# Managing Privacy Risks

By Annie Searle

*"The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures..."*

This language from the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution comes closest to protecting personal information and defining privacy as a right, even though the word "privacy" is never mentioned. The Constitution was written to limit the powers of government as much as the Declaration of Independence was written to outline the rights of a free people. Privacy was defined as a right outside the Constitution, as the "right to be left alone "in 1890 in a famous law review article written primarily by the man who would later become Supreme Court Justice Brandeis. Matters have certainly changed since then, given the nature of the virtual world most of us inhabit. In most cases, there are common-sense steps we can take to limit intrusions into personal information by data miners or hackers, where our digital devices are concerned.

1) **Turn off "Location Services" on your smartphone.** Unless you need to turn on location services to use a map to get from here to there, there is no need to have this feature turned on. If it is enabled, your location can be tracked, your photographs will be geotagged and applications such as FourSquare, which gather this data, can be used for criminal purposes, like theft or stalking.

2) **Pay attention to your privacy settings on social media.** Ensure that your posts are going only to "friends," not to anyone on Facebook. Avoid giving permission for third-party applications, especially games, to access your Facebook platform or you will have exposed your personal information to external sources.

3) **Do transactional business in secure, private places**. I would never do online banking from Starbucks. Nor would I order Amazon books if I were not at home, using my own password-protected router. The chances are too great that your data can be accessed by others in a public wi-fi space.

4) **Think before you click.** No bank will ever ask you to input personal information about your account by sending you an email. There is no such thing as an inheritance gift from Nigeria if you just "click here." More money and corporate data is stolen this way than by any other single tool. If you're in doubt as to who sent you the email, double-check your navigation bar and the source behind the name.

5) **Do all system updates.** Whether you are an Android, Microsoft or Apple platform user, do take all patches and upgrades offered for the system software. And finally, invest in a good third-party antivirus program that also handles malware and spyware.

In today's world, you'll never be left alone. Your inbox will always be full. Exercise good judgment rather than simply taking the most convenient route where digital privacy is concerned.