Abstract

Discussions about privacy and secrecy are often bound around the individual, yet a growing corpus of scholarship is urging for a (re)conceptualization of these notions as a collective fact. Using as a case study the dress rehearsal for the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics, the forerunner for what became the world’s largest media event and the first social media Games, I examine how social media were used to engineer a mass secret. By studying the deployment of the Twitter hashtag #savethesurprise, which was used to create and sustain a general boundary between the 62,000 ‘insider’ rehearsal spectators and the general ‘outsider’ public, I ask: how does organizational and digital culture shape notions about mass secrecy and mass privacy? And conversely, look at how issues of mass secrecy and mass privacy can inform our organizational policies regarding digital practices.