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## Framing Identities Using Shelfies

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Photo by Avery Evans on Unsplash

## Framing Identities using Shelfies: Bridging Private and Professional Spaces

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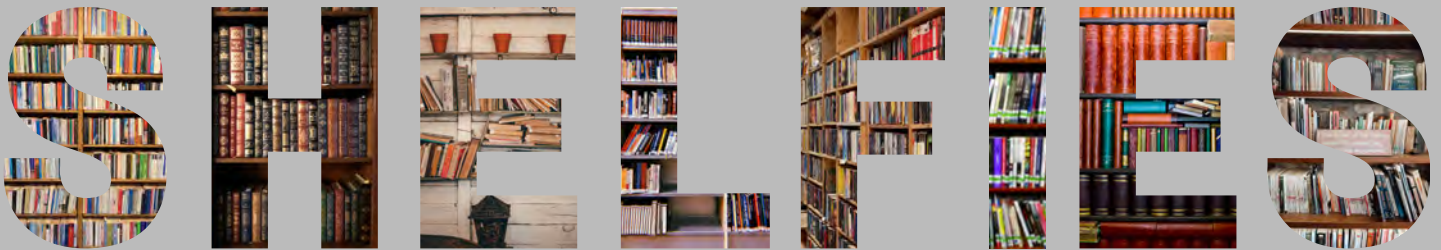
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# Framing identities using



Bridging private and  
professional spaces

Yasemin Allsop, Ekaterina Rzyankina, Natalia Kucirkova,  
Jennifer Rowsell, Janina Wildfeuer, Sumin Zhao



Shelfies are photographs of people and/or their shelves, mainly with books, reading materials and other small objects on the shelves, which may represent the owner's identity.

# METHODOLOGY

- A small exploratory study that draws on a theoretical development in the selfie field.
- Data collected through semi-structured interviews and visual analysis (photos, audio/video).
- Six participants took part in this research who are academics from different higher education institutions. The participants are also the authors of this paper.
- The interviews were completed via an online platform that was convenient for each pair and the video calls were recorded for data analysis purposes.



*Images of the participants*

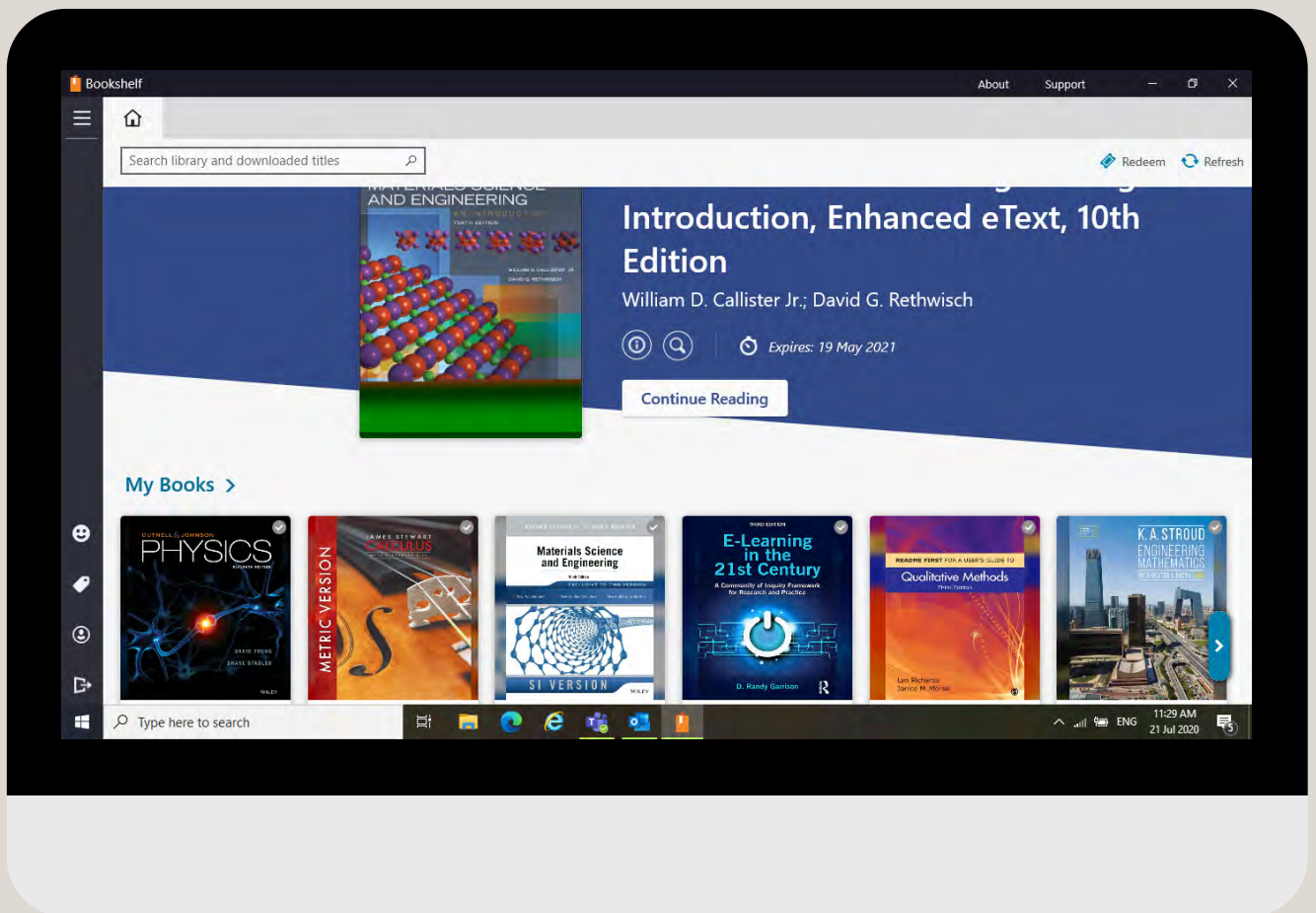
# BOOKSHELVES

## PROFESSIONAL SPACES



## PERSONAL SPACES





*A participant's virtual shelfie*

## VIRTUAL SHELFIES

Shelfies can display its curators' offline and online experiences. For example, one participant of this study provided a screenshot of her virtual bookshelves. She could not share a photo of her bookcase from her professional space as she was not allowed to access her office during the COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, she accessed her books via an online platform called VitalSource bookshelf. Her experience was portrayed in her shelfie image.

# PORTRAYING OFFLINE EXPERIENCES



*The participants' shelfies*

Shelfies enable curators to bridge their “online personas with their offline experiences and identity” (Brandabur, 2019, p. 17). People display tokens of their friendship or souvenirs from their journeys which tells us about their offline experiences and relationships.



# PERSONAL IDENTITY

53 KODAK PORTRA 400



53 KODAK PORTRA 400



# PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY



# EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

53 KODAK PORTRA 400

Material objects can frame life whether that is a memory or an interaction such as friendship (Miller, 2009). Books as powerful objects can represent narratives of individuals' lives by making associations between memories, interactions, design and presentation. Shelfies are unique platforms for sharing narratives from people's lives. Participants' hobbies, memories from holidays, research and reading interests, and emotional struggles are all on display on their shelves.

Data showed that work-related bookshelves were used and re-arranged more often than the private bookshelves. During the interviews participants expressed that as busy female academics, they do not have enough time for enjoying long literary texts rather they engage in reading for professional purposes. As a result, the professional bookshelves gets modified more often, with a slightly different look on a periodic basis.



One of the participants explained that she keeps tokens and objects that she was given by her friend on her bookshelf and the shelfie she shared had framed her professional identity as it included books relevant to her work, but at the same time objects that represented her interactions with her friends.



## ASSEMBLING PARTS OF THE IDENTITY



Participants' personal and professional spaces were bridged through the way they styled their bookshelves using material objects.

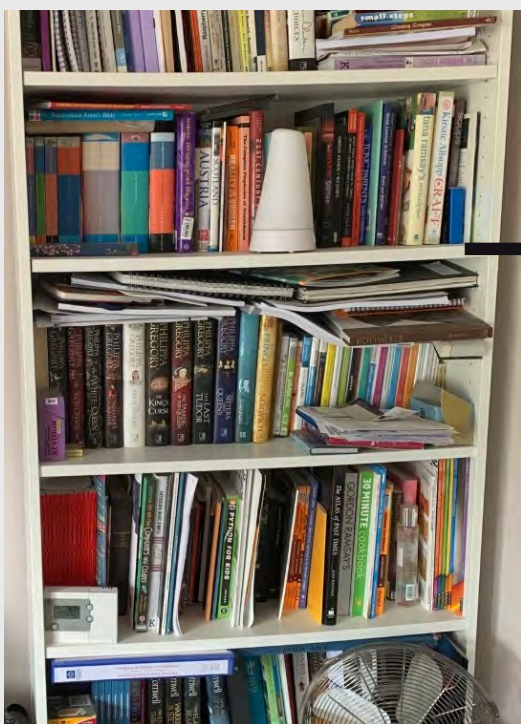


# 01

A participant's bookshelf with objects and books that are portraying her professional and personal identity.

# 02

Books that showing the interests of a participant.



# 03

A participant's bookshelf at home which displays objects relevant to her work and her personal life.