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## Rate my professor: being a teacher in an online world

Liz Bennett, Sue Folley University of Huddersfield

Attwell, Hornumg-Prahäuser and Warburton have identified five “problem spaces” connected to the notion of digital identity for teachers;

1. How can we manage overlaps between our professional and personal identities
2. What digital literacy skills do we need to teach?
3. How can we manage our online digital identities if we are not in charge of the data?
4. Is privacy a thing of the past?
5. In what ways is the discourse of danger a barrier to individuals engaging in online identity e.g. your personal data is easy to locate so that internet criminals can steal and use your identity (2009)

The workshop will explore these concepts. The structure of the session is

2. Introduction to digital identity (10 minutes)
3. Exploring digital identity (15 minutes)
4. Demo using Twitter (10 minutes)
5. Activity thinking through use of Twitter (15 minutes)
6. Relating back to the 5 problem spaces (10 minutes)

Attwell, Hornumg-Prahäuser and Warburton (2009) Digital identities research workshop

[http://www.slideshare.net/stevenw/digital-identity-research-workshop-ecer-2009-2087285?src=related\\_normal&rel=1960426](http://www.slideshare.net/stevenw/digital-identity-research-workshop-ecer-2009-2087285?src=related_normal&rel=1960426) accessed 15/3/10

### Introduction

Title- represents the reality that we can't escape from it is about BEING

This session explores the complexity of what the online world means for teachers, doesn't provide any answers! Instead aims to help you to locate yourself and your professional practice within this world, to provide you with some of the questions that you need to be asking yourself and to guide you through starting to answer those. However it doesn't provide answers, indeed online identity, like other aspects of identity, is visceral (instinctive, difficult to control), temporal (brief ie change over time) so needs to be addressed not in a one off way but repeatedly as we change as people and as professional practitioners.

1. One reaction is head in sand (or what Josie Fraser described as the Ungoogleable man). But by taking this approach aren't you losing out on what the web has to offer? Are others creating your online identity for you eg Rate my professor is a web site where students can put views about their tutor online <http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/>.
2. Supermarket sweep approach – go in take what you can and leave approach? Does participation enhance professional reputation, build networks? As Josie Fraser has argued the functions and processes of an institution are often organised round networks rather than physical spaces, it is not what you know it is who you are connected to that is important so you can ask experts in your network. Participation in online activity provides both escape from social isolation and other people and somewhere to escape to.
3. Another is to race ahead with little thought (mr toad approach). Some of the consequences of this approach are seen in the media (see later)

So this session will help you to consider the important aspects of being a tutor in this digital age.

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5. In what ways is the discourse of danger a barrier to individuals engaging in online identity e.g. your personal data is easy to locate so that internet criminals can steal and use your identity (2009).

To unpick these; 1 applies to any professional person not just a teacher, whereas 2 relates particularly to our role as an educator, 3,4 and 5 are about most people living in 21Century (not just a western phenomena but affects most people's lives).

**Looking at 1;** there have been some very high profile stories in the media about people who have got the overlap between public and private spaces wrong;

Unite general secretary Derek Simpson tweeted during talks with BA management added to the lack of trust in the negotiations! <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/10145993.stm> Raised issues of confidentiality, etiquette of using mobile phones in meetings, nature of mutli tasking\

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/3955913.stm> suspension of airline staff for blogging with photos showing airline uniform, issues – employers concern over publicity (eg bbc employers can't use their work email address for non work uses).

**Looking at 2** Are we equipping students with skills of digital literacy? There is a whole body of thinking about what digital literacy/fluency is and how we incorporate these skills – a new Key Skill perhaps- into our teaching. Not focus for today. Online behaviours of students that need discussion; face group to get a teacher sacked!

### **Looking at 3 Managing our identity;**

Importance of managing our identity in terms of job recruitment; certainly recruitment agencies using facebook/linkedin as an advertising tool, but will/do panels google applicants? Have you googled new members of staff prior meeting them/ contacts made at the conferences etc?

### **Looking at 4 privacy thing of the past**

Orlando Figes, a professor at London's Birkbeck College and the author of many books on Russian history, wrote the negative reviews on the Amazon website of 'competitors' books. Rachel Polonsky's book was described as "hard to follow".

a book by Robert Service was described as "awful whilst he praised a book by Figes as "fascinating". the reviewer used the online moniker, "orlando-birkbeck"!

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8641515.stm>

This would always be considered unethical...but emphasises that anonymity is not easy even using a pseudo name on the web

Institutions will upload to repositories your work.

Our digital foot print is quite often undeletable... Danah Boyd identifies this as persistence

Photos of students pucking up will be available online for employers to check. Photos of you at a conference can be uploaded to a web see Brian Kelly OMG is that me up there on the screen <http://ukwebfocus.wordpress.com/2010/02/10/omg-is-that-me-on-the-screen/>

People can post about you eg Rate my professor.

### **Looking at 5 Discourse of danger;**

Examples relevant to teaching – use of online tools could open students up to "unacceptable" sites eg porn, advertising.

Recently a friend joined ...service and it emailed her home address to ....see Sue for details!

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Brian Kelly and Charles Oppenheim describe the risks and how to consider these from an institutional point of view. They discuss the missed opportunities by not engaging with digital media too so institutions need a strategic risk management response to online engagement. This is like Tanya Byron's argument about online safety for children which she likens to teaching children to cross roads.

### Activity 1 exploring digital id

- Put their own name on a post-it note
- Collect on a flip chart (or bit of wall)
- Everyone takes another person's name (who they do not know personally) and tries to find out information about that person by looking at:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - LinkedIn
  - Google searching
  - Online people finding tools like [www.123people.co.uk](http://www.123people.co.uk)
- Put three things they've found out on the post-it note with the name on and collect
- Debrief in terms of;
  - Pick some interesting ones to discuss/share
  - Does it matter that you don't have a digital id?
  - Will/do employers check out your digital id when applying for jobs (for you or for your students)
  - What opinion did you form of that person from the facts you found out about them?

### Activity 2 Getting started with Twitter

Demo twitter

- Discuss different types of tweets (personal e.g. what I had for breakfast, social/humorous e.g. it's nick clegg's fault, information sharing e.g. I've just posted a new blog post or try this new bit of software, asking for information e.g. which is better nvivo or atlas?)
- Different forms of tweet i.e.
  - retweets to share information with your network, leads to trends
  - directly between people with @ otherwise to all the people who follow you
- Characteristics of tweets; short, easily missed, networks

Worksheet

- Getting started with twitter, who would you follow, what would you tweet?

### Activity 3 Case studies (as a back up)

Prepare 4/5 case studies taken from media about what implications of using social media in t&l. Summarise and include 3 key questions to start the group's discussions.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/3955913.stm> suspension of airline staff for blogging with photos showing airline uniform, issues – employers concern over publicity (eg bbc employers can't use their work email address for non work uses)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/apr/26/election-2010-sun-twitter> power of social media compared to national media. (doesn't seem that relevant to teaching and learning)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2010/feb/28/richard-dawkins-wisdom-of-crowds>

the chaotic and unruly nature of the internet leads to lack of quality eg penguin co authored book was unreadable, Youtube's openness allowed a video of bullying to be uploaded, highly negative comments made to Dawkin.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7821358.stm> school girls suspended for setting up a facebook group with defamatory content about a teacher

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<http://sbinfocanada.about.com/b/2008/06/05/facebook-another-tool-for-recruitment.htm> recruitment agencies using facebook and linkedin for finding staff also <http://www.slideshare.net/thomasshaw/using-facebook-for-recruitment>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8641515.stm> leading academic admits to posting defamatory reviews of other academics' books on Amazon. Issues nothing is anonymous on the web! Old values of respect and etiquette still apply online. People need reminding of basic principles of etiquette when working online.

## **Conclusion**

In this session we are arguing very strongly that as professional educators that we need develop our use and understanding of online digital identities

- To protect ourselves,
- To enhance our professional reputations
- To ensure that we are making best use of technologies that help us connect as professionals
- To enable us to guide our students and understand the 21C world

We hope that we've identified some of the major challenges and raised your awareness of some of the questions/pitfalls and risk when online, but done so in a way that encourages you to explore and become savvy about your digital identity.

## References and resources

Attwell, Hornung-Prahäuser and Warburton (2009) Digital identities research workshop  
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