

The FTC Signals Its Intent to Police Big Data

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"The era of big data has arrived" asserts a recent Federal Trade Commission report that summarizes the results of a public workshop and other research on this developing field.

"Big data" refers to the burgeoning practice of gathering and analyzing vast quantities of data for the purpose of extracting useful information, i.e., information that can lead to conclusions, predictions, or decisions. Big data practitioners gather consumers' Internet footprints and transaction histories to individually target products and services, for example. Big data analytics are widespread, ever more sophisticated, and likely here to stay. Some data brokers, i.e., companies that collect consumer data and perform analytics, reportedly "store billions of data elements on nearly every U.S. consumer." The spread of Internet-connected devices, the "Internet of things," further fuels this trend.

Excerpted from the [Texas Bar Journal, March 2016](#).