# HW5a1: A Right to Be Forgotten?

Michael Plasmeier

<http://sloanreview.mit.edu/improvisations/2011/10/31/should-information-have-an-expiration-date/>

<http://press.princeton.edu/titles/8981.html>

<http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8981.pdf>

a) This book excerpt is about the darker side of Web 2.0. Every word we type, every click we make, is being stored in one computer system or other. Information we have long since forgotten, is still sitting on a disk (or many disks) somewhere ready to be retrieved. In addition, in the past, information had a shelf life. People would forget about those parties you were at as a teen. If any photos were taken, they were lost in an attic somewhere, never to see the light of day again. Mistakes you made early in your life would fall off your record after a certain amount of time. However now, all that information is there – waiting for a Google search to pull it up.

Viktor Mayer-Schönberger argues that there should be an “expiration date” on data. After that time, the information would no longer be accessible.

I think the “right to be forgotten” is an interesting concept that society is beginning to grapple with. The attitude towards it also differs from country to county. In the United States, records of crimes are part of the permanent public record. In Germany, some crimes are expunged from the records after the jail time is served. [[1]](#footnote-1) If a record is expunged, should the news article about it be deleted? I think the evolution of this will be interesting, especially because different cultures approach it differently.

b) I think the material complements the class because the class is about the vast collection of new data happening everyday online. The class has talked about emerging legal and political implications of the new era of data collection; in particular Sandy Pentland’s research on “A New Deal on Data.”

c) I would include a new session - expanding on Sandy Pentland’s “New Deal on Data” and covering this topic

1. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidcoursey/2012/02/24/how-the-right-to-be-forgotten-threatens-the-internet/>

   <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/13/us/13wiki.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)