

The Social Analytics Lab - The Impact of Access to Sensitive Administrative Data for Research

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THE SOCIAL ANALYTICS LAB - THE IMPACT OF ACCESS TO SENSITIVE ADMINISTRATIVE DATA FOR RESEARCH

The Social Analytics Lab (SAL) is a custom-built, secure research facility housed at Griffith University to store, manage and analyse sensitive administrative data for research and teaching purposes. As one of only three research facilities internationally, and the only one of its kind in Australia, it presents unique research opportunities for complex real-world social problems.

The facility houses administrative data; data originally collected for transaction management and record keeping but when collated and analysed, has the potential to provide the community with findings to help inform social reform.

To achieve accurate and meaningful insights into how our society currently operates and inform our future direction, researchers (not data owners) are able to interrogate these datasets. Due to the nature of the data, these datasets are protected by industry standard security protocols and remain the property of the data providers.

Access to these datasets is tightly controlled, however, access is available to approved researchers from any national or international academic institution - provided they go through induction. The processes involved facilitate the key purpose of SAL, establishing trust. Trust between the data owners and data interrogators is essential.

Since its launch in June 2017, the facility has had over 40 researchers inducted, over 10 projects have kicked off and over 5 publications have been released. The facility has also attracted additional datasets since its launch and has the potential to take on more.

The establishment and success of the SAL has demonstrated that it is possible to gain and retain trust between the curators of sensitive data and those that wish to learn from it. However, as access to the facility is only through being physically on site, some of the potential of the data may not ever be fully realised. The next step in this transformation is to establish trust in an online environment.

This presentation will discuss the background and learnings from managing the SAL as well as introducing some ideas about the next steps we can take to achieve the same level of trust in an online environment that we implicitly have in a physical one.