

## Facebook's Privacy Policy – 1,000 words longer than the U.S. Constitution

by  
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Anyone remember Facebook circa 2005? Unless you were a college student, probably not. In retrospect, the early Facebook.com was essentially an exclusive club wherein the biggest issue was tailoring your "About" section to sound supremely cool.

As we all now know, those days are kaput. The former little sister to Myspace, now boasts more than 400 million user profiles, and what seems like as many applications. Facebook is so all-inclusive that its terminologies are now accepted as legitimate vernacular in the English dictionary. For example, the terms "friending" or "unfriending" people is commonplace. And, if someone says, "I'll Facebook you," those of us with profiles generally understand that they will be in contact with us via the website.

Furthermore, socializing in real life is facilitated more and more by Facebook; if you're hosting an event or party, Facebook is the fastest way to invite people. Just beware -- if you're in any pictures, you'll likely be tagged in one or more of them on Facebook soon.

Unfortunately, there's no telling who else might see those pictures. Facebook

is currently under scrutiny from the ACLU and FTC after changes made in early 2010 regarding privacy policies. Unless users navigate through the rigmarole of changing their privacy settings and risk carpal tunnel syndrome with all the clicking involved, it's very easy for personal information to be shared with third-party websites. How easy? For starters (if you are a Facebook user), type your name into a Google search engine, or do an image or video search. Chances are, something you've got on your Facebook page will pop up.

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Facebook changed its policies last January, it tacitly obtained the consent of its users by allowing them to select new "recommended" privacy settings, which most did rather than read the whole policy. (Nick Bilton at the New York Times noted in a May 12th article that Facebook's privacy policy is more than 1,000 words longer than the U.S. Constitution). Even those who went to the trouble of locking down all their personal information may still be accessed through third-party searches via their location or school.

So, while the ease of snooping on exes via social networking sites like Facebook remains a relatively harmless joke, it isn't quite as funny to consider the repercussions of being passed up for a job because a potential manager disliked you listed political views. Scarier still is the fact that the accessibility of personal information is a new scavenging ground for identity thieves, who can prey on more vulnerable profile users.

It's a sad reality when joining Facebook carries such hefty liabilities; I guess there's always the phone.