Learning materials about Digital Identity

Produced by the This Is Me project Originating project funded by Eduserv. Modified by Nancy White for use in the NGO Sector and the CGIAR Social Media Workshop/KS Toolkit

Re-Modified by Shirley Williams, Sarah Fleming and Pat Parslow for Careers advice.

Acknowledgments

Original Work: OdinLab thanks Eduserv for funding the project, and all the staff and students at the University of Reading for their contributions and willingness to talk about Digital Identity issues. We would also like to thank the eLearning community for their critical feedback on both materials and theory. We are grateful to the project's steering group, Julia Horn, Mike Roch, David Gillham, Maria Papaefthimiou, to our colleagues in the Centre for Career Management Skills, David Stanbury, and Finbar Mulholland, and to Sarah Morey, for their invaluable input and guidance.

NGO/NPO Revision: This revision was created as part of a workshop on social media sponsored by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. It is quite a bit shorter than the original This Is Me so you might want to check out both versions.

Careers Revision: This revision was created for people who are thinking about their career, and the impact that an online presence may have on their employment and employability.

Online

- The original "This Is Me" worksheets are available online at http://thisisme.reading.ac.uk.
- The original "This Is Me" material is available in print, and online at
  http://stores.lulu.com/odinlab
- This version for those working in the non governmental organization (NGO) or non profit
  (NPO) sector can be found on the KS Toolkit at http://www.kstoolkit.org
- This version is available in print, and online at http://stores.lulu.com/odinlab

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Contents:

Digital Identity

'Digital Identity' (DI) is a term to describe the persona an individual presents across all the digital communities in which he or she is represented.

As we use more and more online services which allow user content and discussion, such as Facebook (http://www.facebook.com) , LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com), Delicious (http://www.delicious.com), Twitter (http://www.twitter.com), Google, blogs and so on, we leave a 'digital footprint'. This 'footprint' is what makes up our Digital Identity (DI) – all those things which can be found out about us from the content you posts, the profiles we make, the conversations we have with others and the things other people post about us.

Much of this material remains accessible for an indefinite period. Unlike a conversation in a coffee shop, what is put on the Web tends to stay on the Web. With the increasing processing power of computers, it will become easier over time to aggregate this information to build a profile of someone. Various Web sites are already starting to do this, with varying degrees of accuracy.

What would someone who searches the Web for you find? Does it reflect the image of yourself you want to portray? If there is something about you on the Web, how would you find out about it? What does it say about somebody if they have no Web presence in today's world? If you are responsible for others either socially or as part of your job or career, e.g. as a parent, mentee, associate or partner in your practice, are there any extra precautions you should take? As a 21st century individual, you are likely to want to use social networking sites to keep in touch with friends and to keep you up to date with your profession – what can you do to present a positive image of yourself to the wider world?

Learning materials

This workbook is designed to help you explore the ideas and issues surrounding the concept of Digital Identity. Experience shows that a person's view of Digital Identity changes as they become familiar with different online services, and when issues are reported in the media. It can be useful to go back and revisit how you answered the worksheets every now and then, to see how events change your view.

Where possible, people seem to gain more from the worksheets when they have the opportunity to discuss the issues they raise in pairs or small groups. Some people may need to be told not to share any issues which they feel sensitive about, unless with a trusted friend. For example, the worksheet on DI and Death may need to be handled with particular sensitivity.

Exploring your Digital Identity

Clare is starting on her career path, hoping to work in social or health care. She learned the basics of how to use ICT at school and university, but didn't use the Internet much except to chat to friends using instant messaging. Over the couple of years she has come to accept that working online can be a valuable part of her work, enabling her to collaborate with others and find up to date information on policies. Clare loves it when friends send links to pictures of their exploits, and of their new friends that they have met since leaving university, and she has had a chuckle to see her pictures as well. One of Clare's new friends, Jane said "hey, cute fancy dress outfit on Flickr", and Clare said "what?". Jane said she was searching for a picture of Clare to describe her to a friend who works in a local hospital and found her on Flickr, the photo sharing website. Clare was aghast. She had no idea she was 'online'!

What do people see when they search for your name on the Web? Will they find you easily, or is your Digital Identity buried beneath many other search results. Is information about you online? Is it accurate? Are you comfortable with what is there?

The first thing is to explore your own Digital Identity.

Worksheet 1 - *Search Exercise*

This can be a bit of a strange activity and it may be easier to do it with a trusted friend taking on the roles and sharing the results in a spirit of friendship. Imagine you are someone else who is looking to know a bit more about you. Given the role of the other person, write down the types of internet searches that you imagine that they would do, and then try doing them on yourself and making a note of the results.

- A potential employer
- A distant family member
- A recruitment consultant
- A colleague you are currently working with
- Someone who is about to rent you a house
- Your daughter/mother
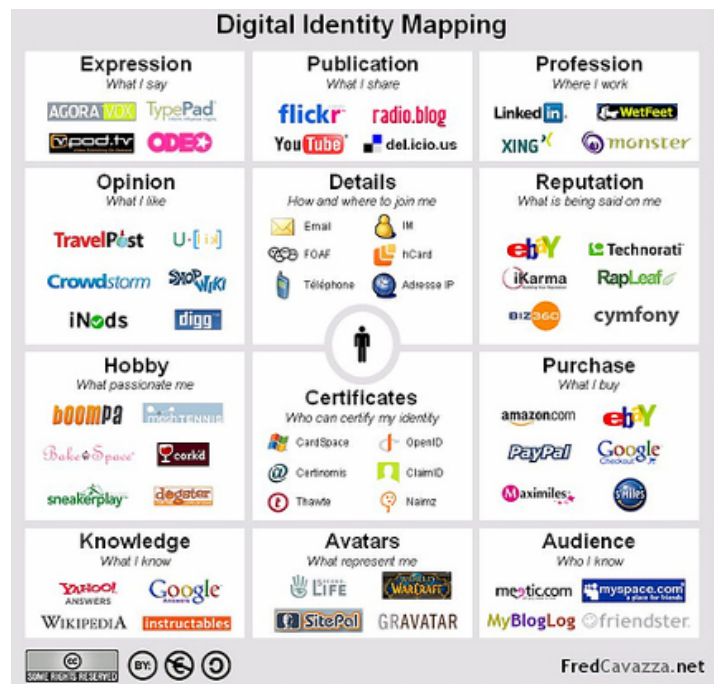
If you have a common name or a name shared with a celebrity, you may not find much with a search just on your name, but you will find more by adding other information such as your location or a key word relating to you. This is also a good exercise to test your search skills.

After you complete your search, consider creating a profile on Google Profiles (http://www.google.com/profiles/me/editprofile?edit=ab) to consolidate the things you do want people to easily find about you. This will improve their ability to find you when searching on Google.

The truth is out there – well almost!

An interview with Laura, a third year undergraduate studying Philosophy.

As the world and its dog seem to have their eyes fixed on what people get up to on social networking sites, it begs the question for many users how best to represent themselves online. Do you take the devil may care route, laying all the details of your life bare for all to see; the hide and seek approach, where you allow certain people access to certain kinds of information about yourself; or something in between?

Laura shares her views on why she feels an honest, but not too open, attitude to social networking is the way to go.

"I started using Facebook through word of mouth - someone said you can use it to get in touch with all your old friends and things like that.

I've got about 600 friends. They have to be someone I definitely know. I put up all the information about hobbies, music, what I'm doing in my degree - all my religious and political views, things like that.

My email address is on there. I have my phone number on there, but not where I live - because you might get stalkers and things like that! People who just turn up at your house that you don't want to be 'friends' with. It's to retain a degree of privacy, because Facebook isn't a very private thing really.

> *"My email address is on there. I have my phone number on there, but not where I live - because you might get stalkers and things like that! People who just turn up at your house that you don't want to be 'friends' with. It's to retain a degree of privacy, because Facebook isn't a very private thing really."*

I've never had any random phone calls or stalking. And I've never stalked anyone. I use privacy settings, so only my friends can access the information. I think the privacy things are quite easy to use. I do put pictures up - for the benefit of people that were also there - or sharing holiday pictures. If they don't want to look at it, they don't have to.

My parents are online, so I monitor what I put up on Facebook - I mean you can't refuse a request from your parents to be your 'friends', but I remove things like pictures of me smoking, or lewd comments on my wall that I might not want them to see!

I could put them on a different list, but I don't want to, because then they would think I was trying to hide things, and they would be all 'why are you hiding things from us!'.

I don't think they are looking to spy on me - I think they joined it for social reasons too. They've got in touch with a load of old friends as well. I hope it's not just to check up on me, anyway. I don't think they've stumbled across anything I wouldn't want them to see - if they have, they haven't said anything!

> *"I wouldn't want to have separate profiles aimed particularly at employers, because I think that can look a bit false. I'd want an employer to know about me. If I were an employer, I would take more of an interest in someone who represented themselves honestly online - if they were a bit of a party-goer or whatever - because I would think it was more honest."*

I am definitely more aware of things that I put on there, especially pictures. But I don't worry that much, because I don't get up to that much that would be frowned upon. There

are no pictures of me sniffing coke, or anything that I would have to worry about.

I think it's quite immature if you look at someone's friends and judge them on that basis. I think people do do that, though, but it doesn't worry me personally.

I do think about what my Facebook profile would say about me to potential employers if they should look at it, but again, I don't think there's really anything on mine that would count against me. There's nothing controversial that could be a threat to a potential job.

I wouldn't want to have separate profiles aimed particularly at employers, because I think that can look a bit false. I'd want an employer to know about me. If I were an employer, I would take more of an interest in someone who represented themselves honestly online - if they were a bit of a party-goer or whatever - because I would think it was more honest. Someone whose profile was basically just their CV would come across as really bland. And I would think they were trying to hide things - no one is that staid, so I would wonder what it was they were trying to cover up.

You can work out whether someone would fit into a team if you know a bit more about their personality, and you're more likely to hire them than someone who appears to have no personality.

I don't think you should be able to have your information passed on to third parties without your consent. And I don't really agree with the change in terms and conditions on Facebook - you should retain control over your own data."

Looking to the future

The 'social web' is still very young, and society is still adjusting to the new-found ability to share thoughts, feelings and anecdotes with a global audience with ease and rapidity. At the moment, there are certainly people who can feel shocked by some of the content others choose to share on the Internet, but there is an argument that this will tend to become more common-place and it will be less of an issue in 10 or 20 years' time.

Of course, there is also the chance that there might be a 'backlash' against the liberal attitudes being shown towards sharing elements of your lifestyle with wide audiences. The real problem for those of us who seek to make the most of the opportunities offered by the social media revolution is to try and judge what the mood will be like in the future. When we are entering our twilight years and hoping to represent our communities on the Council, or on the committee of a retirement home, for instance, will the evidence of excesses in our youths be held against us? Or will a lively background count in our favour? Similarly, if you are thinking of working abroad, bear in mind that other cultures may frown on tales of your party exploits, or pictures of you in revealing clothing.

It is not something anyone can give a definitive view on, but we think it is sensible to consider what possible outcomes there might be, and try to design your Digital Identity to work with the possible changes in society and cultural norms.

Know your Digital Identity

Because there are so many ways to get online, and contact friends and professional acquaintances, you might find that you have bits and pieces of your DI spread across many services. What's more, other people might post things about you without you knowing about it. If you use different names when you sign up to services, it might be harder for other people to be able to make the connection between your different profiles – and that added difficulty may be a good thing or a bad thing.

> *Dave has been contributing to a number of forums, including some discussing online games, and others about his favourite genre of literature, Victorian fantasy. He is quite well respected by the both communities, but has always used pseudonyms when he signs up because he did not want to be personally identified. Now that he is looking for work in games design, hoping to use his extensive knowledge Victorian fantasy and steam punk to create rich story lines for online games. He needs to find a way to let people know that he is the real person behind both identities.*

Your DI has a continuous presence – it represents you on the Web even when you are asleep, or on holiday. It also tells a story of the things you have been interested in previously, as well as what you are actively involved in now.

Although you might be able to keep track of what you have posted to the Internet, particularly if you are relatively new to it, you may not know what others might have been saying about you. Exercise 1 invited you to search for yourself on the Web and to think about how you might appear from other people's perspectives.

Worksheet 2 – Separation of identities, and looking forwards

- What will your DI look like in 20 years time?

- Do you have hobbies which can strengthen your career, or any which other people might 'frown upon'?

- Obviously future gazing is a fairly hit and miss activity, but think about how you might want to appear to others later in life – will you be embarrassed by your partying excesses, or would you perhaps wish that you had revealed more of your social nature rather than keeping a very professional Web presence?

- If you use multiple sites online, do you want to maintain a degree of separation between them, keeping one for more social discourse and another for the professional aspects of your online presence?

- Or will people in your field respond better to a more rounded approach, showing your skills and weaknesses and letting people see how you learn from experience?

Interview with a third year student

I've been on Facebook for about two years, and I've got 44 friends. I'm quite picky about who I accept. Mostly people I know in real life, but also friends of friends.

I used to put quite personal stuff on there, but recently I've not been doing that so much. I just began to realise how stuff I put online is going to stay there, and people can access it quite easily. You've really got to think about it - whereas before I used to put quite random stuff on there. I began to use Live Journal rather than Facebook for publishing stuff. I put a few status updates, that kind of thing, but not very much.

Music is my main social interest. But I've also been using it to chat with people on my course, and I do use it to arrange to meet up with other philosophers - film viewings and things like that. At one point I was using Live Journal to have philosophical discussions, but now I'd rather do that face-to-face. It's easier to chat to someone and discuss things face-to-face than it is to type stuff out. I don't think I'd find myself recording thoughts in that way onto a social networking site.

> "*If it gets to the stage where employers or people in general are looking at what's on Facebook and judging you for it, then society's gone off its rocker!*"

I think if an employer was sensible and objective, they would make a judgement on me through my work, and on stuff I'd type on Live Journal. If they are digging into your private life so they can give you a job, then the job's not worth it.

> "*I got stalked on Facebook in my first year - I went out and did this Piracy Night thing, … and then I got this message saying 'I've got this fetish about pirates blah blah', which was quite terrifying.*"

I don't have much fear of a company looking at my social networking profile because there's nothing really there that's going to incriminate me - and if I have ever put anything up like that, I've then deleted it.

A lot of the problem with Facebook is that there is content that might be associated with you that you can't delete. If someone else is putting stuff up, then you can't get rid of it. If it gets to the stage where employers or people in general are looking at what's on Facebook and judging you for it, then society's gone off its rocker!

I think some people behave like complete and utter idiots to get themselves on YouTube.

I got stalked on Facebook in my first year - I went out and did this Piracy Night thing, and someone took pictures and posted them, and then I got this message saying 'I've got this fetish about pirates blah blah', which was quite terrifying. I did meet the person, and she wasn't that bad. But it did make me a bit scared!

Sometimes if you're in emotional turmoil you might post something on Facebook, and then really regret it later. Which is why I've felt like there's been stuff I need to delete and remove.

When you're on the Internet, in some respects I think you act exactly the same as you would in real life, I think the more you use it, the more you normalise your behaviour on it and moderate yourself. It makes socialising easier, and expressing yourself easier, but it also allows you to have that comfort zone around you.

I've never had multiple identities. There are no actual links between my Live Journal activity and my Facebook activity.

Locking down your Digital Identity?

From school to work

Liz has just finished her legal training and has begun her career as an Articles Clerk at a prestigious law firm. While at college, she built up a Facebook account with literally hundreds of photographs of her tagged at parties, holidays with friends – the usual! Liz studied hard too and received a good upper second degree (2.1). As a teenager, she used chat rooms, and found out a lot about the university she goes to from people who were happy to talk about it online. She has always been careful to avoid heated arguments online, but is aware that her cultural views have shifted since going to university. She does not necessarily see everything she said in the past as being entirely representative of her today.

When she applied for her job with the legal practice, she was well received. The interviewers were impressed with her ability to express herself and communicate with the interview panel without any nervousness, probably because of her dynamic and lively approach, which is reflected in her online persona. They, however, were not users of online media, so they did not ask her about her online experiences.

Liz had not thought much about her online persona in her professional life, especially since many of her peers aren't using online tools. But last week a colleague made a remark about a party picture and now Liz is not sure whether to 'clean up' her Facebook profile, to make it look more professional, or whether to acknowledge that she enjoys a party as much as the next person, and that this shows she has a character as well as those all important skills she has learned at university.

Worksheet 3 – What will they find?

Imagine you are just starting your career as a trainee solicitor in a practice with a number of celebrity clients. You have been using the Internet socially since you were a teenager. You have secured your first job in a practice where *who* you are is almost as important as what you do. Appearances matter. You hear your manager is going to begin looking up everyone online to see if there are any image problems that may be found by the media.

1. What might your existing Facebook or LinkedIn profile say about you if your employer looks at it?

2. Are there any things or in notes you have posted which help your employer see you in a positive light from their perspective? Conversely, is there anything on your profile that might put your employer off?

3. If you were in the position of shortlisting people for interview and your organisation had a policy of checking candidates' Digital Identities, how would you interpret it if it was obvious someone had just 'cleaned up' their profile?

4. How would you feel if the organisation you worked for banned use of social networking sites such as Facebook during work hours? How, on the other hand, would you feel if the organisation you worked for decided its staff had to use a social network?

An interview with Naeema Pasha on DI and employability

In her role as Deputy Director of Reading University's Careers Advisory Service, Naeema Pasha has become aware that the issue of Digital Identity – in particular in relation to social networking sites – is increasingly on employers' minds.

"I've been at conferences recently when discussions about posting drunken pictures or whatever have come up," she says, "but employers still seem to have very much a mixed attitude towards potential employees' Digital Identity. Not all companies seem to know where they are on this subject – whether to have a policy about not looking at Facebook, or taking it into account when it comes to recruitment."

Some are embracing the possibilities of social networking rather than regarding it as something subversive, she adds. "Cadbury Schweppes has a Facebook page for new graduates, and they use it to encourage new graduates to talk to potential graduates. It is slightly policed – what people put on their profiles, and they've made this part of their policy."

On the whole, though, Naeema believes most employers are tending to shy away from digging around in an employee's Digital Identity and, in her opinion, quite rightly. "I think most employers recognise that people have a private life – and that students get drunk! They did themselves."

> "*I think most employers recognise that people have a private life – and that students get drunk! They did themselves.*"

There are not only privacy issues at stake here though, she adds, but legal ones. "I'm sure some employers do dig around into someone's online activity – but there is a principle in recruitment of equality of opportunity and being fair – and they need to be shown to be fair, otherwise an applicant could come back at them saying this wasn't part of the selection procedure, and take them to a tribunal.

> "*If you are going to use Facebook profiling as part of your selection strategy, then you have to be open about it and let everybody know. If you haven't done that, and you are using social criteria, then there could be a legal case to answer.*"

When it comes to advising students, Naeema is very firm about which aspects of their Digital Identity the careers service should and shouldn't issue guidance on. "Where they are actually interfacing with potential employers, we can advise on that – not using an inappropriate hotmail address as a contact on a CV for example, "she says.

"And etiquette is different online. How you write a cover letter and send it off to an employer is different to how you write an email, and we can advise students on how employers expect an email cover letter to be because it's coming into business now."

But when it comes to social networking activity, adds Naeema, it's a whole different ball game. "I don't think we should be working with students to say 'you've go to clean up your life'. It's their life, and how they present to an employer is separate.

"It all comes down to selection criteria. If the employer is saying you've got to be this, this, and this, does it mean if you go out, get drunk and have a kebab at two in the morning you can't be those things? I think there's a danger of conflating the two, and if an employer makes a decision on that basis then it's wrong," she says.

Naeema believes students would not particularly benefit from attempts to instruct them on how to manage their Digital Identity because ultimately, she says, "We shouldn't be prescriptive." But also because social networking is still a relatively new medium, and people are still trying work out what kind of relationship they should have with it.

"I think the way social networking sites are developing is still very organic, and putting emphasis on how students should be, and saying to them 'you've got to be careful', and 'you shouldn't do this or that because someone's going to be looking at you' is the wrong way to go," she adds.

"I think the emphasis should shift to how the employers look at these things, and then people will respond – then they will know where the boundaries are, and might start to think for themselves that they shouldn't put something on their profile because of how it might be interpreted."

There may some value, Naeema concedes, to making students aware that the information they put about themselves online will remain there – and can be copied, or misused. But, she says, "I think that's something you need to let people know – and then they can make their own choices."

What are your rights with respect to information on social networking sites?

This is actually quite a complex field – and we aren't in a position to offer legal advice! However, there are some resources you can use to help think about what other people are allowed to do with your data. Obviously this varies between countries, and it is worth being aware of that. However much protection your information may have in the UK and EU, for instance, you may find that the situation is quite different in other countries. Information on a limited access Facebook profile should not be deemed to be publically available in the EU, judging by the advice given on the UK's Information Commissioner's website[1]. However, the same protection should not be assumed in other countries.

It is probably safest to assume that anything you put online may be usable by others, even if you only intended to share it with one or two other people. There probably should be more protection for your privacy than that, but because of the international nature of the Internet, and the relatively slowness of legislation in keeping up with technological, and even social, change, as an individual you may be best advised to consider everything online as public.

On the other hand, if you are engaged in using social media as part of your working life, the safe position is that you should only access material which is clearly in the public domain or for which you have explicit permission from the subject of the information. For instance, you may be best advised not to use any Twitter feeds which are 'protected', as they may contain Sensitive Personal Data (which you would need explicit permission to use, under the UK's Data Protection Act) and it is best to only use information from Facebook which you can access without being logged in.

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[1]

http://www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/data_protection_guide/principle_8_sending_personal_data_outside_the_eea.aspx

Quick Digital Identity?

Mike is a salesman working for a medium sized company, and is involved in local volunteering initiatives such as mentoring local school children. He also volunteers at a local homeless shelter. Mike has never had time to get involved with social networks on the Internet, preferring the immediacy and dynamic nature of face-to-face conversations. He uses email and, occasionally, gets distracted by his instant messenger program with queries from colleagues, but apart from that, the Internet is chiefly a resource for researching things.

Times are changing. Mike's company is being reorganised. Everyone will have to reapply for jobs and it is expected that some people will have to look elsewhere for positions. So it is time to get some other options ready. One of the organisations Mike would like to work for, though, has a strong presence online, and does a lot of outreach and advocacy using online social networks. They have been contacting people though this medium about their plans for a major new sales initiative. Mike is not sure whether he wants to get involved in this – on the one hand, he could sit down and write a profile to provide an online presence, but on the other hand, he has plenty to do, with the current work and volunteering.

What is worse is that he cannot work out whether a plain and straightforward profile would actually help him in this case. It may be that it would look just a bit too 'engineered' and put a potential employer off. Some people expect to see a 'back story' behind an online persona, and it may just be too late to create one now.
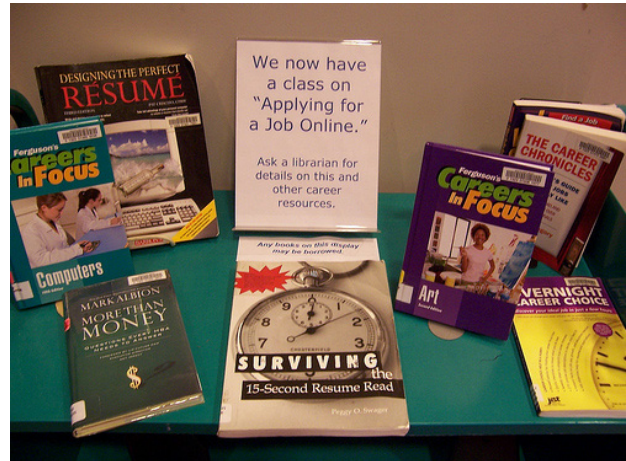
Worksheet 4 – Job hunting for the experienced

You are looking for the opportunity to work abroad for a year. You have avoided being drawn in to social networking sites, preferring to spend time with your friends. You have three organisations that offer interesting opportunities for a year out, and you discover from one of your friends that two of them have been getting in touch with potential applicants through LinkedIn, a business social networking site. While you were chatting with friends over coffee, you heard that there are 20 people applying for each position within the organisations, so it is going to be quite competitive.

1. What basic research would you do to try to determine whether you are more likely to be successful in your application if you have a LinkedIn profile?

2. If you choose to create a profile, for the purposes of enabling the organisations to find you, what sort of information would you make available?

3. What do you think it says about you, if you just create the profile with your academic achievements and areas of professional interests?

4. If you were interacting with potential employees via a social networking site, how would you see someone who had created a profile just to interact with you, or to get your attention?

Seeing red over the writing on the Wall

An Interview with Chris Alexander, a final year Cybernetics and Computer Science student. Active on a number of social networks, Chris took the decision a few months ago to take his Digital Identity in hand.

"It was the culmination of a lot of things," he says. "Facebook's been annoying me for quite a while, so I just got to the point where I thought 'right, I'm fed up with you lot, get off my stuff!'."

The end of the affair between Chris and Facebook started a few months back. "The introduction of applications kicked it off," he says. "Basically people started spamming me with loads of emails - notification emails and that sort of thing. Loads of applications started firing up, and it was like every five minutes getting a notification that "someone's done this to you" - I switched that off. Now it's more about me getting what I want from Facebook rather than Facebook getting what it wants from me."

> *"Facebook's been annoying me for quite a while, so I just got to the point where I thought 'right, I'm fed up with you lot, get off my stuff!'"*

The next nail in the coffin was the controversial change in terms of service early in 2009. "That annoyed me greatly," says Chris. "It turned into a PR stunt eventually, but I don't think enough people took it seriously enough. And I also think some people took it too seriously.

"That they changed it, and then two days later changed it back again led me to believe that they didn't really know what they were doing - that they weren't really in touch with their user base, they were only in touch with developers because they were the people making them money. The original change reflected that."

> *"…thinking about placements and trying to get a job this summer, it struck me I wouldn't want people who might be working with me, or might be looking to employ me in the future, to see all this stuff. I wasn't really bothered about it until then"*

Disenchanted, and seeking to exert a greater degree of control over his content, Chris cast a critical eye over his Facebook page. "I looked at my Wall and looked at my profile on there, and basically felt that it wasn't representative of what I wanted people to see, it was a representation of what other people wanted – and they were making a mess of it," he says.

"And thinking about placements and trying to get a job this summer, it struck me I wouldn't want people who might be working with me, or might be looking to employ me in the future, to see all this stuff. I wasn't really bothered about it until then. And then a switch flipped, and I thought I don't want people seeing this, or pictures tagged to me, and this, that and the other. "

Chris admits that all this put him in such a foul mood, his initial reaction was to delete everything – but decided instead to re-engineer his Facebook profile. "In some ways I've made my information more open," he says, " but in some ways less so.

"I turned my Facebook profile more into something that you would see if you went to Linkedin. So it's got my qualifications, contact details and work history on it, that kind of thing - the information that I want to put on there. It doesn't have things like my photos, photos tagged of me or any of that. It's all been removed, and a lot of my pages have been locked down."

The lock-down process proved quite a challenge, he adds. "I spent an hour buried in the Facebook

privacy things and the application settings, basically turning everything off. So no apps writing to my wall, nobody writing on my wall, the wall is hidden, all my private photo albums are set to hidden and, in essence, no one can now do anything on Facebook which changes my profile.

"I can change my profile – but it is quite difficult to do - you can't turn your wall off to everybody without adding everybody to a friends group and then banning the group. And then I found out I had too many friends, and I could only put 195 of my friends in a group, so I had to make two groups and then ban them! It's incredibly counter-intuitive."

Technical difficulties notwithstanding, Chris is happy with decision to prune his profile, and doesn't feel it would make others feel he has something to hide. "It's not about shutting yourself away from everybody. In many ways I've opened up my details," he says. "A Facebook-savvy employer probably wouldn't take too much notice of what's on someone's profile - but not all employers are Facebook-savvy, and I'm not going to take that risk. I might come to regret it in the end, but I don't think I will."

And in the event of a change of heart, Chris is a man with a back-up plan. "I decided to just hide stuff instead of deleting it in case I change my mind - so then I can change it back again!" he says. "That's not going to happen for now, but you never know."

Changing Privacy settings, choosing services

Social networking sites are in the new 'always beta' style of service, where they are always being changed and improved (at least, as far as some people are concerned). Facebook has made fairly major changes to its privacy settings over the short time it has existed, and they may not always be obvious to people using the system.

When you are considering using a Web2.0 style system, have a look at how you can manage the privacy of material you post, and of information you share on your profile. Also, and I know this is very boring, check what the site says in its terms and conditions of use. Some of these sites have terms which appear to suggest that they claim ownership of your content when you post it – be careful that you aren't losing control over your contributions.

If you are signing up to lots of different services and trying them out, think about whether you want to use a 'throw-away' identity for testing purposes before signing up with the ID you want to use, and possibly integrate with the rest of your Digital Identity.

Employers might check if you are involved in the community

Contribution by Philip Stears, DriveWorks (software development)

> *I'd like to offer my views on this as an employer rather than employee - I've very fortunate in that I've not yet had to apply for a job in my career, but have had to recruit for a number of roles since I left University.*
>
> *For me, one of the first things I will do after having skim read and largely ignored a CV (for good or ill) is to see what someone has made of themselves online - I'm not looking for personal stuff, just a sign that somebody is involved in the community, certainly in the development staff we've had, there's a general marked difference in quality between those that have an online presence and participate in communities, and those that don't.*
>
> *That alone isn't enough to decide whether we go through to an interview, but it is a factor.*

Tweeting

In the 'old days' people used email lists, forums and bulletin boards to have conversations among communities. Social networking sites offered ways of having many-to-many communication via people's 'walls' (in Facebook) and through use of groups. Then came microblogging, (like Twitter), which popularised the idea of sharing out to the world, via the Internet, what you are doing or thinking. People who use it ('Tweeple') were quick to come up with ways of holding semi-private conversations (addressing a remark @someone) which anyone can see. It also has a means of sending 'Direct' (or private) messages to others.

Home counties boy Rob is a couple of months into his first teaching job at a challenging secondary school in inner London, and started using Twitter to communicate with some of his fellow PGCE graduates. It helped him feel connected with friends and family while working hard in difficult situations. It was great because he could use his mobile phone whilst having a breather in the staff room.

Because he liked to Tweet about sports and educational matters, he gained a few other 'followers' – people who were interested in his status updates. Although Rob still feels that it is a bit odd that people from around the world are interested in what he has to say, he continues to update the 'Twitterverse' with comments on sporting events, interspersed with conversations with friends, total strangers, and the odd Tweet about his day-to-day life as a teacher at an inner city school.

Rob was a little anxious when some of his pupils signed up to Twitter. One in particular shared his passion for rugby, and started following a lot of the same people as Rob – making him wonder if he should protect his updates. Protecting them means that people can't read what he writes unless he gives them permission. He would never accidentally connect with others. However, in the end, he decided that although he had made some comments about the school that he would have phrased differently if he had intended anyone connected to the school to read them, he decided it would be OK. But he resolved to keep his Tweets to things he is totally sure are OK to say publicly, which means he sometimes doesn't say what he'd like to say!

Worksheet 5 - Tweeting from the field

You are a student teacher and you start using Twitter over a summer holiday as it was used by staff at the school where you had your most recent placement. When you are back at college, you find that a number of others are also using it.

Thinking about these people

Ali - who takes the same modules as you
Bob - who takes one module with you
Cat - doing the same degree course as you but in a different name
Doug - a postgrad who helps with one of your tutorials
Ed - a lecturer on one of your modules
Fi - your personal tutor
Greg - your student union representative
Hiya - your student radio's twitter ID
Mum - your mother

ST - your college's senior tutor
X - your ex-lover
Lou – a pupil's parent

1. What would be your reaction if any of the above started following you? How do you feel when Doug, a stranger from the other side of the world follows you. If they seem to have similar interests? If they also Tweet about completely different things?

2. Would you expect the above to follow you if you followed them?

3. Now would you Tweet about your work life? Social life? Everything?

Security - Banking on honesty

Lynn decided to delete her Facebook profile after realising that all of her banking security question answers were either directly visible on it, or easily found by following links. This was because many banks ask for a person's mother's maiden name as a security question. It was only somewhat later, when telling the tale of how hard she had found it to delete the information, that a friend asked why she had given honest answers to the bank in the first place. As the friend pointed out - it isn't as though the bank checks the answers are true, you just have to remember what you told them.

We struggle to remember all the different passwords we have, so sometimes reuse them or use easy to remember, but easy to 'hack' passwords. There are tools to help manage passwords we can consider. Some organisations require a reset of critical intranet passwords on a regular basis to avoid these 'easy password' problems. It is worth thinking about your password practices as you begin to use more social media tools.

Worksheet 6 - What are your password practices?
Think of four Internet accounts you have.

1. Are the passwords all the same, or different? If the same, what would be the consequences of someone guessing/hacking into any of those accounts?

2. Are your passwords real words, or do you use a combination of letters, words and characters. The latter are harder to crack. If you have a very valuable account, are you giving it a valuable password?

Digital Footprints – a blog post[2] from Lawrie Phipps

Lawrie is a project manager for JISC.

Dotsam[3]. Defined as:

> The wasteland of abandoned Web sites, Hotmail accounts, blogs, wikis, MySpace pages, etc., that their creators have ignored for months or years but which remain accessible. The word was coined in imitation of flotsam and jetsam; "flotsam" refers to goods that float in the water without having been thrown there, as after a shipwreck, while "jetsam" has been cast into the sea–jettisoned–usually to lighten a ship's cargo in an emergency.

I did a quick check on myself and the oldest page I found was from 1997, a learning and teaching resource that shall remain nameless and is also defunct. Not a calamity and certainly nothing I wish I hadn't written. When I wrote the material back in 97 the ability to publish to the net was not, arguably, easily available to everyone, certainly in universities. I remember filling out forms and visiting the faculty webmaster – "please Neil can I have some space?" the response was less than enthusiastic, and support whilst not grudgingly given was certainly given by someone whose primary concern was that I don't do anything that will break the server (some mystical thingy which appeared to be something that sat under his desk!). The first webpage I loaded onto the server contained 4 images – each of which had been scanned from 10×8 photos at 600 dpi – the page took a while to load, in fact I think the phone call from the webmaster came through before the page did.

Today anyone can go online sign up for a dozen different tools to publish material online and be 'live' in minutes, and so the dotsam grows. Whereas you might have a vague sense of what you have written over the last 10 years, the dotsam created 'about' you by other people presents a completely different kind of problem.

Recently The Guardian published a reasonably balanced story about social networking in education[4]. I and two colleagues, Sarah Knight and Philip Pothen, were quoted in it. Whilst looking for personal dotsam for this posting (or at least what I was going to post about) I found another story that quoted me "UK Universities brings web2.0 tools in education"[5]. This piece was a rewrite of The Guardian article, in it they quote me:

> Lawrie Phipps, JISC project Manager stated that universities can use web2.0 more sensibly in education. Social -networking sites allows students to create their own groups and academic communities in areas like bio-medicine.

No he didn't! At least I was fairly sure he didn't - so I checked in the original. The original quote is:

> "We found social networking and instant messaging being used to support researchers working off-campus," says Jisc's e-learning programme manager, Sarah Knight. "Social networking was allowing students and researchers to create their own interest groups and academic communities in areas like bio-medicine."

This is a fairly harmless misrepresentation, at least I think so, Sarah may feel differently. At least

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[2] http://lawrie.jiscinvolve.org/2007/12/02/digital-footprints/

[3] http://nancyfriedman.typepad.com/away_with_words/2006/11/word_of_the_wee_4.html

[4] http://education.guardian.co.uk/link/story/0,,2202291,00.html

[5] http://www.i4donline.net/news/news-details.asp?NewsID=12202

in this case Sarah and I were both saying similar things in the article. But what if we had been diametrically opposed and something that was said by one was attributed to the other?

With blogging, and the ability to instantly publish and cross refer works so easily on the net, this kind of incident will no doubt continue to occur. And it is not only things that you deliberately state online, I don't think I've been to an event this year where there isn't at least one person blogging what is being said by the speaker! A recent workshop I gave at a university was blogged by two delegates and their blogs referred to in a blog of someone who wasn't actually there – the information was harmless, but the potential for the information to be misreported becomes greater the further from the original it travels.

Instant publishing might be a great idea enabling a lot of people to post thought provoking and interesting material and enabling a debate to be had. But we must be careful about who is saying what and how what we say is being used, The Guardian article mentioned earlier is a good example, several bloggers have used a headline quote from that article:

> Lawrie Phipps, explains how the battle lines are being drawn: "Students really do want to keep their lives separate. They don't want to be always available to their lecturers or bombarded with academic information."

But they don't use the line that I said directly afterwards to the reporter (and which admittedly is two further paragraphs away in the report).

> "They appear to want to keep their online persona private but when you ask them whether they'd like instant communication with tutors or feedback on essays (via Skype or Facebook) the answer is always yes."

The price of instant publishing for anyone that may be cited or quoted is constant vigilance!

What's in a name?

Greg is a recent biology graduate, enjoying the Rome
lifestyle since securing a job with a large company thanks to
a good degree and dazzling Web profile, painstakingly
crafted to sell his talents. In addition to the usual bright
lights big city stuff of touring bars and cafes, Greg spends
quite a bit of his down time gaming on the Internet, playing
a wide range of browser games and hanging out in Second
Life.
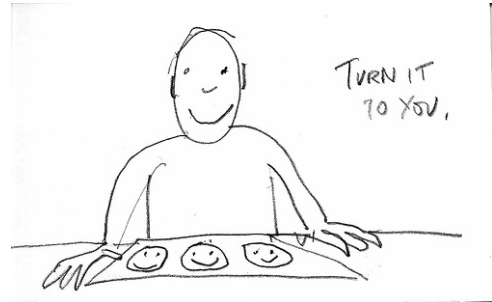
In the office, Greg met Sam from Sudan. Sam has been
working with refugees around Darfur, particularly those who are at risk for political persecution.
Sam's job has been to help these people reconnect with their families and relocate to safer
locations. Sam is intrigued by Greg's online life as he has had neither the time nor internet access
to experiment with these new tools. His employer, a small, conservative NGO in Sudan, does not
allow its employees to do any of their work online for fear of compromising the privacy and identity
of the people they serve as well as to protect staff safety.

Greg offers to set Sam up with a Second Life avatar and some other online accounts. Sam has
some misgivings, but allows Greg to "go ahead and do it as long as we don't use my real name".

Worksheet 7 – Do unto others

What happens when we create a Digital Identity on behalf of someone else – in this case a person
with no experience, limited Internet access, and some prohibitions about Internet use at work.

Greg is a technologically literate individual. He spends time playing online games, and has used
the Web to manage his own reputation both as a student and as an employee. He understands the
implications of having a Web presence, and how presence is viewed and interpreted by others.

Greg has taken on the responsibility for creating a Web presence for Sam, whose organisation has
already expressed misgivings about their staff interacting on the Internet. How he helps Sam
register and choose an online name could have consequences not only for Sam as an individual,
but for his organisational relationships as well. Thinking about this scenario:

1. What issues should you think about when helping someone else to create a facet of their
   Digital Identity?

2. Does the creation of an avatar form a link to the user? If so, who can 'join the dots' and do
   enough web-based research to see who the person behind the avatar is?

3. Thinking back to any accounts you may have had when you were younger, does anyone
   still know you in terms of the identity you projected then?

4. Recent research has shown that the pattern of people you connect to, and the ways you
   connect, are as unique as a fingerprint. If looking at the connections Sam's Second Life
   avatar makes can identify him when related to, say, the friends he has on Facebook later in
   life, does that change any of your previous answers?

Tweeting: Personal, Professional or just Life?

A blog post[6] by Katherine Robinson (@TheSourceress), a human resources 'sourcer' working on the Internet to find talent to fill job roles.

Do you use Twitter professionally or socially? Do you make a distinction?

As I become more sociable with folks I've met through Twitter in real life, I have been giving this a lot of thought. How much trivia, joking, teasing – even flirting, do you let spill over into your twitter stream?

My online life is an intrinsic part of my job. I have Tweetdeck running in the office all day. This allows me to look out for references to our company, run searches for industry news as it breaks and see what others in similar professions are saying. It's great as a tool for learning from others and staying ahead of the game. It also means that I can see what my twitter friends are up to and I naturally join in the conversation, after all, it's just the odd minute here and there, 140 characters don't take long to type.

So far my rule has been "Keep it clean and don't worry too much."

That's all well and good when you are talking to a bunch of strangers, I am British after all. There are certain lines that don't get crossed.

As I start to actually have friends on twitter though, I am noticing a change. Instead of my @ replies only being useful links to help people out or encouragement for tricky projects, I am also chit-chatting about the minutia of life. It's now about coffee and milkshakes, phrases like "How are you feeling?" are being used more and more.

I appreciate that these conversations will not spring up in everyone's twitter stream, depending on their chosen settings, but is this long string of personal @ replies helping people to decide whether or not to follow me? Am I providing good value to the folks that started following me 3 or 6 months ago?

Don't get me wrong.

I firmly believe that Twitter is all about conversation and discovery; people and brands communicating to get more out of everyday experiences.

While standing in the queue at Tesco to get my lunch I considered setting up two twitter accounts, one personal and one professional. I didn't like the notion. Who would be 'TheSourceress'? After all, Katharine Robinson doesn't use a different name when she's at work. My friends, colleagues, family, enemies (if I have any) and business contacts all refer to me by the same name. Why should my online life be any different?

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[6] http://sourceress.co.uk/index.php/2009/tweeting-personal-professional-or-just-life/comment-page-1/#comment-252

Twitter is a very public forum, though.

Anything I say can be taken down in evidence… It's not like chatting with a friend in a pub or in the privacy of your own living room. It's like chatting with a friend in the corner of your office with the boss listening. While an employer may understand that you need a private life and have the right to one outside of work hours, a lot of us are still openly representing brands. That representation doesn't stop when we leave the office.

Increasingly I have been taking the conversation out of the public eye and using direct messaging when chit-chatting. There are some people that I only interact with via Twitter and to let them cross over into email, IM and other social networks would seem strange at this stage.

Perhaps it is time for some rules:

So here is my 'Personal Tweeting Policy'…

Priority tweet topics:

I am an Internet Researcher and dabble in Social Media Marketing.

I follow and am followed by many people that live locally to me. I am invested in this network and these folks have to be my priority for interaction.

EcoSearch (my employer) works exclusively in Renewable Energy. I have a window into the industry that few will ever be privy to. The threat of Climate Change is something I don't talk a lot about outside of the office but I do like to share the odd thought or news item that I see go past.

Frequency:

I would like to always be aiming for a 90-10 split (ninety percent to add value for others and 10 percent for my own personal gain). Not easy, but nice to aim for.

Censorship:

I think "keep it clean" is good advice. Profanity, when it's called for, is quite acceptable to me in everyday life. But when new people are present (as they inevitable always are on twitter) I prefer to keep things out of the verbal gutter. I expect everyone has their own take on this and I promise not to look down on anyone with a potty-mouth (should that be potty-fingers? No – that just sounds wrong). That said, I have been known to use a few carefully selected special characters (!*&£) to express myself now and again.

But, trickiest of all, How much of my personal life should be broadcast or shared via twitter? This is what I am fighting with the most. Just how much should I share? It's very easy to get carried away.

Clearance or convenience?

When John was a child, he had a Brownie camera and he could take eight photos on each film; he now has a digital camera and can take thousands of pictures. As a child he stuck his photos in an album and showed them to family and friends, now he can post his pictures on the Internet and share them with the whole world. The photographs in which he appears that are posted somewhere on the Internet certainly contribute to his Digital Identity.

On holiday with family and friends, large numbers of photos are taken throughout the trip, from the drowsy morning shots of pyjamaed individuals grasping a cup of tea, through sightseeing and lounging by the pool, to boozy evenings. He can control which of these he posts, but he has less control over the ones others select to post.

At recent conferences he attended he was asked to fill in a form that giving his permission for pictures to be taken and used. There were professional photographers who, it seemed, were almost everywhere, capturing not only the presentations but also the coffee breaks and lunch.

Worksheet 8 – Time to review policies?

Select someone who is your Facebook friend and look at photos in which they are tagged, then imagine what comments the following may add to these photos:
- Their father
- A prospective employer
- Their cousin
- A co-worker
- Their partner
- A former classmate

Having tried this with someone else, now try it on photos posted featuring yourself.

Video and other media

Youtube is very popular, and it is easy to create a video and upload it there. Although it is renowned for the loutish behavior of many people who comment on videos there, it can also be a useful place to showcase your interests and abilities. If video isn't 'your thing', you might want to think about audio files – sites like Audioboo (for iPhone users) allow you to publish snippets of voice recordings and sites like SlideShare allow you to share presentations with others.

Think about what you could produce to explain your interests, or your expertise. Perhaps you are at a stage where you want to just who how enthusiastic you are about your aspirations, or maybe you can create something to help other people understand concepts about your professional or leisure activities.

Even if you don't actually produce a video or other web content, thinking through what you could contribute. What type of copyright or licensing you would want to offer it under? This is a useful way to help you think about what might have an impact on a potential employer, or elusive customers.

Closed communities – private community/public impact

David, a medical student, belongs to a secret society. Well, he plays a game in which he is a 'spy' and the game organisers have forums and social networks set up which can only be accessed by paying players. David enjoys the game, even if some of his friends think he is a bit geeky. Around 30 of his friends in the local area also play it on a regular basis.

Many of the players are also on other publically available social networking sites. The game rules forbid them to mention anything about the game in public (after all, they are spies!), and generally people abide by the rules. After one of his friends was treated a bit harshly by one of the referees, there was an incident on the game's forums. The friend was angry and let the referees know about their shortcomings using some colourful language.

Whilst David sympathised with his friend because the judgement had been unjust, the outburst made (game-related) life tricky for a while. Some people decided they couldn't trust David anymore because of his friendship, and because he had defended the guy in the forum. David remained calm and polite throughout, but was now in a position where his friend's reaction had had a negative impact on his own reputation. In a 'real life' situation, this would probably have blown over, as memories started to fade, and people gradually left the game and were replaced with new blood. However, the persistent nature of the incident, recorded in the archives, meant that it never quite seemed to go away.

Worksheet 9 – What changes?

Imagine you are a member of a national society, which has an online presence for its members in the form of email lists. Only members of the society are allowed to join the lists, read emails coming from the list, and send emails to it. You know the following people who received the email:

- Andrew - via the email list only
- Bill - via the email list at first but he lives close by, and you've met up in the pub
- Cassandra - a friend who encouraged you to join the society
- Frederick - a colleague who you know through the society
- Gerald - holds a position of authority in the society, although he isn't in charge

You read your mail one afternoon, and one of the emails is an angry diatribe, targeting those currently in charge of the society. For each of the above people in turn, assume they were the person who sent the email.

1. How does sending the email change the Digital Identity (DI) of the sender? How does it change the DI of the target?

2. How does it change the DI of the society internally?

3. What impact does it have on relationships outside of the society?

4. How do you respond to it? What can be done to mitigate the effects?

Mike Roch on managing your DI

With 25 years in technology behind him Mike Roch, Director of IT Services at Reading University, has a great deal of insight into Digital Identity – both in terms of what it means to him, and the way it is approached by others.

With social networking, particularly Facebook, being very much the topic du jour, Mike observes that his own experience shows you can never be too careful about how you present yourself online, because that information will be around for a long time! "So much of the discussion focuses on the here and now," he says, "but, sorry to be the old fart, to me it's not that new."

"It's a new medium, but we were doing this sort of thing 25 years ago – and the evidence still exists that we were doing it 25 years ago. The persistence of this activity is something we are only coming to recognise now – there are Web sites out there whose mission it is to record all of the Internet for posterity, and actually, it's much more accessible than just some juddering archive!"

With this in mind, he says, people should perhaps take lessons from real life when considering how to form their digital one. "A lot of people don't think about what the audience for their postings is going to be. Yet our actual experience of life is not speak as you would be spoken to, but to speak as the audience expects or requires you to. Very few people have the luxury in life of being themselves, and having the world like it or lump it."

Mike adds that people's belief in the anonymity of the Internet is part of their innocence about how it really works, and can make them throw caution to the wind by telling the world and his dog about their life and exploits from the comfort of a laptop. "I do think there's a lot of, not naivety – because that's a loaded term – but trust and innocence about the way people use social networking, young people in particular," he says.

"Their openness in social networking is not reflected in openness in their real lives. For example, it's not usual when walking down the street to see what someone's name is – even their name is private, never mind what's going on in their relationships, or their political views."

In fact, says Mike, the analogy of a street applies rather well to the Internet. "There are all sorts out there," he comments, "and if you're going to use a street safely and securely, then you tend not to make a lot of eye contact, you tend to avoid dark corners, and cross over when there are no street lights. The Internet's got dark corners as well – and there is a level of risk, especially when there is a link between the virtual and the real."

Setting boundaries and making yourself fully aware of these risks, concludes Mike, are key to staying in control of your Digital Identity, enabling it to work for you and hopefully not against you.

Erica and the aggregator

Erica maintains a simple but effective online profile, which shows her professional achievements. She updates as often as is appropriate, and makes sure it links properly to other information about her on the Web.

When checking recently to see if there were any new mentions of her work which she should create links to, she was surprised to find a site which claimed to be about her. It had her email address, employer, and most of the content from her profile, but it also had links that related to somebody quite different. Moreover, as Erica had never worked as a masseuse, she was rather surprised to see a Web page that appeared to claim she had!

The problem was that the site in question trawled through countless pages, trying to find everything it could about a person, and the rules it used for deciding whether information was about her were not quite right. The company that ran the site said the easiest option was to sign up with them and edit her profile. Although this would get rid of the errors, Erica could not see any reason why she should effectively be blackmailed into joining someone's online service (even though there was no cost).

Nowadays we are often offered the opportunity to tag resources. In Facebook we can tag the people in a photo, on our blogs we can tag a post, and on del.icio.us we can tag pages we have bookmarked.

There are a number of reasons why we choose to tag:

- For ourselves, so that we can find resources later. For example Andy may tag an article 'toread' to remind himself that he intends to read the article later;

- For others, so that others know what the resource is about. For example Bo may tag a picture 'pig' so that others know that it is a picture of a pig;

- For automation, so that other systems know that this resource is meant to be aggregated by them.

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- Identity LOLCat http://www.flickr.com/photos/dbarefoot/514759657/ by Darren Barefoot
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