Facebook: Our Social Tool

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By Sissi Xue

“Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life.” (Facebook). It is the prominent slogan of Facebook.com, a social networking website which is now prevailing all around the world (Phillips 2). The advertising picture that website demonstrates to all browsers is a world map connecting all continents, which go well along with its slogan. We could hear people talking about Facebook every corner, every time, and every situation. Statistics also shows that Facebook is growing 3% per week (100,000 new users per day) and active users have doubled since Facebook expanded registration in 2006 and reaches 120 million active users (MacManus 4). It has spread from Harvard to Ivy, from Ivy to numerous colleges, from colleges to various kinds of schools, from schools to companies. Based on my personal survey, everyday college students spend 1 more hour on Facebook on average (Personal Survey). Moreover, the international user base is in a large growth. What on earth characteristics make Facebook so attractive and it seems a large number of students have come to rely on it? Facebook, based on internet, whose name refers to the paper Facebook depicting members of a community, serves as an essential tool for maintaining social relationship and enhancing communication by various functions in terms of both profilers and browsers. Besides, a third party may get this golden opportunity to make profit or make their own goals. Thus, everybody can get at least some fun or benefits from Facebook, and Facebook is being loved from the aspects of profiles, browsers, and third party according to my research, survey, and interviews.

As profilers, on the other hand, users using true names to make their own identity and build their own social network in order to be understood by people. By creating a Facebook profile, we can add friends even those who has out of contact for a long time to keep in touch, leave messages on our friends’ wall, update our personal profile to notify friends about ourselves, join specific groups organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. On Facebook, we introduce ourselves by showing political orientation, concentration or major, relationships status, hometown, birthday, phone number, photo albums, and our culture to others. “It’s like marketing ourselves.”, expressed by Lit Ung (Interview 5). We share information and experience, hoping our trusted friends understand us by letting them know what I am doing and how I feel recently. Putting up a bridge of understanding and communication between us and others is the simple but not shallow mission of Facebook. What is human nature that we are sociable. “We like ourselves to be special, unique, important. We’re need to feel special and hope other can consider us important.” says by Professor Brigham, “People put a lot into facebook and hoping people to respond them, hoping to be concerned.” (Interview 2). Students not only desire to win in academic areas but also social network they are taking part in. Therefore, the profile is like our face. We show what we want to show, what we want to be seen, which are not our hidden part of identities. When everyone gets their own “face” on a facebook, it would be a funny experience of making comments, compliment, and paying attention on others’ faces. It proved to be a very, very popular way for students to explore themselves and show off our identity from inside to out.

Xue Facebook Presentation
Facebook is first launched in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard Freshman.
**Internationalisation - 22 User Initiated Translations**

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• In MU, a student spends more than 1 hour facebooking on average everyday.

• Students think it’s fun and interesting

Why people get so addicted to Facebook?
www.facebook.com
Facebook=Connection?
As profilers: We introduce ourselves
Facebook is like...

- Marketing ourselves to others
- Our own identity on the internet. Hope to be concerned and responded.
- We like ourselves to be special, unique, important. Hope to be considered important.
Facebook=Identity?
Profiler: A good way to organize your friends and communicate with them

Average:
400 friends
Use “walls” to talk

My Wall-to-Wall with Jimmie Burkeen

Write something...

Save a Gift to Jimmie

Silva Xue wrote
at 18:30am yesterday

I have no idea who I am. I guess it would be like to thank the CEO of Facebook. I have been working on it, whatever, it's only 3 pages and the top 3 pages and that does not suck.

Delete

Jimmie Burkeen wrote
at 11:40am on November 10th, 2001

Maybe you can ask the creator of Facebook what his goal were when creating the networking site. It's only 3 pages and that does not suck.

Delete

Silva Xue wrote
at 1:33am on November 10th, 2001

What do you think I don't think that I get a bunch of gifts to do this week. Is there any good idea you can provide on this topic? By the way, are you getting better?

Delete

Jimmie Burkeen wrote
Facebook=Organization?
Professors’ Voice

I use Facebook simply because the generations that I teach use it and it is easier to stay in touch with former students via Facebook than expecting them to contact us everytime they change employers etc. I use Facebook mainly as a way to stay connected.
Stephen Montgomery-Smith

I use facebook mostly for fun, or keeping up with my friends and family. Once in a while a student will communicate with me via facebook.
Browsers: audiences
while profilers are actors on the stage

• Keep ourselves informed of our friends’ news.
• Get to know more about our friends’ personality, resulting in better teamwork.
• Reveal identity and choose friends.

“You can learn things about them that maybe they’ve never told you before offhand.”

--- Chelsea
Facebook to International students?
Plaza 900 slaves
GROW

Basic Info
Type: Student Groups - Service Groups
Description: This is a place for all of you who have been victims or are currently victimized by employment at Plaza 900. Raise your voices! Share your stories! Even if nobodyListen. Your only escape is Graduation.

Contact Info
Email: standarddeviate@gmail.com
Website: http://m.edu/mississuin.edu
Office: FSU/1
Location: 900 Virginia Ave
Columbia, MO

Recent News
Welcome, we decided to unionize the student employees. Though some full-timers will be welcomed as well.
This will be a board for posting the times and locations of realistic or as the Student gatherings in which we frequent bars, movie theaters, bowling alleys, or any other social events for the express purpose of putting aside the virtues we've endured.

Report Group
MU's Page

Extract knowledge by what others have created and shared.
With so many functions, some thirdparty also take advantages of Facebook and make their own goal
Obama Raised Election Funding through Facebook

Break record: In February, he has raised 55,000,000 dollars, 45,000,000 of which was from internet, including Facebook.

discussion group of Obama

An application plug-in board: watch Obama’s news, read his biography

download phone ringing relating to Obama like “yes we can!”

Facebook has invented 750,000 volunteers, 8000 discussion groups and 30000 rallies.
Express our blessing to others
Value?
The end

Thank you!
On the other hand towards the aspect of profiler, Facebook provides a way to organize our new network of friends, the most important ingredient in the recipe of life, in order to communicate with people. According to my survey, students get about 400 friends average on their Facebook (Personal Survey). “Sometimes it’s just easier to send a message instead of calling them to tell them about something because sometimes you don’t know if people are in class or not.” explained by Chelsea (Interview 1). Students look into our Facebook to find their classmates, to get information about school life. As a freshman this fall, I got confused with orientation schedule. Just because of connecting people through Facebook, I received help from upperclassman and could manage the schedule. When we build our social network, Facebook is a tool to operate the network well and efficient. MU student Jimmie said “before Facebook, it’s hard to connect our old friends. Facebook helps me connect people who haven’t seen for long periods of time so friendships don’t die.” (Interview 4).

Keeping friendship fresh is the most valuable thing that students consider, because no one can live without friends. The Malaysian MU student Lynn Khor said: “because I’m in US now, I value communication with others. When I upload my pictures, write my notes, my Malaysian friends can know about me.” (Interview 3). “We would feel stressful, depressed, and tired when study abroad, using Facebook adds joy to our lives.” (Interview 3). Empty life is a depressant, while Facebook is a stimulant. It is a sauce to the monotony of living as a foreigner. Facebook even has a special meaning towards keeping in relationship with professors and students. The MU Professor Gruen values Facebook because “it’s easier to stay in touch with former students via Facebook than expecting them to contact us (their former dept.) everytime they change employers etc.” (Online Interview). Dr. Stephen also said that “Once in a while a student will communicate to me via Facebook and it is of fun.” (Online Interview). Why we would feel awesome as a profiler? Facebook makes all the people we know in a small internet community. Chelsea thinks: “people connect and share ideas, so people can hear ideas from people, from the other side of the country or the other side of the world, normally those can’t be able to contact with. That’s a really needy thing.” (Interview 1). Facebook is also embraced by some shy people because they find another way to communicate freely. Chelsea explained that “I’m not a big fan of talking on telephone. I like to talk to people in person but it is not always possible, so Facebook is the second best thing to
exchange ideas.”(Interview 1). People hunger for communication and they continuously seek ways to break communication obstacle caused by geographic space, time zone and so on. That’s what Facebook provide and what humans need.

On the other hand, browsers are audiences while profilers are actors on the stage decorating the proscenium. They keep themselves inform of their friends’ news thus get to know them more. They extract knowledge by what others have created and shared. In Facebook’s profile, everyone has his/her own identity showed to the public. “You can learn things about them that maybe they’ve never told you before offhand.”(Interview 1). Consequently, a lot of information is shared, giving people a good incentive to go and learn about each other(Fred). It results in investing in choosing friends. I can see everyone around me, interact with the stars and the people who are friends of the friends of my friends that I see at bar. It makes social life more manageable and students spend a lot of time micro managing their social life. When we get to each other better, we can learn from each other, we can do things together with people who have similar hobbies, we can basically perform good in teamwork because of appropriate work assignment plan. Moreover, people are greatly benefited by Facebook’s newly launched program called “groups”, enabling all users joining in one group to obtain useful information. For example, the group of “University of Missouri-Columbia” is available on Facebook. Some activities plan will be posted on the homepage. Or some other students will share their MU experience so browsers can absorb the essence. I attend “Plaza Slaves” group because I work there. If I need a sub shift, post a notice on the group would be much easier than calling every workers to get substitute. Aside of these school groups, some functional groups can be seen as well. Gordon joins Green Business Facebook Group, members of which express their ideas of contributing their own abilities to our planet and often some experts will be invited to deliver a speech about sustainable business in the future. More than 40,000 different groups are functioning on Facebook currently, giving people some new perspective toward life, or world.

Facebook not only gives amusement and benefit to its users, but also provides some social functions in our modern internet world. The future American president Barack Obama has just raised a great portion of his election fund through Facebook. As political funding scandals emerge in an endless stream, it is difficult to raise money in a large amount from a millionaire. But the social network – Facebook contributed a lot to Obama’s success of getting enough fund in a fast and convenient way from the public. Facebook creates a vast human donating community for Obama. In February, he has raised 55,000,000 dollars, 45,000,000 of which was from internet, including Facebook(Obama’s). Obama’s election group sent numerous messages or e-mails to Facebook profilers to indicate them their pending activities and encourage them to donate in small amount rather than considerable amount. Thus, money from numberless donators makes a big difference even though each time is very petite. What’s more, with various function on Facebook, people can establish a discussion group of Obama, watch Obama’s news or read his biography on a plug-in board, download phone ringing relating to Obama like “yes we can ! ”. Splendid propagandas on Facebook has invented 750,000 volunteers, 8000 discussion groups and 30000 rallies(Obama’s). It is better to say these data are Facebook’s magic rather than Obama’s. Facebook can be a place to express people’s sincere and innermost blessings to ones they care for. A couple of days ago, a huge fire happened in a university in China, from which 4 girls died. The status of one girl’s profile (Chinese version) shows she is expecting the 1000th visitor of her page before the calamity. Now, thousands of people have left their messages on that girl’s wall. “Farewell”, “wish you will have a happy time in the heaven”, “god bless you. Take care”. These warming words are from people she knows or unknows. Internet gifts given to her demonstrate how this social website connect different people together to convey their mourning. You may once wonder if everyone takes on a mask on Facebook, but after seeing this page, we will feel the true love from the world. Strangers can express their deepestest concern, even to a dead person. A
feeling touched by our heartstring, which is called heartquake, can be achieved though the social network, Facebook.

Facebook is not just a tool used for people to say Happy Birthday to others without memorizing the exact dates. People are motivated to explore themselves and formulate to others. People are motivated to know who’s around them and to learn about them. People are motivated to use the internet technology to meet material or emotional needs. Before doing this project, I thought people would have plenty of negative comments on Facebook; nevertheless, Facebook receives highly value of its social networking function. As a result, Facebook is part of what we are communicating, what we are sharing, as well as what we are obtaining, so we should arrange it well to make the most of it. Maybe immersion or addiction into something can still provide its incomparable advantages. Hence, I will end up this personal essay of concluding my whole documentary project with an online interview to Joey Clemons, who is a banker of Boone County National Bank:

I was first introduced to Facebook about 9 months ago by my friend Zhu Sheng(Chloe). I had no idea what FB was, but I had lots of customers asking if I used it. I remember asking Huang Qianyi(Elyse) about it and asked if she could help me set one up. She said sure, but the next day I went online to check it out and it was surprisingly easy to set up, so I just set it up one day during lunch. A week later Elyse saw me and said “wow you are so great at FB for being so new”, it gave me lots of encouragement. Now I am over 1000 friends! I use it as a networking tool to talk my customers on a personal level to become great friends with my customers. No other banker does what I do with FB. Maybe it will start a trend? I use it to really get to personally know each and every one of my customers, plus they get a chance to know me. I use it to organize parties and events as well as learn of other events. FB is a great way for me to reach people whom I have never met before, and make new friends with them. Some people have heard of me, but have never met me before. Now they can see my face, all of my pics, my friends etc. to learn about me. I hope to gain more customers from FB this way. One day I hope to create a new official Int’l position for me at the bank but first I must build an Int’l client base large enough to give the bank a good reason to do this for me and FB could help me reach new customers. So as you can see FB can have a great impact on my job. I recommend all of my customers to join and to add me as a friend. I do this so I can keep in touch on a friend level and make them feel comfortable in a new life and invite them to do things so they do not feel so home sick. This is why I host so many events. FB is just a great way for people to learn about the things I do and great advertising for me at the same time(Online Interview).

I did this personal interview through Facebook and we can see how Facebook benefits this banker. Surprisingly, Facebook is moving from center university place to workplace!

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