

RMIT School of Computer Science and IT

Course Notes

COSC1147

Semester 2, 2017

Week 05

Lecture Components

- ▶ Social Networks;
- ▶ Regulating speech in digital world



Ref: <http://www.socialbusinessnews.com/the-heart-of-social-support-the-branded-online-community/>

Communities in Cyberspace

- ▶ What is a *Community*?
- ▶ *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a community as “people living in the same district, city, etc., under the same laws.”
- Note that this (traditional) definition of community - with its emphasis on people living in the “same district” or “same city,” etc. - stresses the importance of geography and physical space.
- ▶ But our traditional conception of community has evolved significantly because of our interactions in online forums and social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Twitter *etc.*

Forming Online Communities

- ▶ In the past, many people tended to identify themselves as members of a community by way of categories such as their national heritage, religious affiliation, etc.
- ▶ Today, common interests, as opposed to traditional categories, often bring people together to form *online communities*.

Forming Online Communities (Continued)

- ▶ Many people, both young and old, now interact in Web-based social networking sites (SNSs), as well as in professional-oriented networking sites such as LinkedIn, where they:
 - send instantaneous “news feeds” to friends in the forms of “tweets” via a popular online service called Twitter.
 - participate in one or more blogs (web logs).
 - communicate through electronic messenger services such as video messaging services such as Skype, Viber, WhatsApp *etc.*

Blogs as Online Communities

- ▶ A very popular mode of online communication for is a forum called the *blog* (or Web log).
- ▶ What, exactly, is a blog?
- ▶ According to the (online) *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, a blog is “a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer.”

Blogs as Online Communities (Continued)

- ▶ How do blogs function as online communities?
- ▶ While some blogs function as online diaries (i.e., *personal blogs*), others provide commentary on a particular topic or news story and are categorized as:
 - political blogs,
 - corporate blogs,
 - health blogs,
 - literary blogs,
 - travel blogs.

Popular SNS/apps

- ▶ Facebook (FB)
- ▶ Twitter
- ▶ Instagram
- ▶ Tumblr
- ▶ Snapchat
- ▶ Google+
- ▶ *Etc.*

Some Perceived Positive Aspects of Online Communities

- ▶ Many see online communities as positive, because people can:
 - meet new friends and future romantic partners;
 - form support groups by joining Internet-based social networking groups;
 - join discussion forums to disseminate material to like-minded colleagues;
 - communicate by with people they might not otherwise communicate with by physical mail or telephone.

Some Perceived Negative Aspects of Online Communities

- ▶ Many also believe that online communities have had some negative effects because they:
 - threaten traditional community life;
 - minimise the kind of face-to-face communications (that have defined traditional friendships);
 - facilitate social fragmentation and polarisation (because of the very narrow focus of some groups);
 - facilitate anonymity and deception (thus enabling some forms of morally objectionable behaviour that would not be tolerated in traditional communities).

Satisfaction for Those in Online vs. Traditional Communities

- ▶ Do people find as much enjoyment and satisfaction in participating in online communities as they do in traditional ones?
- ▶ Parsell (2008) cites a survey showing that 43% of members of online communities claimed to feel “as strong” about their online communities as their traditional or “real world” communities.

Satisfaction in Online Communities (Continued)

- ▶ Parsell also believed that this satisfaction may be due to the enhanced nature of the Web - what some now refer to as “Web 2.0.”
- ▶ Web 2.0 is very different from the early Web (i.e., “Web 1.0”), primarily because of the interactions it makes possible in social networking services (SNSs).
- ▶ Analysts disagree on exactly which criteria differentiate Web 2.0 from Web 1.0.
- ▶ But most agree that the kinds of services made possible by SNSs and blogging sites have significantly altered the way users interact on the Web.

Implications of Online Communities for Face-to-Face Interactions

- ▶ Does it matter that online communication has minimised the kinds of face-to-face interactions that define behavior in traditional communities?
- ▶ *Is that necessarily a negative thing?*
- On the one hand, being able to send an email or a text message, or to write on a Facebook user's "wall," is far more convenient than having to meet that person face to face in physical space to communicate with them.
- On the other hand, some worry that critical interpersonal skills may decline, or be lost altogether, in excessive on-line communications that avoid face-to-face interactions.

“Friendships” in Online Communities

- ▶ To what extent, if any, is physical interaction between individuals necessary for true friendships to develop and flourish?
- ▶ At one time, the notion of “disembodied friends” might have seemed strange.
- ▶ But today, we hear about so-called “friends” who communicate regularly online but who may have never met in physical space.

Friendships in *Online-Only* Communities

- ▶ What implications do online-only communications between individuals have for our traditional understanding of *friendship*.
- ▶ Is it possible for people who interact only in virtual (or purely online) contexts to be “real friends”?

Friendships in Online-Only Communities (Continued)

- ▶ Cocking and Matthews (2000) argue that the kinds of close friendships we enjoy in physical space are not possible in pure virtual environments (i.e., in contexts that are solely computer-mediated).
- ▶ They note that online-only friendship occurs in “a context of communication dominated by *voluntary* self disclosure, enabling and disposing me to construct a highly chosen and controlled self-presentation.”
- ▶ As a result, Cocking and Matthews believe that we “miss the kind of interaction between friends that seems a striking and commonplace feature of a close friendship.”

Friendships in Online-Only Communities (Continued)

- ▶ Cocking and Matthews also argue that in off-line contexts, we involuntarily disclose aspects of ourselves.
- ▶ We do this through indicators or “cues” in our interactions with others because of “non-voluntary self disclosure,” which means that one has less control over the way he or she presents oneself to others.
- ▶ So, Cocking and Matthews conclude that important aspects of our true personalities are involuntarily revealed, which makes close friendships possible in off-line contexts but not in virtual ones.

Online Friendships (Continued)

- ▶ Briggie (2009) disagrees with Cocking and Matthews.
- ▶ Briggie considers factors such as “sincerity” and “distance” in making his case for why friendships in purely virtual contexts can be “initiated and flourish.”
- ▶ He points out that communications among friends in off-line contexts, which are based largely on “oral exchanges,” are not always candid or *sincere*.
- ▶ Briggie also notes that the *distance* involved in typical computer-mediated communications can give friends the courage to be more candid with one another than in typical face-to-face interactions.

Online Communities and Social Polarisation

- ▶ Online communities, whose focus tends to be on topics and issues that are divisive and narrow, can contribute to *social polarization*
- ▶ Parsell (2008) argues that “extremely narrowly focused” online communities can be dangerous because they “can polarize attitudes and prejudices,” which can lead to increased division and “social cleavage.”

Social Polarisation

- ▶ Parsell worries that the “narrow focus” of many online communities presents us with cause for concern, which he articulates in the following argument:
 1. People tend to be attracted to others with like opinions.
 2. Being exposed to like opinions tends to increase our own prejudices.
 3. This polarizing of attitudes can occur on socially significant issues...
 4. Where the possibility of narrowing focus on socially significant issues is available, increased community fracture is likely.

Deception in Online Communities

- ▶ Online communities can also reveal a “darker side” of the Internet because people can, under the shield of anonymity, engage in behaviour that would not be tolerated in most physical communities.
- For example, individuals can use aliases and screen names when they interact in online forums, which makes it easier to deceive about who actually is communicating with them.

Assessing the Pros and Cons of Online Communities

- ▶ Graham (1999) believes that online communities promote individual freedom because members of those communities can:
 - *choose* a community rather than having to accept the default community in which they are already situated.
 - easily disregard personal attributes, such as gender and ethnicity, which are more obvious in traditional communities.
 - interact with people living in remote locations that they otherwise would not be able to do.

Assessing the Pros and Cons of Online Communities (Continued)

- ▶ Graham also notes that online communities have negative aspects because they can easily:
 - discourage face-to-face interaction between individuals;
 - increase social and political fragmentation;
 - facilitate anonymity, making it easier for some individuals to engage in behaviour that would not be tolerated in most traditional (or physical) communities.

Summary of Positive and Negative Features of Online Communities

Positive Features	Negative Features
Empower individuals by giving them choices regarding community membership	Can easily discourage face-to-face interaction between individuals
Enable people living in geographically remote locations to interact regularly as members of the same community	Can facilitate anonymity, making it easier to perform morally objectionable acts that are not tolerated in physical communities
Tend to provide individuals with greater freedom	Tend to increase social and political fragmentation

What can you do as a responsible Facebook user?

- ▶ Control your own privacy.
- ▶ On the privacy screen on Facebook, tweak the settings for:
 - ▶ Profile
 - ▶ Search
 - ▶ News feed
 - ▶ Poke, message, friend request
 - ▶ Applications
- ▶ Do not put stuff up you don't want others to see. Think about relatives, friends and future employers etc.

What can you do as a responsible Facebook user?

- ▶ Don't name your employer and then defame them or say anything to bring them into disrepute
 - ▶ Oxford Students have been disciplined with evidence from Facebook after post-exam “trashing”
 - ▶ Students at a Toronto school were banned from an end-of-the-year trip after disparaging remarks about a teacher were found on Facebook

What can you do as a responsible Facebook user?

- Limit your time spent on facebook.com
- Don't update your profile too often
 - You will draw attention to your profile
 - You may be spending too much time on facebook.com
- Be aware of the image you portray when joining groups as well as posting pictures and messages
- Don't accept people as friends if you don't know them

Freedom of Speech in Australia



[Ref: http://smallbanynewyork.wordpress.com/](http://smallbanynewyork.wordpress.com/)

Communication paradigms

- ▶ Internet and the digital revolution has changed the communication in a big way.
- ▶ It has brought many extraordinary opportunities for increasing free expression of ideas, easy and inexpensive communication across the globe.
- ▶ But freedom of speech (FoS), *as many of us forget or do not know*, comes loaded with a sense of responsibility.
- ▶ We must own and take responsibility of our expressions/ideas.

FoS laws in Australia

- ▶ Australians are free, within the bounds of the law, to say or write what we think privately or publicly, about the government, or about any topic. We do not censor the media and may criticise the government without fear of arrest.
- ▶ BUT,
- ▶ Free speech comes from facts, not rumours, and the intention must be constructive, not to do harm.

Ref: http://www.border.gov.au/LifeinAustralia/Documents/lia_english_full.pdf#search=free%20speech

FoS laws in Australia

- ▶ There are laws to protect a person's good name and integrity against false information.
- ▶ There are laws against saying or writing things to incite hatred against others because of their culture, ethnicity or background.
- ▶ **Freedom of speech is not an excuse to harm others.**
- ▶ Often people get fired, get jail term and face awkward consequences because they forget the above golden rule.

FoS laws in Australia

- ▶ Australia does not have an explicit First Amendment equivalent (in USA) which would guarantee the protection of freedom of speech in our Constitution.
- ▶ So where does this leave us?
- ▶ Prior to 1992, things were different
- ▶ Come 1992 in *Nationwide News Pty Ltd v Wills* and *Australian Capital Television Pty Ltd v Commonwealth* (ACTV) 177 CLR 1 the issue of free speech was significantly dealt with.

ACTV v Commonwealth

- ▶ The case hinged around the (constitutional or not) validity of Part IIID of the *Broadcasting Act 1942*
- ▶ The act regulated political advertising during election campaigns, and made it easier for broadcasters to broadcast political advertisements free of charge.
- ▶ The High Court found the laws to be invalid, as they infringed upon an conveyed right to freedom of political communication (*note there is no guarantee of freedom of speech*) in the Australian Constitution.

Ref: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Capital_Television_Pty_Ltd_v_Commonwealth

Further down the road..

- ▶ In 1994, *Theophanous v Herald & Weekly Times* (1994) 182 CLR 104 things changed big time.
- ▶ The implied freedom of political communication was strengthened, with the High Court allowed a “constitutional defence” to be put forward regarding an action of defamation.
- ▶ This was however very short-lived.
- ▶ In 1997, something else happened.

Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation

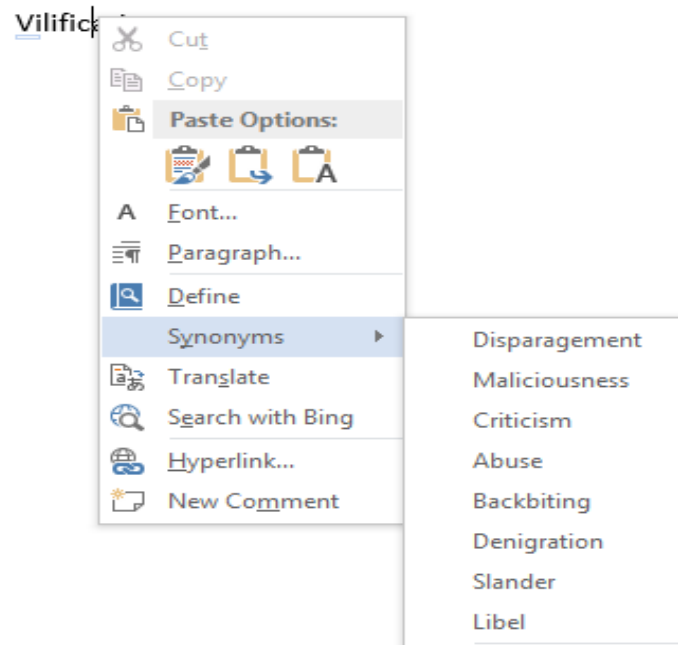
- ▶ *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520
- ▶ NZ Prime Minister took action against the ABC for defamatory accusations during an episode of *Four Corners*.
- ▶ ABC tried to rely upon '*Theophanous v Herald & Weekly Times*' but High court ruled it against them stating- *Theophanous* was no longer good law, and instead extended the notion of qualified privilege.

Freedom of communication

- ▶ The High Court in *Lange* stated that
 - ▶ the protection of freedom of communication in the Constitution is not absolute, and that it is limited to what is necessary for the effective operation of that system of representative government

What can happen if we are not careful?

- ▶ Freedom of speech can become vilification if safeguards are ignored!



Regulating Communication Media

- ▶ It is now almost a cliché to say that Internet lets us all be the publishers.
- ▶ We can “publish” anything we want and it is available to anyone who wants to make use of it
- ▶ **That in itself is a very dangerous assertion!**
- ▶ The digital revolution comes with a lot of positive promises.
- ▶ However many individuals take advantage of that promise.
- ▶ By the end of 2010, number of personal blogs crossed the whopping figure of 150 million!

Do not hide behind the term FoS

- ▶ While computer technologies *might* guarantee FoS and of the press for all of us, the guarantee is not certain.
- ▶ The laws are not explicit on the matter and they are certainly behind the technologies
- ▶ Remember one useful maxim- Constitution was written when Internet and digital devices were not around
- ▶ The law will change but it will take its course.

Controlling Speech

- ▶ Sometimes it becomes necessary to control speech or an expression.
- ▶ The hate speech laws in Australia give compensation to someone who is the victim of discrimination, vilification, or injury account of colour, ethnic origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.
- ▶ **What is hate speech?**

Hate speech

- ▶ It is any speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which is forbidden because it may lead to unfortunate consequences as violence or prejudicial action against or by a protected individual or group, or because it disparages or intimidates a protected individual or group.
- ▶ Sometimes a written speech can incite physical harm as well- *do you know what this means?*

Defamation

- ▶ For defamation to occur, a claim must generally be false and have been made to someone other than the person defamed.
- ▶ Sometimes jurisdiction also distinguishes between spoken defamation, called **slander**, and defamation in other media such as printed words or images, called **libel**.
- ▶ Things have changed in Australia since 2006.

Defamation laws in Australia

- ▶ Prior to 2006, defamation laws varied from state to state across Australia, but now there are Uniform Defamation Laws.
- ▶ The law states-
 - ▶ The publication of any false imputation concerning a person, or a member of his family, whether living or dead, by which (a) the reputation of that person is likely to be injured or (b) he is likely to be injured in his profession or trade or (c) other persons are likely to be induced to shun, avoid, ridicule or despise him.

Defamation laws in Australia

- ▶ Publication of defamatory matter can be by (a) spoken words or audible sound or (b) words intended to be read by sight or touch or (c) signs, signals, gestures or visible representations, and must be done to a person other than the person defamed.
- ▶ Now take this and translate this to Internet-related issues (when it comes to communication).

What needs to be proved at a court of law?

1. The words were capable of a defamatory **meaning** as understood by ordinary members of society.
2. The words **identify** the person defamed. It is not necessary that they should have been specifically named.
3. The words or pictures have been **published**, that is to say heard or seen by a third person.

Do you think this could include a caustic remark about your workplace or a person on your personal blog?

Defences in court

- ▶ If you are dragged into court and accused of defaming someone, there are several defences that can help you (*but most of these are very hard to implement*)-
 - ▶ Truth
 - ▶ Honest opinion
 - ▶ Privilege and protected reports
 - ▶ Political debate
 - ▶ Innocent dissemination
 - ▶ Triviality
 - ▶ Apologies and resolution of civil disputes without litigation
 - ▶ ...

Offensive Communication

- ▶ These forms of communication are also frowned upon-
 - ▶ Spam
 - ▶ An electronic communication which means unsolicited bulk email
 - ▶ Are there anti-spam laws in Australia?
 - ▶ Sexting
 - ▶ Sending suggestive or explicit text or photos, usually via mobile or social media, by underage people.
 - ▶ There are no specific laws but the child pornography laws apply
 - ▶ Victoria is considering updating laws on sexting

Anonymity

- ▶ Some people like to claim their right to FoS but hide behind ‘Anonymity’.
- ▶ What is Anonymity?
- ▶ If we remember one rule of thumb (*apologies for upper case, but a lot of people forget this rule*)-

WE ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM ORDINARY ETHICS AND LAWS MERELY BECAUSE WE USE THE INTERNET OR SIGN COMMENTS WITH AN ALIAS RATHER THAN A REAL NAME.

Social Media and communication

- ▶ The way we communicate has changed for ever.
- ▶ Digital revolution has changed things, we will focus on Social Media
- ▶ Social media has had huge influence on our communication-style.
- ▶ The communication via social media has new rules of engagement

New unwritten rules

▶ People want:

- ▶ to have a say.
- ▶ meaningful dialogue.
- ▶ to be engaged and involved in the process.
- ▶ personal interactions with others.
- ▶ to be listened to.
- ▶ to help shape what they find useful.
- ▶ to connect with others engaged in similar activities
- ▶ plain talk!

Conversation in Social Media

- ▶ For good or bad, the communication on social media is not one-dimensional
- ▶ It is not subjected towards a passive audience
- ▶ It has become multi-dimensional
- ▶ Social media is very engaging and additive to some.
- ▶ It entices everyone to contribute
- ▶ *What issues does this create?*

Positive effects

- ▶ Wider net of people to talk to
- ▶ Stronger virtual communities
- ▶ Learn from others
- ▶ More information at fingertips
- ▶ Learning and discovering new facts
- ▶ ...

Negative impact on communication

- ▶ Not so much negative but undesirable
- ▶ Prolific use of casual lingo in professional environment
- ▶ Use of fragments, acronyms and emoticons
- ▶ Reduced focus on real day-to-day communication with real people, *some people love the virtual world*
- ▶ *Did you know Justin Bieber has 21 million Twitter followers?*

Effect on communication

- ▶ Communicating information that is far more personal
- ▶ Letting impulse guard down
- ▶ Everyone wants to be heard
- ▶ We freely like or dislike anything and everything, and overshare a variety of information that was once unthinkable for public display.
- ▶ *Do you think this has changed communication?*

Bad behaviour

- ▶ While social media is not or cannot be held responsible for people's bad behaviour, it is good to be aware of what constitutes a bad behaviour.
- ▶ There is no excuse for bad behaviour
- ▶ Why do people behave like that?
 - ▶ Because they think they can
 - ▶ Because they confuse their tirade with FoS
 - ▶ Because they learn from others?
 - ▶ Because this is how they talk in real life

Examples of unprofessional communication

- ▶ *Everybody in HR department is a t^^ll!*
- ▶ *That tutor is a low IQ d.....g!*
- ▶ *There is jack all information about the assignment on the discussion board!*
- ▶ *What a bi+\$%^^^h!!*
- ▶ *They are all mor&%\$^s in that department!*
- ▶ *What a f&^*!!**&g hard exam?*

Examples of unprofessional communication

- ▶ *Lets all ditch Andrea as she is dumb and not worthy of joining our group!*
- ▶ *Sc^\$\$#\$*w Mr Jones, he forgot that the test is tomorrow not today*
- ▶ *This is an awful university, abhorrent exam, bad subject, bad tutors, horrible lecturers and I hate it all!!*
- ▶ ...

Often people post such comments and in their defence they say- *I was just expressing myself on Facebook, because like I said I was mad that day because of what he [did].*

Expressing yourself

- ▶ Such expression can land you in a lot of trouble.
- ▶ Society is not meant to communicate in such a vitriolic manner
- ▶ Often this is against the law
- ▶ No matter what the reason is- please do not communicate in such a manner
- ▶ A lot is at stake!

What is at stake?

- ▶ Your reputation
- ▶ Your social media account is your personal brand
- ▶ Organisations are actively searching and mining your social media accounts
- ▶ Anything offensive stays and it hurts or will come back to hurt

Why hide behind the computer and make remarks that you are not willing to share face to face?

Is it happening?

- ▶ People are getting fired from jobs and even getting jailed for such abusive, misrepresenting information
- ▶ Have a look at this video-

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/26/fired-over-facebook-posts_n_659170.html

How to communicate better?

- ▶ Try not to respond to every posting
- ▶ Control yourself
- ▶ Hold the urge to express opinions on every matter
- ▶ Be respectful
- ▶ If you cannot be respectful, please do not post- it is like a bad stain which cannot be removed
- ▶ Do not mix personal and professional lives on social media

How to communicate better?

- ▶ Have a very tight privacy setting, make sure that your social media contacts also have the same level of settings
- ▶ Be accurate about what you communicate
- ▶ Always act in a professional and constructive manner and use sound judgement before posting.
- ▶ Always be polite and respectful of individuals' opinions, especially when discussions become heated- it is better to withdraw than prove a point in an emotionally charged environment.

How to communicate better?

- ▶ Never post malicious, misleading or unfair content about your organisation, colleagues, competitors or other stakeholders.
- ▶ Do not post content that is obscene, defamatory, threatening or discriminatory to an individual, brand or entity.
- ▶ Do not post comments that you would not say directly to another person and consider how other people might react before you post.

How to communicate better?

- ▶ Do not use your organisation's, client's or any logos, trade marks or materials on your website/blog or in a post unless it has been cleared for public use or been otherwise approved by the relevant manager in your organisation.
- ▶ If in doubt, ask the relevant authority on the matter.

Think about these

- ▶ Comments loaded with negative opinion like “That is horrible!” “How cruel!”
- ▶ These are not respectful, though “I strongly disagree” or even “I feel like this is cruel” seem a little more open.
- ▶ Turn “You” statements into “I” statements.
- ▶ If you cannot say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.

Finally

- ▶ *Be aware that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction!*
- ▶ *In many cases abuse will beget abuse.*

FoS laws in Australia: 2014

- ▶ Attorney general George Brandis proposed an amendment (in 2013) in Section 18c of the law which essentially stated..*it is ok for a person to be a bigot*
- ▶ But ... later... the government dropped this amendment and stated that they will not be going through it.

Suggested Reading

- ▶ Textbook
 - ▶ Chapter 11: Online Communities..
 - ▶ Pages 337-343

Assignment 1 due

- ▶ Deadline: August 27, 2017 (11:59 PM)
- ▶ Make sure you submit your zipped file containing your resume, cover letter, **job description (what you are applying for)**,
- ▶ Make sure you label your zipped file with your student number.zip

Quiz 2

- ▶ Go to Blackboard for PCP 1147
 - ▶ Find Assignments tab
 - ▶ Click on Lecture Quizzes
 - ▶ Select and do quiz 2
 - ▶ There are 10 questions in quiz 2 for 1 mark.
-
- ▶ You have 15 mins to answer = 1 min per question + 5 extra minutes allowing for getting into Blackboard
 - ▶ You cannot go back and change an answer, or skip forward - both will end the quiz.