

Show: Tech Bytes

Host: Todd Miller

Overview: Tech Bytes is a technology podcast, produced by the Digital Services department at Niles-Maine District Library about technology news and useful technology tips.

Episode: Tech Bytes #28 - Permission Slip from Consumer Reports

Episode Description: In this episode, we talk about Permission Slip, an app from Consumer Reports which empowers users to take back control of their online personal information.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Hi, and welcome back to Tech Bytes. I'm your host, Todd, and today, we're talking about privacy. Specifically: what happens with your personal data on the Internet? In my experience, a lot of conversations that I've had on this subject end with someone saying, 'well, my information is already out there, so does it really matter?' And the answer to that question is: Yes! A new app called Permission Slip, from Consumer Reports, is here to help and give control back to users to decide what happens with their personal information.

In a moment, we'll get into what this app actually does for consumers.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Ok, we're back, and we're talking about Permission Slip. This app, from Consumer Reports, was developed with funding from Omidyar Network, an organization whose mission is to "invest to build more inclusive and equitable societies."

Permission Slip acts as an Authorized Agent, which is an "intermediary with the authority to send data rights requests on behalf of a consumer." In other words, someone can give this app permission to contact companies and request that they either delete their data and/or stop selling that data.

Now, a data broker is a company that collects and sells personal consumer information to other entities. Often this is done in service of marketing, but there are many reasons why a company may buy or sell someone's data.

The Permission Slip app essentially has four main functions:

First, it gives users an easy way to tell companies not to sell their personal information

The next is to allow consumers to tell companies to delete the data that they have on them.

Next, is to allow customers to delete customer accounts on websites that they no longer use.

Last, a user can use the app to report a company if they believe that their personal information is being misused.

When setting up the automatic opt out, a user needs to provide their phone number, address, and sign a waiver that allows Permission Slip to contact companies on their behalf.

While our personal data *is* in many far flung corners of the Internet, and it may be difficult or impossible to reel it *all* back in, I appreciate that this free app is giving users the ability to start to take back control of their personal information and data.

Permission Slip is available on both the iOS App Store and the Google Play Store.

Tech Bytes is recorded in Studio A on the lower level of the Niles-Maine District Library, where Niles-Maine cardholders have access to the recording equipment and software that were used to produce this episode.

A text transcript of this episode can be found in the show's notes.

Thank you for listening, and if you have questions about Consumer Reports (which can be accessed with your Niles-Maine library card), personal data, or any other technology question, you can find us on the lower level, at the Library's technology desk. You can also email us at digitalservices@nileslibrary.org.

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[Music - Tech Bytes theme]