Case Analysis on Privacy

Personal privacy is a topic that will always be ever evolving and continually nuanced as time goes on. Google Street View being at the forefront of this as the topic here. Vaidhyanathan’s paper presents us with an interesting circumstance. Google has decided to implement this fascinating and cutting-edge technology, that in theory sounds amazing. With Google Street View, one can theoretically view anywhere on the planet, through continuous 3D pictures that are stitched together. This can prove to be very useful to many different people. Examples provided on Vaidhyanathan’s paper include somebody writing a novel, misremembering the details of a street they had been in years ago, being able to use Street View to gleam details, and include them in their novel, as though they were there. Another example is an architect who is actively looking at different sites to build in, rather than going there and taking hundreds of photos, the architect can quickly view the area through Street View and see if it is suitable to build on or not. There is absolutely no argument that this technology is useful. The problem comes in the form of privacy concerns, these streets are not entirely public. From a technical standpoint in the United States, they might be, however, they still lead into neighborhoods, and housefronts that are owned by people, where are we to draw this line? Using the concepts that have been taught through Utilitarianism, I will argue that Google should absolutely prioritize the concerns of the citizenry, rather than ignore or downsize them.

Floridi’s “Privacy: Informational Friction?” Can be used as a tool for analysis in this case. One point that Floridi makes is the fact that technology is indeed making the wall between access and information thinner, and easier to get to. While this can certainly be interpreted as positive, since it leads to quicker turnaround time, it can also be quite detrimental for the privacy of the citizenry, as information is given out freely and with little notice, the window for action against approving information dispersion is smaller.