Inconsistency in Accessing Information from Social Networking Services

Christopher Parsons
University of Toronto

Colin Bennett,
University of Victoria

Adam Molnar
Queen’s University
Talk Outline

• Project motivation and overview
• Social networks and subscribers
• Social networks and authorities
• Inconsistencies in access
• Moving the CATSMI framework forward
CATSMI

• Top 23 SNSes in Canada

• Content analysis of privacy policies

• Tests of subject access by researchers

• Law enforcement compliance guides

• Implications for ‘lawful access’ legislation
Companies Examined
Subscriber Access

- “Real and substantial connection to Canada” test
- Acusearch, Facebook, Nexopia, Second Life, Cloud Computing
- Accessed PII using: Letter and challenges & “Checkout” systems
Inconsistent Responses

- PII Provided: Facebook, Twitter, Google
- Information Provided: Apple, Instagram
- No Follow-through: LinkedIn
- Refuse: Tumblr
- No Response: LiveJournal, Yahoo!, Wordpress
Lack/Limited Metadata
Inconsistent Subscriber
Deletion

- Deletion: but not yet
- Deletion: but only for what we deem to be PII
- Deletion: but not information that your friends have said or shared about you
- Deletion: but only for us, not for others
- Deletion: but we need to cover our legal backs
- Deletion: but we cannot guarantee complete erasure
- Forgetting: but not for third-party analytics
Authorities

What they access

• Open Source Intelligence
• Subscriber Data
• ‘Content’

How they access

• Self-Download
• Letter
• Court Order
• MLAT (and Corporate-processes)
Significances of Inconsistency

- High variation for all parties
- Non-transparency because of corporate decisions
- Challenging for individuals and law enforcement alike to know how, why, under what conditions data protected
Is there an explicit process for opting out/in of disclosure of personal information? Does this include an authentication process?

Only this: "As mentioned above, you can always choose not to provide your Personal Information to us, but that may prevent you from being able to use or take advantage of specific features of WeChat."
Tracking Me

• Homepage: http://www.christopher-parsons.com

• Twitter: @caparsons

• Email: christopher@christopher-parsons.com

• Research funded by: SSHRC, New Transparency Project, Office of Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Munk School of Global Affairs