Designing a Privacy Label
Assisting Consumer Understanding of Online Privacy Practices

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Overview

• Privacy policies are difficult for users to read and understand
• We are continuing to refine a privacy label based on nutrition, drug, and energy labels as well as financial privacy notifications and our earlier trials

Goals

Design a “Privacy Label” that:

• Is actually understandable, including privacy concepts, terminology, and symbols
• Allows users to quickly and efficiently find information
• Makes comparisons easy between different companies through a standardized form

Design Iteration

• Our original design was based off of Reeder’s Expandable Grids [3]
• This included following the principle of displaying the entire policy, hierarchically, allowing users to drill down to what they believe is important
• However, we found that this design had many flaws including: unclear labels, P3P statements displayed separately, and too many confusing symbols [2]
• Additionally, we found users rarely expanded the rows and columns

• Based on labeling literature (including drug, energy, water, nutrition, and financial privacy) we simplified the design
• We included bold labels, lines separating sections, a descriptive header, and more apparent opt-out links
• To simplify the policy information, we combined many categories together and wrote longer descriptions of each

• Our early grid label reintroduced symbols for collected data, opt-in, opt-out, and mixed use, which range from light to dark based on severity
• This version again expands, with a single fully expanded state and a default view that shows most of the relevant information
• We focused on creating a single page label that is printable and designed for easy comparison of multiple policies

The Acme Policy

**Preliminary Results**

User Testing

We held two, hour-long focus group sessions to explore the promise of our design possibilities:

- The first was conducted to review the early grid label design
- The second compared the simple text label to our final prototype above

With the final proposed label we ran a 24-participant laboratory user study to compare the label to a text policy

- Using a within-subjects design, participants saw both text and label
- Participants completed eight tasks and were then asked a series of qualitative questions to assess the experience

Additionally, subjects were more accurate and completed the tasks in less time. [1]

**Conclusion**

The final label design we have proposed here:

- Allows for information to be found in the same place every time
- Removes wiggle room and complicated terminology by using four standard symbols
- Allows for quick high-level visual feedback by looking at the overall intensity of the page
- Can be printed, fits in a standard browser window
- Has a glossary of useful terms attached
- And most importantly people who have used it to find privacy information have rated it as not just more pleasurable than text, but actually enjoyable

**Next Steps**

Examine accuracy and comparison results of label vs. natural language

Run tests on a larger segment of the populace in an online study

Integrate the label with PrivacyFinder.org, a privacy-enhanced search engine, so that people are provided with privacy information as they conduct searches online

I would like to acknowledge Janice Tsai, Sungjoon Steve Won, Robert Reader, Alecia McDonald, Daniel Rhim, Robert McGuire, Cristian Bravo-Lilis, Norman Saleh, and everyone who provided input throughout the design process, as well as my advisor on this project, Lorrie Cranor. Without her insights this work would never have been possible.

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