
THE BUPSI TIMES



PRIVACY POLICY BREAKDOWN

Founded in 2010 following Instagram's release, The BUPSI (BU Prospective Students on Instagram) Times is Binghamton's independently published newspaper that targets prospective students with online profiles. Specifically, the BUPSI Times prints weekly reports that aim to disclose any and all updates regarding Instagram's privacy policy. It is imperative that prospective students with Instagram accounts post and use the app vigilantly, as personal information, or even false information, can end up in the hands of a college admissions officer. Whether an active contributor or someone who hasn't opened the app since downloading it, anyone with an account is subject to Instagram's collection of data. In an effort to make the admissions process more transparent, BUPSI provides prospective students with information that has otherwise been redacted from an easy access portal. Readers have the right to fully understand what information is being collected from them and how such information is being used.

THINGS YOU AND OTHERS DO AND PROVIDE



Even if your account is private, data can be collected about you that you never intended to reveal. How? Well, let's say your friend posts a picture of you holding a red solo cup. While you may not have posted yourself under that light, Instagram still obtains this record of you. Additionally, if your friend's account is public, anyone, including admissions officers, can find this picture of you. Instagram collects information regarding the people you interact with as well as the accounts you follow. Hypothetically, if you follow an account called "Binghamtonfakes," aka, an account that promotes and publicizes underage drinking, that information is collected and linked to your profile.

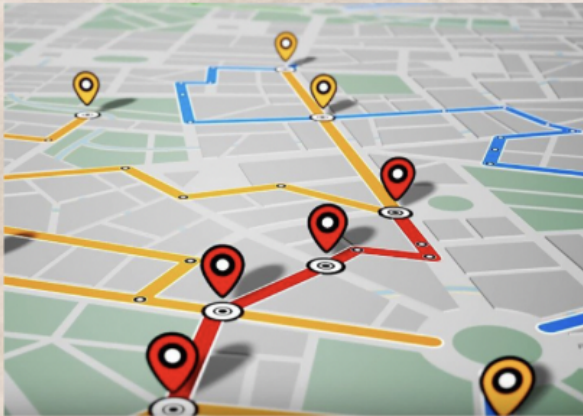
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ISSUE 312

INFORMATION FROM PARTNERS

Part of how Instagram collects data comes from handling “information from partners,” which is obscured terminology for “third-party services.” These services are companies other than the one at hand that have access to your data. Instagram claims that the purpose of maintaining these partnerships is to personalize your feed; however, if you were to click on the “Meta Business Tools” hyperlink, a more Instagram-motivated justification is provided. Partnering with technologies such as Facebook, Meta Pixel, Conversions API, etc. allows these platforms to better reach people who may have interest in their products and services.

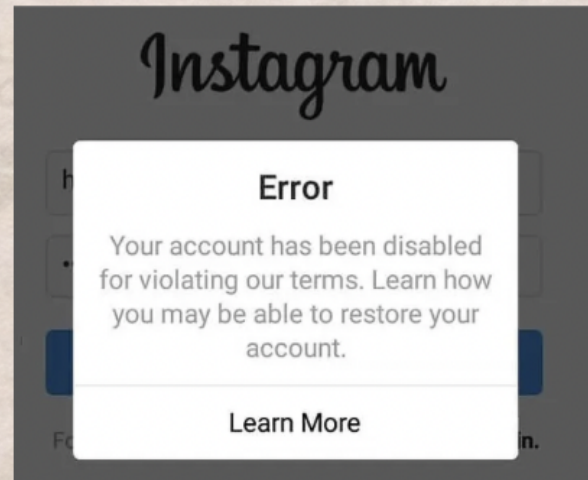
What does this mean for you, a prospective Binghamton college student? Instagram uses your involvement on third-party services, such as your location-related information, to provide relevant ads. Let’s say you went on a trip to Colorado where marijuana is legal. You may start receiving ads promoting weed which then may prompt your feed to comprise of more and more weed-related content. One wrong click, purchase or follow, and your profile can be permanently linked to a drug you’ve never taken nor want associated with your profile as a prospective student.



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RESPONDING TO LEGAL REQUESTS

Instagram’s privacy policy specifies that they can respond to legal requests if they have “good-faith” in the jurisdiction, whether the request is domestic or international. Additionally, if Instagram has reason to believe you’re involved in fraud or illegal activity, they can review your personal information and share it with third-party services to protect their “rights, properties or products.”



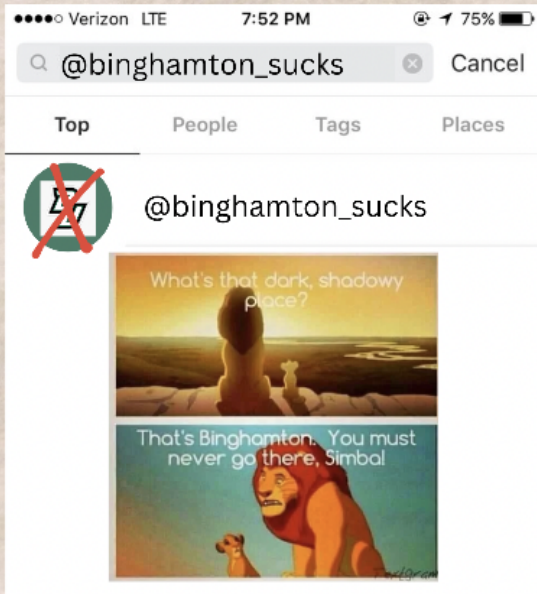
When it comes to your rights and privacies, especially as a prospective Binghamton student, you do not want to rely on “good-faith” when it comes to legal or illegal activity on your record. There is not an objective list of dos and don’ts provided by Instagram. Rather, if your account is liking the right things at the wrong time or interacting with unknowingly suspicious activity, your information can be shared and your image as an applicant may be damaged.

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MANAGING AND DELETING INFORMATION

It's easy - and reasonable - to assume that the supposed control you have over your search history is definite. However, simply going into settings and deleting certain searches from *your* history doesn't actually delete the search from, well, history. When you search something on Instagram, the log of that search remains for six months, regardless of whether you delete it from your personal search history. What's more is that the same applies to Instagram's partners, like Facebook. In other words, what you search on Facebook and what you search on Instagram is available to both platforms as well as their other third-party services.

In the scenario that you search "Binghamtonhateaccount" on Instagram, even if you delete that inquiry from your engine, the search remains available to retrieve from Instagram. Aka, you better hope there's no admissions officer working for the platform or who has reason to ask for such information.

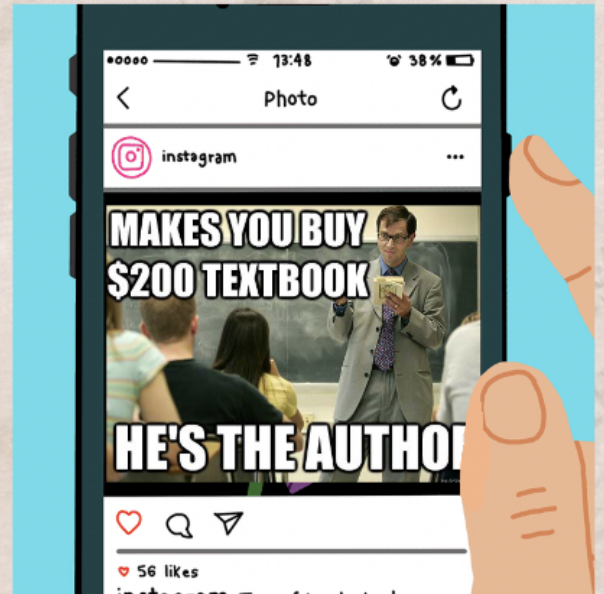


CONTENT OTHERS SHARE OR RESHARE ABOUT YOU

Have a private Instagram account? Okay, so people you don't mutually follow can't immediately access your profile. That being said, Instagram has no control or regulation over how your information, private or not, is shared by others.

Let's say you Instagram DM your classmate a funny meme about a professor. Even though your account is private, your friend has the ability to share this meme to others, whether that means via another DM or simply by screenshotting your conversation. At the end of the day, Instagram is an amalgamation of computerized algorithms and has no control over physically initiated interactions.

Despite your privacy status on Instagram, that meme about your professor can get traced back to you simply by the means of socially driven incentives. Sounds like you should look for other places to apply and better friends while you're at it!



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Meta-Analysis

The five big ideas I chose to focus on from Instagram's privacy policy were "Things You and Others Do and Provide," "Information From Partners," "Responding to Legal Requests," "Managing and Deleting Information" and "Content Others Share or Reshare About You." I chose these ideas because all (except "Managing and Deleting Information" which I'll explain subsequently) tie back to the lack of self-regulation one has as an account holder. In other words, these ideas have to do with personal privacy, or lack thereof, because so much of your online presence is accessible or controlled by others. Information about you is available from *others*, shared by *others* and requested by *others*, and Instagram's privacy policy basically says much of that is unavoidable. In fact, there's many reasons why they condone or initiate it, many of such reasons masquerading as "to personalize your experience." Sharing information online is a tried and true marketing champagne, so it paradoxically gives big data platforms an incentive to be lenient with privacy. As for why I chose the "Managing and Deleting Information" idea as well, I've always been pretty spooked about the tirelessly preached "once you hit send, it's out there forever" warning. Forever is a long time, and I'm not sure I'd ever want something available about me online forever, at least not under my control. This mindset is what inclined the incorporation of that fifth idea, even if it's not as much having to do with "others" like the other four. After zeroing in on this idea, I learned about Instagram's six month policy, which basically explains that even after you delete something from your search history, it's still available via Instagram or its third-party services for six months. While six months is slightly less haunting than forever, it still places my words in the hands of someone or something else after they're gone from my possession, and who knows how my words can be used against me?

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A change I would make to Instagram's policy that would better "protect" users' privacy is to be a lot more specific about their legal actions. Ironically, it almost felt like Instagram put more effort into explaining more minor privacy concerns than when it came to briefing their "Responding to Legal Requests" section. Here, Instagram continuously refers to "good faith" and "belief." This is unsettling for a number of reasons. For one thing, applying "belief" to a platform's foundation is a fundamental flaw in big data and perpetuates discrepancies based on racist, sexist, ableist, etc. ideologies. Secondly, it obscures what the platform considers as righteous or not, so it's unclear how users should know how to act online (passed common sense). Further, Instagram's only outline of this behavior is left as "internationally recognized standards." The change I would make to this idea is to have a much more thorough, numbered list of online behaviors that can be shared if legally requested. It should not be up to "good faith" to determine what type of behavior is condemned; rather, it should be made clear to users how they are expected to act on the platform.

Cheney-Lippold's "Categorization: Making Data Useful" builds on this idea of subjectivity in platforms and algorithms. This reading delved into the concept of measurable types, which are data templates that construct a new interpretation of a certain type of identity (Cheney-Lippold 32). One of the examples the author uses to explain measurable types is the comparison between a terrorist and a 'terrorist,' the latter being the computerized measurable type version of a terrorist. The difference lies in the fact that a terrorist is someone who projects violence against citizens due to political motivation, whereas a 'terrorist' is someone whose behavior acts "as if" they were a terrorist, based on fixed definitions of online behavior that are algorithmically tied to what makes someone a terrorist (Cheney-Lippold 30). This is an extreme example, but a necessary one in order to expose the grave potential of measurable type online

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identities. Instagram's "good faith" and "belief" justifications for handing over personal information are unnervingly similar to the overarching concept of "as if" measurable types. Not having straightforward, deliberately specific behaviors that determine further legal actions leaves room for interpretation, or rather misinterpretation, of information.

My chosen audience for this project are prospective students looking to apply to Binghamton University. This shaped how I chose my narrative and style because having been in that position just four years ago, I remember wanting someone to tell me the facts as they were and the information I needed to put my best foot forward. Considering this, I interpreted my audience as young adults who understand mature concepts yet are looking for accessible, straightforward explanations. I also formatted my examples around stuff I was hyper aware of while applying to college, such as what my profile said about me as a person, student and applicant. Additionally, I incorporated memes because I know people at that age appreciate a good meme and will better relate to and consider the information at hand.

I chose to compose my privacy policy in the form of a newspaper. This was admittedly a result of my eat-breathe-sleep Pipe Dream routine nowadays, so a newspaper design was at the forefront of my thoughts and ideas. While this was my process of coming up with the idea, the more I considered it the more it made sense for prospective students anyway. Newspapers address events and issues as they come without dumbing down for their readers or concealing information. I think that my chosen form of a newspaper would be engaging to my audience, as prospective students are looking for credible, valid information directly from the schools they're applying to. A newspaper run by the school presents relevant and necessary facts about the

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school and its values, information that would serve as incredibly useful for Binghamton applicants.

I think that the amount of time allotted for this project was fair for the amount of research that was expected of us. The only constraint I feel may have been reflected in my project was the reliance of my non-expert interpretation to reword a privacy policy for a non-expert audience. It was difficult to digest the ideas in the policy to begin with, so I'm not entirely confident that I provided a more accessible and explicit overview for others. If there was more time for the project, maybe I could've ensured a better understanding of the policy myself which would translate better to a non-expert audience. Regardless of how much I ultimately understood about Instagram's privacy policy, I definitely know more now than before this project and I am more aware of my role as an Instagram user.

Works Cited

Cheney-Lippold, J. (2019). Categorization: Making Data Useful. In *We are data: Algorithms and the making of our Digital Selves*. essay, New York University Press.