

# If Not Us, Who? Social Media Policy and the iSchool Classroom

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Social networking tools offer opportunities for innovative, participative pedagogical practice within traditional institutional frameworks. However, tensions continue to develop within this space: between creativity and security, personal and professional identity, privacy and openness. We argue that iSchools are uniquely positioned to create proactive, adaptive policies guiding the pedagogical use of social media and offer initial recommendations toward the crafting of such policies. If we expect information school graduates to be proficient and critical users of perpetually evolving social media technologies, we need to create learning environments that support the ethical, reflective and effective use of these tools. As an initial step in that direction, we report on three explorations we conducted to identify the challenges and opportunities that are part of today's educational social media landscape. Informed by these investigations we put forward initial guidelines for developing a "Social Media & the iSchool Classroom" policy for other schools to appropriate, modify and enhance.

**Keywords:** Social media, policy design, information policy, education, professional identity, privacy, access, survey

## Introduction

"If not now, when? If not us, who?"  
(George Romney, 1963)<sup>1</sup>

Through this article we argue that iSchools across the globe should develop policy frameworks and guidance for addressing the use of social media tools in post-secondary classrooms. iSchool educators are keenly aware of the vibrant, complicated interactions that develop between people, information and technology (Dillon, 2012). These interactions are

particularly complicated when individuals are engaged in social media activities that are closely linked to course requirements and evaluations of academic performance. iSchool faculty members are uniquely positioned to identify and investigate the opportunities and challenges associated with the use of *public*, profit-driven proprietary platforms for educational purposes. In turn, iSchool administrators and curriculum committees are poised to incorporate findings from their colleagues' work into the *proactive and iterative design* of information policy that informs effective pedagogical practice and supports the ethically-responsive use of social media. We report on initial steps towards this goal, a series of interwoven investigations informing the

<sup>1</sup>In 1963 Michigan's Governor George Romney challenged his legislature to act: "We should ask ourselves two questions: If not now, when? If not us, who?" (*Time*)

development of an *adaptive* social media policy for our school.

Many stakeholders are involved in the provision of post-secondary education. We chose to frame our inquiries around three primary stakeholders: the educator, the student and the administrator because pedagogical policies have the greatest impact on their day-to-day lives. For the educator, we focus on contemporary research from the Learning Sciences concerning social media use for pedagogical purposes; for the student we gathered students' insights on how they negotiate social media requirements set by instructors; and for administrators we analyzed the institutional policies of top-tier programs, looking for those that address the classroom use of social media.

We begin with a description of the motivation for the project and segue into a review of learning sciences research on the use of social media tools in post-secondary education. We argue that educators interested in improving their pedagogical use of social media need to be well-informed on this scholarship. We then present findings from a survey of continuing students across our school's four graduate-level programs, to develop an idea of how they believe social media is contributing (or not) to their learning when no school-wide policy exists. Next we introduce the reader to our third exploration—an analysis of publicly accessible online social media policies from North American universities that have highly-ranked library and information science graduate programs that are members of the iSchool caucus. Drawing on the three investigations we discuss the development of an adaptive policy statement, "Social Media in the Classroom," that we drafted for faculty discussion and feedback at our school. Although the specifics of the policy remain under review, we describe the core components for readers of this submission to discuss, appropriate, trial and adapt. We present next steps in terms of introducing and implementing

the social media policy across our school. Finally, we call on the iSchool/LIS education community to continue to develop, share and research iterative policy models that engage the ever-changing affordances of social media technologies and the tensions these proprietary tools create in the post-secondary educational environment.

## **Situational Motivation**

In early November 2012, a request was posted to the Association for Internet Researchers listserv concerning social media policies in educational contexts (Kruse, 2012). The scholar who posted the message stated that she had volunteered to draft an ethics document for her department and she needed to address whether it was acceptable to require students to have (or use) an online presence on a social media site as a part of their coursework (Kruse, 2012). She requested that other readers of the listserv share their thoughts on the topic and whether their institution already had policies related to the use of social media in support of coursework. The posts that followed demonstrated a range of concerns, from the protection of students from coercive and unethical practices to ambivalence towards "long-winded" and prescriptive policies that few instructors knew about, let alone followed. The thread was strikingly similar to the discussions the authors of this paper engaged in while trying to decide whether to draft a social media in the classroom policy for the iSchool@UBC (officially the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia). At the beginning of the process, each of the authors of this article filled different roles at the school (assistant professor, teaching assistant/PhD student, and Masters student) and on separate occasions each had been approached for advice from students concerned about an instructor requiring them to develop online identities on a social media site. Despite their strong concerns, students felt hindered from ex-

pressing them to their instructors because of power disparity.

At the time, instructors across the school's programs followed different practices and neither university-wide nor school-wide policies addressed pedagogical uses of social media in the classroom. Many courses at the school incorporate social media, but there is not an explicit school-wide philosophy or approach that addresses the use of social media in the classroom. The three co-authors decided to develop a draft policy for faculty consideration. If nothing else, we hoped it would stimulate focused discussion on the issue. As we considered how to begin developing this draft, we realized that a number of questions needed to be addressed:

- What types of interactions can social media foster in the educational context?
  - What are the implications of these interactions when utilizing third-party platforms that host publicly-available information?
  - Could classroom use of social media potentially compromise existing laws, policies and norms that regulate educational practices and products?
- How do students at our iSchool—future information professionals—perceive social media use as part of their educational experience?
  - Have many students faced the requirement to use social media in their iSchool coursework?
  - What are students' perceptions of the use of social media in relation to their coursework?
  - Do students believe social media use in coursework is enhancing their educational experience?
- Are there publicly available policies that other iSchools have developed to address the use of rapidly-shifting social media in educational contexts?
  - If so, what are the issues these policies address?
  - Are the guidelines prescriptive or adaptive?

The remainder of this article describes our inquiries into the three categories of questions presented above. We matched these questions with the roles identified earlier (educator, student, and administrator) and decided on three approaches to best address each combination of role and questions. The inquiries were done concurrently. We conclude by weaving our findings into a preliminary list of components for social media in higher education policy development.

## **Inquiry 1. Learning Sciences Scholarship**

### *Role*

- Educator

### *Questions*

- What types of interactions can social media foster in the educational context?
  - What are the implications of these interactions when utilizing third-party platforms that host publicly available information?
  - Could classroom use of social media potentially compromise existing laws, policies and norms that regulate educational practices and products?

## **Methodology**

Research suggests that university instructors the world over incorporate social media tools into their pedagogical practice, often as a supplement to face-to-face classroom learning (Armstrong & Franklin, 2008; Chapman & Russell, 2009; Dohn, 2009; Joosten, 2012). Such tools may include wikis, blogs, social networking sites, social bookmarking and video sharing sites (Anderson, 2007; Joosten, 2012). Reviews of the use of social media tools in education highlight many purported benefits (e.g., Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). The participatory in-

formation practices associated with social media (or Web 2.0) mesh well with the creative and critical exercises fostered in many higher education programs (Bennet, *et al.*, 2012; Joosten, 2012). Additionally, the tools are lauded for their ease of use and ready availability (Armstrong & Franklin, 2008). Findings from investigations reported in the last six years link social media use in education with: increased student engagement in the learning process; bridging the gap between formal and informal learning environments; preparing students for workplaces that require competence in Web 2.0 technologies; providing students with opportunities for personalizing and contextualizing their learning; allowing students a sense of control over their learning; improving students' research skills in online environments; and increasing collaboration between instructors and students as well as among students (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2010; Armstrong & Franklin, 2008; Conole & Alevizou, 2009; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010; Minocha, 2009; Meijias, 2006; Grosbeck & Holotescu, 2008).

In contrast, scholarship has also revealed problematic issues that can arise from social media use in educational settings. These include particularly-thorny challenges related to privacy, security, intellectual property, identity management, access, and record creation and management (e.g. Cain, 2008; Collis & Moonen, 2008; Franklin & van Harmelen, 2007; Munoz & Towner, 2011; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Rodriguez, 2011; Duranti & Shaffer, 2013). These issues are explored in detail in the next sections.

### ***Challenge: Privacy, Identity, Compliance***

A significant number of social media platforms used in higher education are owned by third parties (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), often resulting in the inability of the university, the faculty, and the student to control how the user-

generated content (UGC) and personal user information is accessed, shared and (re)used. The management and sharing of classroom-created social media content and the use (and potential selling and/or sharing) of personal data collected by third-party sites requires further examination (Rodriguez, 2011). Safeguards are needed to ensure that these parties are aware of, and adhere to, existing legislation and that concerns related to student privacy and online identity are adequately addressed.

As one example, consider the terms of service (TOS) that govern the use of these third-party applications (e.g. Facebook TOS, 2012). TOS typically require users to fulfill a variety of requirements in order to fully engage with these platforms (e.g., registering personal information, including, but not limited to, name and email address, and agreeing to have the information they post on the platform publicly shared and/or used to endorse products or services). Additionally, user information may be housed on servers outside the user's home institution's jurisdiction, potentially challenging laws and institutional policies on freedom of information, protection of privacy, information retention, information security and access.

Educational institutional policies often govern where and how certain information is stored and what information may be disclosed, and to whom, in accordance with dictating legislation and regulations. Thus, educators may find themselves in an untenable situation when, in attempting to provide students with experience using contemporary social media tools, a specific application's TOS may conflict with institutional policies and/or norms and require students to relinquish information to third party entities which they otherwise would not choose to engage.

### ***Challenge: Ownership of User-Generated Content***

Social media tools may enable the

collective creation and sharing of UGC, which is publicly available online to be used, shared and disseminated, often across geographical and legal boundaries. The utilization of social media platforms to create educational UGC can open the door to novel and complex intellectual property, copyright, and information ownership issues. Traditionally, students have had the option of contributing their coursework to newsletters, journals, conferences, etc. for publication. The requirement to create and post content to a publicly hosted wiki (e.g., Wikipedia) or other social media platforms could impede a student's ability to later publish this work in a more traditional format. Additionally, the requirement to post on open platforms makes student work that is traditionally examined in a closed scholastic environment vulnerable to potentially-unwanted public scrutiny.

### ***Challenge: Curating Online Professional Identity & Context Collapse***

UGC on social media platforms can often be difficult to erase or conceal, and can result in what has been termed a "digital tattoo," a record of a person's online activity (e.g., <http://digitaltattoo.ubc.ca/>). These so-called tattoos are not always flattering—indeed, there are numerous examples of severe repercussions resulting from users posting comments or pictures onto what they perceived to be protected social media spaces (Rodriguez, 2011).

Danah Boyd (2007) calls social networking sites "mediated publics," which she defines as "environments where people can gather publicly through mediating technology." She identifies four unique properties of mediated publics: persistence, searchability, replicability and invisible audiences (i.e. user content posted on social media platforms can be enduring, accessed via search engines, replicated endlessly through copy and paste functions and accessed by faceless users across the globe). Each of these four prop-

erties has profound privacy and security implications—issues that are particularly problematic for students striving to cultivate professional online identities. Student projects posted online (e.g. on a wiki) may not accurately characterize a student's aptitude or skill, especially when done early in a student's tenure, and technological advances may not represent older projects as they originally appeared. Even in cases where social media content is password protected and subsequently deleted, it may have been copied by someone else with access, and could thus resurface later for the broader public to view (Rodriguez, 2011). Such issues of context collapse can evoke anxiety in students who fear (perhaps correctly) that potential future employers and colleagues will evaluate them on the basis of such search results.

Additionally, many contemporary students have already at least one curated online identity that is linked to their non-professional lives and may also have multiple online personas or identities that they have chosen to compartmentalize for any number of reasons.

### ***Challenge: Student Records***

An institution's requirement to create, maintain and preserve records of instruction and student learning is challenged with the introduction of social media into the classroom. The by-products and outcomes of social media use in the classroom are potentially academic records of teaching and learning and may be governed by institutional policies and norms, including retention, storage and management requirements. The presence of such records in third-party platforms may pose challenges to carrying out these obligations (Duranti & Shaffer, 2013). While there is little investigation into the products resulting from the use of social media in higher education, it is necessary to identify such products and understand their attributes in order to effectively ensure their management and preservation over time. Educa-



tors employing social media technologies in the classroom need to be aware of the documentary artifacts that are being generated, where these artifacts reside and what institutional policies and legislation govern their management, use, and retention (Duranti & Shaffer, 2013).

### ***Challenge: Accessibility and Access***

Rodriquez (2011) makes the argument that a “chosen medium” has the ability to accommodate the diversity in student needs when it comes to issues of accessibility and access (e.g. university course management systems can be designed to ensure equitable access to users with disabilities). However, the utilization of third-party social media platforms may challenge the ability of all students to equally access class content and technologies that support its creation and use. Issues of access to these tools are not new concerns. Rodriquez (2011) cites a survey by the UK based AbilityNet that reports the “locking out” of disabled visitors to the five most popular social media sites at the time of the study (Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Yahoo, and Bebo), who were not able to participate or even register on these sites.

Requiring the use of social media tools that are not inclusive may create issues of non-compliance with policies and laws that could land an educational institution in court. Schools such as Pennsylvania State University have been brought to task for not ensuring equal access to information technologies for students with disabilities (Parry, 2010). Consideration of a platform’s ability to accommodate all students and faculty must be undertaken by instructors utilizing social media in the classroom environment.

### ***Summary of Inquiry 1***

The need to educate students “about” and “with” social media tools poses a conundrum for iSchool educators seeking to ensure they keep pace with contemporary

information and communication technology practice. Students need to gain experience identifying the uses, affordances, constraints and products associated with technologies such as social media tools. However, engagement with third-party platforms potentially impacts students’ ability to manage issues related to privacy, security, intellectual property rights and online identity, student records and access. In our next inquiry, we turned our attention to reflections from members of our student body.

## **Inquiry 2: Social Media in the Classroom Survey**

### ***Role***

- Student

### ***Questions***

- How do students at our iSchool—future information professionals—perceive social media use as part of their educational experience?
  - Have many students faced the requirement to use social media in their iSchool coursework?
  - What are students’ perceptions of the use of social media in relation to their coursework?
  - Do students believe social media use in coursework is enhancing their educational experience?

## **Methodology**

The iSchool@UBC consists of four major programs: Masters of Library and Information Studies; Masters of Archival Studies; Masters of Children’s Literature; and Ph.D. We developed a short survey consisting of seven questions for continuing students across these programs that was administered during the summer of 2012. Because we were interested in the responses of students who had completed at least one term of coursework in their

respective program, only continuing students were invited to participate.

The goal of the survey was to elicit students' experiences and reflections related to the use of social media in their coursework. We were not trying to establish any causal relationships or identify specific courses that students deemed problematic. The first five questions were structured to ease respondents into reflecting on their experiences using social media as a part of their coursework. The last two queries were open-ended, providing students with space to share their individual perspectives.

Calls to participate in the survey were sent out via the school's student listserv along with an invitation to enter a draw for a 35-dollar bookstore or food-service gift certificate. The survey was hosted for two weeks in August 2012. There were 51 respondents out of approximately 202 continuing students, making the survey response rate 25%.<sup>2</sup>

We developed a thematic coding scheme for the two open-response questions (6 and 7) through inductive analysis of the submissions. Two raters coded each of the open responses, along six and eight dimensions respectively, using binary agreement as to whether the property was present or absent in the response. An inter-rater reliability analysis was performed using Cohen's kappa statistic in SPSS 20 to determine consistency between raters. The inter-rater reliability was found to be Kappa = 0.827 ( $p < 0.000$ ), which represents a high level of inter-rater agreement.

## Findings

For questions One through Five, we provide information regarding the number

of responses and percentages in Table 1. Participant answers suggest that over 80% (42) of students used social media tools in their coursework, with almost 70% (35) stating that in at least one course, the use of social media was a requirement. The question concerning whether students had the option to limit access to the information they posted to a social media site received a mix of responses, with less than half (45% or 23) stating that this was the case. Please note that 10 students did not respond to this question and 11 (21%) stated that limiting access was an option, but not in every situation. Similarly there was a mix of responses to the question that asked whether students had an alternate assignment option if they did not want to engage in social media channels open to the public; however, 51% (26) stated that they had not been presented with that option.

The responses to the open-ended sixth question on the survey ("How did the use of the social media tool in your course(s) influence your learning experience?") ranged from extremely positive to ambivalent to fairly negative. Several themes, some contradictory, emerged as a whole: concern over privacy, the professor-student power dynamic, the usefulness of social media to support learning, and (conversely) the uselessness of social media to support learning.

### *Theme: Privacy Concerns and Online Identity Management*

Several students expressed concerns over their work being accessible to the public and felt the need to censor themselves accordingly out of concern for their privacy and/or online reputation.

"For the most part, I was very careful because anything I said was being published in a public environment with my personal name attached. I didn't like the fact that I was mixing my personal social network with academic content. It didn't feel like a

<sup>2</sup>Although this response rate is lower than we hoped for, some survey methodologists question the commonly held belief that low response rates and short field times are significant limitations (e.g., Groves, 2006; Abraham, Maitland, & Bianchi, 2006). According to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (2012), there are no "significant differences between estimates from surveys with low response rates and short field periods and surveys with high response rates and long field periods."

Table 1. Social Media Survey Questions.

Social Media Survey Questions	Responses (n = 51)
1. Have you used social media tools in your coursework at the iSchool@UBC? (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, wiki)?	Yes: 42 (82%) No: 9 (18%) No Response: 0
2. Has the use of a social media tool been a course requirement?	Yes: 35 (69%) No: 14 (27%) No Response: 2 (4%)
3. How many courses have you taken that required you to use some type of social media tool?	Mean = 1.74 Max = 6 Min = 0 Median = 1
4. In courses where the use of an online social media tool was a requirement, did you have the option of limiting access to your contributions to members of your class? (As opposed to open to the broader public internet)	Yes: 23 (45%) No: 7 (14%) Sometimes: 11 (21%) No response: 10 (20%)
5. In courses where contributions to a public online social media tool (viewable to the broader public) was a requirement of the class, were substitute assignments provided as an alternative to the online postings?	Yes: 8 (16%) No: 26 (51%) Sometimes: 4 (8%) No response: 13 (25%)
6. How did the use of the social media tool in your course(s) influence your learning experience?	No response: 15 (29%)
7. What is your opinion of using online social media tools to support learning at the iSchool@UBC?	No response: 7 (14%)

‘safe’ environment and I felt compelled to censor myself.” (Respondent 26)

“At times, it made me more reticent to express to [sic] certain ideas or insights than I would have been in class or in a relatively private web environment.” (Respondent 22)

***Theme: Professor-student Power Dynamic***

Some students were uncomfortable challenging social media use in coursework because of their perceived professor-student hierarchy.

“I suppose I should have been more alert to the consequences of participating in social media online, but was fairly nonchalant and ‘rolled with the punches’ as long

as my peers did. It’s also a tricky power dynamic to speak up against an assignment as a student—especially for first term core courses, when you’re still getting the lay of the land and sensing what is appropriate to bring up with your professor.” (Respondent 28)

***Theme: Social Media in Support of Learning***

A number of the student respondents felt that the use of social media in their courses effectively enhanced their learning experience for various reasons, including greater enjoyment in learning, the facilitation of group projects and an increased number of tools to complete course projects

“Learning became more entertaining—it is fun to use blogs and other forms of



social media to discuss classroom topics!” (Respondent 32)

“For this class, we had to create a wiki in a group. It was an interesting experience to learn how to communicate with other [students] online. I also learned how to create a wiki, which I think is a useful skill for librarians to have. It influenced my learning experience in that it changed the way I communicated with other [students]. It made the process of editing a group project easier, as it could be done in real time.” (Respondent 21)

“Social media applications contribute to our having a wider palette of information tools that helps us complete projects more successfully and provides a more inclusive experience for students in remote locations.” (Respondent 29)

### ***Theme: Social Media as Ineffectual for Learning***

Social media’s potential to enhance learning was called into question numerous times. A few students felt that using social media in coursework only helped them learn how to use a particular social media tool, not to engage more fully with course content, while others argued that some instructors inserted social media engagement into their syllabi simply as a matter of form, rather than as a carefully integrated part of their pedagogical practice.

“These tools—specifically blogs, micro-blogs, and wikis—improved my social media literacy rather than enriching the content of the courses. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but I feel that many teachers believe social media tools will enhance their instruction . . . while I found that they merely allowed students to learn new technological skills.” (Respondent 27)

“I don’t think it really contributed much. It seemed to be a slapped on section of the class that was put there because it was

something that it was expected for us to learn about.” (Respondent 19)

Our analysis of responses to the seventh and final question of the survey (“What is your opinion of using online social media tools to support learning at the iSchool @ UBC?”) revealed several prevalent themes, specifically the belief that social media training is essential for iSchool students, a concern that social media is sometimes used without any particular pedagogical benefit, and that social media is not conducive to educational discourse. Unsurprisingly, identity management, privacy, and technology access issues arose once again.

### ***Theme: Social Media is Essential for Information Professionals***

The theme of students regarding social media tools as a necessary component of future practice repeatedly surfaced in the responses. Several students contended that knowledge of these tools would enable them to provide better reference service or expand the information professional’s reach.

“I think it’s essential. It would be a shame to get through the program without having ever used Twitter or at least having an informed opinion on it. (Insert Pinterest, Instagram or whatever tech toy du jour in there for Twitter)”. (Respondent 9)

“Should be almost mandatory to expose iSchool students to social media tools if they’re not already familiar with them. Not so much as a learning tool for the courses, but for a familiarity with technologies that are applicable to helping future patrons in libraries and other organizations.” (Respondent 11)

“I think it is very important to use social media tools at the iSchool@UBC. Our field is expanding through the use of the Internet and we must know how to communicate and engage the public through these tools.” (Respondent 32)

***Theme: Social Media for its Own Sake/  
Does Not Improve Learning***

Echoing several responses to the previous question, some students expressed concern that social media applications are sometimes incorporated by instructors into coursework more for its own sake or its current cultural value than for its educational benefits.

“Helpful when the right media tool is matched up with the kind of course content being covered. Use of a social media tool simply for the sake of using it generally does not improve the learning experience.” (Respondent 17)

“I think that knowing the social media options is necessary, but creating accounts on social media spaces currently seems to be more niche/hip, rather than actually adding to the learning experience.” (Respondent 51)

***Theme: Social Media Not Conducive to Educational Discourse***

Social media used in an educational context fell short of some students’ expectations regarding educational discourse.

“My opinion of social media is that it is a poor substitute for actual discussion, which it sometimes replaces; and also that it is a poor vehicle for discussion, which is always required.” (Respondent 5)

“The concept is a fascinating way of approaching interpersonal and broad information sharing, but supports lazy link-dumping more effectively than true discourse.” (Respondent 41)

***Theme: Privacy Concerns and Online Identity Management***

As with the previous question, student responses revealed their concern for privacy and identity management when using social media tools for coursework.

“The things we post on social media really are digital tattoos. They can’t ever be fully erased. I don’t think it’s fair to \*require\* people to get a tattoo. That said, I do think it could [be] workable if people have the option of remaining anonymous.” (Respondent 22)

***Theme: Access Issues***

Concerns over equal access to technology emerged in several responses.

“There is still inequality in how we are able to partake in social media depending on our access. People with Twitter/Facebook on their smartphone interact differently with the tools than [sic] those who don’t, never mind those without home computers.” (Respondent 15)

“It does limit this education to students who have immediate access to technology, but that’s a limitation that is felt all over the iSchool, and probably the university as well.” (Respondent 23)

***Summary of Inquiry 2***

Overall, the responses to the survey enriched our understanding of the types of benefits and challenges students were concerned about in relation to the use of social media in their iSchool classrooms. In many ways the concerns were similar to those that arose in our review of the Learning Sciences literature (e.g., privacy, identity curation, access, etc.). However, the students’ responses were clearly grounded in their specific circumstances as future information professionals. They articulated an acceptance that engagement with social media tools would be a critical part of their professional futures, while at the same time expressing concerns that the “how” and “why” of this engagement was often inadequately addressed by their instructors. These findings provide us with further evidence that there is a need to help instructors articulate and address both the

challenges and opportunities of social media use. We posit that policies governing the use of social media in iSchool courses are a critical part of addressing that need.

### **Inquiry 3: Survey of Institutional Social Media Policies at Top Ranked Members of the iCaucus**

#### *Role*

- Administrator

#### *Questions*

- Are there publicly available policies that other iSchools have developed to address the use of rapidly shifting social media in educational contexts?
  - If so, what are the issues these policies address?
  - Are the guidelines prescriptive or adaptive?

The two initial investigations revealed that anecdotal concerns voiced by students across our programs were shared by many of their colleagues (Inquiry 2) and indicated that many of these concerns may not be unique to our specific iSchool context (Inquiry 1). The two investigations supported our claim that a social media policy could help address arising issues in a less ad hoc manner. We combed the websites of our home institution looking for relevant social media policies that might already exist. It was not a satisfying hunt. We found dated policies built on a prescriptive model that did not account for the challenges and opportunities of contemporary pedagogical practice that incorporates social media tools. The policies did not address the concerns raised by either of the earlier investigations, most notably those from the students'. Unsurprisingly, the institutional policies were often primarily concerned with protecting the institution from liability (e.g. managing the brand and copyright infringement).

We expanded our search to include

other North American schools in an effort to situate the inquiry within comparable legislative and socio-cultural contexts. Our purposive sample consisted of the 13 Library and Information Science graduate programs ranked in the top ten by the latest (at the time of our data collection) US News and World Report ranking of library and information science graduate programs (2009). There are 13 schools in the top 10 because of ties. We also included iSchool @ UBC because it was the motivating context of our study (see Appendix 1 for full list of schools). The pool of 13 schools is the same as those included in the top ten 2013 ranking by US News & World Report, although the order of appearance differs (US News & World Report, 2013). During November 2012, we conducted a systematic search for social media policies across these institutions, both at the university and school or departmental level. We searched for policies or guidelines that address the use of social media in support of classroom instruction through each institution's website (see Appendix 1 for search terms).

### **Findings**

Out of fifteen institutions, all but two provided public online access to policies that address social media use (see Appendix 1). However, of the 13 that had policies available, the most common area of concern was "how to use social media" from a marketing perspective. Not surprisingly, these top-tier institutions were concerned about their online identities and how employees are representing the school "brand". Other concerns included: using respectful language, compliance with institutional policies related to engaging with the media, planning, lists of do's and don'ts, application specific how-tos, legal liabilities, institutional voice (or representing the university), security, transparency, university property, naming conventions, privacy, copyright and correct attribution.

Only two of the policies found specifically addressed the use of social media for pedagogical purposes. One of these policies was, in essence, an abbreviated copy of the other, using the same prescriptive tone (e.g., “instructors should . . .” or “instructors must . . .”), similar structure and headings, and some of the same phrases. Neither policy addressed all of the concerns that arose from the inquiries above. However, they did go a good distance in addressing examples of using social media for courses, the importance of disclosing intent to use third party media platforms to the students, legal issues of privacy, accessibility, data security, intellectual property and IT support. Unfortunately, issues such as matching social media tools and practices to pedagogical goals, faculty/student power relationships, alternate assignments, and professional identity were not addressed, and the policies were university-wide, not created specifically for the iSchool pedagogical context.

### ***Summary of Inquiry 3***

All of the institutions with social media policies primarily addressed concerns related to marketing, school identity and privacy rather than those directly stemming from the use of social media for pedagogical practice. Although these documents were well written and thorough, they did not fully address the concerns uncovered during our investigation of social media in the classroom scholarship or those expressed by our student participants.

### **Discussion**

Here we provide initial responses to the list of questions that we posed at the beginning of this project, the first set of which was explored through our examination of the scholarly literature on social media use in higher education, which revealed that professor-student communication can be supported through the pedagogical use of social media, and the increased engage-

ment of students with the learning process as a result of using social media for classroom purposes has the potential to augment an instructor’s teaching. Existing alongside these beneficial attributes are significant concerns regarding student privacy, intellectual property, identity management and more. Instructors who choose to use third-party owned social media platforms to supplement their face-to-face teaching have virtually no control over the ways in which their students’ personal information and the content they generate will be used. The third-party owned sites’ use of student information could potentially violate laws and university policies regarding privacy and data protection.

The second set of questions was addressed through our survey of continuing students. 82% of the respondents reported using social media tools as a requirement in one or more of their classes and perceptions of its use and its ability to augment their education varied widely. The concerns fitted broadly into three categories: one, the use of social media to support learning; two, the challenges of using social media (publicly accessible and proprietary) in an educational context; and three, the need for students preparing to enter the information profession to be well informed regarding the affordances and constraints of these tools. Many students felt that current use was not well integrated into their coursework. Despite these concerns, the majority of students believed that learning “about” and “with” social media tools should be an essential part of the education they receive from an iSchool.

We investigated the third set of questions in the third phase of our investigation, the survey of the social media policies from representative institutions in the iSchool Caucus. Our search revealed that only two of the institutions we selected had policies readily available online that explicitly addressed the use of social media for pedagogical purposes. The majority of institutional level policies were concerned with the “how-to” use of specific social

media applications in support of marketing and media campaigns, and protecting institutions' intellectual property and reputation. The two policies we found that directly addressed the use of third-party, for-profit social media tools in support of classroom activities went some distance in addressing many of the issues that arose from the Learning Sciences literature and from the student survey findings, but were not targeted to the preparation of future information professionals.

## Recommendations

Most educational institutions have policies on information management and the use of information technologies broadly. As well, tools and frameworks may be in place for the development of policies at the institutional level. Whether creating a new policy or building on an existing policy, there are often models to draw upon. Employing existing policy building frameworks, either from within the institution or from external sources, and understanding the role policy plays in the institution will aid an academic unit's ability to integrate concerns and requirements as they relate to the pedagogical use of social media. Because of the nature of social media technologies and their ever-changing capabilities, it would be beneficial to ensure the policy building model uses an incremental, adaptive approach to the design and analysis of policy—making small advances which can be implemented, evaluated and continually improved upon to address the evolutionary nature of social media technologies, their affordances and the pedagogical challenges their use creates. In other words, a social media policy should be treated as a living document that allows for iteration and its creators should be willing to make and learn from mistakes in order not to stifle innovation and learning.

Adaptive design is not a new concept. Its goal is to help the “products” of the design process, whether an object, sys-

tem, practice or policy, function more effectively under “complex, dynamic and uncertain conditions” (Venema & Drexhage, 2009). Venema and Drexhage suggest that those engaged in adaptive design need to anticipate the array of conditions that lie ahead through: one, integrated and forward looking analysis; two, multi-stakeholder deliberation; three, monitoring key performance indicators to trigger automatic policy adjustments; four, enabling the self-organization and social networking capacity of communities (i.e. sharing knowledge/experience between students and teachers); five, decentralizing governance to the lowest and most effective jurisdictional levels (class level); six, promoting variation in policy responses (across classes); and seven, formal policy review and continuous learning (set time periods for reviewing policy and number four above).

## Crafting a Social Media Policy

Based on findings from the three investigations and inspired by the idea of adaptive policy design, we began creating a social media policy to present to our full-time faculty during the yearly faculty retreat to begin the process of discussion, editing, and eventual approval. Although the policy we are creating addresses our particular context and is still a work in progress, we identified adaptive components that we believe are important to include in any iSchool social media in the classroom policy in order to provide instructors with principles to guide their actions as well as flexibility to choose the actions that support their learning objectives, the continued shifts in social media tools and practices, and the highly complex and integrated nature of contemporary social media applications:

1. *Positioning*: Clearly articulate why such a policy is critical, particularly within an iSchool environment;
2. *Protocols*: Provide a firm, clearly-artic-



ulated set of principles that the academic unit is willing to stand behind (e.g. respecting student privacy, adhering to accessibility guidelines, maintaining secure student records, etc.);

3. *Requirements*: A succinct statement of any requirements related to social media use and a protocol for reporting to a student representative to the Director/Dean if the requirements are not met (e.g. If an assignment includes posting to a publically accessible, proprietary social media site, there must be an alternative format, such as a text document that follows the same constraints as the site);
4. *Questions*: A set of guiding questions to reflect on during the design of instructional materials and assignment descriptions and to be used in classroom discussions at the beginning of the term. Here we were inspired by policy documents that ask a series of questions, rather than didactic policy documents within a constantly shifting environment (e.g. University of British Columbia Digital Collection Development Policy, 2010);
5. *Resources*: A concise list of resources for instructors and students to use to increase familiarity with institutional resources, legislation, and recent scholarship;
6. *Timeline*: A set period of time after which the policy must be reviewed, updated and renewed.

## Next Steps

We continue to shepherd the policy through faculty and director approval. However, we view this policy as a “living document,” one that will need to be revisited on an annual basis to reflect social media’s evolving platforms and accompanying issues. To complement the faculty policy, we are working on language to be included on all course syllabi to ensure that students are aware of their school’s

position toward use of social media to support course activities. We plan on leveraging our school’s new learning management system to host discussions among and between faculty and students regarding the use of social media, using the last two questions from our student survey to seed the conversation. Ideally, this work will position our graduates to not only use social media critically in a range of contexts, but to be active participants in the design of future tools and the policies that govern them.

## Limitations

The main limitations within our project include: the small amount of input from iSchool instructors to date; the review of other institutions’ policies was not comprehensive across all North American schools that are members of the iCaucus and the policies we reviewed were only those publicly accessible on the web. [It is possible that they may have existed online, but we did not locate them]; and the student survey response rate was 25% and the survey was only offered for a two-week period. In addition, the time from initial completion of the research to the time it was published was significantly extended when the journal we had targeted for submission stopped accepting manuscripts for a number of months—thus the reported findings are more dated than anticipated. We did not find evidence of other academic departments exploring these issues, but this may have happened at the same time as this article was in preparation, under review or awaiting publication. There is no doubt that the claims we can make regarding our findings are limited as the overall approach to this inquiry was targeted on informing policy development for a particular context (the iSchool@UBC) and a great deal more work is needed in this area. However, we are optimistic that others will draw inspiration and motivation from this initial project and its areas of inquiry.

## Conclusion

The internet is still in its relative infancy, as are the varied tools and practices through which we create, share, retrieve and store information across it. Our use of social media continues to evolve (and is enacted alongside more traditional information tools and practices), as will our understanding of how social media tools can scaffold learning objectives. We suggest that it is ill-advised for iSchools to write overly-prescriptive policies within an ecosystem that is still developing and ever-evolving. It is imperative to consider that the most forward-looking and insightful policy does not ensure change in behavior; indeed, it is another process entirely to get instructors to abide by the policy and students to trust it. Yet, despite these challenges, who are more suited, than the members of the iSchool education community, purported leaders and innovators in the field of information management, to act proactively regarding the policies guiding the ethical and effective use of social media platforms in our classrooms?

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## Appendix 1

Institution	Search Description	Policy/Guideline	Concerns	URL	Version Date	Date Accessed
Drexel University <i>The iSchool at Drexel University</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Social Media Guidelines	Planning, tailoring content to audience, application-specific how-to's, legal liabilities, attribution	<a href="http://drexel.edu/ucomm/social-media/guidelines/">http://drexel.edu/ucomm/social-media/guidelines/</a>	[Not given]	11/13/2012
		Social Media Best Practices	Respect, transparency, life on online content, separation between personal and the professional social media use	<a href="http://drexel.edu/ucomm/social-media/best-practices/">http://drexel.edu/ucomm/social-media/best-practices/</a>	[Not given]	11/13/2012
		Social Media Policy	Privacy, compliance with university practices, media interaction	<a href="http://drexel.edu/hr/resources/policies/ducompolicies/ur3/">http://drexel.edu/hr/resources/policies/ducompolicies/ur3/</a>	7/1/2011	11/13/2012
Indiana University—Bloomington <i>School of Library and Information Science</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Use of Social Networks, Blogs, Wikis, and Other Third-Party Hosted Tools in Instruction	Examples of social media use in instruction, disclosure of intention to use social 3rd party media platforms to students, accessibility; privacy, data security, intellectual property; IT support	<a href="http://www.teaching.iub.edu/finder/wrapper.php?inc_id=s2_6_tech_04_cloud.shtml">http://www.teaching.iub.edu/finder/wrapper.php?inc_id=s2_6_tech_04_cloud.shtml</a>	6/19/2012	11/13/2012
		Social Media Guidelines for Indiana University	Do's and don't's, university policies, branding, application-specific how-to's	<a href="http://policies.iu.edu/docs/U-social-media-guidelines.pdf">http://policies.iu.edu/docs/U-social-media-guidelines.pdf</a>	2/3/2012	11/13/2012

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Search Description</b>	<b>Policy/Guideline</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>URL</b>	<b>Version Date</b>	<b>Date Accessed</b>
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick <i>School of Communication and Information</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Using Social Media	Tools, websites, strategies, application-specific how-to's	<a href="http://ur.rutgers.edu/web-ecomunications/using-social-media">http://ur.rutgers.edu/web-ecomunications/using-social-media</a>	[Not given]	11/12/2012
Simmons College <i>Graduate School of Library and Information Science</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Social Media Guidelines	Strategic use, up to date content, institutional voice, appropriate use, naming conventions, privacy, copyright	<a href="http://www.simmons.edu/offices/marketing/online-social-media.php">http://www.simmons.edu/offices/marketing/online-social-media.php</a>	[Not given]	11/12/2012
Syracuse University <i>School of Information Studies</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	SU Social Media Guidelines	[Blank page]	<a href="http://socialmedia.syr.edu/guidelines/">http://socialmedia.syr.edu/guidelines/</a>	[Not given]	11/13/2012



Institution	Search Description	Policy/Guideline	Concerns	URL	Version Date	Date Accessed
University of British Columbia <i>SLAIS: The iSchool at UBC</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Social Media Guidelines for UBC Employees	Privacy, best practices, copyright, branding, Institutional reputation, marketing	<a href="http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/communications/socialmedia.html">http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/communications/socialmedia.html</a>	7/19/2012	11/13/2012
		UBC Social Media Handbook	Guidelines, brief, resources	<a href="http://wiki.ubc.ca/Documentation:UBC_Social_Media_Handbook">http://wiki.ubc.ca/Documentation:UBC_Social_Media_Handbook</a>	3/16/2011	11/13/2012
		Social Media Resources	Policies, 3rd party resources	<a href="http://brand.ubc.ca/working-with-our-brand/social-media/social-media-resources/">http://brand.ubc.ca/working-with-our-brand/social-media/social-media-resources/</a>	[Not given]	11/13/2012
University of Illinois—Urbana-Champaign <i>Graduate School of Library and Information Science</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Social Media Best Practices	Strategic use, distributed management system creation, risks, tone, branding, posting policy creation	<a href="http://publicaffairs.illinois.edu/resources/socialmediabestpractices.html">http://publicaffairs.illinois.edu/resources/socialmediabestpractices.html</a>	[Not given]	11/12/2012
University of Maryland—College Park <i>Maryland's iSchool</i>	Search terms: "social media"; social media guidelines; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	No social media policies/procedures/guidelines/best practices located				11/12/2012

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Search Description</b>	<b>Policy/Guideline</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>URL</b>	<b>Version Date</b>	<b>Date Accessed</b>
University of Michigan—Ann Arbor <i>School of Information</i>	Search terms: "social media"; social media guidelines; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom policy; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; teaching social media	Guidelines for the Use of Social Media	Privacy, security, transparency, university property, liability, safety, guidelines for individual use, guidelines for representing the university	<a href="http://voices.umich.edu/docs/Social-Media-Guidelines.pdf">http://voices.umich.edu/docs/Social-Media-Guidelines.pdf</a>	Jan-10	11/12/2012
University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill <i>School of Library and Information Science</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	No social media policies/procedures/guidelines/best practices located				11/12/2012
University of Pittsburgh <i>School of Information Sciences</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Best Practice: Safe Social Networking	Privacy, security, personal online reputation	<a href="http://www.technology.pitt.edu/security/compliance/safe-social-networking-dup.html">http://www.technology.pitt.edu/security/compliance/safe-social-networking-dup.html</a>	[Not given]	11/12/2012
University of Texas—Austin <i>School of Information</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Social Media Guidelines	Privacy, transparency, intellectual property, institutional reputation, safety, security, copyright, branding, accessibility	<a href="http://www.utexas.edu/know/directory/guidelines/">http://www.utexas.edu/know/directory/guidelines/</a>	[Not given]	11/12/2012

Institution	Search Description	Policy/Guideline	Concerns	URL	Version Date	Date Accessed
University of Toronto <i>Faculty of Information's iSchool</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Policy on Web and Social Media at the iSchool	Marketing, web presence, sharing resources, research participation	<a href="http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/system/files/user/108/web_and_social_media_policy_2011_finale.pdf">http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/system/files/user/108/web_and_social_media_policy_2011_finale.pdf</a>	11/18/2011	11/12/2012
University of Washington <i>Information School</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	University of Washington Social Media Guidelines	Examples of social media, best practices, summary of relevant UW policy	<a href="http://depts.washington.edu/uwviso/site/files/UW_Social_Media_Guidelines.pdf">http://depts.washington.edu/uwviso/site/files/UW_Social_Media_Guidelines.pdf</a>	4/9/2012	11/13/2012
University of Wisconsin—Madison <i>School of Library and Information Studies</i>	Search terms: "social media"; "social media guidelines"; "social media instruction"; "social media policy"; social media classroom; social media classroom policy; social media guidelines; social media instruction; teaching social media	Guidelines for Use of Non-UW-Madison Applications and Services for Instruction	Disclosure of intention to use social 3rd party media platforms to students, terms of service, accessibility, privacy, data security, intellectual property	<a href="http://www.cio.wisc.edu/Non-UWApps-ServicesInstruction.pdf">http://www.cio.wisc.edu/Non-UWApps-ServicesInstruction.pdf</a>	Version 3a: 7/22/2009	11/13/2012
		Social Media Guidelines	Confidentiality, respect, personal responsibility, liability, transparency, security, guidelines for individual use, guidelines for representing the university	<a href="http://universityrelations.wisc.edu/policies/social-media.php">http://universityrelations.wisc.edu/policies/social-media.php</a>	2010 with Permission from the University of Michigan	11/13/2012