

Elizabeth DiPippo

Museum-Partner Observation Three

LIS 258: Museum Informatics

Dr. Angel

April 22, 2017

According to the 2016 NMC Horizon Report, “Privacy policies in the museum sector are continually being refined, but they cannot keep pace with the rapid acceleration of the new data-centered technologies and the capabilities of cybercriminals.”¹ Data security at The Whitney Museum of Art is captured in its Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions online.



Screenshot of Whitney Museum of American Art “tombstone” website caption.

To begin, the Whitney details that it uses Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) to encrypt the public’s data that is supplied to the museum. In its Privacy Policy under the heading, “Security,” it clearly states that the Whitney website or any website for that matter using the common web

¹ “Privacy Concerns.” In *NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition*. pp. 32-33.
<http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf>. Accessed 22 April 2017.

browsers available today will display a padlock in the status bar and https:// to indicate a secure site.



<https://shop.whitney.org/checkout/onepage/>

Screenshot of padlock at the Whitney Shop and secure site indication by https.

This means, for example, as referenced above, purchases made on the shopwhitney.org related website will encrypt credit card information. Similarly, this will also apply to membership purchases online.

CHECKOUT

	Qty	Item		Price
Remove	1	Individual — Philanthropy Series	<input type="button" value="ADD MEMBER INFO"/> Required	\$ 85.00
Total				\$ 85.00

[Clear Cart](#)

Have a Discount Code?

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Cards Accepted Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Discover

Select payment option Use Card on file for this purchase Remember/Update my card

Card number and expiration

Expiration: -- Month -- ▾ -- Year -- ▾

FINALIZE SALE

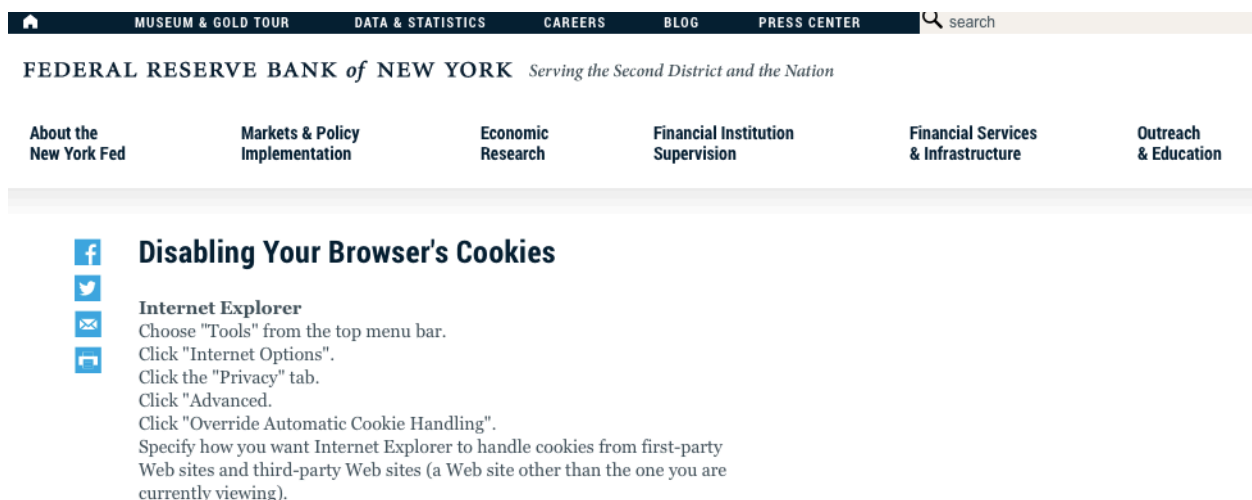
Screenshots of online Membership enrollment.

As detailed in the Whitney's online Privacy Policy, the use of personal information *sauf* your credit card number may be shared with third party merchants. Membership details may be shared with other not for profits and which are also entered into a membership database. This raises the question of the application of a Whitney Information Policy. If one exists, it would include the potential for internal departmental oversight as discussed in Zorich.² To this point, redundancy would need to be addressed if the Whitney can be expected to viably and efficiently maintain its data.³ An institution wide information policy, is a tool that all museums can use to set forth data security measures.

² Zorich, Diane M. "Information Policy in Museums." In *Museum Informatics: People Information, and Technology in Museums*, ed.s Paul F. Marty and Katherine Burton Jones. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 85-106.

³ *Ibid.*

According to the Whitney's Privacy Policy, its data integrity fulfills its overall museum mission, and acceptance of the terms and conditions of the website is fulfilled by simply accessing the "Site." The Whitney suggests users check the Privacy Policy periodically as it may change. Currently, the latest update to the Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions was July 21, 2016. Unfortunately, many informed art consumers may not be well versed in museum policy, and the thought of accessing the Whitney's website may not inspire a gander at the Privacy Policy or the Terms and Conditions, let alone understand the tenet of complete consent by plain use. To adhere to full disclosure, the Privacy Policy describes the user's capacity to turn off cookies and web beacons, providing links to consumer advocate sites to opt-out of the Whitney's sharing of one's "non-personally identifiable information." In fact, to promote public trust, the Whitney provides a link to the Federal Reserve of New York as an example of websites that provide additional information on data security to consumers.



Screenshot of Federal Reserve Bank of New York hit sourced from Whitney Museum of American Art website.

The Whitney Museum clearly applies an onus of responsibility into the hands of the consumer. Although it uses a secure server, provides options for users to not have information shared with other organizations and merchants, and offers additional “outside” prescriptive solutions for consumers, e.g in disabling cookies, the Whitney’s privacy policy is still quite rudimentary. A pop-up of opt-in or an “app” as described in the 2016 NMC Horizon Report,⁴ could alert users to updated policy changes. In fact, the benefit of such a tool or feature would raise awareness in the community for the need for improving data security and hence invite more ideas on how to accomplish such a feat. The more consumers are aware of their options, the more able we are to contribute to solving the issues at stake.

The information age requires privacy policies and terms and conditions, but a museum’s “information infrastructure”⁵ demands “an enterprise-wide system.”⁶ In other words, everyone has to get involved, and siloes cannot serve a museum or its visitors well. Museums have a responsibility to their patrons to protect their data, not to forget-- all of the data of the art or patents, etc. that is the centerpiece of the institution. Since information is an asset,⁷ museums are in positions to legally and ethically protect private information about its donors, (e.g. an anonymous one), and the artists whose work is exhibited, (e.g. in a worst-case scenario,

⁴ “Privacy Concerns.” In *NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition*. pp. 32-33.
<http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf>. Accessed 22 April 2017.

⁵ Zorich, Diane M. “Information Policy in Museums.” In *Museum Informatics: People Information, and Technology in Museums*, ed.s Paul F. Marty and Katherine Burton Jones. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 85-106.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

intimate details of a suicide). Traditionally, donor information falls under the purview of Development Departments and artists' rights under the purview of Rights and Reproduction Departments. However, as mentioned these nuances are soon becoming obscured. As the referenced sources note, changes must begin to remediate the "lack of control" many information users feel is seismically loosening and translating to an abduction of our data footprints. For the Whitney, its information policy must address the volume of data at hand and its risks-- from thieves with respect to the most dangerous to overexposure speaking to the more benign. Like the Whitney's founder, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and similar to the first donor of the fiscal year, there invokes an institutional identity of the museum contributing, as Zorich states, to its credibility.⁸ To potentially sacrifice such reputation would fail the mission of the museum, the employees who represent the museum, and the millions of real and virtual visitors who depend on the safety of a cultural hub such as the Whitney. There will be additional tools, too, that will be coming as the world technologically changes. Websites will most likely be overridden by biometrics by some point and privacy functionalities may soon be integrated meta-corporally. Information, its intangible cultural data, is yet a whisper in an open field. What and how we communicate it will all the more call upon our mores as we consider our ethical choices.

⁸ Zorich, Diane M. "Information Policy in Museums." In *Museum Informatics: People Information, and Technology in Museums*, ed.s Paul F. Marty and Katherine Burton Jones. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 85-106.