ANDERSON: MUSEUM-PARTNER OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT THREE

Christopher Anderson
LIS 258: Museum Informatics – Dr. Angel
St. John's University Division of Library and Information Science
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Introduction

This semester, I have partnered with the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County ("HMTC") to gain insight and perspective regarding how a museum manages exhibits and collections to provide visitors with an engaging and informative experience. As museums continue to incorporate new and interactive technologies for visitor engagement, they must face the challenge of keeping visitor/user data secure. With the increased use of interactive museum websites, "users must trust third-party platforms with sensitive information, creating more opportunities for it to be compromised."[1] Museums therefore face the challenge of connecting with visitors while at the same time making sure that a visitor's personal information remains private and secure. This paper will present an overview of the HMTC's privacy policy and highlight selected steps the institution has implemented to meet privacy and data security challenges.

Privacy Policy

The HMTC's website outlines an extensive privacy policy aimed at informing visitors about the type of information that is recorded and how information is kept secure.[2] The website collects visitor information including "IP address, geographical location, browser type and version, operating system, referral source, length of visit, page views and website navigation paths."[3] Recorded information is used for a number of purposes to enhance the visitor experience, a partial list of purposes includes personalizing the website for visitors, supplying goods or services purchased through the website, sending the museum newsletter if requested by a visitor, and dealing with inquiries.[4] Furthermore, the HMTC "may disclose your personal information to [any of our employees, officers, insurers, professional advisers, agents, suppliers or subcontractors] insofar as reasonably necessary for the purposes set out in this policy."[5]
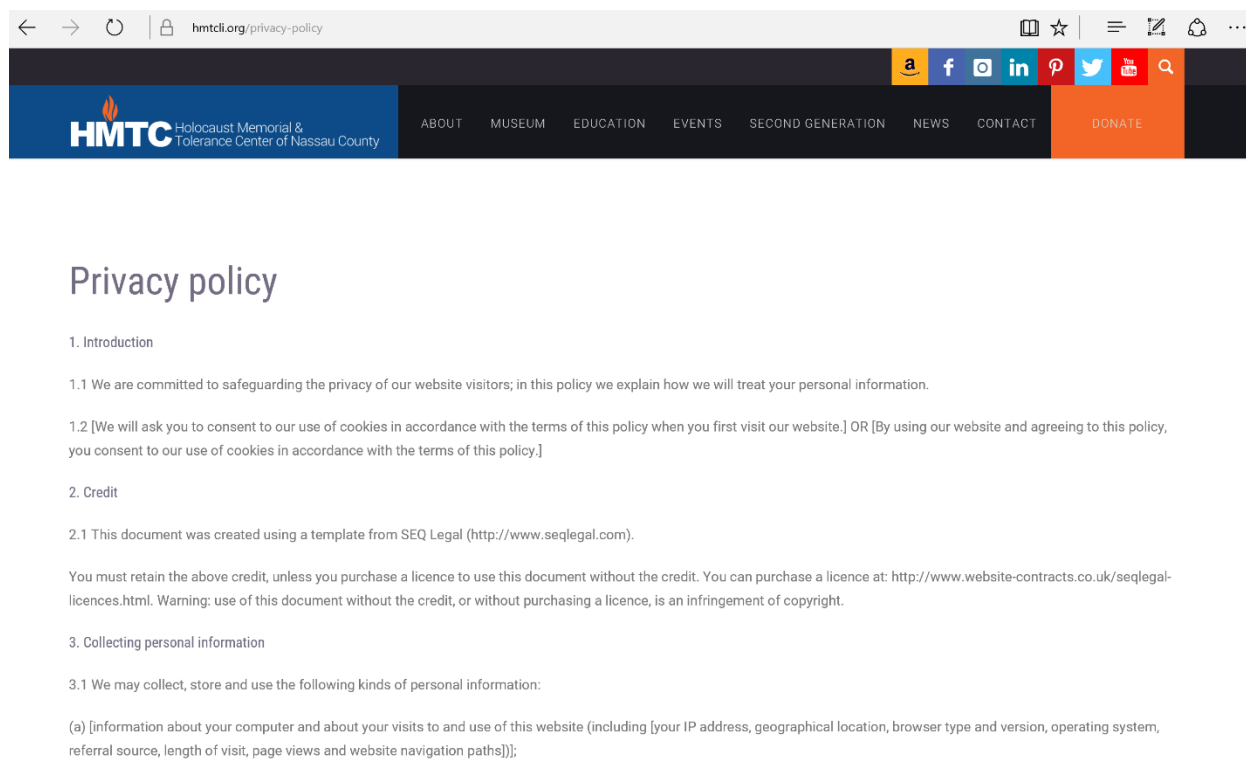
Screenshot of [Privacy policy](#) page.

Visitors do have the ability to limit the amount of information collected as "privacy settings can be used to limit the publication of your information on our website, and can be adjusted using privacy controls on the website."[6] These tools provide visitors with additional control and limit some of the information that is collected.

Data Security

The HMTC uses a number of steps to secure visitor data. One important feature provides that: "Personal information that we process for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes."[7] In addition, the HMTC "will store all the personal information you provide on our secure (password- and firewall-protected) servers."[8] Furthermore, "electronic financial transactions entered into through our website will be protected by encryption technology."[9]

All of these tools help to protect visitor data. Keeping information for only a limited time helps reduce the length of time that information is stored and allows for a much shorter window in which information can be compromised. Using secure servers implementing password and firewall protection helps reduce the probability of nefarious actors accessing data. Additionally, using encryption technology for financial transactions decreases the ability of outsiders to intercept transaction information. Implemented in combination, these measures will help mitigate the potential breach of user information and data. However, a data breach always remains a looming threat for any activity conducted in an online environment.

Conclusion

The HMTC provides easy access to their privacy policy and the information is presented in a straightforward manner. The privacy policy sets forth a number of examples identifying how the museum is providing data security. While a data security protocol can always be tweaked or improved, the HMTC has implemented a number of thoughtful measures to increase the security of visitor data.

Endnotes

[1] "NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition," The New Media Consortium, 2016: 32, Accessed April 20, 2018, http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf.

[2] "Privacy policy," Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County, Accessed April 20, 2018, https://www.hmtcli.org/privacy-policy/.

[3] Ibid, Section 3.1(a).

[4] Ibid, Section 4.2.

[5] Ibid, Section 5.1.

[6] Ibid, Section 4.4.

[7] Ibid, Section 7.2.

[8] Ibid, Section 8.2

[9] Ibid, Section 8.3.

Bibliography

Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County. "Privacy policy." Accessed April 20, 2018. https://www.hmtcli.org/privacy-policy/.

The New Media Consortium. "NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition." Accessed April 20, 2018. http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf.