

# Privacy in the age of e-mail: Your life may be available on-line

I know who you are, and I know where you live. Not only can I find out where you live, but I can look up your home phone number. All I have to do is log-on to the University computer network and look you up.

If you are a student and have not requested suppression of your personal information in the student directory, you are listed on-line. Information about you is available not just to others at the University, but the world.

That's right. Surfers on the World Wide Web can type in your name and find out what's in your file. This is cool if you want your friends in Alaska or your brother in Australia to be able to find your e-mail address. This is not cool if you want your street address and unlisted phone number to remain semi-private. The bogeyman can look you up, courtesy of the University.

I discovered this a couple weeks ago when I tried to find the e-mail address of a friend. I found not only her e-mail address but also her home address and her home phone number. Surprised, I looked myself up. By golly, there I was.

I was stunned. The nice folks at the Registrar Office and Computing Center are not stunned; they know you're in there. It's the students I've talked to, even the electronically-savvy students, who are stunned. We've all been editing our listed information, which you can do now, too (see below).

The University's Registrar Office maintains a database with information on all students. The University's Computing Center maintains a database based on the information supplied by the Registrar Office. If you filled out a form asking the registrar to suppress your information, you're probably not listed on-line. If you

didn't fill out such a form, you can bet you're listed.

The Computing Center told me what I wanted to hear: YES, I could get into the database and edit my listing. I can delete everything, or I can change some things.

But even so, the on-line student database raises more than a couple of questions:



Kelly Andersson

• Does the University have any responsibility to let students know that they're listed on-line, with personal information available worldwide?

I say they do. If the information was accessible only to University students, I would be less uncomfortable with the idea, but I still don't think the University should make your unlisted home phone number available to me.

• Does the University have any liability for our personal security?

I say they do. If the University makes my personal info available for electronic look-up and some scuzzball looks up my stuff and uses it for scuzzball purposes, I consider the University responsible.

• Does the University have any liability for our personal safety?

I say they do. If some lecherous pervert waits on my back porch for me to get out of class, or starts calling me at home, I consider the University ethically, legally and financially responsible for any consequences. Not only did the University list this information on a globally-available network, it did it without letting me know it was there.

• Does the University have any purpose for maintaining

and publishing this database?

Sure it does. The Registrar, the Computing Center and other University departments might have good reason for contacting me. But do they need to make it available to anyone who wants to look? Hell, no. They could restrict access to it, and they should.

• Have other universities addressed this issue?

Yes. I tried looking up friends at Stanford, and I can't get into their database at all. I can't even find the e-mail addresses of Stanford students, much less their home phone numbers.

Realistically, we know that information about us is in the files and records of countless businesses and organizations. I

understand that many of these businesses and organizations have more information about me than I'd like them to have, and I'm not comfortable with that.

However, students aren't justified in assigning any "blame" at this point. I'm quite sure that neither the Registrar's Office nor the Computing Center had any intention of compromising our privacy or security when the system was set up. It's simply a matter of technology getting ahead of us.

Al Stavitsky, who teaches "Mass Media & Society" at the journalism school, agrees.

"Clearly there are emerging problem areas regarding computer-based communication," he says. "The technology is developing faster than our abil-

ity to anticipate problems. Protection of personal information is one of these areas, along with issues of copyright and libel."

Just because the information is on-line, though, doesn't mean it ought to stay there. The current system raises issues that should be addressed. One is my right to privacy. Another is whether I have any right to expect the University to take measures to maintain its information about me in such a way as to provide for security, both in terms of information and physical safety.

What do you think?

Kelly Andersson, a junior majoring in journalism, is a columnist for the Emerald.

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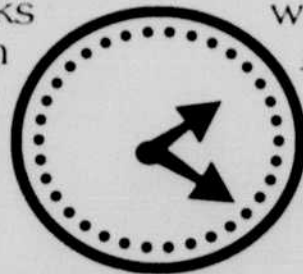
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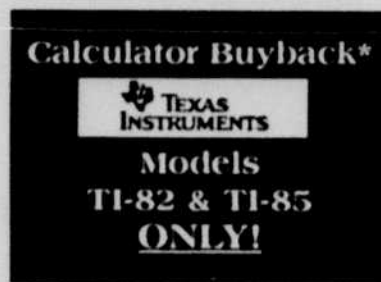
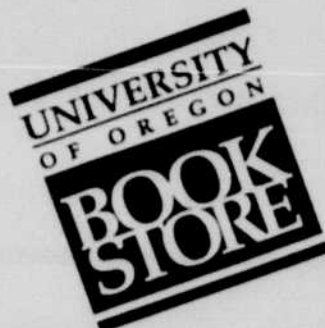
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## How to change your life information on-line

■ **GUIDE:** Following these steps will keep your private data within your control

By Kelly Andersson  
Columnist

If you don't want all your personal information listed on the University computer system where anyone can look you up, you can get into the database and change your file.

Some of the items (your name and curriculum, for example) you can't change. Examples of items you can change are your phone number, your fax number and your address.

Here's what you do:

1. Log onto gladstone (or your other system if you don't use gladstone).

2. When you see the prompts below, type what is printed in bold.

3. Find out what "alias" or userid is connected to your name. You must use your real legal name just as it appears in your registration information. Let's say your name is Johnny B. Goode. You should do this from the system prompt: "1%"

4. Type: **ph Johnny B. Goode**  
return all

Don't use a <cr> or <enter>

where it says return. TYPE IT JUST LIKE IT SAYS, using your full legal name, and you will get a listing of all kinds of stuff, some of it for you and some of it for other people with names like yours. Find yourself in there, and check it out.

What you see here is the information that's available to anyone — the public data.

5. Make a note of your alias. If it starts with "tmp-," you can't change your listing. You have to get a uo-net ID at the Computing Center.

If your alias begins with "uo," you can change some of your listing but only if you remember your uo-net password. If you DON'T remember it, you have to go to the Computing Center with your identification and fill out a form to have your uo-net password reset.

6. Here's how you find out what else is in your file and change it if you want to. From the system prompt, you get into the database like this: 1%

7. Type: **ph**

8. You'll see this: "\$Date: 1993/07/21 22:09:42 \$Revision: 6.6 \$ 200:Database ready. Ph>"

9. Type: **login uo-john**

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