

What Facebook knows – about human behaviour and a lot more by mining its huge users' database

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August 2012 issue features a cover story about Facebook and the subtitle “**It has collected more personal data than any other organization in human history. What will it do with that information?**” tells a lot about the contents. The article by **Tom Simonite** is really interesting and tells that:

“...” even as Facebook has embedded itself into modern life, it hasn't done that much with what it knows about us. Its stash of data looms like an oversize shadow. everyone has a feeling that this resource will yield something big, but nobody knows quite what. “...”

An information I didn't know (and I live in Milan) is what follows:

*For one example of how Facebook can serve as a proxy for examining society at large, consider a recent study of the notion that any person on the globe is just **six degrees of separation** from any other. The best-known real-world study, in 1967, involved a few hundred people trying to send postcards to a particular Boston stockholder.*

***Facebook's** version, conducted in collaboration with researchers from the **University of Milan**, involved the entire social network as of May 2011, which amounted to more than 10 percent of the world's population. Analyzing the 69 billion friend connections among those 721 million people showed that the world is smaller than we thought: four intermediary friends are usually enough to introduce anyone to a random stranger.*

So, what will Facebook do with all this incredible amount of data?

*One potential use of Facebook's data storehouse would be to **sell insights mined from it**.*

Such information could be the basis for almost any kind of business. Assuming Facebook can do this without upsetting users and regulators, it could be lucrative.

Check an [abstract of the full Facebook data story on Technology Review web site](#).