

Mary Gay Michaels

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Federal Trade Commission
Office of the Secretary
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Suite CC-5610 (Annex C)
Washington, DC 20580

Re: Competition and Consumer Protection in the 21st Century Hearing, Project Number P181201

I am a teacher, and I use a lot of online services in my day-to-day life, such as Google, Gmail, Facebook, and Amazon. I don't like the feeling that these companies know what I'm doing and that they're watching me. Frankly, I feel like they shouldn't even care what I'm doing. When I signed up for these services, I knew I didn't have any voice to opt out of them harvesting my personal data. If we could somehow control that--if we, as consumers, could be given that voice--I would love it.

Our data is valuable. A lot of things can go wrong when our personal information is compromised, as evidenced by the data breaches we have all heard about in the news. The risk of data theft concerns me so much that I pay extra insurance premiums through my school to receive legal assistance in the event that my personal data is breached.

I am also concerned about pervasive tracking on the part of Google and its Android phones. It's not right that people are being tracked via their phones even when they have disabled this feature. Plus, I don't think a company should be able to alter what we see online to its own benefit, as was the case when Google promoted its own phones in Web searches, rather than including the competition in the results.

It troubles me that certain political viewpoints are being silenced online, which has happened on Google's YouTube. As an educator, I don't like it that websites are telling us what to think. Democracy needs to hear all views. When we hear both sides, we can be critical thinkers and readers, and we can make informed decisions. That's what a real democracy is.

When any one of us clicks the "I Accept" button on an app or service, we are giving up our information. I would really love to get these services without them being allowed to take my information and do other things with it. Perhaps there could be an option in which we could select what they can and can't do with our information. There has to be a middle ground between having no voice in how our information is used and giving up the use of these services altogether.

Sincerely,

Mary Gay Michaels