

Ethics Can Enable Open Source Data Research

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Abstract : The openness, availability and the sheer volume of big data have provided, what some regard as, an invaluable and rich dataset. Researchers, businesses, advertising agencies, medical institutions, to name only a few, collect, share, and analyze this data to enable their processes and decision making. However, there are important ethical considerations associated with the use of big data. The rapidly evolving nature of online technologies has overtaken the many legislative, privacy, and ethical frameworks and principles that exist. For example, should we obtain consent to use people's online data, and under what circumstances can privacy considerations be overridden? Current guidance on how to appropriately and ethically handle big data is inconsistent. Consequently, this paper focuses on two quite distinct but related ethical considerations that are at the core of the use of big data for research purposes. They include empowering the producers of data and empowering researchers who want to study big data. The first consideration focuses on informed consent which is at the core of empowering producers of data. In this paper, we discuss some of the complexities associated with informed consent and consider studies of producers' perceptions to inform research ethics guidelines and practice. The second consideration focuses on the researcher. Similarly, we explore studies that focus on researchers' perceptions and experiences.

Keywords : big data, ethics, producers' perceptions, researchers' perceptions

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