

For Immediate Release
January 28, 2010
N-2xx, 2009-2010

Contact: Tim Farrell
212.998.6797
tim.farrell@nyu.edu

**NEW BOOK BY NYU'S NISSENBAUM OFFERS FRAMEWORK FOR
UNDERSTANDING PRIVACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

Privacy is one of the most urgent issues associated with information technologies and digital media. In her new book, *Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy, and the Integrity of Social Life* (Stanford UP), Helen Nissenbaum argues that what people really care about is not that information about them is shared – this is crucial for social life -- but that it is shared inappropriately. Her book develops a theory of appropriate sharing and explains some of the ways digital technologies have threatened this.

Nissenbaum, professor of media, culture, and communication at New York University's Steinhardt School, grounds her argument in the notion that social activity is governed by context-relative norms and her framework of *contextual integrity* offers a new approach to understanding social norms governing the flow of personal information. It is the radical disruption of these norms enabled by new digital technologies that we experience as threats to privacy and provokes anxiety and protest.

Acknowledging that different social contexts—such as the workplace, schools, hospitals, or among family and friends—have different social norms, Nissenbaum argues that the flow of information should be distributed and protected according to appropriate norms. For instance, Americans generally accept that patient information should be shared among doctors and nurses in a hospital while they remain deeply suspicious of companies that monitor and record users' online transactions. Nissenbaum's book offers a way of explaining these contrasts and, in some cases, offers approaches to resolve them.

Illustrating these claims with a wealth of real-life cases and suggesting solutions, Nissenbaum's book is a major contribution to the literatures of law and technology.

Reporters interested in interviewing Nissenbaum can contact Tim Farrell, NYU Office of Public Affairs, at 212.998.6797 or via email at tim.farrell@nyu.edu.

###