

The iNVESTIGATOR

Direct

Street Wise: Online Social Networking - A Means of Social Unification or a Security Breach?

By: Dalia Shamkhani

We live in a world where notions of technology and society are inseparable concepts. Daily, we depend on computers, cellular phones, ATM machines, and none other than the internet itself. However, with instant messaging replacing conventional emailing, with text messages replacing a regular phone call, it is not surprising that social networking has been the latest craze in technology. It seems that social networking databases such as Facebook and MySpace have taken over the cyber-world one personal profile at a time.

Many have perceived social networking as a means of using technology to create a single seamless reality. Social databases such as Facebook and MySpace allows people to create personal profiles, add friends, post comments, add photos, create events, share their favorite songs, movies, books; and the list goes on. It becomes an easy outlet to chat with friends, find school friends, or family members around the world. Sounds rather appealing does it not? It is therefore no surprise that the membership to Facebook has doubled to 24 million, only in the last 8 months. Similarly, MySpace remains three times the size of Facebook with 67 million active members. These members will spend an average of 14 minutes on Facebook and an amazing 30 minutes on MySpace daily. MySpace and Facebook are now the second and third most visited site on the internet, replacing Google and Ebay. It does not end there, a plethora of sites have emerged as a result, such as Xanga, Hi5, Livejournal, and Friendsfinder.

Although this idea of creating a unified humanity may seem appealing, it is important to consider that reality is not this idealistic. It is almost impossible to avoid the controversy regarding the use of these social networks, as they allow people to post not only their full names, but their date of birth, phone number, cell phone number and address including apartment numbers and postal codes. The major concern here, is that once this information has been posted online it automatically becomes public information. This not only becomes a problem for personal security and identity theft, but according to NBC's Dateline, it has also resulted in many incidents of sexual predators stalking young men and women around the world. Many are refusing to stay silent on this serious matter and several states in the U.S are already in the process of instating legislation that enforces these networks to confine their use to certain ages. However, it seems that the government's struggling efforts cannot outweigh the site's popularity.



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The use of Facebook and MySpace for reasons other than social networking has raised a sufficient amount of controversy. Recent attention has been drawn to the fact that employers and school admissions have been using these networks as a means of profiling individuals. Many have admitted to using Facebook and MySpace to obtain personal information on perspective candidates and employees. Various police services around North America admit to regularly logging on these sites to observe illegal activities and obtain information on political activist groups. For example, in Santa Monica

USA, a Superior Court Judge sentenced a 22 year-old woman to serve six years in prison for driving under the influence and manslaughter of her 25 year-old passenger. Her lengthy sentence was a result of pictures which the 22 year-old had posted on her own MySpace profile. Pictures of the young woman partying with her friends the night of the accident were posted on her MySpace webpage only one day after the incident. The pictures were therefore used to show her lack of remorse for the accident which had occurred 24 hours earlier. It is therefore not surprising that many have termed these sites as "Big Brother with a consumer friendly smile". An important question comes to mind; is it entirely ethical to use personal information that was meant to be used for social reasons in this manner? It is clear that this question has no concise answer. However, ethical or not, information used in these cases could not be deemed illegal, as individuals have voluntarily provided personal information for the public to utilize at their convenience.

Nonetheless, a more important question comes to mind; how are these social networks developing privacy policies to address these issues? Facebook's privacy policy makes the effort to express to its users that appropriate safety precautions are taken to protect its users on the internet by associating themselves with security companies designed to offer internet security. On the other hand, Facebook prides itself on how *easy* it is to obtain information on other people, and they even suggest that they may collect information about its users from newspapers, internet sources, blogs, and instant messaging services to create a more "personalized experience". Facebook finally concludes its policy by stating that there is no absolute security measure that is impenetrable, and that they cannot guarantee that Unauthorized individuals obtain access to user's personal information.



It seems that no social networking site can guarantee safety on the internet. However, with registration of these sites increasing by the minute, it is clear that the idea of social unification that these sites provide is far more appealing than the security risks. Therefore, here are a few handy tips to assist in one's security on social networking websites:

- Keep private information private:** It is important to remember that all information posted on these sites is public information. Therefore, avoid posting addresses, telephone numbers, a date of birth or social insurance number online.
- Consider using privacy settings to your advantage:** Social Networking sites offer a variety of security settings which can be changed at your convenience. These allow you to restrict who views your profile, message boards, and photos. Generally, the best way to ensure safety on the internet is to only allow your friends to view your profile.
- Be aware of who you add as a friend:** Be sure that you know everyone that is authorized to look at your profile and never add people who you do not know, or never have met. □

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Tales from the Road



By: Shannon Turriff

Although most aspects of being a professional Private Investigator are rewarding and enjoyable, there are those mid-July days when the outside temperature is soaring and the inside of the surveillance vehicle feels like being inside of an oven. The excitement felt on these days when your subject goes “active” is not only result oriented, but also based on the fact that you can finally turn on your vehicle and blast the air-conditioning on your sweaty face.

One such exciting moment was soon halted several years ago while being on an assignment in the city of Ottawa. I was there to investigate a gentleman on an insurance claim who stated that he was bed ridden. I spent almost two days waiting in my “oven” for this gentlemen to leave his home and go play, what our preliminary inquiries had suggested, was his favorite pastime: baseball.



Five-thirty rolled around on the second day of surveillance. After not seeing anything more than my subject sticking his arm out from the front door of his home to retrieve his mail, sure enough, out comes the target of my assignment, dressed in a baseball uniform and carrying what appeared to be a bat bag. After videotaping him effortlessly placing his bat bag into his car, he drove from the area.

Finally, I thought, *we are going to get this guy*. More importantly, I am going to get to feel that long awaited air conditioning that had eluded me for two days.

Not more than twenty seconds after I started following my subject en route to what was no doubt, a baseball game; several marked and unmarked cars of Ottawa's finest converged on my vehicle forcing me to stop.

I was utterly and completely flabbergasted. *What is all this about?* I asked myself. After being summoned out of my car and a rather intimidating period of questioning, I learned that my vehicle matched the description of a get-away car that had just been used in a nearby bank robbery.



Needless to say that after Ottawa's finest had managed to rip apart the curtains of my surveillance vehicle, and empty it out of all the fast food garbage I had back there, there were no bags of money stashed in my trunk.

My excitement soon disappeared as I realized that I would not be able to relocate my subject on this day. On a positive note, I was able to drive back to my office in air conditioned comfort only to give my client the dreaded telephone call to explain the situation.

For the record, the following week my camera captured the subject going 3 for 4 at bat. □

IN THE NEWS...

AN OPEN BOOK ON ADOPTION



By: Lesley Nicol

Imagine not knowing about your personal history, or who your parents are. Imagine not knowing if the child you gave up has had a good life" said Papatello. "Finally, our adoption information laws will recognize how important these things are to adoptees and birth parents. Finally, Ontario adoptees will have what the rest of us take for granted the right to know their personal identity and history." When she introduced Bill 183 into the Ontario Legislature on March 29, 2005, Sandra Papatello, Minister of Community and Social Services, sparked a lively debate. Passed a year-and-a-half ago, the Adoption Information Disclosure Act is expected to take full effect this fall 2007.

What does that mean? It means we have people who want nothing more than to be out there versus a group of people that for a variety of reasons do not want to be out there. In other words we have people who want to be found and people who do not want to be found. We have people who are ok with putting a child up for adoption and people who do not want anyone to know.

On November 1st, 2005, Bill 183, the Adoption Information Disclosure Act passed the Ontario legislature by a vote of 68 to 19. Ontario is now the only jurisdiction in North America to permit both adopted adults and their birth parents unrestricted access to identifying information. Under the new system, adoptees and birth parents can access records that were previously sealed. There are now four Canadian provinces which have unsealed their adoption records; British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Newfoundland. However, Ontario remains the only province without a "disclosure veto", which would allow anyone to keep their records sealed if they specifically requested it. In other words, an adopted person who does not wish to be contacted by a birth parent may register a notice to that effect, if the adopted person is at least 18. Similarly, a birth parent may register a notice that he or she does not wish to be contacted by the adopted person. These notices may include a brief statement concerning the person's reasons for not wishing to be contacted and concerning family and medical history. A notice takes effect when it is matched with the relevant registered adoption order and these notices may be withdrawn by the applicant (adoptee or birth parent) at any time. The notice is given to the adopted person or birth parent at the same time the Register General gives him or her copies of their birth information.

Marilyn Churley (NDP), a birth mother who reunited with her son in 1996, introduced her adoption disclosure reform bill, No. 14, in December 2003. It is modeled on her previous bills on opening sealed records. She observed that many jurisdictions have scrapped disclosure vetoes after finding they were not necessary. Once fully implemented, the new Ontario adoption law will:

- Give adoptees who are 18 years or older the right to obtain copies of their original birth records and adoption orders that would provide them with their original birth name and may identify birth parents.
- Provide birth parents with access to information from the adoptee's birth records and adoption order once the adoptee has reached 19 which could allow them to learn the adoptee's name after adoption.
- Allow the child and Family Services Review Board to prohibit disclosure of identifying information in circumstances where there are concerns for personal safety.
- Give all parties the right to put a "no contact" notice on their file, prohibiting each party from contacting the other.

In 2004, only 887 individuals out of 57,000 who were on the register were reunited. Being an adoptee myself I did not want to be re-united I just wanted to know if my birth parents were healthy after the birth of my daughter. I support the Bill but have compassion for those whom feel their right to privacy has been affected. Justice Edward Belobaba, who is currently residing over the hearings against the act says, "I'm not ready to buy those words; right to privacy, the lawyers mounting the constitutional challenge on behalf of three adoptees and a birth parent have the tougher job".

So the question is; are the non-disclosure options adequate safeguards for those who wish to remain anonymous? The four litigants who are currently fighting this new legislation (three of whom are adoptees and one is a birth parent) believe their right to privacy is being gravely jeopardized. Two of the adoptees feel the emotional trauma would weigh heavily on families and they firmly state that they are not willing to risk their current important relationships. The birth parent agrees that the trauma to her current family would be devastating. They feel they are not protected enough because even though they have the right to flag their file so that they are not contacted, certain information is still provided. This information can be used to track down these people who do not want to be tracked down through private means. In today's world of information overload do these options protect such persons? Are we trampling on the constitutionality of the law? □

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Tech Profile : GPS Systems



By: Dalia Shamkhani

Stored in the depths of the backseats of our vehicles, under a pile of Tim-Horton's coffee cups and an old windbreaker, is probably a map book which has not seen the light of day in a few decades. Perhaps we have just become accustomed to rolling down the window and asking for directions. However, we do not exactly recommend using the rolling-down-the-window method in the private investigations industry. GPS Systems have been a tremendous assistance to private investigators and has become a necessary tool for surveillance next to a camcorder. Many investigators rely on GPS systems in their vehicles today to efficiently navigate themselves on the road, especially in smaller cities and rural areas. These devices generally have a large bright screen for comfortable viewing, voice guidance which loudly and clearly dictates directions and a built-in road maps feature where a point of interest can be chosen using a simple touch-screen.

Developed in the United States in the 1940's, and used in World War II, GPS is an acronym for Global Positioning System and is currently the only Global Navigation System. It is a satellite based navigating device that determines locations and exact co-ordinates by using a variety of satellite signals. These signals create pseudo-random codes that allow GPS Systems to work with low power signals and low antennae. Recent advancements in technology has made GPS systems smaller, more cost-effective, and most importantly, user-friendly. Therefore, GPS Systems are now widely used by civilians as a simply way to get them from Point A to point B.

There are a large variety of GPS Systems on the market today, each providing differentiating functions. At Precept Canada, our surveillance investigators use varying GPS technologies. Three of our investigators have volunteered to provide an analysis of the GPS System which works best for them:

TomTom700:

Pros: TomTom is a small and simple portable GPS System which can be attached onto a dashboard with a suction-cup mount either vertically, horizontally, or even upside-down. The unit allows you to rotate the device 180 Degrees for personal viewing. The system comes with an SD card which allows the user to install of a variety of mapping features. The system provides a multitude of region choices and possesses features such as blue-tooth calling, weather condition notifications and traffic updates.



Cons: Our investigator notes that timing on the unit has been an issue as it will not always inform its driver of turns a significant amount of time in advance. Also, although a variety of regions are provided on its mapping feature, not all points of interest are available. The system also lacks the feature which informs the user of shortest or fastest routes to certain destinations. Our investigator also suggests that signal may be weak in busy metropolis areas or regions with high-rise buildings.

Rating: Despite limitations, it seems that TomTom has proven handy to our investigator who has rated it with an 8 of 10.

Garmin StreetPilot:

Pros: Garmin StreetPilot received the most praise from our investigators. The StreetPilot is one of the smallest and most versatile GPS Systems as it be mounted in a vehicle, or used as a hand held navigator. The Garmin StreetPilot comes with a MapSource City DVD which contains 6 million points of interest. This includes hotels, restaurants, gas stations and tourist attractions. It also comes equipped with a Directory Assistance-type feature which provides telephone numbers to a variety of services. Our investigator noted that it is especially handy when needing to find hotel accommodations for out-out-town assignments. In addition, our investigator also suggested that its extremely small size allows it to be discreetly displayed in a vehicle.



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Cons: Our investigator had little to say about the StreetPilot's limitations. Although our investigator noted that its discreet size may be beneficial for the Private Security Industry, he mentioned that it may be a bit of a nuisance for the average consumer as data entry becomes extremely difficult and rather time-consuming. Also, the StreetPilot is rather slow when it comes to route calculation and re-calculation.

Rating: Our investigator had no problem rating this GPS system with 9 out of 10.

Magellan RoadMate:

Pros: This model possesses points of interests from both the United States and Canada and additional map updates are available through free online downloads. The software comes complete with 14 tutorials which helps the user become familiar with the unit. Route calculation and re-calculation for this system is extremely quick and the unit automatically re-calculates a route when the user decides to make a detour. It also allows the user to choose the fastest route, shortest distance, and the least use of highways.



Cons: The unit comes complete with a 128MB memory card which only allows the user to store up to two regions. Therefore, our investigator noted that the unit is not ideal for traveling great distances, and will require the user to purchase a memory card with larger available space. Additionally, our investigator noted that the display was difficult to read in direct sunlight, and the voice guidance could not be heard over traffic noises. Unlike other GPS units on the market, the Magellan does not allow its user to observe individual satellite strengths and specific satellite positions.

Rating: Our investigator noted that the unit would be sufficient for the average consumer, but would not suffice for more technical-minded individuals. He therefore rated the Magellan a 7 out of 10. □

Armchair Gumshoe

Try a thirty second mystery and see how you do!

THE CASE:

In the 1950's a doctor prescribes an unusual and unappetizing diet to a reluctant individual. The doctor never talks to the individual about his case, but publishes the diet in a best selling book.

THE MYSTERY:

Why did that doctor create the diet and what is the title of the book?

CLUES:

The doctor holds no medical degree, but hopes the public will buy his diet anyway.

The reluctant individual is known only by his first name.

The doctor has also written about cats, turtles, and fish.

The doctor's given name is Theodore Geisel.

The reluctant individual goes by the name Sam.

The meal consists of meat and a discoloured dairy product.

ANSWER: The doctor, [Dr. Seuss](#), created the diet to sell books. The book is [Green Eggs and Ham](#)





The Incredible Stories of...

Sally Moon - Private Investigator

By Diana Kuo

File # DGI-07988

Subject: George White

They say that there's nothing worse than watching grass grow. Well there is: it's being on surveillance.

Ring Ring "Hello?"

"Yo girlfriend, what's up?" sang Lorna Love.

"Yo Lore, I'm on surveillance and bored out of my mind. What's up with you?" Sally asked, relieved that she didn't have to resort to singing 99 bottles of beer on the wall for distraction.

"Well, the spirits were telling me that you were in need of my guidance," said Lorna mysteriously. Lorna was Sally's childhood friend who made a living as a quasi-successful spiritual advisor.

"I don't think so Lore, my subject seems to be legit for once, he was wheeled to his medical assessment in a wheel chair and he hasn't been out of his home otherwise. In fact, I've been watching the grass grow for the last two days."

"You know Sally, I think we can really help each other. Since we're both in the information gathering business. I think it would really help your company if you employed my particular area of expertise as part of your background prep. Maybe you should set up a meeting with that boss of yours," Lorna said.

"Are you trying to get me fired? Dirk Manning doesn't understand anything except the mighty dollar. He has no sense for the mystical. He doesn't even have a soul," Sally said exasperated. Even though Sally loved Lorna to death, she didn't have the heart to tell Lorna that she didn't see exactly eye-to-eye when it came to the whole spiritual realm stuff. Sally didn't judge Lorna on how she made a buck and Lorna gave her the same respect.

"Well, if that's how you feel Sal. But I just want you to know the spirits are telling me you should watch out for this guy. The spirits are sensing a very angry woman," Lorna said in her mystic voice.

"What do you mean? Mrs. White is at work right now. Why would she be angry? Oh, Lore I gotta go," Sally said jumping up to turn on her camcorder.

Sally watched as George White walked out of the front door of his house and drove away in his Honda Accord.

Sally jumped into the driver's seat of her sunflower yellow VW Beetle and raced to catch up with her subject.

I thought this man couldn't walk, Sally thought as she followed her subject into the parking area of a nearby park.

George parked his car next to a Chevy Montana and got out of his car. He got into the Montana that had a woman sitting in the driver's seat.

That's not Mrs. White he's kissing, Sally thought while she aimed her camera at the minivan, which began rocking up and down.□



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