

Museum Observation #3  
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The Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum was an exemplar of privacy and security in the Museum Horizon Report for its inventive method of connecting its audience with the museum without obtaining any personal information through its use of the Pen tool. Although this is a strong and innovative example of how a cultural heritage institution may do this the Cooper Hewitt fails to guarantee the same level of privacy to its members.

The screenshot shows the Cooper Hewitt website with a dark header containing the logo, search, and menu icons. The main content is divided into sections: 'BECOME A MEMBER TO DISCOVER DESIGN', 'ALL MEMBERS ACCESS', 'BECOME A MEMBER AND BE THE FIRST TO SEE NATURE—COOPER HEWITT DESIGN TRIENNIAL!' (with three images of museum exhibits), and 'PAST EVENT HIGHLIGHTS' (with four images of museum events). The text describes various membership levels and their benefits, such as access to exhibitions, events, and discounts.

In the above photo the Cooper Hewitt details the benefits of membership with the museum, the rates of some memberships, and more; yet the institution fails to guarantee to its patrons that the information collected in the sign-up process is private and secure. Although this appears discouraging at first the Cooper Hewitt does provide an all-encompassing privacy policy within the footer (image below) of their website that can be accessed regardless of the page their patron is viewing.

The screenshot shows the Smithsonian website footer with a dark background. On the left is the Smithsonian logo. To the right is a navigation menu with links: 'Contact Us', 'Employment', 'Records Requests', 'Host Your Event', 'FAQs', 'Supplier Diversity & EEO', 'Terms of Use', 'Press Room', 'Inspector General', and 'Privacy'. The 'Privacy' link is highlighted with a red rectangular box.

The Smithsonian's privacy policy covers all of its bases well and explains to its patrons exactly what type of information is being collected such as IP address, web client, time of day when the site is visited and more. In regard to personal information such as name, address, date of birth, etc. the Smithsonian makes it clear that they do not sell this information to any outside sources, that certain information dealing with the processing of credit and debit cards is

distributed on a need to know basis, and that personal information, if shared, will only be done so with select members and that members will be notified each time it is done so.



# Smithsonian Institution's Privacy Statement

## Overview

Thank you for visiting the Smithsonian Institution network of Websites and reviewing our Privacy Statement. The Smithsonian Institution does not collect personal information about visitors to our Websites unless you choose to provide that information to us. The Smithsonian will use that information to respond to your message and to help us get you the information you have requested.

This Privacy Statement applies to the online activities of the Smithsonian Institution and onsite interactive activities (collectively "Websites"). It does not apply to its Smithsonian Enterprises websites (Smithsonian Magazine, Air & Space Magazine, Smithsonian Store, and Smithsonian Journeys). Consult those websites for the Smithsonian Enterprises privacy statement.

## Information Collected and Stored Automatically

When you visit our Websites, we automatically gather and store the following information about your visit so that we can track the use of our Websites in order to make improvements. This information is stored and used in the aggregate only, and is not used to contact you personally:

- The IP address from which you access our Websites;
- The name of the domain from which you access the Internet (for example, gmail.com, if you are connecting from a Google account);
- The type of browser and operating system used to access our Websites;
- The date and time you access our sites;
- The pages, files, documents and links that you visit; and
- The domain of the website which referred you to this Website (the last website you visited before visiting this one).

Furthermore, the Smithsonian expressly states that it provides its members with the opportunity to opt-out of any and all information sharing processes (except that of payment processing as understood by the policy) at any point in time. The Smithsonian also takes time to explain how the institution uses cookies, interacts with individuals under the age of 13, and takes appropriate steps to encrypt financial information from web purchases. Lastly, the Smithsonian reminds its members and patrons that the Cooper Hewitt is not a stand-alone museum but operates under the umbrella of the Smithsonian Institute and is therefore managed as a piece of a whole rather than an independent entity.

## References

Smithsonian Institute. (2019). Smithsonian Institution's Privacy Statement. Retrieved from <https://www.si.edu/privacy>

Privacy concerns wicked challenge: Those that are complex to even define, much less address. (2016). NMC Horizon Report:2016 Museum Edition. Retrieved from <http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf>