



GAGA FOR GOOGLE

MHS sacrifices privacy in switch from Microsoft to convenient Google technology

Jessica Sommerville | Staff Writer

If sophomore Alexander Shearer logged on to Google Chrome at 5:56 p.m. on Monday, February 23, Google would know about it.

As Mason City Schools transitions to Google-based technology for its convenience and collaborative capabilities, the corporation collects data without user consent. This poses a threat to privacy unrivaled by social media, Shearer said.

"If you post something on Facebook or other social media, you give some sort of permission, although you might not be fully aware of the consequences of your post," Shearer said. "If Google just tracks what you do, it's never directly stated that they're going to track

everything you do. (With) social media, you have to choose what you put online, but Google just sort of invades your privacy."

Google's knowledge of student online activity is bolstered through its links to other electronic services, according to Shearer.

"They want you for a service; you apply for this account (then) you start to do more," Shearer said. "You might have a YouTube account then move on to Google Plus, but then they can track what you do on Google Plus. And Chrome is owned by Google, so they can track what you search."

Despite Google's monitoring of search history, Shearer said he prefers Chrome as a web browser and does not mind that advertisements are tai-

lored to him. According to Digital Image Design teacher Aaron Roberts, however, advertisements will not be a problem in the upcoming Mason Ohio Schools Gmail accounts generated for the student body.

"Google does not sell ads to your education accounts," Roberts said. "When you go into your home Gmail, you always have those ads on there...that's Google's business; it's how they make money...but when they created these apps for education, they said, 'No, we're not going to do that here.'"

Roberts said the new accounts will ease communication between students and teachers—documents can be transmitted without flash drives or storage constraints.

"As a teacher, you can then share (a)

document over to me," Roberts said. "Now I can highlight and comment on everything right back to you, so you can then make changes to a draft. As far as the feedback between teacher and student, it is huge."

AP Physics teacher Brian Thomas also uses Google for collaborative purposes. Groups submit lab reports via Google Drive, and Thomas uses the technology to account for each member's share.

"That revision history for that particular person actually shows up in a different color font," Thomas said. "It also gives the time stamp of every single revision they make. I can tell who's been on there and how long they've been on, then if I click on their name, then that color that's assigned to them will actu-

ally show in the original document, so I can actually see what revisions they made as well."

While those at Google can also monitor student activity, Thomas said the data transmitted from school assignments is small compared to students' personal activity. While Shearer prefers his personal account, he said he is happy to see Mason integrating new technology.

"I'm kind of glad they're embracing the technology, but I'm also worried that the standardization of all the accounts can lead to sort of less creative things," Shearer said. "It's more rigid, and I liked it when we were using Google accounts, but it was our own accounts and not enforced by the school."

"I think as a business, it's important to track what the consumer is doing on the site and what they could improve on because it's being utilized a lot. They can focus on making it better, but it's kind of creepy...the whole thing has a balance at some point."

— Morgan Schaffer, senior

"I think that the benefits definitely outweigh the costs...it makes information more accessible to everyone, anyone can learn anything about different people, but if you have nothing to hide, then I really don't think that's much of a problem."

— Michael Crawshaw, senior

