

## Facebook Offers More Disclosure to Users

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Published: April 12, 2012

Facebook, seeking to address concerns about the personal information it collects on its users, said Thursday that it would provide any user with more about the data it tracks and stores.

In a posting on its privacy blog, Facebook said the expanded archive feature would be introduced gradually to its 845 million monthly active users. It goes beyond the first archive made available in 2010, which has been criticized as incomplete by privacy advocates and regulators in Europe.

The archive Facebook published two years ago gave users a copy of their photos, posts, messages, list of friends and chat conversations. The new version, Facebook said, includes previous user names, friend requests and the Internet protocol addresses of the computers that users have logged in from. More categories of information will be made available in the future, Facebook said.

Online social networks offer free services to users and make money primarily through advertising, which can often be directed more effectively using the information the network has collected on them.

Facebook, which is preparing for an initial public stock offering, most likely in May, has been trying to accommodate government officials in Europe, where privacy laws are more stringent than in the United States.

Facebook's data collection practices have tested the boundaries of Europe's privacy laws. The social networking site, based in Menlo Park, Calif., is Europe's leading online network, according to comScore, a research firm in Reston, Va.

In December, the Irish Data Protection Commission reached an agreement with Facebook, which runs its international businesses from offices in Dublin, to provide more information to its users and amend its data protection practices. "We took up their recommendation to make more data available to Facebook users through this expanded functionality," the company said in a statement.

Facebook agreed to make those changes by July. In Europe, 40,000 Facebook users have already requested a full copy of the data that the site has compiled on each of them, straining the company's ability to respond. Under European privacy law, the company must comply with the requests within 40 days.

Max Schrems, the German law student who filed the complaint leading to the agreement with the Irish authorities, criticized Facebook's latest offer as insufficient.

"We welcome that Facebook users are now getting more access to their data, but Facebook is still not in line with the European Data Protection Law," said Mr. Schrems, a student at the University of Vienna. "With the changes, Facebook will only offer access to 39 data categories, while it is holding at least 84 such data categories about every user."

In 2011, Mr. Schrems requested his own data from Facebook and received files with information in 57 categories. The disclosure, Mr. Schrems said, showed that Facebook was keeping information he had previously deleted from the Web site, and was also storing information on his whereabouts, gleaned from his computer's I.P. address.

Facebook's data collection practices are being scrutinized in Brussels as European Union policy makers deliberate on changes to the European Data Protection Directive, which was last revised in 1995. The commissioner responsible for the update, Viviane Reding, has cited Facebook's data collection practices in pushing for a requirement that online businesses delete all information held on individuals at the user's request.

Ulrich Börger, a privacy lawyer with Latham & Watkins in Hamburg, said he thought it was unlikely that the European Union would enact laws that would significantly restrict the use of customized advertising, which is at the core of the business model for Web sites like Facebook. It is more likely, Mr. Börger said, that lawmakers would require Facebook and other networking sites to revise their consent policies to make them more easy to understand. But it was unlikely that Facebook would be legally prevented from using information from individuals who sign up for the service.

"I don't see any fundamental change," Mr. Börger said. "It comes back to the question of consent. They cannot go so far as to prohibit things that people are willing to consent to. That would violate an individual's freedom to receive services they want to receive."

A version of this article appeared in print on April 13, 2012, on page B4 of the New York edition with the headline: Facebook, Eye on Privacy Laws, Offers More Disclosure to Users.