

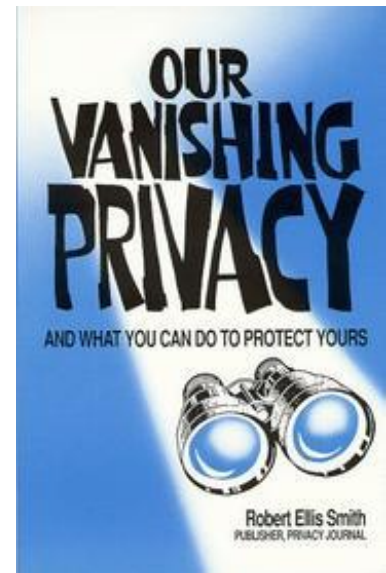
Our Vanishing Privacy

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Tyrannical governments always make it a point to indiscriminately surveil the hapless citizens under their jurisdiction so as to control them better. By [incrementally](#) ratcheting up the rate of interferences with the lives of the populace, the more omnipotent the State begins to appear. [Statism](#) is all about convincing people that the State is God, and one of the easiest and most pernicious ways of accomplishing this is to give the strong impression that the government is omniscient.

One of the traditional hallmarks of [police states](#) is that they require, either officially or culturally, that [everyone carry on their person at all times some sort of documentation validating their legal identity](#). While the courts like to play games with [stop and identify statutes](#) with their contradictory case rulings, usually if you refuse to identify yourself based on the request (or command?) of a [blue-costumed thug](#), typically that is grounds for him to up the ante and harass you further. Although it was originally promised by agents of the State that [Social Security numbers \(SSNs\)](#) would never be used for identification, it has become ubiquitous for everything from opening a bank account to getting a library card. What was initially touted as a “benefit” of the welfare State has now become little more than a prisoner ID number.

The [United States Postal “Service” \(USPS\)](#) willingly allows corporations to engage in [direct marketing](#) from the information you provide on those Change of Address cards. [Caller ID](#) on telephones is a double-edged sword, since while it is useful for you to screen calls, if you call someone and they have Caller ID too, they’ll know it’s you who’s calling them. In detailing the invasive nature of [target marketing](#) by corporations who solicit for customers’ preferences, the author observes that:



“It is a myopic view of privacy to say that so long as information is protected, the individual’s privacy is protected. Privacy, in the 1990s, includes not only the right to control personal information about oneself and how it is used, but also the right to be free of manipulation, whether in the marketplace or vis-a-vis the government. Privacy includes the right to exercise autonomy in one’s life and one’s personal affairs [emphasis added].”

Confidentiality is non-existent in regards to medical records due to the very broadly worded “privacy policies.” Unfortunately, Texas is one of those states within the federal Union that does **not** recognize the [doctor-patient privilege](#).

[Employers have become much more authoritarian](#) by insisting that job applicants submit to a battery of utterly invasive and degrading screening tests, ranging from trick question riddled “honesty” quizzes to urinalysis. [Tabloid journalism](#) is on the rise within the [corporate whore media](#), as evidenced by the so-called “celebrity news” that is covered so commonly now. Because of this:

"[A]verage citizens who may find themselves thrust into newsworthy situations or whose careers or civic activities bring them into contact with the press are entitled to impose upon the press reasonable expectations when it comes to reporting on private lives."

Sensitive material should **never** be sent by facsimile, corporate advertising is so prevalent in public that many have joked that it's only a matter of time before the moon has the Pepsi logo on it, and taxes on major publications are common place.

Hackers are able to infiltrate just about any computer database. Europeans have comprehensive, omnibus-esque protection for *all* kinds of records, which is something lacking in the USS of A. The Big Three credit bureaus sell your personal credit files to whomever can afford to buy them, which in turn they are able to recoup those expenses (and make a profit) by directly marketing to you products and services that not only do you not need, but that you also can't even afford. The legal doctrine of "[pre-emption](#)" serves only to negate the power of the several states by reinforcing the legitimacy of the [14th Amendment](#) while simultaneously lowering what privacy safeguards are still left. The author may argue that there are federal statutes on the books forcing corporations and Administrative Agencies to respect **some** forms of individual privacy, these have since been effectively negated by the [USA PATRIOT Act](#).

I truly appreciated Smith's attempt to codify philosophical principles respecting privacy. Unfortunately, the practice and enforcement of these enumerated principles are mostly in the power of the State, the very same entity that, in some instances, negligently permitted the abuse of information and, in other cases, directly enabled it. I don't see the fundamental nature of government changing anytime soon, particularly with regard to providing effective safeguards for individual privacy.

In terms of what you can do to protect your privacy, I regret to admit that I found Smith's lack of suggestions greatly disappointing. What he did advise was to **not** automatically give out your SSN to whomever asks for it, unless it is a government agent who has a demonstrated need for it. Customers should pay in cash as much as possible; credit cards do not require any more data beyond a signature, and checks *at most* should be accompanied by a government-issued ID. Medical patients need to alter the language of the privacy policy before they sign it, and probably the smartest piece of advice was Smith's recommendation that you become a self-employed entrepreneur who preferably works from home. Aside from these tidbits, nothing else is offered besides a wistful desire for the government to step in and legislate yet more statutes into the legal code to supposedly protect our privacy.

[Robert Smith's *Our Vanishing Privacy and What You Can Do to Protect Yours*](#) is a good introductory examination into the very beginnings of the [Big Brother](#) control mechanism. Published in 1993, the specifics are a bit dated, but what is valuable about it was that it showed that the American police state was already active before [9/11](#). This historical documentation testifies that all 9/11 did in terms of the homefront was to place the already emerging police state on steroids. Other than proving the case for the grievances related to violations of the [4th Amendment](#) (if only in spirit if not according to the letter of [the law](#)), the utility of this work is greatly limited to mitigating the use of your SSN, not leaving a paper trail of all of your financial transactions, rewording medical confidentiality agreements, and becoming self-employed.