[Social Network Users' Bill of Rights](#)

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The "[Social Network Users' Bill of Rights](#)" panel at the South by Southwest Interactive (SXSW) conference last Friday had something that most panels lack:  an outcome.  The goal was to get the SXSWi community to cast their votes and help to shape a bill of rights that would reflect the participation of many thousands of people using the social networks.

The idea of getting broad communities to vote on this is pretty interesting.  Panelist Lisa Borodkin [wrote](#):

> There is no good way currently of collecting hard, empirical, quantitative data about the preferences of a large number of social network users. There is a need to have user input into the formation of social norms, because courts interpreting values such as "expectations of privacy" often look to social network sites policies and practices.

Where did the Bill of Rights come from?  The document was [written collaboratively ](#)over four days at last year's [Computers, Freedom and Privacy Conference](#) and since the [final version was published ](#)has been collecting votes through [pages like this one](#).  Voting is open until June 15, 2011 - the "anniversary of the date the U.S. government asked Twitter to delay its scheduled server maintenance as a critical communication tool for use in the 2009 Iran elections".  And guess what?  That date also coincides with this year's [Computers, Freedom and Privacy Conference](#).

The Bill - admirably straightforward and aimed at real people - [reads as follows](#):

> *We the users expect social network sites to provide us the following rights in their Terms of Service, Privacy Policies, and implementations of their system:*
>
> 1.  *Honesty: Honor your privacy policy and terms of service*
> 2.  *Clarity: Make sure that policies, terms of service, and settings are easy to find and understand*
> 3.  *Freedom of speech: Do not delete or modify my data without a clear policy and justification*
> 4.  *Empowerment : Support assistive technologies and universal accessibility*
> 5.  *Self-protection: Support privacy-enhancing technologies*
> 6.  *Data minimization: Minimize the information I am required to provide and share with others*
> 7.  *Control: Let me control my data, and don't facilitate sharing it unless I agree first*
> 8.  *Predictability: Obtain my prior consent before significantly changing who can see my data.*
> 9.  *Data portability: Make it easy for me to obtain a copy of my data*
> 10.  *Protection: Treat my data as securely as your own confidential data unless I choose to share it, and notify me if it is compromised*

11. *Right to know: Show me how you are using my data and allow me to see who and what has access to it.*
12. *Right to self-define: Let me create more than one identity and use pseudonyms. Do not link them without my permission.*
13. *Right to appeal: Allow me to appeal punitive actions*
14. *Right to withdraw: Allow me to delete my account, and remove my data*

It will be interesting to see whether social networking sites engage with this initiative.  Sixestate reported some time ago that Facebook objected to requiring support for pseudonyms.

While I support all other aspects of the Bill, *I too think it is a mistake to mandate that ALL communities MUST support pseudonymity or be in violation of the Bill…*  In all other respects, the Bill is consistent with the Laws of Identity.  However the Laws envisaged a continuum of approaches to identification, and argued that all have their place for different purposes.  I think this is much closer to the mark and Right 12 should be amended.  The fundamental point is that we must have the RIGHT to form and participate in communities that DO choose to support pseudonymity.  This doesn't mean we ONLY have the right to participate in such communities.

Where do the organizers want to go next? Jon Pincus writes:

Here's a few ideas:

- get social network sites to adopt the concept of a Bill of Rights for their users and as many of the individual rights as they're comfortable with.   Some of the specific rights are contentious  — for example, Facebook objected to in their response last summer.  But more positively, Facebook's current "user rights and responsibilities" document already covers many of these rights, and it would be great to have even partial support from them.  And sites like Twitter, tribe.net, and emerging companies that are trying to emphasize different values may be willing to go even farther.
- work with politicians in the US and elsewhere who are looking at protecting online, and encourage them to adopt the bill of rights framework and our specific language.  There's a bit of "carrot and stick" combining this and the previous bullet: the threat of legislation is great both for encouraging self-regulation and getting startups to look for a potential future strategic advantage by adopting strong user rights from the beginning.
- encourage broad participation to highlight where there's consensus.  Currently, there are a couple of ways to weigh in: the Social Network Users' Bill of Rights site allows you to vote on the individual rights, and you can also vote for or against the entire bill via Twitter.  It would be great to have additional voting on other social network sites like Facebook, MySpace, Reddit to give the citizens of those "countries" a voice.
- collaborate with with groups like the Global Network Initiative, the Internet Rights and Principles Coalition, the Social Charter, and the Association for Progressive Communications that support similar principles
- follow Gabrielle Pohl's lead and translate into multiple languages to build awareness globally.
- take a more active approach with media outreach to call more attention to the campaign.  #privchat, the weekly Twitter chat sponsored by Center for Democracy and Technology and Privacy Camp, is natural hub for the discussion.

Meanwhile, here are some ways you can express your views:

- Facebook – like the #BillOfRights page to vote 'yes'

- Facebook – like the [No to the Social Network Users' Bill of Rights page](#) to vote 'no'
- Twitter – tweet the following to [@cfpconf](#): *"yes" to the #BillOfRights [http://act.ly/23h](http://act.ly/23h)*
- Twitter – tweet the following to [@cfpconf](#): *"no" to the #BillOfRights [http://act.ly/23i](http://act.ly/23i)*
- Doodle – vote on the [poll](#) by name or pseudonymously