



facebook

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“*Online Networks: An ‘In-your-Facebook’ examination of one popular student website*”

By: Joshua W. Schutts (2006).

What is the *Facebook*?

- “The *Facebook* is an online directory that connects people through social networks at schools.” (Facebook.com, 2005.)
- “Part huge chat room, part diary, and part dating service, the *Facebook* site allows college students to post their photos and tell about about themselves – sometimes too much” (Messenger, 2005).
- “A huge online yearbook” (Toomey, 2005).
- It is both a noun and a verb
- Centre’s Top 5 *Facebook* Groups (as of 27 December 2005)
 1. Long Live the Solo Cup – 409 Members
 2. I love President John Roush – 326 Members
 3. I Didn’t go to GSP, but I’m still Awesome – 298 Members
 4. Kiss me, I went to Public School – 269 Members
 5. I Love to Spoon – 268 Members
- The group, “DPS Sucks. They take all my money” has 12 members.

Facebook's Main Features

- Making “Friends” & keeping in touch
- Personal whiteboards or “walls”
- Joining “Groups” and their message boards
- Advertising Parties / “Events”
- Private messaging
- Uploading & Sharing an unlimited amount of pictures
- Campus Advertising
- Displaying your “status”

What are the Dangers?

- **Addiction**
- **Simulated interaction** v. interpersonal interaction (U Wire, 2005)
 - Like emailing your co-workers next door
 - “*Facebook*” the roommate down the hall vs. knock on their door and talk to them
- **Stalking**
 - a University of Toledo freshman reported that some of her female friends have had unwanted male visitors show up at their dorm rooms after posting personal information on Facebook (Buckman, 2005).
 - “At best, *Facebook* is a stalking service. It’s taboo to talk about it, but everyone uses it” (Johnson, 2005).
- **Advertisement of illegal and/or inappropriate things**
- You/your groups **image**?
 - Groups like “It’s cool to get wasted and not show up to class.”, “I drink till I puke”, are simple examples of negative impressions given to people
 - The pictures you upload, or that are uploaded by others?
 - Your self reported interests, quotes and blog entries.

- **Beyond Centre: The job search process**

- The Boston Globe reported that some Brandeis University administrators have begun reading *Facebook* profiles before hiring them for campus jobs (Woo, 2005).
- Brandeis spokespeople claim that is not a college process, and if it had occurred, it would have been done by individual administrators and not something representative of the university (Woo, 2005).
- “T.J. Barber, Associate Director for the Office of Campus Life at Trinity University indicated that there was an instance in which a ‘graduating senior lost a job at Disney due to her Facebook account contradicting some of her answers from an interview and information contained on her resume’” (Montermini, 2005).
- “Corporate recruiters, enticed by the prospect of gaining a new perspective on applicants, have begun to utilize the facebook.com to perform the equivalent of a background check.” (Mossavar-Rahmani, 2005).
 - This is not firm/company or university policy, but rather something individuals are doing on their own time
 - It occurs because many recruiters are themselves recently out of college, and have accounts, or can pay college students to retrieve the vital information.

- **In 2006, approved companies have been given access to Facebook (e.g. St. Jude's, Eli Lilly, Walt Disney Co.)**
- **Disaffiliation & the Greek recruitment process**
 - **How can you really disaffiliate?**
 - **How are we spending our time?**
 - **What images are affecting our organizations (positively and negatively)**
 - **Benefits of advertising on Facebook**

Why is *Facebook* so addictive?

- A number of reasons
 - “The unquenchable desire to see [their] list of friends expand to outrageous proportions” (Whitall, 2005).
 - Keep in touch with old friends from Centre and other schools
 - Daily creation of new groups that fit people’s interests or amusement
 - See how many personal messages/wall posts you are getting from your friends
 - Viewing other people’s pictures & the new features Facebook continually adds
 - Searching for new people who have recently joined whom you might know or want to meet
 - It’s the cool thing to be doing right now.
 - People are already on the internet (it’s like checking your MS Outlook)
 - “Facebook.com has become our social Bible for definitive information on our classmates, crushes and high school peers we haven’t spoken to in who-knows-how long” (Whitall, 2005).

- *Facebook*, launched in February 2004, has garnered more than **9.4 million unique users** nationwide who log on each month, according to ComScore, a tracking service for internet use (Withall, 2005).
- *Facebook* exists at more than 2,000 colleges (Toomey, 2005).
- Overall, there is an estimated **85%** of college students across the country that are members of *Facebook* (Toomey, 2006).
- **65%** of *Facebook* users log on every day (Withall, 2005).
- Each day, between **10,000 and 20,000 new members** sign up (Toomey, 2005).
- The site ranks **9th in terms of overall hits on the Internet** behind fellow online network MySpace.com (Whitall, 2005).
- [*Facebook*] logs over **250 million page views** in any given 24-hour period (Whitall, 2005).
- As of February 2006, high school students were granted access to Facebook and networked between college students, regionally located alumni, and approved companies.

What students say about their addiction

- “Sometimes I’ll sign-off *Facebook* and just stare at the login screen like a cocaine addict looking at the edge of his coffee table, thinking to myself, ‘Well, I’ve really got nothing better to do right now,’ and then I sign right back on” (Benner, 2005)
- “True addiction includes people who view class as merely an obstacle that keeps them from *Facebook*, and who constantly check their friends’ recently updated profiles, trying to figure out exactly what has changed” (Benner, 2005).
- “To tell you the truth, I am on it all the time...the first thing I do the second I step in my [dorm] room is *Facebook*. When I had to write my 10-page paper last night, I literally checked it maybe every 15 minutes.” (Toomey, 2005).
- “I was one of those people who thought, ‘What do I need this for?’ but now it’s addictive. I check it at least twice a day” (Toomey, 2005).

Is there anything good about *Facebook*?

- Yes!
 - **Advertising/marketing inexpensively**
 - 1 to 1 marketing/advertising via messaging & posting information on group boards
 - \$10 a day, college wide marketing
 - **Excellent networking opportunity**
 - For students
 - For professionals
 - Keep in touch with students, alumni and/or peers who have graduated or are at other institutions
 - **Monitoring the students** – follow up on investigations etc.
 - Offers us **opportunities for learning and student development** where we can engage our students ‘on their terms’ and talk to them on a level they can completely understand and relate to.
 - An excellent developmental model for the congruence of what we say our values are, and what we show others about those values.

– Marketing & Advertising cheaply

- Often, we work on limited budgets and resources, where we often find ourselves trying to “squeeze blood from a turnip”
- Creating groups and posting important information on message boards/personal messages is free
- *Facebook* offers \$10/day advertising via a side advertisement on the webpage that is viewed by all students at CENTRE.
 - This has not occurred at Centre yet, but students and administrators elsewhere have begun using it.
 - Students advertising their SGA candidacy, etc.
 - Greek Life advertising recruitment, Student activities advertising an upcoming concert or festival, etc.

– Monitoring the students

- What groups are students creating? How are they using *Facebook* in general?
- How do they feel about campus decisions, policies, etc.
- What pictures are they uploading
- What behavior are they participating in?

This comes at a cost

- Colleges/Universities must decide where they draw the lines with *Facebook*
- We must ask ourselves how far we are willing to go.
 - Some scenarios for thought
 - If someone is smoking pot in a picture, will the College prosecute?
 - Underage drinking & consumption of alcohol in original containers
 - or, instead of adjudication, do we lean toward seeking **opportunities for learning and student development**
 - Talking about perceptions & images with students
 - How are you representing yourself / the groups you belong to
 - Who all can 'view' this information and how that might effect the students future
 - How private is the internet?
 - Is this what you want others to think of you/your organization?
- By using *Facebook*, we as college administrators are offering ourselves more 'access' to information, but that comes with a price. With increased information availability comes increased pressure to respond. The adage of "ignorance is bliss" fits perfectly here because if you know about something, we must decide how we will respond.
 - Should we remain ignorant -or- should we continually search for more information
 - Are we getting enough information from our students currently?.

- An argument can be made that by increasing administrative/faculty/public safety presence on the *Facebook*, not only are we increasing our ability to monitor, but we can serve as a positive model for appropriate *Facebook* use, and through our ‘presence’ on here students might come to realize
 - Perhaps students will become more conscious and aware of what they are putting up for everyone to see if they know those who hold them responsible have direct access to their information
 - I submit that many students have been in the dark about administrative presence, and think “we don’t use it” or “we wouldn’t be on it-*Facebook* is something for students only.”
 - “I had no idea that administrators could see my *Facebook* profile... I joined...on the assumption that administrators were not going to read that Web page. I was so naïve” (Woo, 2005).

Student's false sense of 'security'

- You have to be a college student, or in college to get on *Facebook*. It's only for .edu addresses
 - “College administrators point out that it's not hard to get an '.edu' address, since faculty, staff and alumni of colleges often have them – and can share them with friends.” (Buckman, 2005).
- The popularity of the site
 - “Many [administrators] say they will investigate illegal or inappropriate conduct depicted on Facebook this is brought to their attention” (Buckman, 2005).
- “Photos in your profile or group showing you violating campus policy, regardless of whether or not you posted the photos, may also lead to charges against you” (Mendelson, 2005).
- “Potential employers with a lack of information about a student could access *Facebook* and other sites for information” (Mendelson, 2005).
- Pete Trentacoste, Assistant Director of University Housing at Northern Kentucky University notes, “You feel anonymous on there but if there's anywhere you aren't anonymous, it's the Internet” (Chalfant, 2005).
- “You're writing a public diary...the presumption is that anybody can see it. It's not hard to get into the *Facebook*, no matter who you are.” – *John Palfrey*, lecturer and executive director of the Berkman Centre for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School.

Examples of the stupid things students put on *Facebook*

- A Wright State administrator has seen pictures from another college of sorority members smoking pot. The caption read “Doing a one-hitter.” (Buckman, 2005)
- A Fisher College student (the SGA President) created and participated in a group aimed at removing a campus police officer. “Either we get a petition going or we try and set him up. He’s got to do something wrong, in either case, he’s gotta foul up at some point...anyone willing to get arrested?” (Schweitzer, 2005).
 - The student was expelled from Fisher College, marking the first and only occurrence of a student being expelled for *Facebook*-related activities (Woo, 2005).
- A student at The University of Virginia created a group titled “People for the Propagation of the Asian Fetish,” which contained blatant racist and sexist remarks by some students (Rao, 2005).

What's been done so far?

- Proactive
 - “Administrators at the University of California – Santa Barbara told their student newspaper that if they happened upon activities that proved a violation of campus policies, they would use the evidence against students” (Messenger, 2005).
 - Workshops like U. Toledo on the dangers of putting too much personal information online (Buckman, 2005).
 - “Several campuses across the country are grappling with how to respond to conduct violations that come to light through narratives and photos students post on the social networking website Facebook.com. The University of Missouri-Columbia (“Mizzou”) is forming a task force to discuss the issue. (“Campus Capsules”, 2005)

- Reactive

- Facebook.com does remove some offensive content from the site if it is brought to the company's attention and violates their standards policy [e.g. nudity, hate speech, or photos of illegal activity such as drug use] (Buckman, 2005).
- Penn State University: “police used photographic evidence from *Facebook* to help nab more than 50 students who violated university policy by swarming the football field after a game with rival Ohio State” (Buckman, 2005).
- Northern Kentucky University: 4 NKU students received fines, probation and required attendance at an alcohol class when administrators saw pictures posted on *Facebook* that depicted them drinking in a Kentucky Hall dorm room. The pictures featured students surrounding a keg of beer they managed to bring into the dorms. (Chalfant, 2005).
- Kansas State University: used *Facebook* to look into possible breaches in the honor code when students used *Facebook* to trade information without the professor's knowledge (Mendelson, 2005).
- Residence hall staff at NC State recently cited nine underage students for violating campus alcohol policy after viewing Facebook.com photographs of an on-campus party (“Campus Capsules”, 2005).
- University of New Mexico: blocked access to *Facebook* from campus facilities because it violates the school's acceptable use policy (Mendelson, 2005).

The Future of *Facebook*?

- Steve Jones, a communications professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign predicts that 20 years from now a political candidate will be in hot water due to something posted on *Facebook* (Withall, 2005).
- I predict that in the next 4 years, close to 100% of Centre's campus will be connected through *Facebook*, as their recently launched high school site provides access and created addiction at a much earlier phase. The 'rite of passage' will change from finally being allowed to join the *Facebook* to changing my high school site over to the collegiate version.
- If colleges, graduate schools, and prospective employers are not using *Facebook* profiles in the hiring process now, in the future, they may play a more significant role.
- Additionally, it would not shock me to see SGA campaigns, student marketing endeavors, and the like begin surfacing on this popular, and ever expanding website. The technology and medium is definitely there already.

Facebook faux pas

- Tip 1: **Do not spend more than 25 minutes a day on Facebook.**
 - What ends up happening is you see someone on campus and then reality and “*Facebook* reality” combine for some uncomfortable moments.
- Tip 2: **Do not put any information that you don’t want computer geeks to take advantage of.**
 - Just by having your email address and a picture online makes the rest of your life pretty accessible to the entire school.
 - Don’t make it any easier by putting your phone number.
- Tip 3: **Refrain from updating your site too often.**
 - People tend to notice this if the date changes every day, and all that means is that you’re spending too much time on the computer. Big social faux pas.

- Tip 4: **Don't create or join groups of which you wouldn't be proud to tell your mother you're an "active" member.**
 - Being a member of “Drink irresponsibly...or Don't Drink at All” or “I like to put my hands down my pants” isn't going to help you out in the social 'scene', it's just gross.
- Tip 5: **Don't request friendship of people you don't know.**
 - If you want to be friends with someone, send them a message first.
- Tip 6: **Don't post messages on the walls of people you don't know**
- Tip 7: **If you're going to put a picture of yourself on Facebook, make sure it's the best one you can find.**
- Tip 8: **Don't initiate (or respond to) chain mail.** That went out in the 7th grade.

Source: (Johnston, 2005)

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