

AI Chatbots and Privacy – What You Need to Know

October 15, 2023 – When you search the web using Google or Bing, you create a search history. In fact, law enforcement agencies often look at a suspect's search history when investigating them. As a for instance, if someone is suspected of murder and their search history turns up a query of "how to poison someone," that's fairly damning evidence that will likely be used in court. But what about conversation histories with AI chatbots? Do those exist and who has access to them? The answer is, it depends.

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It has taken about one year for AI chatbots to explode into the consumer market. ChatGPT is probably the best known, but there are numerous others including Bing and Google. And these larger companies can and do maintain search histories. But do they maintain chat histories?

For the record, ChatGPT doesn't maintain chat histories. In fact, it was designed that way specifically to help maintain user privacy. The same is true with Bing. But that doesn't mean that your chat histories are completely safe.

In the case of Bing, even though someone may not be able to access your chat history, they will still be able to access your search history. And since Bing's chatbot is accessed via Bing search, there's a pretty good chance that someone will be able to figure out most of the questions you ask if they can gain access to your search history.

In the case of ChatGPT, there is a plugin called Superpower ChatGPT that works in Chrome browsers. That plugin does save copies of your conversations with ChatGPT so that you can refer to them later. While that can be very convenient, it isn't very good from a privacy perspective.

Frankly, there are now so many AI powered chatbots available that there is no way to know which, if any, are safe to use from a privacy perspective. And because of the way that these chatbots work, people are feeding them more and more personal information in their interactions with them. So the old adage, buyer beware applies.

Before entrusting any chatbot with your personal information, it would be a good idea to learn a little about that chatbot and its privacy policies. And if you are using plugins, or third-party programs in conjunction with AI chatbots, you need to be aware of their privacy policies too.

by Jim Malmberg

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