



## City Research Online

### City, University of London Institutional Repository

---

**Citation:** Bawden, D. ORCID: 0000-0002-0478-6456 and Robinson, L. ORCID: 0000-0001-5202-8206 (2019). "Essentially made of information": concepts and implications of informational privacy. Paper presented at the Conceptions of Library and Information Science (CoLIS), 16-19 June, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

---

**Permanent repository link:** <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/22390/>

**Link to published version:**

**Copyright:** City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

**Reuse:** Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

---

---

---

City Research Online:

<http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/>

[publications@city.ac.uk](mailto:publications@city.ac.uk)

---

# "Essentially made of information": concepts and implications of informational privacy

David Bawden and Lyn Robinson  
Department of Library and Information Science  
City, University of London  
United Kingdom

## **Abstract**

### **Introduction.**

This paper presents an approach to a conceptual understanding of privacy issues, rooted in Luciano Floridi's philosophy of information and information ethics. It draws from Floridi's ideas of ontological information privacy, in combination with other frameworks.

### **Methods**

Qualitative conceptual analysis of a set of material found by a comprehensive search for articles and books discussing Floridi's informational privacy, and a selective search for related relevant materials; sources used were Web of Science, Library and Information Science and Technology Abstracts, and Google Scholar. A detailed evaluation of Floridi's ideas of informational privacy within his philosophy of information, and a comparison with other informational privacy models, leads to an analysis of their applicability to research and practice in the library and information sciences.

### **Results**

There are five major considerations: each person is constituted by their information, so that informational privacy is fundamental, overlaying other privacy type; breach of informational privacy is an aggression against personal identity and self-development, and hence protection of privacy should be based directly on the protection of human dignity; explicit protection for group privacy is as important as for individual privacy; digital technologies can both defend and damage privacy, and can also change our understanding of it; information friction, anonymity, and obscurity are key concepts.

### **Conclusions**

Floridi's conception of privacy, within his philosophy of information, offers, in our view, the best basis for developing information privacy as a field of research, study, and practice within the library/information disciplines and professions. Suggestions for future research include: formulation of LIS privacy issues in terms of Floridi's conception, to assess its value; introduction of information privacy concepts into models of information behaviour and information literacy; investigation of quantitative and semi-quantitative privacy modelling, based on a formal analysis of informational frictions.

**Keywords:** philosophy of information; information ethics; privacy; conceptual models