



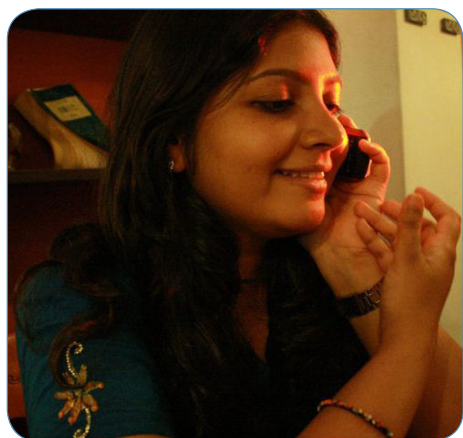
Links *in the* Chain

A Newsletter of the Digital Natives with a Cause? Project

Vol. 8

Editorial

Is Social The New Personal?



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The word ‘media’ has the ignominy of never being called by its first name. It’s always prefixed or suffixed into playing second fiddle. Evidence? Traditional media, mass media, new media, digital media, hypermedia, social media – the list could go on with subsets. What remains common and consistent is that consumers have always accessed finished material from the media. Digital platforms have of course changed all that; the lines between content producers and consumers has blurred.

What is it about social media that drives us to contribute information and in turn become producers? Perhaps it has to do with the design interface of easy log-ins, handy read-and-respond menus and archival features that allow us to store streams of conversations. Having a ready reference to the events in a day, week and month allows us to pick and choose – curate in a way – information that we feel is relevant to a larger community beyond home.

So, don’t we have any qualms in putting up personal information on a public platform? Well, social media never took off with claims of being a strictly “public entity”. Its primary purpose was to initiate circles of friendship and network on the Internet, allowing members to share with each other what they would otherwise do via a phone call or text messages. Thus, personal information remained in a tight circle.

What we don’t deliberate over is the fact that circles and communities never remain strictly closed or rigid; they contract with the loss of a member, both physically and with waning interests of some, and they expand, with new members becoming family and bringing their own circle of friends on board. It’s the leitmotif of our offline social circles, why not online?

We are at a cut-off point in history when we can clearly demarcate the line between the generation that looked at the coming of the Internet as a historical narrative, an event that occurred in their lives, and those for whom it is a “way of life”.

This second group – perhaps those born in the mid-90s, to middle-class, educated, white-collar parents – sprouted their milk tooth as their parents set-up a yahoo account for them (fear of running out of domain names is quite valid). Their first baby steps, first birthday and first comic act in school is recorded not on photopapers stuck in decorated albums, but in the real-time archives of Picassa, Facebook, Orkut or Flickr; a life span coverage that began when their parents uploaded pregnancy pictures to videos of the hospital visit post delivery and so on from their digital cameras to the Web.

Does this generation realize that they are unwitting curators and historians, documenting their every waking routine and the meta-narratives of their lives? Many of their activities – uploading photographs, sending emails, responding to posts and commenting on forums, watching videos and shopping online and simply being **available in green indicator** – are indicators of their personality, their hobbies and interests, their moods and nature, and gives us clues to their literacy levels, intelligence, emotional quotient, and more. Clicking links, reading news at all times, *Liking* several hundred posts (randomly), participating in a-synchronous messages in real-time (you message and don’t wait for the opposite person to respond immediately) and living a multi-tabbed existence is not only what they do but **who they are**.

The post-digital generation never knew of a world where the “net was looked upon as a mysterious monster” as **Ayesha Tabassum** writes. It is simply a ‘way’ of being – digital – rather than a ‘place’ you enter. Being online is a socially engaging phenomenon for them, unlike us Generation X,Y,Z who do crave for “meet-ups with friends to just hang-out” as **Ssozi Javie** puts it under the new debating feature **The Contrarian View**. **Rotimi Olawale** narrates a really funny scenario where friends get together in a restaurant and then spend the rest of their time texting and emailing others in the web-universe from their ‘smartphones’! Irony or malaise?

This issue on Social Media covers our fascination and addiction – **Anand Philip** in Selective Obsessions - for socializing, networking and engaging with an audience online. Some do feel the need to draw a clear line and keep this engagement under observation, as **Samuel Tettner** does in “Facebook and the Technologies of Memory”. While **Frank Odongkara** gives a moment of pause with his poem on the myths of being social, **Hasina Hassan** verses eloquent about her affair with U/I, As and Anti. We got the introvert reporter **Ravish Khapra** to redefine social for us and **Noopur Raval** tickles us pink with her tongue-in-cheek piece “Ogle”.

The cheerleader of this issue, **Maureen Agena**, helps us celebrate **World Social Media Day**. **Meena Kandasamy** affirms the democratic nature of the net in our opening story and she is joined by the champions of this issue: **Andres Palma**, **Juan Casaneuva** and **Tsinane Pe**, who give us reasons to disregard the cynicism that is usually reserved for new technologies and fads. My faith is affirmed in the possibilities of a fair, open and participative society if efforts are sustained & consistent and ideas, ever green. How about you?

Personal always precluded a narrow margin of allowing in the social. It is just today that we have begun to take social media personally. Happy Clicking | Connecting | Linking!

Nilofar Ansher

P.S. Please do write back to the contributors and the editor with your e-reactions, emoticons, suggestions for improvements to the newsletter (and the stuff that delighted you). Lurkers, time to come out of the closet.

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NEWS

The new Lord Mayor of Dublin Andrew Montague signed a mayoral scroll proclaiming Social Media Day on 30 June. It is a fitting honor for Dublin – Europe's internet capital – which is home to the European headquarters of Facebook, Zynga, Google, LinkedIn and many others.

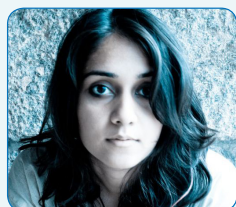
Via: <http://www.siliconrepublic.com/new-media/item/22427-a-social-first-for-dublin/>

Pope Benedict XVI Writes His Very First Tweet
<http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/06/28/the-holy-see-goes-high-tech-pope-benedict-xvi-writes-his-very-first-tweet/>

WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

Locating Internets: Histories of the Internet(s) in India – Research Training and Curriculum Workshop
Deadline for submission: 15th July 2011-06-08;

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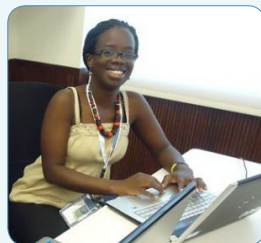


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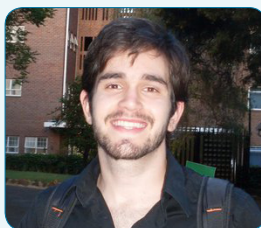


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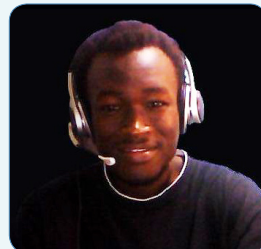
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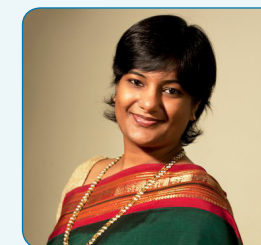
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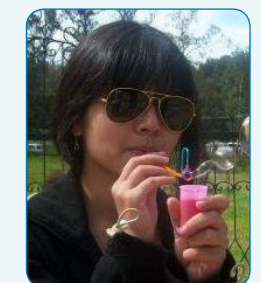
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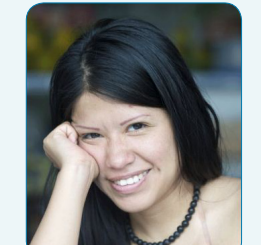
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Closer to ourselves

Books and Blogging: My Side of the Story

By Meena Kandasamy

I review one or two books every fortnight for The New Indian Express. And since I have just finished my doctoral thesis, I can safely say that I read about twenty books a month, if only for research purposes. I faithfully post all these reviews on my blog, leaving the door open for discussion. Readers tell me they have gotten lazy since they go around selecting books with the kind of reviews I write. Some urge me to be more spiteful, more vicious and develop an acidic style of attack. Many of the readers stray into my blog looking for a review of some book, then they

chance upon my poetry, and taken an interest in my writing and activism. I love all of this. Teresa, in an email, asked me if blogging about books led to relationships with authors? I love that prospect too, but right now, they are all just friends. Facebook friends, to be precise. Let's leave it at that. Translating got me into enough entanglements, so you see, I am playing it safe this time around.

Why did I get to blogging in the first place? I started blogging in 2002—when it was really not such a craze—I called my web-log Impudence, and it was typically at Blogspot, and I pulled it down two years later when I lost my anonymity and was stalked. That is another story for another day.

But, the democracy to speak up and speak out ensured that I was back to blogging again. Big media houses which own the major publications rarely give opportunity to Dalit (ex-untouchable) writers, and there's an absence of Dalit/anti-caste writers who write in English. The elitist writers want to write the feel-good stuff, India Shining myths, and that's the work that gets into print. So, I wanted to tap the power and enormous outreach of the internet: how anyone can write and be read/heard in the virtual space. I was not writing because anyone was commissioning me, I didn't have to follow other people's diktats, I could speak my mind. Google and tagging ensure that I can get heard without having my own column in any newspaper. Sometimes its helped me bring some happenings to light—such as the recent inside story of Dalit students being beaten up at a law university in Chennai (the mainstream media merely reported it as a "clash" at first) and so on.

Blogging on feminist issues, with a caste perspective, was also something that I set out to do, because feminism in India forgets that caste exists at all, and that women at the bottom of the caste hierarchy do suffer more. Blogging about literature and books ensured that I got a larger audience—and consequently I got into the print media in

a big way. Now, I review books for a major national newspaper. And, on an average day, my blog gets anywhere between 250-300 hits, which I guess is pretty modest for someone at the start of her writing career.

Since the cost of establishing alternative media in India is extremely high, activist groups have taken to the Internet in a big way. There is a hunger to use the potential of this media, and human rights defenders are doing it the right way. The campaign to free Binayak Sen; the exposes on state terrorism, fake encounters and police atrocities; the virulent speed in which fact-finding reports can be circulated; the ease with which the LGBT community in India came together and organized their shows of strength in every major city—these have all been possible because of the digital sphere and the space for social networking, discussion and dissemination that it allows.

For a few years, I was collaborating with Tamilnet.com, the only independent website that reported from the Vanni, the battle-zone, Sri Lanka's war-ravaged territory. The news-site is banned in Sri Lanka, but proxies provide people a way out to retrieve some of the real information. Hundreds of thousands of Tamils across the world access that website on a daily basis. Just one single website in English, along with a couple of others in Tamil, had the power to destroy and dispel one of the worst disinformation campaigns ever undertaken by a state. Not just that, it binds them together as a community. Even if the absolutely paralyzed and impotent international community did nothing to stop the genocide of fifty thousand Tamils in the course of a few months earlier this year, they at least acknowledged and addressed the fact that innocent civilians were being slain as part of a ruthless cleansing campaign. Were it not for the advent of online publishing, I doubt if the truth would have ever been told.

This sort of publishing on the internet has its payoffs too. I think E-books actually ease the cruel war against terror. A Catholic priest in Colombo told me stories of how Sinhalese soldiers doing a routine check on the local seminary in March this year checked for guns stashed inside hardback, hand-bound Bibles. If that Holy Book were just an unread PDF file, whatever threat could it pose?

For the sake of argument, had Satanic Verses been released merely in its zipped version, whoever would have read it through? And what would the zealots have burned on the streets when they sought a ban? And what would I have religiously lugged around with me, as a hefty style statement, in order to impress a certain older man?

A book is no longer a material thing that you can use to flaunt your knowledge. It has outgrown its handiness as a pillow or a paperweight. Forget the dilemma of choosing

the right shade of burgundy that would work well with lipstick-kissing your collection of poetry! Books, in their 21st

century digital avatar cannot even be autographed. They have lost their fresh scent, their serrated edges. The loss of personality has ensured that books are no longer independent entities. It is time for them to collectively call upon a shrink. Or they can fall back upon their cosmic power, their new-found God-like ability to exist without any beginning or end. Reading one book is no longer just reading that book. Something in it prods one to look up for more, to chance upon tens and hundreds of other books. Every book entices you into its exclusive lair. But walking away has never been easier. Information is now served in its sexiest scrambled form, and extracting just a little something from that whole system is quick, but also cumbersome. And I somehow believe that the way a book is read presently is certainly going to radically affect the way in which books are written. Google-addicted audiences demand and deserve nothing less, I guess.

Yesterday, I met a young man as fierce and weird as me. I met him online of course, on Facebook, and by the time it was our fifth conversation there was talk of snipers. And he recalled sniper alley in Sarajevo, asked me if I had read Kurt Schork's famous and heart-wrenching dispatch, spoke of correspondents being killed while reporting from conflict zones, selected Dan Eldon's story in Somalia as the most tragic of that lot, condemned the necessity to make a biopic on him. And then we both laughed at the fact that the said biopic was going to star Daniel Radcliffe. Until the Harry Potter reference, I had to simultaneously google in order to keep up with this charming, but overloaded guy. But believe me, I managed to come out pretty unscathed, with no ruin to my reputation as someone well-read. Even of course, if the reading did take place way past the eleventh hour. Had the said conversation been taking in a coffee shop, or at the college library, I can imagine how wide-eyed and tongue-tied I would have been. Thank god for the internet, for its explosion of knowledge, its enormous ease of access.

Would this presentation ever have been possible without the web? Where else in the world can ideas be bounced around with wild abandon, where else would people have the opportunity to offload all their knowledge on another hapless soul whose only sin was to have a green button indicating availability to chat. And above all, where else could anybody get away with preparing a whole essay and never having referred to a single book to do so? In which other world, would an author shamelessly admit to this?

Next Issue: Internet Governance. Deadline for Contributions: July 10.

Please send your contributions to:
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Complementary Voices

Traditional and social media do not stand on opposite ends of the spectrum, opines

Andrés Felipe Arias Palma

In the last couple of years, our society has given credence to an idea that has existed since the surge of communication media, the idea that the creation of a new medium means the death of the earlier one. For example, when radio was invented many thought that the newspaper would disappear simply because it has yesterday's news; in contrast, the radio offers a sense of "immediateness". When television sets hit the market, it was truly believed that all other mass media would fade into obsolescence – TV offered images in movement and could beam visuals in real time. However, the last I looked, "traditional" media is still around.

It is now fashionable to say that social networks will be the downfall of any other media forms, because digital platforms on which the modern media thrives gives you information in real time. Let's remember that not everything that is online is true; it's enough to look at the 'false' death announcements on Twitter, the last one of which was Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez's (who is in Cuba getting an operation!).

How we inform ourselves has changed and that is something each of us can see. When

a friend tells us about some news, and that news stays in our head, we research online to see what other people have said on Twitter, maybe there is a YouTube video or we search through our most trusted blog and access our favorite news site. The way we consume information and news has changed and isn't limited to the traditional media 'Breaking News' for us.

I'll point out a few of the things we ought to look at when engaging with social media and how traditional media could learn from social media and vice-versa.

Social Media versus Traditional:

- Not everyone is connected and when they are, they don't have the gadgets needed to be online all the time. Let's remember the big digital divide 'we' face compared to the more developed countries.
- Traditional media has always had recognition via big brands, but today, social media uses social strategies to complement their marketing strategies, thus reducing dependence on exclusive brands.
- Social media allows us to advertise our products and increase visibility. It caters to all audience and clients: big companies to

single users (For e.g., Twitter allows people to "follow me" @cafeycassette and most importantly, even traditional media now carry 'Share Icons').

- Traditional media still has a strong niche and reaches many people. It will continue to do so till the world doesn't get digitized completely.
 - Why does traditional media need social media?
 - Traditional media is mono-directional (sender-receiver). It's only when they unite with social media platforms can they create a conversation and begin to listen, interact and know the 'user' (who would otherwise be the traditional consumer).
 - With traditional media the business creates a brand; with social media you turn the users into stakeholders, instilling brand loyalty.
 - Traditional media informs, social media reaffirms and communicates.
- In conclusion, we must understand that traditional media should not reduce themselves to simply "digitizing" their operation, they need to change their way of informing. Society is changing and with it, the way we access information.

Translated from Spanish by Samuel Tetter.

...In Spanish...

Nuestra sociedad en los últimos años, se ha creado una idea que ha estado presente desde el surgimiento de los medios de comunicación, pues cuando se crea un nuevo medio se piensa que inicia el fin de su antecesor. Por ejemplo cuando salió la radio muchos pensaron que el periódico con sus noticias desaparecería, sencillamente porque mientras el periódico de hoy contiene las noticias de ayer, la radio ofrecía "inmediatez"; cuando apareció la televisión se creyó que los demás medios ahora sí se irían, dado que la televisión ofrecía imagen en movimiento y podía transmitir las imágenes reales en directo, hasta nuestros días aun seguimos con los medios tradicionales.

Ahora está la moda de las redes sociales y todo el mundo empieza a vaticinar la caída de los medios de comunicación frente

a unos social media que te informan en tiempo real, pero recordemos que no todo lo que está en la red es cierto, basta con mirar las muertes falsas que han creado muchos usuarios de Twitter, la última fue la del presidente de Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, quién se encuentra realizándose una intervención quirúrgica en Cuba y apenas se supo que estaba siendo operado se empezó a rodar el rumor de su muerte.

El cómo nos informamos ha cambiado y eso lo podemos ver cada uno de nosotros, cuando un amigo nos dice algún dato sobre una noticia y a nosotros nos queda en la cabeza, empezamos a indagar sobre la noticia buscando que dicen otras personas en Twitter, quizás si hay algún video en YouTube, miramos en nuestro blog de confianza y accedemos a nuestro medio digital favorito. La forma en que consumen información y las noticias ha cambiado y no se limita a 'Breaking News' los medios de comunicación tradicionales para nosotros.

Bueno a continuación expondré algunos puntos que creo importantes a la hora de observar este fenómeno al que nos vemos enfrentados día tras día, lo que los medios tradicionales deben aprender de los social media y viceversa.

¿Por qué Sociales necesitan de los Tradicionales?

- No todos están conectados a la red o si lo están no cuentan o no cuentan con un dispositivo que les permita estar 100% conectado a Internet, recordemos que nuestros países afrontan una gran brecha digital en comparación con otros países.
- Los medios tradicionales han

sido los que durante años han generado reconocimiento de marcas, pero hoy en día los Social medias se apalancan de ello para complementar sus estrategias en los mass medias con mercado mediante estrategias sociales.

- Nos ayuda a ubicar nuestra cuenta de manera más fácil y hacer visible (El periódico en su edición impresa, seguramente tendrá un letrero que dice "Sígueme en Twitter.com/cafeycassette").
- Los medios de comunicación aun tienen cautivo una gran audiencia y la seguirán teniendo.

¿Por qué Tradicionales necesitan de los Sociales?

- Los medios tradicionales son unidireccionales (emisor - receptor) y solo cuando se unen con los medios sociales logra crear una comunicación de doble vía (emisor - receptor - emisor) empiezan a escuchar, conversar, interactuar y conocer al usuario.
- Mientras con el medio tradicional das a conocer tu marca, con medios sociales fidelizas a tus posibles compradores.
- Los medios tradicionales informan, los medios sociales reafirman y comunican.

En conclusión, debemos entender que los medios de comunicación tradicionales no se debe limitar solamente a familiarizarse con el entorno digital, sino debe cambiar su manera de informar pues la sociedad está cambiando y con ella la manera en que accedemos a la información.



Andrés Felipe Arias Palma

Re-inventing Histories

Rotimi Olawale steps into his parent's shoes and relives their wonder as he makes sense of the social media technologies that punctuate our office routines and personal lives

It is now fashionable to say that social netwRotimi Olawale steps into his parent's shoes and relives their wonder as he makes sense of the social media technologies that punctuate our office routines and personal lives.

At age 7, describing me in 140 characters would have been a tough puzzle to solve. Not anymore. Not just me, but teenagers, school kids, college professors, housewives, activists and diplomats now describe themselves in 140 characters or less; share their thoughts, opinions, links to articles and practically anything with ease.

It is no longer strange for a group of friends to meet at a restaurant and start discussions – not with each other, but on their mobile phones with Internet, where discussions take place in various circles, on chat forums or Facebook. At the end of 30 minutes, while the group that originally met up disperse, their chat streams continue. Snippets of their discussions have found its way to Twitter and the conversation, pictures and comments are liked, disliked, re-tweeted and shared. That small group's chat ecosystem was shrunk, linking them to a global community in a never-ending spiral.

The work place is playing catch up with this aspect of social media technology, at least in Nigeria. Several of my friends who work with large corporations have had their access to social media sites blocked at work. This is part of several companies' efforts to curtail employees from wasting company time and productivity.

Enter smartphones! The average upwardly mobile digital native has a smartphone with multiple features; top on the most-sought features are to connect to Twitter, Facebook, Mxit, LinkedIn, and several other social media platforms that they have a stake in. Tapping Internet from their mobile phones, they bypass the company's network and continue their e-conversations. The most that they do? Share pictures, jokes, 'Like' several status updates on Facebook and RT a Twitter link!

For several companies, social media has been an opportunity to enhance their brand and maintain real-time contact with customers, 'engagement' in marketing terms. GTBank, my local bank in Nigeria, maintains a wonderful social media presence where they respond to tweets in less than an hour. I was elated when they provided links for me to download a mobile banking app for

my Blackberry phone, enabling me to check account balance, see a mini-statement of my account and also purchase top-up card for my phone.

Today's working professionals are learning to cope and work with the constant buzz, pings, online groups, chats, tweets and more that tend to punctuate their normal work schedule. Quite a number of people are already hooked and can't seem to get any work done if there is any disruption to their Internet connection, even if there are a number of tasks that can be done without the latter. It is not surprising when a couple of weeks ago, a UN report declared Internet access a human right!

I ask myself, where would social media be in the next five years? I am sure even Mark Zuckerberg and the Google founders (both dominant in the social media space) won't have accurate estimates. One day, I might be sharing stories with my grandchildren on how the next best social media platform redefined life for us. I can assume they would laugh and not fully understand my nostalgia. Just like I look at my parents in doubt and wonder when they talk about growing up without a television and working without computers!

To be or 'net' to be

No longer in the dilemma of being in or out, Ayesha Tabbasum believes the Internet is here to stay, so why not jump into the driver's seat and control the steering!

Current trends do indicate that the Internet is here to stay, forever, so I choose to be with 'it'. From a humble start with an e-mail account, to chatting, blogging, networking, and recently, tiny steps towards online shopping, I have slowly travelled the map of the Internet. But honestly, it wasn't something a computer illiterate like me would have thought of, back when we were all getting to know the net.

Using the Internet to keep in touch with friends and family abroad, seemed like the only reason to be online – for about ten minutes a day. Or sometimes just about half an hour a week. This was back in the late 90s. Soon, as I entered college, assignments and keeping up with peer competition turned the tide. The outlook that the computer was a mysterious monster (with exotic viruses) and the net, an addictive danger was slowly changing. It was like riding a bicycle, once you get the hang of the controls and learn the balancing act, you are good to go.

Alice in Wonderland Feeling

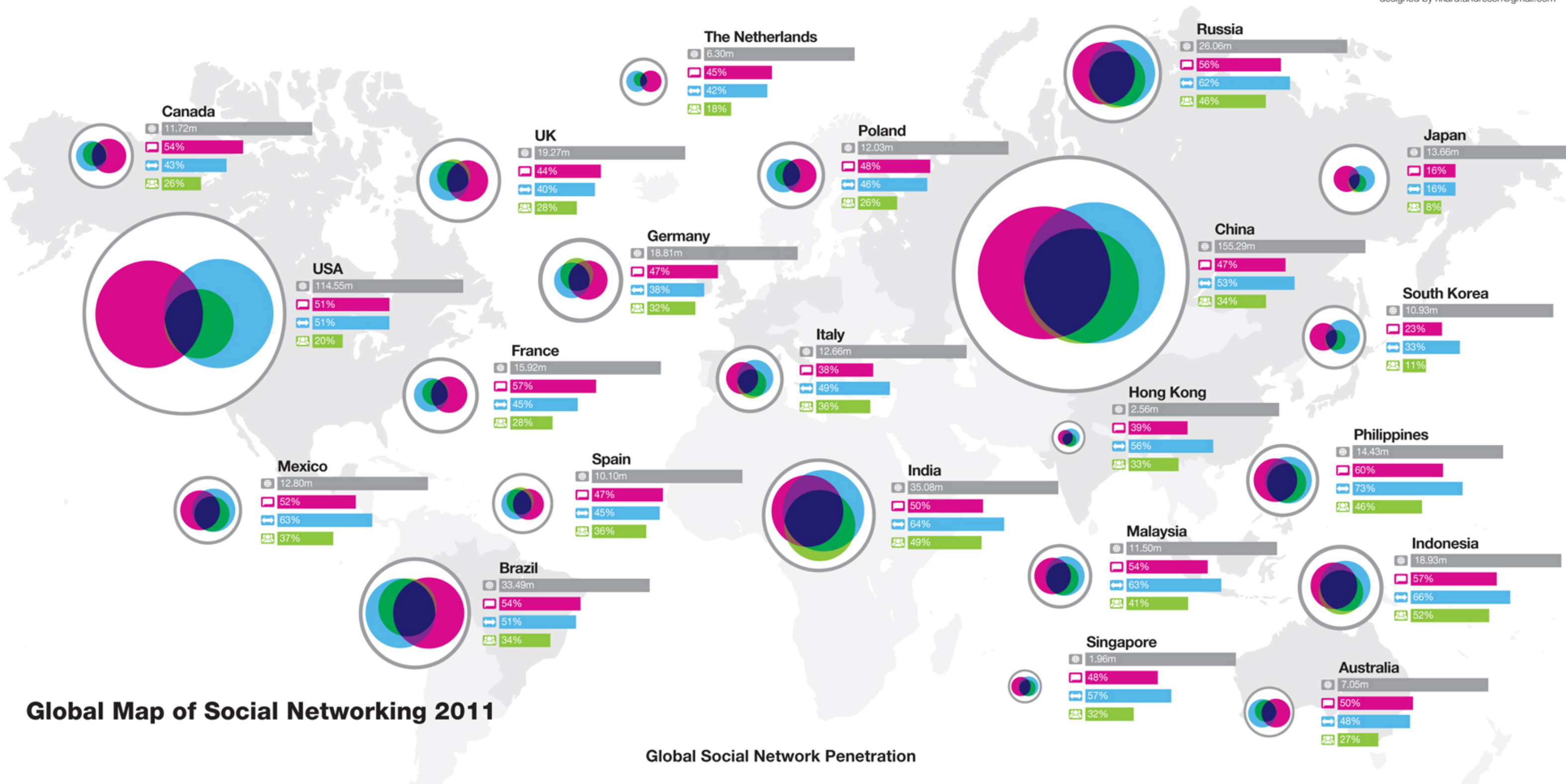
With all the news sites, blogs, encyclopedias and social networking sites,

seeking information, turning in assignments and keeping up to date with trends and the increasing circle of friends became easier. And Google? Oh, Google was the answer to the labor pain of an entire generation for whom everything had to be instant (and I am not referring to the Instant Maggi Noodles-consuming oldies!). Fast food, fast bikes and now fast connectivity – everything on a supersonic speed is how we play life.

My moment of victory (and confirmation) came with the political revolution in a country far away from India, Egypt. I supported an Egyptian activist by vocalizing my dissent – online – against the Mubarak government. It fostered a sense of empowerment in me. It was obvious, though not measurable that opinions do mobilize change. But it doesn't stop there. Metropolitan cities in India are currently in the throes of a major 'feminist' movement, the Slutwalk, and though I don't have the means to physically attend the protest march and carry placards, I am vocal online. Engaging in forum discussions, furiously chatting on Facebook with a larger group of supporters, social media

sites have given us a platform to express ourselves and connect with others. Networking forms a major part of being online today – from professional contacts to book club groups; we are all a-twitter with buzz. The online world stares at me as if it were another universe!

Rewinding to Childhood Days
The last few months have been tough for me. Juggling work, extra projects, family and friends has kept me on collapse-mode. However, the Internet has come to my aid, again. Friends are too busy themselves to meet up, so we keep in touch online, on Facebook. And it doesn't bother us, for we know we can choose to shut down the screen and meet up face to face when the time is right. Of course, there are many 'side-effects' that I haven't spoken of, worst of which are loss of privacy, security breach, this need to keep checking our messages, etc. Recently, my pictures were stolen to create a fake profile in another person's name. I learnt a lesson then, just like the real world, the virtual world has its share of goods and bads. Do I still choose to be 'net'-ted? Yes!



Global Map of Social Networking 2011

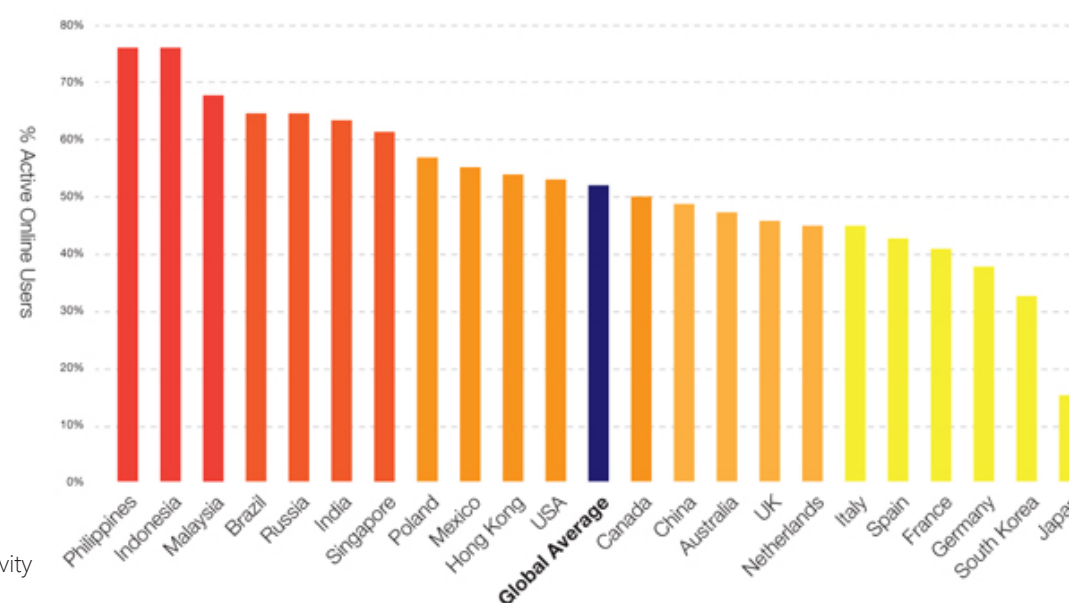
About the Map

This map shows the universe size of active social networkers for each market and then segments users into three behavior types: Messengers, Groupers and Content Sharers. This behavioral data is based on a number of detailed questions we conduct into the way that consumers that consumers use social networks. Because social networking is now so big and touches every aspect of our internet experience, this detail is essential for the ef-

fective planning and implementation of marketing activity across social networks.

This data reveals that users across the world are very different in how they utilize their network, with more focus on messaging and less on content sharing in established markets like US and UK but more focus on content and groups in fast growing markets like Indonesia and China.

Global Social Network Penetration



The most detailed study on the consumer adoption of the internet ever compiled:

PC /// Mobile /// Tablets /// TV sets /// Gaming
100K+ surveys a year /// 3 waves a year /// 36 markets

Find out more /// www.globalwebindex.net/
mail /// globalwebindex@trendstream.net

Digital Natives on Facebook

Now that Sam's turned 24, here is a disclosure on what goes on in his mind, while working.

<http://memegenerator.net/instance/8292221>

Happy Buuday Sam!

Nishant Shah

Any 4Chan users here? Interesting research by MIT on the "life / time span of a thread" and how conversations are kept *alive* on 4Chan.

Nilofar Shamim Ansher

Did someone ask for the value of a hash tag? [www.briansolis.com](http://briansolis.com) Hashtags are to the social web what emoticons were to Web 1.0 and TXTing. Hashtags are not only part of online culture, they are defining a new era of communication on the Web and IRL (in real life).

Simeon Oriko

I am an official Opinion maker, leader and GURU:P....according to <http://tribune.com.pk/story/194831/tribune-twitterati-list-140-characters-of-pakistan/>

Nighat Daad

Hello all, just taking a break from writing for the Digital Natives book and peeping in to see who is still around (also helping Sam reach his target post-count). I have spent almost the whole night writing the introductions and prefaces and editing the final submissions... and I tell ya'll, the book is going to be awesome. I can hardly wait to see it in print now! Thanks, once again, all those who have added so much value to it!

Nishant Shah

The evolution of 'anonymity' or 'Is the cyberspace the new witch-hunt ground?' Sorry for the journalistic beginnings but this article, using the recent Vancouver riot pictures as a peg mentions many a recent overtures on the internet and shows how this certain invisible force, a sort of human curiosity, the urge to know about things and importantly other people has been bolstered by digital technologies

Continued on page 12

Making Sense of Social Network

Socially Speaking

Do extroverts have patent rights over the word social? Ravish Khapra – an introvert by choice – says otherwise.

Would you settle for it if you could be all by yourself and be guaranteed happiness? Because, the assumption is that we are "social" beings and are much better off in company than in isolation. More than happiness, it's our needs that get fulfilled in company. We need to be in a social environment to be heard and receive feedback for our responses. And social doesn't mean public. At home, it is our family members who engage with us and we in turn engage with circles beyond home. Like in office, our colleagues provide us responses. In isolation, with limited communication, we would be static.

There are two types of social beings, namely, introverts and extroverts. Coming straight to the point, let me make it very clear that being an introvert doesn't mean that you are losing out on something. You continue being part of the social stream and get responses from people around you, depending upon where you are – at home, doing grocery shopping or attending tuition class. An introvert may not generate the same number of responses that an extrovert generates. These varying degrees of responses cannot be predicted or mapped; put an extrovert in an isolated holiday home in an exotic beach perhaps, and he would have no stimulus to "be social". Could the other be possible: if we put an introvert in a situation where is forced to interact with people all the time, would we see a change in his "social quotient"? I wonder.

Let us take the example of Facebook, quite

a popular online social environment where people interact with each other. An extrovert would be more active online than an introvert. However, other than this there is no other difference in how the introvert and extrovert would experience this particular online social environment. An extrovert would have more online friends compared to the introvert. However, the richness of the experience in the online social environment doesn't merely depend on the number of friends you have. So, an introvert with fewer friends could have a richer experience than an extrovert who has many friends.

I believe that you should remain in what mould you are most comfortable in. If you think you are by nature an introvert, then let not the "tag" or perception of an introvert – withdrawn, reclusive, anti-social, lonely – force you into adopting artificial ways of engaging with people. No one is an introvert unhappily. We all behave in a certain way because that's our comfort state. The experiences can be positive and life-enriching whether you are quiet and withdrawn, with your books and music or whether you are looked on as an extrovert.

So, everyone is social to some extent and only the degree differs, depending upon the environment we are born in or the stimulus we receive in a social setup. This is as true for animals, I believe, as it is for us. In short, no one can escape from being social.

Did you miss the Celebrations?



Illustration by Albert Muc on Facebook (<http://facebook.com/almuc>)

New Members Who Joined our Facebook group!



Kunal Mehta
India



Gabriel John Komanda
Kenya



Kerryn McKay
South Africa



Peterson Wanyoike
Kenya



Steve Vosloo
USA



Joseph Munuulo
Uganda



Eunice Gray
Uganda

Making Sense of Social Network

Social Media: Selective Addictions—Necessary Obsessions

Anand Philip posits that the lines separating addiction and necessity are artificial at best and nothing but a ruse for the opposition camp to tweet their sentiments / offline

Addiction and necessity are not really opposites. Many necessary things can become addictions and some addictions are necessary. But these divisions are commonly used by both haters and fans to qualify their indulgences. However, instead of making a statement like "it is an addiction for some and a necessity for others", I would like to look at why and how such a dichotomy came to be.

Xenophobia

We love routine. With the advent of social media, many of the older methods of making connections, networking and even romance have been changed radically. Also, in social media the tools keep changing; a while ago it was Orkut, now it's Facebook, and we don't know what it will be tomorrow. Moreover, new technologies come with a steep learning curve and favor early adopters (and adapters). So, it is only natural that these fast changing, time consuming online activities appear as addictions or crazes to the 'older' generation.

Power always tries to conserve power

The new web is that it is an equalizer. Till the advent of blogs and to a much larger extent, YouTube and a few other services, who got to be famous and what becomes the talk of the town was largely controlled by a highly concentrated cluster of king makers. This is one of the reasons behind the mainstream not being very happy about social media, at least initially. It is doubtful that they predicted what social media was going to be or do, but the implicit threat in a medium which allowed everyone to have an opinion and become influential was not hidden.

Variable-ratio schedules in Operant Conditioning

It has been noticed that in situations where there is an action and a response, if the response follows an action, but not at every instance of the action, the behavior that leads to the action is reinforced and habits thus formed are very resistant to change.

This is the reason we spend so much time on social media. We can never be sure which tweet is going to get 100 re-tweets or what pic is going to reach reddit's front page - there are formulas, but they don't always work. So we keep at it.

Conclusion: Addiction or necessity?

The hallmarks of addiction are an inability to stop, severe disruption in normal routine / life, and the need to continue despite demonstrable ill-effects to self. Most users of Twitter don't develop RSI (repetitive stress injury) or malnutrition due to it. Obsessions on the other hand are more common, they are characterized by preoccupation and craving. If you have been blogging or tweeting for a while you have an almost constant mental conversation trying to fit real life into tweets and blog posts. Yes, that is an obsession, and it can be healthy, it can be your bread and butter, it can keep you online 10 hours a day and make your mom go crazy. So, take a step back if your mom threatens to throw you out, but chances are she will join Facebook tomorrow: it's addictive you see.

Find us on
YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/user/superdigitalnatives>



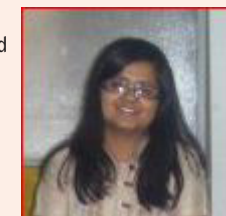
"another platform to fulfil the mankind's need to connect, consume information and share "
Ajay Kumar



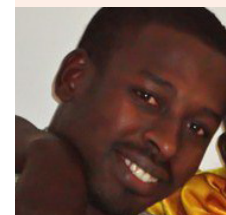
"Social media an alternate reality " @
bangash, Pakistan



"Social media has redefined the boundaries b/w personal, political & social by narrowing the gaps @ makepeacelhou"
Makepeace Sitlhou



"It is a necessity. Social media was created because a need was felt so. Once created there has never been a looking back. It has its pros and cons too. Depends how you go ahead with it,"
Shruti Gautam

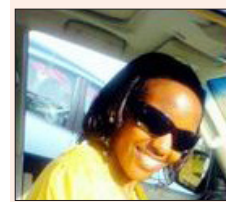


"To me social media is the main source of knowledge and information. Resources are easily shared through social media,"
Cedric Anil via PC Tech.Geeks on Facebook



"The new internet... you discover things because other people have seen them... you learn things because other people write about them... and you're basically here because other people are!!,"
Elijah Bee via PC Tech.Geeks

QUOTES: From Facebook about Social Media



"Communication and more,"
Eunice Gray via PC Tech. Geeks on Facebook



"It's the use of communication technologies, web or mobile, for interaction,"
Will Saya Mwijuka via PC Tech.Geeks on Facebook



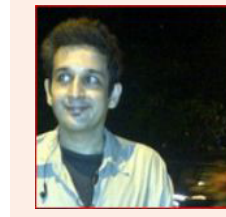
"For me, the difference is that web 2.0 is a technology that allows us to also express the parts of ourselves as social beings instead of only the solitary/individual parts of us."
Maesy Angelina



"In the coming days, if you don't have a social media account you will be part of a small minority. Like what nappy pads are for babies, social media will be for people and businesses. he he he!"
Vinaya Kumar, India



"Digital sphere & its connectivity continuum: social media"
Kunal D Mehta, India



"Hmm, curiosity at first, then a need (info, opinions) and I guess now a want; it's my online water cooler "
Gaurav G, India



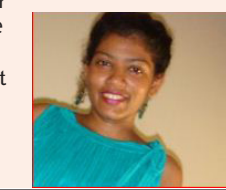
"Definitely a necessity. Helps get advice, get in touch, so many things"
Clinton Jeff



"Across borders, genders and knowledge bases, It is an equaliser."
Amruta Mehta, Mumbai



"Social media is a conversation on things that matter to you, that will go on whether you join it or not. You choose."
Anthony Permal, Pakistan



"Social media is becoming d next effective medium for exchanging news, info n ideas,"
Melissa D.

WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES

When:

19th - 22nd August, 2011;

Where:

Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University, Ahmedabad;

Organised by:

Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore and CEPT University, Ahmedabad.

The Elena Pinchuk ANTI-AIDS Foundation has launched a competition to develop social media and mobile phone projects for HIV prevention.

<http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2011/june/20110630smcomp/>

The 2011 Fundamentals of Freedom Essay Contest is open exclusively to undergraduate and graduate journalism students to citizens of 22 Asian countries. Organized by The Fund for American Studies (TFAS <http://www.tfasinternational.org/>), this essay contest asks young journalists to write an 800-1600 word essay on the role of social media and citizen journalism in today's society.

<http://www.tfasinternational.org/aip/essaycontest/homepage.asp>

OR

<http://ijnet.org/opportunities/essay-contest-social-media-and-citizen...>

What should people never, ever do when online, especially on social networks?

Anti-Social Verses



UI / User interface

By Hasina Hasan

What are users interfacing so much for?
Who are they using through the interfacing?
Users using each other?
Why is U using the IU? Using each other.
Don't make excuse of using the interface!
I see through all your lies!!
Stop using the interface as an excuse to fight!
Stop fighting!
Stop this fatalistic attraction
to the other user
to the other user's tools and attractions!
What is all this tooting!
What is all this kissing each other and then
pretending professionalism in public!
Pretending the public display of hate can
shield,
Your behind the scenes love making?
What is this tightrope walking when instead
you could,
Be tending to yourself and your loved ones!
When that is what you want!
I can see through your eyes I see through my
child eyes!
I am blind and I can see.
I am deaf and I hear your stomach rumble for
what is not yours to have.
You're driving me mute,
As the spectator in the circle, mouth widened!
I am dumbfoundedly in love with you,
Can you hear my silent plea?
Can I let you go in peace
as you let me?
Silently dancing to the music,
Plugged in to the blank screen.

Anti's.
"i teased an anti social element (as = anti
social)
i teased and teased until as began to trust me
for only an angry as will trust a teaser
as as shared her story with me
her anger gave way to tears.
through her tears and snotty nose she shared
some of her story
then abruptly stopped.
as said oh i am no longer angry how nice!
i did not prod her for more.
i'm not sure if as understood that it's ok to feel
angry.
i will sleep with this enemy tonight.
i will give her a blank white sheet tomorrow
and ask her what social means to her."

the following morning...

Third in line
She looked pretty when she cried.
So I teased for a reaction;
'A' response from the Drama Queen.
I teased and teased till,
There was nowhere to hide;
Anger gave way to tears.
She held me tight through all the sobbing,
Replaying the performance;
Abruptly she stopped.
She retorted, "Let's eat, it's time for dinner!"
We ate and slept together that night.
I stroked her hair;
this enemy of progress.
the sentimentalist.
I woke the next morning to find her nowhere.
I searched online
I looked frantically at the mirror
I searched all day
And inside the recycle bin,
I found her.

For shame
On world Social Media Day
For the shame
That public display of affection between men
brings upon us
For the shame upon our household names
By women stepping out of their rightful place
in the kitchen
For all the disrespectful children
Sharing openly and unabashedly about all their
disgraceful interactions
For the shameless
Dancing revolutions they take to the streets
from evil computers these days.
I understand how all this
as shame you perceive.
Now come tell me a story,
read me a poem, Grandma.

Photos from

<http://www.designinindia.net/design-thoughts/writings/professionals/india-unique-professionals-1.html>
<http://www.stinque.com/2010/07/13/and-the-golden-vuvuzela-nominees-are/>
<http://www.mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/what-the-naked-eye-cannot-see>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hendricks-leboeuf.jpg>
www.google.com

Media for Social interaction: Celebrating Social Media day

Maureen Agena tells us why it's time we cheer for World Social Media Day on June 30

First celebrated in 2010 on June 20, the World Social Media Day recognised the day media became social to the common man. The use and application of social media comes at an opportune time to capitalize on the application of citizen journalism, a practice still limited and understood by only a few. Citizen journalism, also known as "participatory journalism" is a kind of journalism where people can publish news globally on news websites or media publications. A practice that has so far been the reserve of established journalists and media companies.

On this day, we appreciate the changes in media that have enabled information sharing and networking in real time among ordinary people.

Social Media for Development

When the World Wide Web made its way into homes and office - beyond military and scientific walls - we needed a web master to guide and help end-users, but today, the situation has changed. Social media tools are second generation tools that empower users on the web to read and write on it. With social media, you can publish your content without having to depend or take permission from established institutions or authorities. It is user-centered and enables inter-operability and information sharing.

It is true that social media alone is not relevant unless linked to development. The tools must be participatory in a sense that people must be involved and share or access information voluntarily. Technology

- and in essence, technologists - need to be 'people centered' and understand people's needs. They must also understand that access might not only be in terms of connection but language. A great example of how the mainstream media is making the best use of social media is i-Report, the CNN program that encourages citizens to share their stories.

Professional journalists and social media: the equation of sharing While attending the 7th World Conference of Science Journalists in Doha, Qatar (June 25-29), I took time off to ask professional journalists if they were aware of the World Social Media Day and how relevant they thought social media is in enhancing their reporting. This is what the few I interviewed had to say:

"Social media enables very innovative ways of sharing information and expressing opinion. It can do much more than we think it does. It's also not true that social media is for the young only," Kounila Keo, youth Activist from Cambodia

"Using social media is a great way of disseminating information in a few characters. In a world where there is so much information, social media helps one learn more about the outside world," Brenda Zulu, ICT Journalist from Zambia

"It's about garbage in, garbage out which garbage might not be 'bad'. It does open up spaces and spheres for those who can get access and use the Internet," Dr Andrew Kanyegirire, CAADP Communication Manager, AU/NEPAD

"If there are days set apart for other causes, then why not for social media?" Prof Fackson Banda, UNESCO

Socializing, Face-to-Face

Ssozi Javie loves social networking, as long as it doesn't have to virtual, 24x7 and with friends whom he never meets

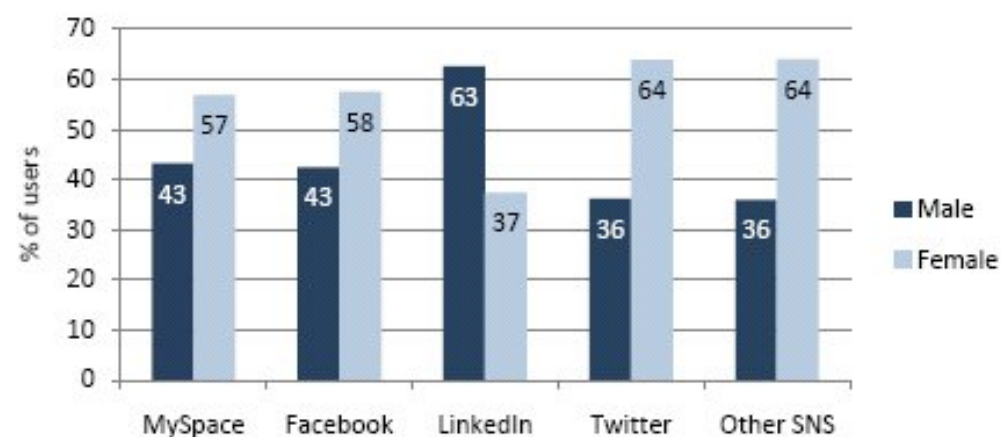
Even though many people continue to appreciate the role of technology in development, there are others who think that technology could negatively impact the way people network in person! This is because digital technologies continue to revolutionize not just the way people communicate but also changes our social networking habits. In this era of new media, social networking has become virtual, sophisticated and quite effective (I must agree) because people can remain far apart but still feel connected in various ways. Until a year ago, my friends and I would organize parties or go out on several occasions to dance, chat and have a good time. The idea of organizing such meet-ups was to see each other, face-to-face, shake hands, hug each other, listen to each other's worries

and just hang out the traditional way. Today, it has changed. I have only met with very few of my friends in person - including those who live or work 10 to 20 minutes drive from my house and office! This is because over the last one year, social media has rolled out widely and has been welcomed and adopted by both young people and the adults. Once I got into the habit of using online social networking tools to keep in touch with friends, I left many of my friends who are not users of social media out. Whenever I update my Facebook/ Twitter/ LinkedIn status, I assume that every one of my friends and close relatives will know what I am up to. I must agree that social networking platforms, such as Facebook, have made communication easy and cheap or free with the introduction of free **0.facebook.com**

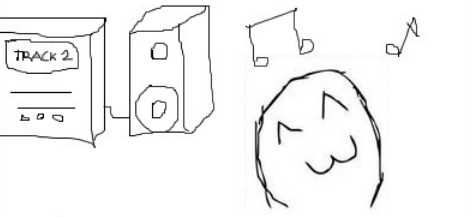
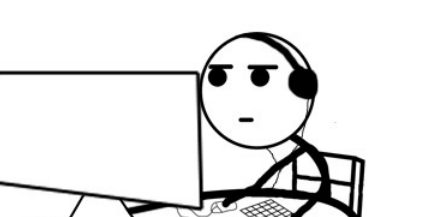

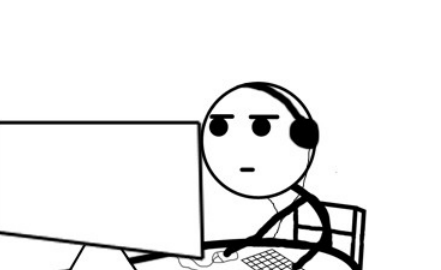

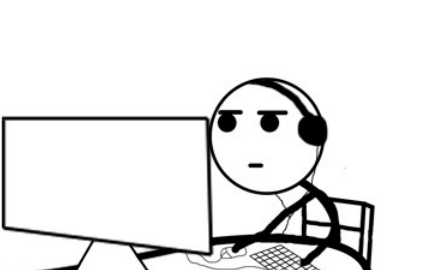

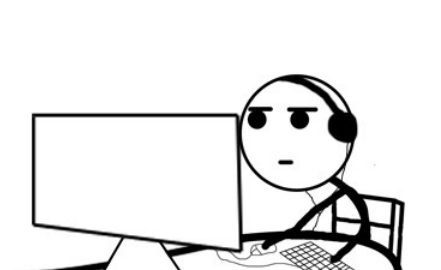

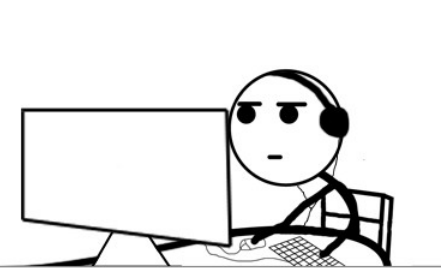

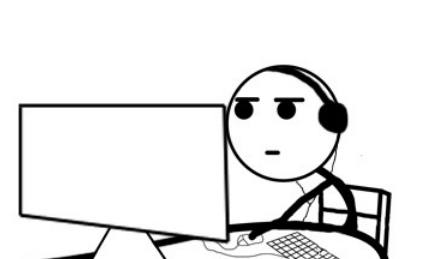
and telecom major Orange's free access to m.facebook.com. To that I must add the fact that Facebook in particular is not just fun to use but also addictive. Personally, I am a big fun of social media because it makes information sharing and/ access very easy and cheap. However, I don't like the fact that social media makes the way I interact with my (close) friends and relatives "virtual". To me, social media is not a substitute for our traditional way of socializing, it is only a supplement. I still value meeting family and friends in person to chat and laugh physically as opposed to the virtual chats or laughing in front of my laptop screen or my mobile phone when I read my friends' status updates or comments on Facebook.

Sex distribution by social networking site platform

% of users on the following social networking sites who are male or female. For instance, 43% of MySpace users are male.



Infographics - Continued...

	15 Years ago	Today
Listening to music		
Watching a movie		
Contacting people		
Reading the news		
Making Music		
Masturbating		

Facebook Discussions... From page 8

so much so that almost any action in the physical realm does not go unnoticed, untraced.

In earlier days what used to be the rumor/gossip of a faraway town or an obscure article on a distant celebrity, is today, the talk of everybody's neighborhood because we all belong to the same neighborhood, the cyber neighborhood.

Upending Anonymity, These Days the Web Unmasks Everyone

Noopur Lily

Right, I want to be an Icelandic citizen. Has Social Media finally "arrived" ...via Facebook that is? #InfoFatigue Iceland Crowdsources Its Constitution

Nilofar Shamim Ansher

Who wants to do something fun? Let's all write a story together! I will the first line of the short story, tag one person, who then has to write add one line to the story, and tag someone else, and that's it! There is one aspect we must observe however, the short story must include

expressions of the digital world used in non-digital contexts! for example: "Sir Ajay the third, rode all the way to Duke Albert's castle, and posted the rewards notice on his wall". For this act of aggression, Duke Albert blocked him from attending the royal banquet." Here we go...

Samuel Tettner



'Free, Fair and Wide-Reachin'

Facebook and Twitter can play a vital role in popularizing traditional not-for-profit organizations, finds out Tsinane Pe in an interview with Solveig Firing Lunde.

Tsinane: Solveig Lunde is a volunteer at Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes (FENAMAD), an indigenous organization located in the Peruvian Amazon. One of the first things she did when she came to FENAMAD was to create a page for the Federation on Facebook.

Tsinane: Why is FENAMAD on Facebook?

Solveig: There are many reasons why I created a Facebook page for FENAMAD. Before involving your organization with Facebook you should ask yourself two questions: Why is Facebook a good tool, and second, How can it help us?

Tsinane: How can the organization benefit from being on Facebook?

Solveig: I will try to answer these questions from FENAMAD's point of view. Facebook has a lot of qualities. First, it is free. Second, Facebook works when other pages does not. Twitter, for instance, does not work in Puerto Maldonado, and FENAMAD's own website takes ages to load. This does not mean that Facebook can or should replace an ordinary webpage, but it can be a useful supplement.

Third, it's a platform that most can easily learn. That makes it democratic, and strategic, for an organization that sees a fair amount of attrition. We can't afford to train new people in using proprietary tools, when they might not be with us 6 months down the road.

Fourth, Facebook is growing in Peru. This means that a lot of enthusiastic Peruvians probably will spend quite a lot of time on the site, sharing information they find interesting with friends and possibly be loyal to organizations that are easily accessible on



Solveig Firing Lunde and Alicia Fernandez, dirigente de FENAMAD

popular media sites. Fifth, it is already big in the Northern part of the world, both among individuals but also, or better said as a consequence, among civil society actors. If you want to make an impact on the European or Northern American domain, both politically and when lobbying for funds, being active and visible on such a popular platform is mandatory.

Tsinane: Could you give us the specific strategies you have taken up for your organization?

Solveig: The idea to begin with, is to use the Facebook page to show that we are an active organization. Not all the activities that FENAMAD engages in are suitable as subjects for a news article, but it is almost always possible to get a nice picture or a couple of sentences out of it, which is exactly what Facebook page is ideal for and Facebook fans want.

FENAMAD works with issues that deserve to be broadcast not only locally, but also nationally and internationally, and Facebook can be an easy-to-use, free and handy tool for this if we get many followers to our page.

In that case, Facebook can potentially also be a good campaign tool. In addition it might help people who drop by the office or meet representatives from FENAMAD to get information on events in Peru or overseas and keep in touch with the organization.

Tsinane: What other tools does FENAMAD use on the Internet?

Solveig: We want to work more with audiovisual tools, and our ambition is to use some of our material on the Internet. YouTube is very helpful for us when we want to publicize our videos. FENAMAD also has a blog, but I believe there is still a lot of unused potential.

Tsinane: Free services on Internet give only benefits or are there also risks involved for the organization? What is your opinion?

Solveig: Successful use of social media requires knowledge about its potential and limits. It is important to keep in mind that everything that we publish on the Internet is public. We are working with people who might not want to be exposed with pictures, names or other information on the Internet, and it is important that we prevent this from happening. There is also a need for capacity building within the organization, to learn how to use the Internet in general, and Facebook and other social media technologies in particular, both at the institutional as well as the individual level.

Visit the Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Federaci%C3%B3n-Nativa-del-R%C3%ADo-Madre-de-Dios-y-Afluentes-FENAMAD/201180499915660> (Screenshot below)



Turning crowdsourced reports into actionable information

By Juan Casaneuva

The Digital Era brings into sharp contrast the cultural changes that it's a harbinger of in traditional society: openness, transparency and communication. Case study of CitiVox | Juan Manuel Casaneuva

Mexican ICT4Change start-up company CitiVox was recently born with the aim of developing technology solutions that would enhance citizen's voice and institution services to promote transparency and better quality of life. Their core technology is being known as a 'citizen relationship management' tool which aims to make crowdsourcing citizen report manageable for institutions that intend to listen to citizens and respond to them with adequate solutions. So far, the initial projects have been initiated to identify, track and respond to quality of life complaints, crime reporting and election monitoring.

Aware that people interact daily with a wide variety of devices and technology interfaces, the CitiVox platform can be customized to receive reports from any source, be it smartphones, "dumbphones", email, Twitter, Facebook, web apps, other websites, etc. Also, using the original communication media, anonymous messages can be sent between the institutions and reporters so that further information can be gathered for verification.

These reports can be labeled in different customizable categories; geo-locations would make them viewable on a map, set a status

and assigned to users for further tracking. CitiVox has enabled workflows so that report management can be carried out within an institution where it is easy to know the status of the reports and the person responsible for executing them. Also, report metrics and analytics dashboards have been included to compare essential report characteristics as well as help track internal report analysis among staff.

Despite the technical nature of the functions, experience from the first project deployments reveal that aiming to set new institution-citizen communications is a complex matter. To achieve this goal, in-depth change management within the institutions is needed and civic engagement must play an active role in order to promote transparent, open and effective dialogue between both parties.

CitiVox's 'citizen relationship management' platform is being used in Mexico and Honduras. In Mexico, a citizen reporting strategy was implemented to enhance government's dialogue with the inhabitants of the state of Guerrero. Initially, the state Ministry of Public Security set-up a SMS public alert service so that people would get useful information on what could affect them in their daily life. Once citizens gained trust and value on the government's information offering, users built a database of over 35,000 contacts in urban and rural areas. The second step was initiating a citizen-government dialogue asking people to report quality of life issues and

setting up a report- management team in the government.

San Pedro Sula, Honduras saw a similar deployment. Here, we gave smartphones to policemen and they were trained to report crimes. Despite the digital divide in the region, policemen became familiar with smartphone use and after an adaptation process, mobile crime reporting began to substitute older crime reporting and follow-up processes in the police department.

Either with open public crowdsourcing or with selected group reporting, CitiVox is engaging with institutions and people to establish technology that can provide tools for turning information into concrete service processes and actions. Social media is slowly but surely becoming a vital part of our lives and could soon be an essential component in dialogue and service between people and institutions. The greatest technological challenge thus far is to build flexible, intuitive and adaptable solutions that can add value to people's voices and institution's internal processes. Though, after the first experiences using CitiVox, the greater challenge surpasses technology. The Digital Era is still very fast paced for many people and some of the cultural changes that it involves (openness, transparency, communication, etc.) demand profound changes in society's power structures, philosophies and habits.

Blogging: Evidence that we're living in the era of individualism

By Albert Mucunguzi

About a year after I had got my first job — at Makerere University Business School, a memo was sent from the Principal's office. He directed that a blog to be set up for each department in the institution. We had been implementing a plan to set up a website for each of those departments, [which was already too much work for me and my team of one ;)], and the new task of setting up blogs was proving to be enormous.

What was always going to be harder was sensitizing the target users of these blogs: cause a lot of them didn't even think of blogs as important — let alone even knowing what a blog is!

But when I was laying out the page for contributors to this issue, I noticed almost everyone sent us a URL to their blogs.

I remember not so many of my workmates had Facebook accounts (that time Twitter so much of a foreigner), and there used to be hot debates on whether they actually needed them.



We set up a few blogs, but slowly realized that people were not that much into blogging, so it wasn't necessary to set them up at that point.

Two years later however, everything has

changed. At least I see a number of my ex-workmates on Facebook, with a few of them actually posting updates regularly.

Every morning I look at my Facebook news feed, and Twitter stream... it's all about people, themselves, and their lives. The "me, mine and my" thing! It turns out that we are in an era where everyone is very obsessed about themselves, as well as very willing to share.

And that is the whole point in blogging: Almost all bloggers write in first person, spending hours each day chronicling their anger at their service providers' (MTN in my case) poor QoS, or how poor the roads in their country have gotten, or as is the case with many Ugandan bloggers now, how the government has failed on basic service delivery like electricity...

Every Facebook update and tweet is sophomoric, solipsistic, snarky and many other words you can learn by Googling me ;)

Back in the day, it sounded queer for someone to actually right about themselves and their thoughts!

It's a different era altogether. I hope you're loving it!

Facebook and the Technologies of memory: On Letting Go

By Samuel Tettner

I have this proto-neurotic habit of keeping my “friend” count on Facebook hovering around 150. I think this is a manifestation of the “carpe diem” (seize the day) idealism that is present in all of us. Or maybe now that I am just a year away from being alive for a quarter of century (I turned 24 this year), I look at this stage as a one-time affair to be maximized.

Our life is full of transitory connections - ex-friends, one-time friends, one-night stand-type friends, situational friends (ones you meet at a festival or concert), friends of exes - as we trans-locate through social ecologies: college, work, romantic engagements, hobbies, new cities, and new lifestyles. By keeping these connections present and visible in our social life (online and offline) we maintain a live nerve to the past. It is very easy to remain friends with people from our past because of a sentimental nostalgia: scrolling through their pictures we reminisce about what was and is no more. The truth is, I don't talk to them anymore, and in the rare occasion I do it is to partake in a mutual exer-

cise of bias confirmation, of the construction of a romanticized distant thought. “Oh man, remember that one time in college when you ...those were good times”.

I used to do this all the time, relive the moments and reap the feel-good effects of younger-Sam's actions. Recently, I have been paying close attention to the effects this practice has on me. The past is a powerful force in my life; it helps me situate myself and judge growth patterns and trajectories. It can also be overwhelming, a force so powerful it can swallow us. I think “the past” is something we all must deal with in our lives. Technology has interesting effects in the way we deal with the past; Nishant's piece (Rest in Code) on how digital storytelling can help people in mourning was particularly touching because, just a week before, a good friend lost his life in a drunk-driving accident. Social media lets us see these changes in our social networks throughout our life, with patterns disturbed, maybe even re-organized.

Are we supposed to have 5,000 friends by the time we are 60? Is our “friend list” an accumulation of everyone we've befriended in

our lives up to that point or is it an instantaneous peek - a cross-section - into our social life at that time? For me the answer has begun leaning towards the latter. If you have not actively contributed to my life in positive ways in the last year, you are out. I am finding this option to be more intellectually and emotionally honest, at least more so than “we'll stay in touch someday”.

So, yes, 150 is my number: 150 friends is a quantity that I can handle. 150 gives me a healthy combination of people whom I can effectively keep a track of. 150 also seems more “natural”, alluding to the size of the nomadic hunting tribes which constituted our early social organization. The key perceptual change, in my opinion, is that by clicking “remove friend” I am not eliminating all the experiences I had with that person. All the good times which constitute my memories of places, people and experiences are still there, there to be cherished and treasured at will. “There” is in my mind, where they have not been appropriated, sorted and formalized by Facebook. “There” is also crucially in my past, which allows me to better live in the present.

POEM: *SOCIAL*

So many faces
they meet and chat in places
and take pictures for memory patches

On and on they push and pull
each other in and out of the pool
in groups of course; to win the bull

Church is a place called hell
Where the devils dress well
and work is done by the address of the bell

In times of hunger they kill to fill
with disregard to how the preys feel
but soon they want those habitats refilled

A story was told of a team
that worked to form another team
that they may form another team

Love and life are two great myths
that we spend on all we got in form of tithes

By Frank Odongkara