

ABSTRACT

Even if you can reuse, aggregate or share that photo, video, meme or text, should you?

Our mixed-methods study explores the legal and ethical issues involved in content-sharing practices in social media and messaging apps through analyses of:

- Public policy challenges.
- Related work in HCI literature.
- Quantitative + qualitative user data.

Examples

Unethical or even illegal practices in sharing may include:
1. Incorrect or missing attribution.
2. Incorrect or missing description.
3. Lack of interest by the poster in correcting inaccuracies.
4. A degree of impersonation by the poster or aggregator.
5. An arresting piece of visual content.

Dude: Photo image from a photo history I compiled to a Facebook group, prompting 50 shares, multiple likes, comments, etc.

Me: Hey, it’s cool if you want to share this, glad everybody’s into it, but just FYI it came from a book I wrote, here’s a link if you’re interested in more.


PHASE 1: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY DATA

- What self-reported attitudes do users of social computing and digital communication hold about legal and ethical issues with content sharing, publishing and fair use?
- How do users’ attitudes vary regarding legal and ethical issues according to:
  - Who created it?
  - Motivations for sharing?
  - Training or education?

PHASE 2: QUALITATIVE IN SITU DATA

- What awareness, attitudes and behaviors regarding legal and ethical issues do users of social computing and digital communication evince “in the wild” for content sharing in both personal and professional contexts?
- How do the selected results identified in Phase 1 compare with the results identified in Phase 2?

KEY CONCEPTS IN THE STUDY

Copyright is the subdomain of intellectual property law that guards individual rights to works of original and creative value, including some derivative works and compilations. Plagiarism is the act of passing off someone else’s work as one’s own. User-Generated Content (UGC) is content that is created and posted by users of an online, and usually socially networked, platform or app. Fair Use is the U.S. legal doctrine that allows limited reuse of copyrighted material without permission according to four factors:
1. The purpose and character of the use such as a commercial purpose;
2. The nature of the copyrighted work;
3. The amount and “substantiality” of the part of the work that is used;
4. The effect of the use on the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.