What is your Data Silhouette?

Trace the digital traces that make your data silhouette

OVERVIEW

Participants create a self-portrait that represents their data traces and then connect the image of their data with a circuit that lights up.

WORKSHOP PURPOSE

By visualizing personal data use, participants gain awareness of themselves as data subjects and how all their data connects. One anticipated outcome is an increased sense of agency over data traces.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY FOR LIBRARY WEBSITE

"What are the digital traces that make your data silhouette? Facebook posts, tweets can say a lot about us. What do you look like online? Make a silhouette of your online self and then light it up with an LED light and copper conductive tape!"

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION:

1. Where do you go online?
2. How often do you go there?
3. What do you think your data says about you?

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS:

circuits, data awareness, data identity, data subjectivity, data traces, silhouette

PHASES OF DATA LIFE CYCLE ADDRESSED:

Collect Data, Describe/Organize Data, Transform/Use Data

RECOMMENDED AUDIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

For teens, ages 13 and up. Up to 12 participants, with at least one mentor for every five participants. Fine motor skills are needed to apply the delicate copper conductive tape and some young people will need assistance.

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MATERIALS NEEDED

1. 5” x 7” cards, or card board cut to fit, for the base of the silhouettes.
2. Colored markers
3. 7-10 yards of Copper conductive tape
4. Button cell batteries (2032)
5. Light emitting diodes (LED lights)

STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

Directions

1. Record your data traces: There are a few ways to do this:
    a. Count the number of messages you send in one day from your mobile device.
    b. Count the number of ways that messages are sent, including SMS (texting), email, platforms like iMessage, WhatsApp, Facebook or Twitter.
    c. Count the number of devices you use, like cell phones, laptops, and tablets.
2. Draw your data self (we’re calling this your data silhouette). You could draw an image of yourself in outline or just draw a map of all the apps and services you use. Make sure to leave room for the circuits.
3. Make a circuit: Lay two strips of copper conductive tape in a square on the board, surrounding the image of your data. Leaving two spaces – one for the LED and one for the battery. Make sure to leave the ends of the two strips of tape loose (about 1 cm at each end).
4. Light: The LED has two lead wires. Place each wire under the tape so that the LED acts as a bridge between the two pieces of tape.
5. Battery: Lay the battery over one end of the tape. With the other end of the copper tape, create a flap by folding the tape on itself at the end of the opposite piece of tape so that you can lower the flap onto the battery as a “light switch.” Match the positive path of the tape to the positive side of the battery.
6. Share: Participants present their silhouettes to one another, lighting up the circuits and explaining how they represented their data traces.

Tips:

- Visit the *Instructables* web site for detailed guidelines on how to make a paper circuit: http://www.instructables.com/id/Paper-Circuits/
- Make sure that the LED lead wires are completely covered by the tape
- Test the batteries in working circuits to make sure they still have juice!

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