

MYTH #48

Mark Perry

Information wants to be free.

Myth: The innate nature of information is to self-disseminate. It should be without cost and it should be accessible. Reputable scholars seek open access, and those criticizing intellectual property and supporting free information even take this assumption as excuses for hacking.

Busted: Of course, information itself doesn't want to do anything, it is all driven by the will of people. Since the time individuals have understood that they hold information, they have known of its use and may have given it to others as a valuable asset. (→ #9) Although legal systems have been loath to propertize raw data as this would lead to restraints on normal daily living, the openness provided for information sharing has been eroded over the centuries by concepts of privacy, database protection (Europe), data protection, and various other mechanisms, such as confidential information laws, that restrict sharing. Some data, e.g. that supplied by drug companies for the purposes of regulatory examination of a new product, is also protected. (→ #40) On the other hand, and this perhaps is one of the roots of one form of the "information wants to be free" meme, is the reduction in the cost of sharing information and giving widespread accessibility through the Internet. What would have taken years of work and large sums of money to disseminate can now be made available to half the world at the click of a mouse.

The idea that information could be shared without detriment to the sharer of information has come up in a number of earlier computer law cases, mostly denying the ability of prosecutions to claim "theft" of information (as no deprivation), or the failure of copyright over assemblages of data. These have led to changes in the law ranging from database protection in the European Union to the widespread adoption of anti-hacking laws. The latter have typically criminalized the entry into systems for the purposes of accessing information, changing it or deleting it. The trend has been to allow those with access to data to collect information about everything, and then sell the material to those interested. Often such sales are restricted by contract to prevent the "sharing" of the data, although the data itself may not be protected by any intellectual property laws.

Truth: Useful data is rarely free, neither in the sense of cost nor legal access. Information is being gathered, collated and analyzed at an unprecedented rate. Most of this data diving activity is by governments and corporations who wish to gain advantage or influence over the behaviour of the individuals whose information has been collected. It might rather be the people who want to be free, like Cory Doctorow put it.

■ Source

Graham Greenleaf, *An Endnote on Regulating Cyberspace: Architecture vs Law?* 52 (1998) 21 (2) *UNSW Law Journal*, 593, <http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/journals/UNSWLawJl/1998/52.html?context=1;query=%22information%20wants%20to%20be%20free%22>; Steven Levy, "Hackers" and "Information wants to be Free", *Medium* (2014), <https://medium.com/backchannel/the-definitive-story-of-information-wants-to-be-free-a8d95427641c>.

Information will frei sein.

Nein, sagt Mark Perry: Nützliche Daten sind selten kostenlos, und zwar weder im Sinn von finanziellen Kosten noch im Sinn eines einfachen rechtmäßigen Zugangs. Informationen werden in beispiellosen Mengen und mit hoher Geschwindigkeit gesammelt, zusammengestellt und analysiert. Die meisten dieser Datensammelaktivitäten werden von Regierungen und Unternehmen durchgeführt, die sich Vorteile oder Einfluss auf das Verhalten jener Bürger*innen verschaffen wollen, deren Daten gesammelt wurden. Es ist vermutlich also eher der Mensch, der frei sein will, um es mit den Worten von Cory Doctorow zu sagen.

المعلومات يجب أن تكون مجانية / حرة.

كلا، هكذا يقول مارك بيرى: نادراً ما تكون البيانات المفيدة مجانية سواء من حيث التكلفة أو الولوج القانوني. يتم جمع المعلومات ومقارنتها وتحليلها بمعدل لم يسبق له مثيل. يتم معظم هذا النشاط المتعلق بمعالجة البيانات على أيدي الحكومات والشركات الراغبة في الحصول على أسبقية أو التأثير على سلوك الأفراد الذين جُمعت معلوماتهم. وعلى العكس فقد يكون الأفراد هم الذين يريدون أن يكونوا أحراراً، كما قال كوري دوكتورو.

以后信息可能会免费。

不，Mark Perry 写道：有用的数据很少是免费的，无论就成本还是合法访问权限来说。信息正在以前所未有的速度得到收集、整理和分析。大部分数据潜水活动是由希望获得优势或希望影响被收集信息个人的行为的政府和公司开展的。这个观点可能是想要让信息免费的人提出的，就像 Cory Doctorow 所说的那样。

L'information veut être libre.

Non, écrit Mark Perry: les données utiles sont rarement libres, ni en termes de coût, ni en termes d'accès légal. Les informations sont collectées, rassemblées et analysées à un rythme sans précédent. La plupart de ces activités de collecte de données sont réalisées par des gouvernements et des sociétés souhaitant obtenir un avantage ou acquérir une influence sur le comportement des personnes dont les informations ont été collectées. Comme Cory Doctorow le souligne, il se pourrait que ce soient plutôt les personnes qui veulent être libres.

Информация хочет быть свободной.

Это не так, говорит Марк Пэрри: Ценные данные редко бывают доступными ни в плане стоимости, ни в плане законного доступа. Информация собирается, сравнивается и анализируется с беспрецедентной скоростью. Большая часть деятельности по сбору данных осуществляется правительствами и корпорациями, желающих использовать и влиять на поведение людей, информацию которых они собрали. Скорее, это люди хотят быть свободными, как выразился Кори Доктороу.

La información desea ser libre.

No, dice Mark Perry: la información útil rara vez es gratuita, tanto en términos económicos como de acceso legal. La información está siendo recogida, recopilada y analizada a un ritmo sin precedentes. La mayoría de estas actividades es llevada a cabo por gobiernos y corporaciones que desean obtener ventaja o influencia sobre el comportamiento de los individuos cuya información ha sido recopilada. Es más probable que sean las personas las que desean ser libres, como lo formula Cory Doctorow.