INTRODUCTION: WHY DIGITAL IDENTITIES MATTER

This chapter provides an overview of current statistics of digital engagement and discusses why effectively managing one's online presence matters for academics and higher education professionals.

THE CURRENT DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

In higher education, professional online identities have become increasingly important for building and maintaining reputation. A rightly (or wrongly, for that matter) worded tweet can cause an academic blog post to go viral. When this happens, the author can become "known" for something that may have been relatively tangential to their work, and sometimes with a negative effect. Take as just one example the blog post that came out in August 2016 in which author Gabriel Egan "laments the narcissistic craving for others' approval" brought on by social media engagement (Egan, 2016). The response to this post was swift, particularly on Twitter, where many academics argued for the benefits of social media engagement, including the ways in which social media creates a space for diversity and inclusivity in academia. Egan is a Shakespeare scholar, but for the week that this post was passed around social media, his words

were read and debated by academics from many disciplines and, perhaps, were interpreted quite differently than what he intended.

An academic professional online presence—whether through social media engagement with students, communicating with colleagues via email or discussion boards, or creating profiles to share research and teaching artifacts—has become a central part of many of our daily lives. Ironically, given the importance of digital identities to job searches, the promotion and distribution of scholarly work, pedagogical innovation, and many other components of an academic life, higher education professionals receive little to no training about how to best represent themselves in a digital space.

Currently, almost two-thirds of Americans own a smartphone (Smith, 2015) and the majority of adults in the United States (68%) are Facebook users. There are also 28% of U.S. adults on Instagram, 26% on Pinterest, 25% on LinkedIn, and 21% on Twitter; more than half of U.S. adults who are online (56%) use more than one of the five platforms listed above (Greenwood, Perrin and Duggan, 2016, np). U.S. adults with some college experience are more likely to use social media than those with a high school degree or less and the majority of whites (65%), Hispanics (65%), and African-Americans (56%) use social media (Perrin, 2015). Online engagement has become intricately tied to one's use of social media platforms. Usability statistics from some of the more popular social media and media sharing sites provide clear evidence of the pervasiveness of these online environments. Below, I share some basic statistics from five of the more popular online platforms: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter (for definitions of each, see the glossary in the back of the book).

Facebook

Facebook is America's most popular social networking platform with 79% of online Americans now using it (Greenwood, Perrin and Duggan, 2016, np). The platform has 1.18 billion daily active users on average and 1.79 billion monthly active users (as of September 2016), including over one billion users on mobile devices ("Stats," 2016). Approximately 84.9% of Facebook's daily active users are outside the U.S. and Canada ("Stats," 2016).

YouTube

YouTube has over one billion users and hundreds of millions of hours of video are watched daily generating billions of views ("Statistics," 2016). The platform reaches more 18-34 and 18-49 year-olds than any cable network in the U.S. and more than half of YouTube views come from mobile devices ("Statistics," 2016).

Instagram

Instagram has more than 600 million members (as of December 2016); of those, 100 million joined in just the previous six months ("600 Million and Counting," 2016). Users on the platforms have shared over 40 billion photos and share an average of 95 million photos and videos each day (Parker, 2016).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn currently has more than 467 million registered members in over 200 countries and territories ("About Us," 2016). New members sign up on LinkedIn at a rate of more than two new members per second and there are more than 40 million students and recent college graduates on LinkedIn making them LinkedIn's fastest-growing demographic ("About Us," 2016).

Twitter

Twitter has over 313 million active monthly users with 82% of active users on mobile, and 79% of accounts outside of the U.S. ("Twitter Usage," 2016).

DIGITAL CONFUSION

Although one might think that with this many people online we would all know where and how to be in these spaces, it is just not the case. We continue to question the value and purpose of various online spaces and digital platforms. Among other things, we want to know how does being online benefit us personally and professionally? What does it mean to "be" online? How much time should we devote to our digital selves? What do we have control over regarding our representation online? Why should we bother spending our time and energy on developing and maintaining an online presence?And, given that "each platform is unique, and requires a unique formula" (Vaynerchuk, 2013, p. 14), how can we ever be assured that what we are doing online is correct or that we are using platforms in the best way possible?

To be sure, being online is not easy. Online spaces are both complicated and vulnerable. Because platforms, features, and rules of engagement keep changing, even social media experts do not know what they are doing half the time. Indeed, Jessie Daniels, in an interview for the collection *The Digital Academic* (2017), states: "Right now, it's very much there are no rules, there are no guidelines, there are just a few examples and some cautionary tales. There aren't really guidelines or a set of best practices" (p. 167). If you feel some discomfort being in online environments, it may be for one of the following reasons:

It is necessarily social and public. Online social spaces are inherently vulnerable for many people who view digital spaces as just another place where they might face rejection. Being online is about being yourself, but being yourself in any space can be hard. With "friends" and "followers" as public metrics, it can be difficult to enter digital spaces with confidence.

People may or may not engage with the content that you are sharing online. Despite their best efforts to the contrary, many people struggle to separate out the metrics of online engagement from their own personal worth. (For more on engaging and building community online, see Chapter Nine).

It means you might fail. By putting yourself out there online, you are asking for people to engage with you and your ideas. There will probably come a time where you might say something that you later regret. Given the changing nature of platforms and features, it is also inevitable that you will engage on an online platform in a way that demonstrates your lack of knowledge of the cultural norms. So much of digital engagement is learned through experimentation and failure is a necessary part of experimentation.

It requires awareness of constant change. New platforms and features are available regularly and digital spaces go out of style and require you to transition your time and energy elsewhere (remember MySpace?). The digital world is in constant flux, so part of engaging online means being willing to try new things, to being open to change, and to paying attention to the latest developments and trends.

It requires an investment of time. Being online means being in relationship with others and, just like in our face-to-face encounters, this takes time and emotional energy. In addition to learning the "formulas" of each platform, we each need to decide how and how much to engage in each of the online spaces where we choose to be.

But, as many of us are well-aware, being online also provides a lot of benefits:

You can build a network. Nurturing digital relationships and curating content online is an investment that can have huge payoffs in job opportunities, collaborations, and learning about new resources for work (see some examples of this in Chapter Twelve). You can meet and

engage with people from all over the world and you never know where those connections will lead.

You can more easily share ideas with broad audiences. It has never been easier to share your work in open platforms where it can be found by people all over the world. You can post content in a range of mediums from text-based, to images, to video, and more. Perhaps most importantly, you can receive feedback on this content from a wide range of people in real-time.

You can be seen as an expert. By consistently posting quality content on a particular subject, you can become an expert online in a relatively short amount of time. Although academics are used to years of commitment to receive degrees that signal expertise, expertise online is significantly quicker to earn.

You have more information at your fingertips. Although it can be overwhelming, we have more information available to us than ever before. Connecting with and sharing information with colleagues online can make our jobs easier, our research stronger, and our work more efficient.

THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Although recent studies have found that faculty use social media more for their personal lives than they do in their professional lives (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2012; Seaman & Tinti-Kane 2013), faculty use of social media for personal, professional, and teaching purposes is increasing over time (Seaman & Tinti-Kane, 2013). Faculty reticence to use social media in a professional capacity may stem, in part, from their concerns about other faculty who have been attacked on social media (see more about responding to online conflict in Chapter Ten). A 2015 *Inside Higher Ed* survey found that 60% of instructors strongly agree or agree that they are concerned about the attacks on professors for their comments on social media. Indeed, most of the faculty members surveyed (75%) do not use social media to discuss their scholarship or their

political views. Interestingly, this same survey also found that faculty members are not sure about whether social media is a good way for scholars to communicate with the broader public; approximately equal numbers agree (35%) and disagree (36%) (Straumsheim, Jaschik, & Lederman, 2015, p. 43).

These concerns are not unfounded. Recently, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* covered the story of a professor who was fired for comments that he made on his personal Twitter account when he posited that Hurricane Harvey was "karma" in response to Texas being a majority republican-voting state (Turnage, 2017). These kinds of stories, however rare that they may be, strengthen the urban-legend-like-qualities of the cautions faculty and higher education professionals might receive about engaging online. These stories emphasize that it can be hard to know where the landmines are and how best to avoid them.

However, trade publications like *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* also regularly feature blog posts with topics including "How to Tailor Your Online Image" (Kelsky, 2016), "Managing Your Digital Identity" (Meyers, 2013), "How to Build a Following on Twitter" (Jenkins, 2016), and "Why You May Need Social Media for Your Career" (Warner, 2016). Indeed, there is a growing, and needed, literature regarding the engagement of academics and higher education professionals online. Books like *Social Media for Academics* (Carrigan, 2016) and *Social Media for Educators* (Joosten, 2012) provide how-to guides for engaging online as a researcher and teacher. In higher education, whether we are ready or not, the digital age has arrived and is here to stay.

Setting aside the broad array of scholarship on integrating technology into teaching and pedagogy, which is too vast to cover here, the remaining literature in this area can be broadly categorized into the following main topics: academic blogging, social media engagement for

professional purposes, academics' and higher education professionals' lived experiences online, and the use of altmetrics from online channels as a measurement for scholarly impact.

Academic Blogging

Blogs, short for "web logs," have become a popular form for academic online engagement to the degree that some have argued that "academic blogging can and should have an acknowledged place in the overall ecology of scholarship" (Maitzen, 2012, 348). A quick review of the blogging literature finds articles on blogging as a public intellectual (Kirkup, 2010), blogging as social practice (Davies & Merchant, 2006), blogging as community of practice (Mewburn & Thompson, 2013), blogging as a form of academic scholarship (Powell, Jacob, & Chapman, 2012), blogging as a pedagogical practice (Nackerud & Scaletta, 2008), and blogging and identity formation (Estes, 2012). Scholars write about blogs that are disciplinarily situated in the humanities (Davies & Merchant, 2006; Lindemann, 2010, Maitzen, 2012), law (Hurt & Yin, 2006; Solum, 2006), and the sciences (Mahrt & Puschmann, 2014; Riesch & Mendel, 2014).

Academics have been found to use blogs for a wide range of purposes. Kjellberg (2010) argues that academic bloggers write to share, be creative, and find connection. Mewburn and Thompson (2013) categorized 100 academic blogs into nine main content areas: self-help, descriptions of academic practices, technical advice, academic culture critique, research dissemination, career advice, personal reflections, information, and teaching advice with the two most common areas being academic cultural critique and research dissemination (p. 1111). While there is no way to tell how many academic blogs exist, or how many academic or higher education professionals are engaging in blogging, the emerging literature demonstrates that blogging is becoming a standardized academic practice.

Social Media Engagement

Perhaps not too surprisingly, much of the literature surrounding social media engagement in academia is related to the use of different tools in the online and face-to-face classroom (see, for example, Bosch, 2009; Farmer, Yue, & Brooks, 2008; Seaman, J. & Tinti-Kane, 2013; Yensen, 2012). However, the literature on faculty and higher education professionals' use of different online platforms is beginning to grow. While some of this literature focuses on the rationales for academics to use social media (see for example, Miah, 2016) much of the literature looks at engagement with specific social media platforms such as Twitter (Ross, Terras, Warwick, & Welsh, 2011; Veletsianos, 2012), Facebook (Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, & Witty, 2010), Academia.edu and ResearchGate (Duffy & Pooley, 2017; Ovadia, 2014; Thewall & Kousha, 2013; Yu, Wu, Alhalabi, Kao, & Wu, 2016), Google Scholar (Harzing, 2017), and Pinterest (Dudenhoffer, 2012). A Pew Research Study also found that "incorporating social media into the research workflow can improve the overall responsiveness and timeliness of scholarly communication. It also has a powerful secondary advantage: exposing and pinpointing scholarly processes once hidden and ephemeral" (Brown, Cowan, & Green, 2016, np).

Academics and higher education professionals are in need of resources for how to share about their work and process online as new online spaces materialize and mature. Practical guides such as Carrigan (2016) share concrete steps for how to use social media for publicizing academic work, building a network, engaging the public, and managing information. Additional resources have also emerged to help academics and higher education professionals share work with the broader public through traditional and digital media (Gasman, 2016; Tyson, 2010). Exploratory research in this area is also growing; for example, Al-Aufi and Fulton (2014) have studied how social media tools are used for informal scholarly communication. More recently,

Veletsianos and Shaw (2017) examined how the engagement of scholars online is impacted by the imagined audiences that academics believe they will encounter.

Academics' and Higher Education Professionals' Lived Experiences Online

As more academics and higher education professionals are engaging online across social media and other professional platforms, the literature has turned to study their experiences. Barbour and Marshall (2012) provide a five-part framework for how academics present themselves online as "formal," "networked," "comprehensive," "teaching," and "uncontainable" (n.p.). Interestingly, these different personas can be navigated both within and outside of institutional settings. Barbour and Marshall also found that "the level of identity planning and management varies among individuals, and quite dramatically over the course of an academic year" (2012, n.p.). One significant aspect of this framework is how fluid it can be depending on time of year, online platform, and context, among other variables.

Scholars have also explored such topics as how academics participate online as researchers (Costa, 2014; Daniels, 2013; Marwick, Blackwell, & Lo, 2016), how the digital is impacting knowledge flow and gatekeeping in the academy (Graham, 2013), the impacts of online engagement on tenure and promotion (Gruzd, Staves, & Wilk, 2011), how online engagement impacts academic reputation (Reich, 2011), the changing nature of how students and faculty engage together online (Malesky & Peters, 2012), and how higher education professionals engage in social networking online (Veletsianos, & Kimmons, 2013). A short perusal of the literature uncovers these and many other fascinating topics (for helpful collections of this literature, see also, Veletsianos, 2016a and Lupton, Mewburn, & Thompson, 2017).

Altmetrics

Alternative metrics, also known as "altmetrics," are the use of information from social media to measure the impact of scholarly work. For example, rather than only measuring traditional citation rates, altmetrics might also consider how frequently a piece of scholarly work was tweeted about or otherwise shared on social media. Priem, Piwowar, and Hemminger (2012) describe several "events" that might be counted in altmetrics including Wikipedia links to articles, social bookmarking through web services such as Mendeley, Twitter links, links from blog posts, and Facebook likes, clicks, shares, and comments, among many other metrics.

Still relatively new in the digital landscape, altmetrics are a contested space. For one thing, altmetrics are hard to define and even harder to measure. Although some scholars represent altmetrics as the new normal (see, for example, Taylor, 2013), others question whether altmetrics work at all. Indeed, Thelwall, Haustein, Larivière, and Sugimoto (2013) demonstrated that the usefulness of altmetrics is highly dependent on platform and effects of time. Eysenbach (2011) argues that altmetrics should be used to compliment more traditional citation impact measures.

How altmetrics can be useful to scholars is also still under debate. For example, some scholars list social media engagements on a CV, but this is by no means a standardized practice. New tools such as Impactstory (https://impactstory.org/) have emerged to help scholars more automatically generate altmetrics, but many of these tools are still relatively young. Impactstory utilizes ORCiD, which creates a persistent digital identifier for scholars, to track online engagements with a particular individual's work. Similarly, a tool called Altmetric (https://www.altmetric.com/) depends heavily on the use of a publication's digital object identifier, or DOI.

As more scholars engage with and promote their work on social media platforms, the altmetric landscape will continue to evolve. As additional definitions, tools, and services become available, further experimentation will continue to clarify the altmetrics landscape.

WHY DIGITAL IDENTITIES MATTER

Some would argue that playing this new digital game is not worth our time and energy. Others would argue that spending seven to ten years on advanced degrees is also not worth it. And yet, many of us did just that. We invested time, energy, money, and emotional effort in earning pieces of paper that call us experts in niche fields. Digital identities matter for the same reasons that our academic credentials matter. In our professional lives, many of us are playing a similar game about credibility, networking, and getting ahead. Our degrees act as one way that we can open doors for ourselves and be eligible for certain professional experiences that others are not "qualified" to do. By "mastering" our subjects and becoming "experts" we are following well-established rules and traditions of academia. In the same way that we leverage our formal credentials, we can also learn to leverage our digital credentials. Just as we had to learn the language and customs of higher education, being a successful professional online means learning the language, customs, and strategies of things like social media.

As much as it might seem to the contrary, this book is not only about online platforms and tools. This is a book about who you are as a professional. It is about who you have been in the past, who you are now, and who you will be in the future. For that reason, I intend for this book to be as much a "how-to-be-online" guide as it is a "how-to-be-yourself" reflective experience. The more you know about who you want to be and why, the easier it will be to engage in online spaces. While I would never argue that there is a solidified and permanent

"you" that needs to be signified online, I do believe that there is a "you-as-you-are-now" that does require a form of representation in digital spaces.

As this book demonstrates, I have also come to believe that being online as a professional in higher education has become a necessity. However, others disagree. In a piece for *The New York Times*, productivity writer and computer science professor Cal Newport advises, "if you're serious about making an impact in the world, power down your smartphone, close your browser tabs, roll up your sleeves and get to work" (Newport 2016, np). To a degree, Newport is right. Engaging online can be a distracting, time-intensive hobby (this is something the anonymous contributor to Chapter Twelve might also agree with). But, as I will show throughout this book, when done with purpose, it can also lead to professional opportunities and relationships to which you might not otherwise have been exposed.

A FEW WORDS ON LANGUAGE

There are several terms that I use consistently throughout this book that may need a little explanation.

Social Media: I use the term "social media" in this book to refer to specific kinds of online platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and others) that are specifically built to create community, to encourage conversation, and to provide digital social spaces.

Social Networking: I use the term "social networking" to refer to the actions of people who engage on social media sites. Although social networking is a broader term that can describe interactions that occur in face-to-face environments (see, for example, the work of Christakis & Fowler, 2009), in this book it is used to refer to digital interactions via social media platforms.

Academics: I use the term "academics" to primarily refer to faculty members (including contingent faculty) who are teaching, researching, and publishing in the field of higher education. I chose a broad term intentionally so that this phrasing was as inclusive as possible.

Higher Education Professionals: I use the term "higher education professionals" to include the range of people within the field of higher education who are not faculty members, but who are in need of a professional online identity. This group includes administrators in all areas such as those working in student affairs, academic affairs, instructional technology, faculty development, faculty leadership, and other areas of colleges and universities. I frequently use the terms "academics and higher education professionals" together to try to be as inclusive as possible when talking about the potential readers of this book.

Please note that there is also a comprehensive glossary included at the end of the book for terms, platforms, features, and other vocabulary mentioned throughout.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Like many other components of our academic lives such as designing courses, revising scholarship, or effectively leading committees, managing your online identity is an iterative process. Although I wish I could say different, it is not a task that you will check off your list and never return to again. However, I also think it is the iterative nature of online identity development and updating that is a large part of what makes this process both creative and fun. I hope that you will revisit the activities in this book as frequently as you need to to refresh your online identity when you choose to go on the job market, when you need to promote a new piece of scholarship, or when you want to emphasize a new professional skillset that you have developed.

Writing a book on managing your academic identity online when the online environment is constantly changing has its challenges. To ensure that this book would not be obsolete before it was even published, I decided to keep the content in the book focused on you, the reader, and the choices that you will need to make about your professional identity online. Many of these choices, as you will see, are not about the platforms or the features available to you. Rather, they are about your values, your professional aspirations, and how much time and energy you are willing to invest in managing your online identity. Throughout this book, there are a series of reflective questions and activities to guide you as you self-evaluate and revise your professional online identity. The book will be most useful to you if you take the time to answer the questions provided, peruse the examples, and explore the additional readings that are recommended. While I do offer some basic overviews of platforms and features (see, for example, Chapter Two and Chapter Eight), I have designed the book as a guide that is, for the most part, platform agnostic.

To offer you more detailed information related to the technology elements discussed throughout the book, including tutorials of different platforms, you can look to the book's bonus features available online. The book has a companion website at www.mypiobook.com where you will find audio extras, PDF handouts, a syllabus example for how to use the book as a course text, additional examples, links, tutorials, and a range of other resources. There are also directions in specific chapters to go to the companion website when there are relevant bonus resources so that you will always know when to look for these extra components. If there are additional resources that you would like to see created for the book, I welcome you to contact me at contact@katielinder.work to share your feedback.

Before you read this book, I encourage you to first take a moment to consider the main questions or concerns that you have about revising your academic identity online and write them down here:

1. _____

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2. _____

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3. _____

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If you are you concerned about the time it will take to revise and manage your online identity, you might want to pay particular attention to Chapters Four and Five, which focus on time management practices.

If you are wondering about how to prioritize where to be online and how to represent yourself, you should make sure to read Chapters Two and Eight, which focus specifically on choosing the right platforms and posting appropriate content for each.

If you are unsure about what makes an online academic identity "professional," I would recommend that you start at the beginning with Chapters One and Three, which both describe the components that make a strong professional online identity and how to self-evaluate what you already have online.

If you are most interested in learning about the tools, strategies and tactics that will help you level-up your online identity game, make sure to read Chapters Six, Seven and Eleven, which are all about specific ways to promote yourself and your work in online environments.

If you are looking for some tips and strategies to more effectively engage with or start new online communities, turn to Chapter Nine.

If you are concerned about how best to respond to online conflict, whether that is aimed at yourself or your colleagues, turn to Chapter Ten.

If you want to hear about other academic and higher education professionals' experiences creating their own online identities, read the profiles throughout the book and then turn to the final chapter where several colleagues share their stories.

This book will give you some of the tools and strategies that you need to be successful. It will explain some of the common "rules" of the game and help you to decide whether you want to play by those rules. It will describe how being online is always about choices that you need to make about the boundaries between your personal and professional life, your career goals, and the alignment of your online self with your professional values. Whatever brings you to reading this book, I hope that you find it to be a helpful guide as you embark on this professional development journey. Please connect with me and share your experiences managing your online identity through one of the following platforms:

Twitter: @katie__linder (two underscores)

Instagram: katie_linder (one underscore)

Email: contact@katielinder.work