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ONLINE LIVES 2.0: INTRODUCTION

LAURIE MCNEILL AND JOHN DAVID ZUERN

In 2003 *Biography* published “Online Lives,” a special issue of the journal devoted to the various modes of autobiographical writing that had emerged on the Internet in the decade since the World Wide Web came into widespread use in the mid-1990s. The issue brought together a group of scholars whose essays examined personal home pages, online diaries, web cams, and some of the earliest manifestations of blogs, which at the time were the state-of-the-art platforms for self-representation on the Web. More than a decade later, with “Online Lives 2.0,” we return to the question of how people are mobilizing online media to represent their own lives and the lives of others on the Internet. In the intervening years, every aspect of those media—the software that animates them, the hardware through which we access them, and the economic, social, and political apparatuses entangled with them—has dramatically changed. We have updated the 2003 issue’s title with “2.0” not only to mark the present one as “version 2” but also to acknowledge how profoundly the constellation of technologies known as “Web 2.0,” a designation all but universally adopted in 2004, has transformed the capacities of the Internet to facilitate and complicate auto/biographical production. Taking different perspectives and working within a range of conceptual frameworks, the scholars and artists represented in the present issue address the social, political, ethical, and aesthetic ramifications of these sweeping developments in the technological infrastructure of online life.

“Online Lives” appeared at a pivotal moment in the history of the Internet. The Timeline on the following page tracks the inauguration of key Internet technologies of the World Wide Web and Web 2.0. In 2002, while the “Online Lives” authors were drafting their essays, Friendster grew into the first social-networking site to attract more than one million users. As the Timeline indicates, in the following year three other major players entered the arena: MySpace, Second Life, and Wordpress, each offering a different

TIMELINE: ONLINE AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL TECHNOLOGIES.***BEFORE 2003***

Bulletin Board Systems	1978
Usenet	1980
Internet Relay Chat	1988
LambdaMOO	1990
Mosaic	1993
Geocities	1994
QuickCam	1994
Open Diary	1998
Blogger	1999
LiveJournal	1999
Xanga	1999
Friendster	2002

SINCE 2003

MySpace	2003
Second Life	2003
Wordpress	2003
Facebook	2004
Flickr	2004
YouTube	2005
Twitter	2006
Tumblr	2007
Foursquare	2009
Instagram	2010
Pinterest	2010
Storify	2010
Google+	2011
Snapchat	2011
Vine	2013
Secret	2013

environment for online self-representation. In 2004 MySpace outstripped Friendster's user base, and Mark Zuckerberg launched the first version of Facebook. Subsequent releases of systems for sharing media, such as YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, Storify, and Pinterest made it possible to perform what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson call "autobiographical acts" in a wide range of formats and to disseminate them along a variety of channels (*Reading Autobiography* 4).

The list of online auto/biographical resources continues to expand, of course, and we must also count professional networking sites like LinkedIn, dating sites like Match.com and eHarmony, and the personals sections of sites like Craigslist, all of which feature autobiographical profiles, as well as the

biographical entries in Wikipedia, which Pamela Graham analyzes in her contribution to this volume. As Julie Rak's contribution suggests, online games like *The Sims* can also serve as venues for auto/biographical production. On the whole, these online environments have materialized and intensified the relationality that print-based auto/biography always entailed, allowing for transactions between authors and audiences at speeds and scales that were not possible with print, while at the same time providing many more opportunities for fashioning, fabricating, and appropriating identities within those circuits of exchange.

In addition to its authors' engagement with the dynamics of social media and other facets of Web 2.0, "Online Lives 2.0" is also an update on the 2003 issue in terms of the professional trajectories of the people involved in its production. John had the privilege of guest editing that issue, to which Laurie contributed her essay "Teaching an Old Genre New Tricks: The Diary on the Internet." As we discuss in more detail below, four of the other original authors have provided short essays describing how their thinking and writing have evolved since their work appeared in "Online Lives." Developments in our own thinking during that period are reflected in this introduction, in which we elaborate on some of the key themes we see emerging from the present collection of essays, and consider some of the issues we ourselves think might well occupy the field of auto/biography studies as it endeavors to understand what it now means—and what it might mean in the future—to craft, to sustain, and at least in some cases to endure an "online life."

In our view, these issues constellate around a question Sidonie Smith poses in her Presidential Address to the Modern Language Association. After noting that in the wake of Web 2.0 technologies, "multitasking, search trails, networked sociality are all effects of human-machine-ensemble exchanges that structure everyday life in developed and developing countries," Smith asks "to what extent do these phenomena affect the organization of consciousness?" (570). As means to auto/biographical ends, these technologies undoubtedly present us with different affordances and constraints than those of print, photography, film, and live performance, but have we *ourselves*, as subjects of auto/biographical acts, undergone a significant transformation? Has the digital turn in our society made an appreciable—and from the standpoint of scholarship, an identifiable, measurable, citable—difference in the experience of being in the world, of being embodied, to some degree empowered, and to some degree vulnerable as a self in the midst of other selves? This is a question the field of auto/biography studies is in a particularly good position to tackle, not only because the artifacts it engages are closely tied to the lived experience of their makers, but also because it so often anchors that engagement in philosophical reflections on the problem of human subjectivity. Looking across the essays

assembled in this issue, we see a number of thematic threads running through them, all of which relate in some way to this question. In the next sections, we pick up some of these threads and expand on their implications for ongoing research in auto/biography studies. First, we point out that with the advent of Web 2.0 the boundaries between online and offline life—and as a consequence, the boundaries between private and public life—have become even harder to discern than they were in the early days of the Internet, and that this conflation of private and public space has created a climate of exposure and risk in which identity becomes not only something we are constantly compelled to construct but also something we are constantly compelled to safeguard against threats to its integrity and security. We then suggest three ways this experience of exposure is conditioning acts of online self-representation, and perhaps transforming the selves who perform them. Following this discussion, we offer summaries of each of the contributions.

THE COSTS OF LIVING ONLINE: BEING PRIVATE IN PUBLIC

The caption of Peter Steiner's famous 1993 *New Yorker* cartoon—"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog"—figures in two of the contributions to this issue. It serves as one of the epigraphs to Kylie Cardell and Emma Maguire's essay on the "Gay Girl in Damascus" blog hoax, and for Molly Pulda, in her analysis of James Lasdun's *Give Me Everything You Have: On Being Stalked*, it "sums up the possibilities of escaping identity in an earlier era of online browsing" (197). The relevance of Steiner's early commentary on online masquerading has endured for more than two decades, but in the context of these authors' engagements with cases of autobiographical fraud and identity theft, it takes on a darker tone that indicates the significant cultural-historical gap between 1993, the year in which the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) made the World Wide Web available to the general public, and the online world of today. That very gap is the theme of a cartoon by Kaamran Hafeez that appears in the February 23 & March 2, 2015, issue of *The New Yorker*, in which two dogs closely resembling those in Steiner's original cartoon sit in the foreground, with their owner at his desktop computer behind them. One dog asks the other, "Remember when, on the Internet, nobody knew who you were?" (Figure 1).

As a result of what Paul Arthur, in his coda to this issue, calls "a lifetime collection of emails, tweets, downloads, Facebook entries, digital medical data, online chats, blogs, photographs, and so on" (313), *too many* people now know—or potentially can know—who we are online. Our lives are exposed to the actual and algorithmic gaze of potentially thousands of "visitors," from criminal networks operating outside the law to government agencies—such

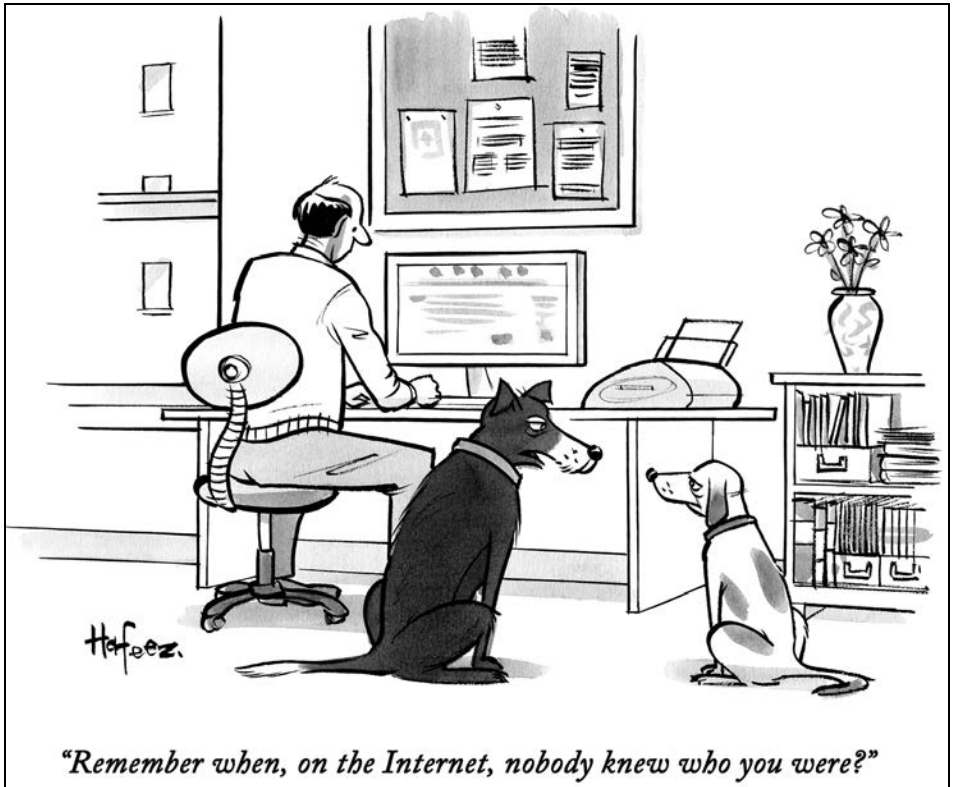


Figure 1. Kaamran Hafeez/The New Yorker Collection/The Cartoon Bank © Copyright Condé Nast.

as the National Security Administration in the United States—operating beyond the boundaries of constitutionality. Most of us cannot help but entrust personal information to the network in order to get on with the everyday business of our lives, from paying our bills to keeping up with our friends, but we know that doing so makes us vulnerable to unwelcome surveillance, stalking, identity theft, and a wide range of increasingly sophisticated scams. In addition to creating a market for products like LifeLock, a subscription service that monitors its customers' credit history for signs of fraud, this exposure has been spurring many people to lock down their online lives, as Jodi Dean anticipated in her 2010 study of blogging:

Anxious before the gaze, before the disturbing inquiries and intrusions of unknown others, unsure about what to expect, about whether one is succeeding or failing, whether others are friends or foes, we build more reliable, apparently intimate networks. We may not know everyone in our intimate network, but we know they are friends—we had to friend them. Someone has vouched for them. (57)

In Dean's view, although Web 2.0 offers "new ways for us to imagine ourselves, immense varieties of lifestyles with which we can experiment" (57), the price we pay for these opportunities is the provisionality and vulnerability of whatever identities we take on in the shifting spheres of private and public online life, subject as they are to prying eyes as well as to the social network's ever-shifting dynamics of power and prestige.

In 2003, many contributors to "Online Lives" articulated concerns—their own, or those reflected in the texts they studied—about what was already perceived as a crumbling public/private binary. Madeleine Sorapure, for example, shared several bloggers' "disclaimers" or "rules" that attempted to separate online and offline lives, asking those who knew them in "real life" not to read the blogs because they were too personal, too revealing, meant for a (non-intimate) public (10–13). Laurie's own contribution opened with her sense of discomfort about reading these very personal, often very quotidian narratives, even though she recognized they were intended for a readership. Similarly, Carolyn R. Miller and Dawn Shepherd's 2004 "Blogging as Social Action" positioned blogs as the canary in the coal mine for new (and fraught) definitions of the public and private. Reading blogs as both product and producer of contemporary cultural shifts that included the celebration of the ordinary, the market for "misery lit," and the traction of Western therapeutic frameworks that counsel the value of "sharing," Miller and Shepherd examined how blogs enable the performance of the private in public that Clay Calvert calls "mediated exhibitionism" and "mediated voyeurism" (qtd. in Miller and Shepherd), and that Hal Niedzviecki refers to as "peep culture" (1). This tension between the public and private characterized two dominant frameworks for viewing "the Web": as a democratizing space for diversity and dialogue (enabled by going public), and as an unseemly confessional that encouraged too much sharing by too many people, transgressing the boundaries of decorum, social hierarchies, and in some cases, legality. Debates about online practice stood in for larger, unspoken social and cultural concerns about what should be said, and by whom, in the public, interactive space of Web 2.0.

Interestingly, the brouhaha over blogs that these scholars captured came almost a decade after individuals first started writing lives online. Pioneering internet diarist Justin Hall started *Justin's Links* in 1994, posting about all aspects of his life in extraordinarily intimate, often NSFW, detail, and was joined by other early adapters such as Steve Schalchlin and Carolyn Burke. But as Rebecca Blood has noted, blogs didn't boom until technological change made them accessible to non-specialist users: with the launch of Blogger.com and other sites that didn't require knowledge of coding, "[o]nce literally *anyone* could

make a weblog, literally anyone did" (x). We can attribute the early twenty-first century moral panics about blogging—surely echoing similar panics about the use of the telephone or the television set—to this sharp increase in practice: hundreds of thousands of blogs had significant cultural force.

Our contributors to this issue remind us, though, that definitions of “public” and “private” remain highly contested terrain, long after the establishment of Web 2.0. Blogs may have “invited” the public in to the private, creating a Habermasian public sphere, as Torill Mortenson and Jill Walker, among others, have suggested (257), but the disclosure was mostly uni-directional, a “one-to-many” distribution model with the blogger leading the conversation. The rise of social network sites (SNSs) mid-decade changed that model: networked interactivity is a many-to-many structure, with a range of participants being private in public. With over one billion users on Facebook alone (“Company Info”), SNSs foreground the limits of the binary. Indeed, if blogs ran the first steamroller through that binary, SNSs have now paved an eight-lane information highway right through traditional definitions of these concepts. And yet the debates continue, with the terms unchanged, though perhaps the implications have shifted. Public concerns continue to beat the drum of social decay resulting from “too much information.” “Oversharing” was the word of the year in both 2008 (Niedzveck 1) and 2014 (Flood), suggesting common codes of decorum that continue to be violated because of digital platforms that perpetuate the onslaught of disclosure.

Like blogs before them, selfies are the current lightning rod for censure, with moral panics about people snapping (and sharing) photos at funerals (Gibbs, Nansen, Carter, and Kohn), Ground Zero and Auschwitz (“Curse”), and before or after a plane crash (“Worst Flight”; Zimmerman). Martin Gibbs, Bjorn Nansen, Marcus Carter, and Tamara Kohn summarize the dominant public response to this phenomenon: people “wondered what has happened to our humanity, and if social media had emptied everything, even death, of meaning and gravitas” (1). Bans on “selfie sticks” (Kim) stir the pot of public discord about how much is too much, and reinvigorate condemnations of what appears to be the rampant narcissism of digital culture.

All this sharing, fuelled by and fuelling the need to produce and consume more and more lives, comes, again, with anxieties about how to do it and who can do it. Geert Lovink notes that with Web 2.0 comes an “obligation” to join in to be with “everybody else” (13). But as the debates about selfies illustrate, joining in needs to happen in very particular ways. Policing of access to, and self-performances in, these digital spaces reminds us of the power dynamics that the Web failed to dismantle: as danah boyd notes in her essay in this issue, cyberspace remains highly normative. When boyd started blogging, she

joined a community dominated by “geeks, freaks, and queers,” and now it’s “mainstream”—“the status quo” instead of what “challenged the status quo” (306). Memes about auto-correct fails and parents texting (badly) are two relatively benign instances of such policing, examples of “newbie shaming” (or, more properly, “oldie-shaming”) that, by making public texts that were intended to be private, demarcate circles of belonging, insider status, and expertise, a hierarchy of who *should* be using these technologies, and how they should be used. Doxxing—the public posting of information, such as real names and addresses, that users would have a reasonable expectation of keeping private—is, as Molly Pulda considers in this issue, one way that power is exerted by some users over others. 2014’s Gamergate, when Zoe Quinn, Anita Sarkeesian, and other women who critiqued misogyny in the video game industry were subject to an online intimidation campaign that included doxxing and rape and death threats, made clear how the public and private, online and offline, remain highly relevant boundaries.

At the same time we observe these practices of shaming and norming in response to online lives, we note how other stories of social media and its benefits gain traction. Individuals and organizations have harnessed the global reach and communicative power of social network sites to make political as well as personal statements, through their own profiles, pages, and activities such as comments, likes, or retweets and repins. Memes in which users substitute their own profile pictures with public service announcements (for instance, about mental illness or breast cancer) are one local instance of the potential consciousness-raising role of social network sites. Importantly, and we think uniquely, social networks enable such conversations, and the social, cultural, and political critique embedded in them, to happen as part of the chronicles of everyday life rather than in separate texts or spaces that might be more explicitly seen as political and might therefore only be encountered by those who looked for them. Because the platforms do not by default distinguish kinds of content (though the algorithms can certainly be taught to by users), protest posts and other interventions into public dialogue can appear alongside the records of meals eaten, photos taken, and milestones reached, which a potentially diverse audience will encounter in its newsfeeds. This convergence makes explicit that for some individuals, the political is an important part of their identities—not a distinct public or professional practice, but an inherent element of how they live online and off. In many networked lives, the political is not only personal but also collective, with opportunities for broad engagement on urgent issues. In such instances, we see how online lives, with their assemblages of public and personal, can propel the political and transformative work of life narratives on a global scale.

Perhaps these engagements are what Mark Zuckerberg imagined in coining the company motto that sharing will “make the world more open and connected” (“Facebook: About”); in other words, Facebook (and social networks more broadly) makes the world, and us, better. Zuckerberg’s vision of better living through networking reflects early Web 1.0 optimism, though with a corporate flavor (notably, Facebook is frequently in legal trouble for violating users’ expectations of privacy and profiting from those violations). Similar panegyrics have followed democratic uprisings—most notably the Arab Spring, but more recently Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution, and the #blacklivesmatter meme—in which social media played a key role. In social movements like these, the mobilization of online channels to connect people and exchange information, often circumventing restrictions on the freedom of speech and public assembly, clearly demonstrates the potential of these media to create virtual spaces for public discourses that can transform social relations. Gillian Whitlock’s essay in this issue on the YouTube testimonials of people seeking asylum in Australia offers an example on a smaller scale of how individuals can appropriate social media to document abuses, expose perpetrators, and solicit support.

However, precisely by making the world “more open and connected,” the fusion of private and public domains in social media has left many of us feeling more exposed and even endangered. In the United States, for example, higher education has become a sphere in which the blurring of these lines now poses concrete threats to individuals’ civil rights and livelihoods. In 2014, the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign rescinded its job offer to Steven Salaita on the basis of his expressions of outrage at Israel’s attacks on Palestinians in Gaza, which he published on his personal Twitter account (Schmidt). A year later, Saida Grundy came under fire at Boston University for tweeting about the enduring legacy of racism in American culture, again on her own Twitter account (Krantz). Grundy subsequently made her account private—a move that seems to confirm Dean’s concerns about a shrinking of the online public sphere. While the creation of virtual publics can certainly promote more democratic forms of governance, the ambiguity about where the rights and obligations of private life end and those of public life begin also creates conditions in which personal liberties can be hampered, when they are not directly abrogated.

This atmosphere of uncertainty and vulnerability, we argue, is transforming not only our relationships with other people but also our experience of our own identities, and consequently, our practices of self-representation. To a significant degree, the ongoing construction of our online selves has been infused with an impulse to manage risk, not only to safeguard our finances and reputations, but also to ward off a kind of disintegration, the unsettling

loss of control over the bits and pieces of “ourselves” adrift on the Internet. As Arthur observes in the conclusion to his coda, “with the exponential increase in data about ourselves and others, we have entered the era of the dispersed self. Versions of the subject can, of course, be ‘aggregated’ in all kinds of permutations, but this is most likely to happen mechanically and remotely, beyond the subject’s sphere of influence and without her knowledge.” In light of this situation, Arthur asks, “Will there be a backlash? Will nostalgia for the old unified self, mythical or not, take hold?” (318). Arthur’s questions, which might be seen as corollary to Smith’s, are directed toward culture in general but also, more pointedly, toward the field of auto/biography studies, where they invite us to assess our own theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding the impact of social media, data mining, and the insecurity of personal information on the experience of selfhood, and consequently, on online auto/biographical performances. In the next sections, we reflect on three interconnected issues that seem especially important sites for critical reflection: the now widespread practice of auto/biographical curation; the intersection of online auto/biography and relations of production in the Internet economy, and in particular the phenomenon Axel Bruns calls “produsage”; and the falsification of identities and experiences in various forms of online auto/biographical imposture.

CURATING ONLINE LIVES

The dual forces of Web 2.0 and the “age of memoir,” as described by critics such as Leigh Gilmore and Julie Rak, excite contemporary anxieties about staying on top of valuable personal information, our own and others’. Traditional functions associated with the auto/biographical, including preserving and sharing material about a life for (self-)reflection, remain in place, but on a scale impossible to manage. Such anxieties are compounded by the ephemeral nature of online postings: they disappear, the links break, or as Arthur notes in this issue, the software becomes obsolete and unreadable. Ellen Gurber Garvey, in her study of nineteenth century scrapbookers, chronicles a similar confluence of cultural and technological shifts: a boom in “cheap newspapers” drove individuals to gather material they wished to preserve before it was lost. Like contemporary social media, she notes, to these readers newspapers presented both promise and problem, because they were “cheap, disposable, yet somehow tantalizingly valuable, if only their value could be separated from their ephemerality” (3–4). The scrapbook industry was born to give readers ways to preserve cuttings in personal collections, what Gurber Garvey calls “writing with scissors” (22). Whether or not these collections are annotated, the very act of their selection, ordering, and preservation in a

bound volume (suggesting their value), can be read as an auto/biographical act that both responds to and is produced by technological change.

The Web 2.0 version of Gurber Garvey's scrapbook enthusiasts is the digital "curator," the individual engaged in gathering and exhibiting materials that address personal interests, and in so doing, giving these collected materials personal meaning. Lee Rainie, Joanna Brenner, and Kristin Purcell, in research conducted for the Pew Research Center, define two categories of internet users: "creators," who "post original photos or videos," and "curators," who "take photos or videos they have found online and repost them on sites designed for sharing images with many people." They note that "41% of adult internet users" fit into the latter category, and that the increased use and capabilities of mobile phones play a "major part" in the rise of the digital curator, because they enable users to take and upload photos easily. Gillian Whitlock and Anna Poletti, in early work on user interfaces with social network sites, considered uploading and tagging photos as instances of "online autographics" (xv); the social media platforms that enable such sharing have developed to respond to and create the need for such autographics, just as scrapbooks did for newspaper readers. Whitlock and Poletti read as "auto assemblages" the layers of autobiographical "multimodal texts" on SNSs (xx). The curator indeed assembles the stuff of life—her own or others'—into the production of selves. Catherine Hall and Michael Zarro note that this "curator" is different from the model used by museum, library, or archival studies, in which there is institutional oversight; in Web 2.0 "anyone" can put together a collection of interesting sites and call it curating. If the early millennium was celebrated for the role of blogging and social media in creating the "citizen-journalist," perhaps this stage is the time of the "citizen-curator."

While this application of the term "curator" has emerged in the context of participatory cultures of Web 2.0, the actions the term describes have been necessary since content began to proliferate online. Sorting and sharing the materials of the Internet was the primary function of the first blogs: the original "link plus annotations" formula (Powazek) was driven by a desire to find the best of the Web and make it accessible to others (Blood). That practice was seen as distinct from the auto/biographical, as captured in defensive posturing by "bloggers" when "Internet diarists" co-opted the term for longer, explicitly personal posts that embedded links as part of a life narrative (e.g., Talbot). Surely, though, webloggers were equally engaged in acts of "auto/curation" (McNeill, "Digital Dioramas"), with a self emerging through the compilation, categorization, and circulation of one's "favorite things." Inherent to such collecting is a sense of (shared) value: the value of collecting as an activity, the value of one's particular collection, and the value to others of sharing this collection.

While curators on sites such as Storify focus on news items, other curators address the reams of personal material that have been a key driver of Web 2.0 development, with legions of sites, networks, and apps built around the shared production of auto/biography (McNeill, “Life Bytes”). The predominance of the auto/biographical on the Web has validated the sharing of lives as a legitimate cultural practice, and creates desire to participate in that sharing. Digital curation offers a new way to do so. These auto/curators see personal and collective meaning in something random, something that otherwise might be tossed away, forgotten, an inconsequential thing meant for another purpose. Auto/curators comb through *Awkward Family Photos*, Tumblr accounts, magazines, and fashion blogs to find links, images, and content they find noteworthy—for whatever reason—and that they think others will find interesting, too. This action is creative in that it imposes an order on the dispersed fragments of material scattered across the web; this posting with pixels is also an implicitly auto/biographical act. In the materials’ new contexts, individual to each curator, auto/biographical meaning is made and offered to a community: significance emerges through collection, patterns, and items in juxtaposition. Further meaning is produced through engagement with other curators, who comment, “pin,” reblog, or link to this material as part of their own online presence.

Two sites offer compelling and influential instances of auto/biographical curating. On PostSecret, “a community art project where people mail in their secrets anonymously on one side of a postcard” (*PostSecret*), founder Frank Warren selects from these anonymous postcard confessions to share at the original blog site, as well as on social media, in print books, and in touring art exhibits. Since the site’s launch in 2004, Warren has emerged as “the Most Trusted Stranger in America” (Fisher). Acting as lay therapist or confessor, Warren promotes the idea that telling secrets is a necessary and necessarily therapeutic act for both the card-maker and readers of it: “You will find your answers in the secrets of strangers” (“PostSecret Community”). As Anna Poletti argues, Warren inculcates in readers the universalizing narrative that “we all have secrets” (29); PostSecret promises the “healing power of confession” (32), with the warning that “secrets can kill us” (34). Drawing on Lauren Berlant, Poletti observes how PostSecret constitutes an “intimate public” by inviting auto/biographical participation, grounded in affect and “the normative power of the confessional form” (26, 29). In the participatory cultures of Web 2.0, however, that confession appears “democratized,” shared with wider PostSecret communities who both give and receive confessions, producing a sense of “belonging” (27). Warren, presiding over this public, takes on an expert position that results entirely from his collecting and sharing the material

of others' lives in a forum that invites ongoing contributions and participation through both social media and print communication. Through curating the auto/biographical acts of others (both the postcards and then responses to them on the community forum and social media), Warren builds his own public identity and narrative.

Like Warren, Maria Popova, of the *Brain Pickings* digest, has made both a career and an auto/biographical persona through her curating. Popova began her blog *Brain Pickings* in 2006, the online version of her "weekly email to seven friends." Popova characterizes *Brain Pickings*, now also on Facebook and Twitter, as a "human-powered discovery engine for interestingness, a subjective lens on what matters in the world and why, bringing you things you didn't know you were interested in—until you are." Putting writers from an array of disciplines into conversation, Popova promotes a philosophy of discovery and creativity enabled by her curating. *Brain Pickings* is the reflection of Popova's "mental pool of resources—knowledge, insight, information, inspiration, and all the fragments populating our minds—that we've accumulated over the years just by being present and alive and awake to the world." Through sharing her "resources," Popova aims to provide the space for readers to "connect countless dots," "to combine and recombine these pieces and build new ideas." While Warren engages with the PostSecret community, providing personalized commentary (signed "Frank," as a signal of the intimacy of this group) and the occasional autobiographical anecdote, Popova rarely writes about herself in her *Brain Pickings* entries. She emerges, though, in her selection and summaries of "life lessons" from the writers and thinkers she curates on her site, and in her direction to readers to see these lessons as relevant to their own lives: "if you read one thing today," is a common headline for her posts, drawing attention to a passage she finds particularly meaningful. She characterizes *Brain Pickings* as "culling ideas that shed light on what it means to live a good life." In her sense that the Popovian idea of a "good life," an assemblage of wisdom from Western literary and cultural leaders (Ernest Hemingway, Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan, Maurice Sendak, and Mary Oliver are frequent picks), is a shared, even universal, definition, she projects a self-image and invites others to see themselves reflected in it, too. The success of *Brain Pickings* indicates that her sense of common value is accurate: her Facebook page has generated over 3.3 million "likes," and her Twitter account has 557,000 followers.¹

On a more individual level, millions of people engage in daily acts of auto/curation that constitute personal and communal selves. At Pinterest, the "social curation website" (Hall and Zorro) or online "pin-board," over twenty million individuals trawl through collections of documents produced by other members, discovering shared interests in activities or items. They find and

produce value in creating their own categories and browsing through others', gathering images, quotes, and stories they like, and making meaning through building their own collections. This content curation allows individuals to use images of places, things, and activities to represent themselves to others on the site. Founder Ben Silbermann argues that "when we collect things and when we share those collections with people, that's how we show who we are in the world" (qtd. in Chocana). With thirty-six categories for pins, including "cars and motorcycles," "food & drink," and "DIY & crafts," Pinterest is a clearing-house for inspiration: its home page declares, "Join Pinterest to find (and save!) all the things that inspire you" (*Pinterest*). Through pinning (and commenting on and liking others' pins), members declare their own interests as members of a community who share values. The site explains that Pinterest is "a place to discover ideas for all your projects and interests, hand-picked by *people like you*" ("Pinterest: About," emphasis added). Groomed by social media, particularly Facebook, to position themselves in online communities through their cultural consumption (Zhou, Grasmuck, and Martin), Pinterest members window-shop for experiences, behaviors, and goods they find "inspirational," as vetted by "people like them." They therefore curate "inspired" lives—lives they may not have, but wish they did. Curation in this case constitutes aspirational auto/biography: concepts of "good lives" created through "good" living.²

Auto/curators are also avid collectors of data about themselves, a curiosity encouraged by social media platforms. We might think of selfies as an instance of such self-curating, a persistent exhibiting of one's self-image to represent different experiences. The popularity of "Throwback Thursdays," in which individuals scan and share old (often pre-digital) photos of themselves, marks another instance of curatorial, even archival practice: material from one's past gains renewed relevance and existence because it is made public, where it can be consumed and commented on by a larger network. Facebook's Timeline, which launched in 2011, encouraged this sense that one's entire life needs to be networked: the profile now begins with "birth" and members are invited to fill in the blanks between that date and the date of one's Facebook "birth," when they joined the network. In 2012 and 2014, Facebook algorithmically curated members' lives, offering "Year in Review" slideshows based on an individual's photos that generated the most uptake by one's network, through likes or comments (Chowdhry). The site created a video for every network user, who could opt to share it. These videos reinforce the traditional auto/biographical notion that lives should be examined, or "reviewed," and in a Web 2.0 context, that review should be done publicly. A Facebooked life review necessarily defaults to a positive framework; the slideshows ran with the

upbeat tagline, “It’s been a great year! Thanks for being a part of it,” a move that generated significant negative press due to complaints by users who had not had a “great year” (Chowdhry).

Some digital enthusiasts turn to platforms to actively generate and organize the data for such self-reflection, using technologies to “become their own quantification engines” (Smith and Watson, “Virtually Me” 87). As Madeleine Sorapure also discusses in this issue, Web 2.0 enables the surveillance and sharing of the “Quantified Self”: data about the sleeping, eating, fitness, and other habits that users can track using devices such as the FitBit and upload to social media. The charts and graphs these devices and software produce give such “lifeloggers” means through which to interpret how they live, and by extension, who they are: their numbers tell their stories. While offline enthusiasts have long used diaries, for example, to track themselves, both the scope and potential reach of these records is a product of digital culture. The technology enables more advanced and pervasive capturing, and the cultural practice sets up the expectation that one will share the results as part of one’s broader online profile (i.e., not just to one’s online running group). The “data-driven life,” as Gary Wolf describes it, takes the self as the object to curate, and submits that auto/biographical assemblage of qualities and quantities into the relays of exchange, sampling, appropriation, and reuse in which the cultural, social, political, and economic dimensions of the Internet are enmeshed.

PRODUSING ONLINE LIVES

Many of the contributors to this issue point to the transformation in relations of production and consumption Web 2.0 has brought about, and reflect on the implications of these developments for online auto/biography. Drawing on the work of Vincent Miller, Rak describes the players of *The Sims* as “prosumers” who go beyond their role of consumers to generate and exchange content with game developers and other players. Graham, Pulda, and Whitlock all enlist Axel Bruns’s notion of “produsage”: the ongoing, collaborative, and putatively democratic production of online resources by the users of those resources. For Bruns, produsage represents an Internet-driven transformation of the conventional models for the manufacturing and distribution of goods, especially in the spheres of culture and entertainment. Producers, Bruns argues, “channel content into curated collections which improve that content’s ‘findability’ for further users” (255), at once diminishing the traditional media industry’s control over content and boosting the status of the individual producer. In the domain of online auto/biography, we can see large-scale examples of collective produsage not only in the curatorial work of social

networks but also in the collaborative crafting of the Wikipedia biographies Graham examines. Individuals also act as producers when they appropriate and recirculate existing online content in the service of self-representation, as do the stalker/impersonator who figures in Pulda's article and the asylum seekers Whitlock discusses. These three essays add to a growing body of scholarship on social media and shifting patterns of production and exchange, which includes Aimée Morrison's nuanced examination, in her essay in *Identity Technologies*, of how Facebook's "coaxed affordances" create complex, mutually constituting relationships among users, audiences, and developers (see especially 125–27).

Brun's description of the outcome of produsage as "only a temporary artefact of the ongoing process, a snapshot in time which is likely to be different again the next minute, the next hour, or the next day" (28), applies aptly to the sequential, cumulative, and eminently updatable self-presentations in venues like Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram, in which, Henry Jenkins observes, "each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information we have extracted from the ongoing flow of media around us and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives" (3–4). To some extent, all self-curators are self-producers, cobbling together presentations of selfhood within networks of consumption and exchange that still bear the traces of a market economy. Even if they aren't seeking "instafame" and commercial gain, online auto/biographers remain subject to an imperative to produce appealing products in an environment shaped by more or less friendly competition, and for some of them, trying to keep up with that demand brings on the envy and depression Diane Josefowicz addresses in her essay in this issue. They are likewise subject to an imperative to consume the products they transmute through self-representational produsage. As David Palmer maintains in his analysis of online photo sharing, "contemporary capitalism requires that we must be willing to embrace continual transformation as an essential condition of contemporary subjectivity. Subsequently, life is framed as a series of events, and 'self-realization' becomes a driving force for promoting consumption" (156). Although it may run against the grain of old-style capitalist models of production, the logic of produsage also enlists the producer in the processes of self-defining consumption and market-driven self-fashioning that characterize life under neoliberal capitalism. "Even when it might be argued that Facebookers and partiers on 2night.com are not consciously self-branding," writes Alison Hearn, "they remain (as we all do) global value subjects. They are product, producer, and consumer, but they do not control the means of their own distribution. They remain captive to and conditioned by the controlling

interests of global flexible capital” (213). Bruns acknowledges that the results of collaborative produsage-driven projects remain vulnerable to absorption into traditional commercial enterprises (33), but he expresses his faith in the capacity of produsage communities to resist such appropriation. Reflecting, perhaps, the functional differences between collective and individual initiatives, some auto/biographical producers are explicitly embracing opportunities to turn their projects into engines of lucrative self-promotion, while at the same time implicitly testifying to the instability and vulnerability of life in the present-day economy.

At least since the eighteenth century, with the advent of mass printing, audiences of auto/biography have always also served, to varying degrees, as *markets* for auto/biographical products (Rak 44–47). Social media have vastly extended the means of production of brandable, marketable lives; in their introduction to *Identity Technologies*, Poletti and Rak suggest that if we think inclusively about the wide range of auto/biographical performances we encounter on the Internet, “we can ask what the ‘products’ of identity are and whether they are part of late capitalist circulations of goods, and we can find out who produces and who consumes certain kinds of identities” (10). A striking example of one such product of identity—an identity *as* a product—is the celebrity YouTube vlogger Jenna Marbles, whose rise to fame Emma Maguire studies in a recent article in *Biography*. Invoking Bruns’s model, Maguire recognizes “sites for autobiographical engagement” such as YouTube and other media-sharing platforms as “spaces where producers develop and promote their personal brands” (78).³ In addition to a wide range of other prominent YouTube prosumers and self-producers, such as Joey Graceffa, Michelle Phan, and Felix Kjellberg (PewDiePie), examples of the marketing of auto/biographical performances include crowd-funded and commercially marketed curatorial and lifestyle-promotion projects such as Popova’s *Brain Pickings*, Foster Huntington’s *The Burning House* and *Home Is Where You Park It*, Colin Wright’s *Exile Lifestyle* blog and his many spin-off books, and the living-with-less campaign of The Minimalists Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, who have parlayed their departure from well-compensated corporate employment into a successful publishing and public-speaking enterprise. While Bruns’s model of produsage can offer scholars in the field of auto/biography studies one way to describe the processes through which these author/curators “produce” cultural artifacts, we may need to find other conceptual frameworks to help us understand how such online self-fashioning and self-promoting initiatives articulate with—and at least potentially push back against—the production of subjectivity itself within the ideological apparatuses of contemporary capitalist society.

The work of political theorist Isabell Lorey seems particularly relevant here, as it focuses on what Lorey sees as a significant trend among workers in the “creative” sector of the economy, a group that includes all of the individuals we have just mentioned. In response to diminishing prospects for long-term employment and the erosion of state-supported services and protections, many of these people, Lorey argues, are now deliberately taking on temporary, unstable work to craft DIY lifestyles and careers that incorporate that very instability as a hallmark, if not a badge of honor. Lorey calls this strategy “self-precarization.” Because freelance assignments hold out to people “the promise of the ability to take responsibility for their own creativity and fashion their lives according to their own rules,” designers, writers, musicians, programmers, and a range of consultants “freely” assume their inherent precarity “as a desirable, supposedly normal condition of existence” (197). In Lorey’s view, although this behavior is most evident within the creative professions, in the end neoliberal ideology compels all of us to “self-precarize”: “Currently everybody has to become ‘creative’ and to design her/himself to sell her/his whole personality on the market of affective labor. Short-term, insecure, and low-wage jobs, often named ‘projects,’ are becoming normal for the bigger part of society: precarization is in a process of normalization” (Berlant et al. 164). Lorey’s argument falls in line with positions David Graeber and Wendy Brown have recently taken, both of whom argue that the ideology of neoliberalism encourages each of us to think of ourselves not only as good capitalists but also as valuable *capital* that needs to be invested and maximized. We are all compelled to see ourselves as “tiny corporations,” as Graeber puts it (376), because, in Brown’s terms, “when competition becomes the market’s root principle, all market actors are rendered as capitals, rather than as producers, sellers, workers, clients or consumers. As capitals, every subject is rendered as entrepreneurial, no matter how small, impoverished, or without resources, and every aspect of human existence is produced as an entrepreneurial one” (65). From the perspective of these critics, the precarization to which neoliberal capitalism subjects us puts our very selfhood on the defensive, and compels us to privilege our own self-interest over the welfare of others. We are forced to be competitive and even mercenary, to see other people not only as rivals for market share but also as potential markets in themselves and even as potential raw materials for our own projects.⁴ And we are to cloak these essentially anti-social impulses in the guise of creativity, innovation, “thinking outside the box,” and social networking.

Even if we do not entirely subscribe to it, this grim vision of contemporary life and creative labor might inspire us to recalibrate some of our critical responses to a range of online auto/biographical phenomena, examining

them against the backdrop of endemic economic precarity and the corrosive effects of that instability on social bonds. This perspective might, for example, introduce a measure of skepticism into analyses that assume, if not celebrate, a liberation via social media from the shackles of traditional capitalist relations of production, an approach some interpretations of Bruns's work might underwrite.⁵ By the same token, it might complicate critiques of revenue-generating auto/biographical performances as merely instances of the crass commodification of identities. In addition, an acknowledgement of the atmosphere of risk, instability, competition, and pressure to perform in which many members of our society are now composing their online self-representations may encourage more nuanced critical perspectives on the range of deceptive and sometimes destructive auto/biographical performances that have been proliferating in online environments since the advent of the Internet.

FAKING AND FILTERING ONLINE LIVES

We were struck by the number of submissions focusing on the phenomena of online hoaxes, impersonation, stalking, and identity theft. Of the authors in this issue, Pulda, Cardell and Maguire, Graham, and Josefowicz are tapping into a broad stream of popular and scholarly engagement with the ethical and political ramifications of auto/biographical misrepresentation in media of all kinds. In June 2015, for example, the US public was captivated by the exposure of civil-rights activist Rachel Dolezal's masquerade as an African American (Flaherty), a case which in turn revived long-standing questions about indigenous studies scholar Andrea Smith's claims to a Cherokee heritage (Jaschik).⁶ As we know from notorious cases like James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* and Benjamin Wilkomirski/Bruno Dösekker's *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*, print media, and to some extent photography and film, have long offered authors resources for impersonation, plagiarism, and slander. The affordances of social media have added catfishing, sockpuppeting, astroturfing, and various other ruses to the auto/biographical fraudster's repertoire.⁷ The case of "Joan," a male psychiatrist posing as a disabled woman in a CompuServe chat space, which Sherry Turkle discusses in her 1997 book *Life on the Screen* (228–30), is an early example of online imposture. In 2013, the alleged hoodwinking of Notre Dame football player Manti Te'o by a man posing as "Lennay Kekua," Te'o's terminally ill online girlfriend, fleetingly captured the attention of American media (Zeman). The demise in early 2015 of the initially popular social media app Secret, which allowed users to post anonymously within their networks, has been attributed in part to the impersonation and bullying the service seemed to foster (Chapman). By making

so much data about individuals so widely available, and by creating spaces in which we can enjoy rich, intimate relationships with other people without ever meeting them in person, Web 2.0 supplies nefarious “producers” powerful new resources for “making, taking, and faking” lives, to adapt the title of G. Thomas Couser’s chapter on the ethics of collaborative life writing in *Vulnerable Subjects*. Indeed, whether the fraud involves a single violation, such as lifting a real person’s profile picture to represent a fabricated individual (as in the case of Jelena Lecic’s Facebook photo, discussed in Cardell and Maguire’s “Hoax Politics: Blogging, Betrayal, and the Intimate Public of *A Gay Girl in Damascus*”), or the seizure and manipulation of all the elements of a person’s online self-representation (as in the case of James Lasdun’s experience, examined by Pulda), targets of online impersonation become unwitting co-producers of a life story that at once is and isn’t their own. Insofar as they exploit available information about the lives of real people, hoaxers and impersonators are essentially biographers posing as autobiographers, their misappropriation of another’s life reminding us of the complex, usually asymmetrical distribution of power along the boundary marked by the slash in “auto/biography.”

Along with these new conditions of possibility for the calculated, sometimes malicious, faking of identities and life stories, does Web 2.0 also offer new modalities of the more routine deceptions, omissions, and fictionalizations that many scholars of life writing regard as inevitable components of autobiographical discourse? On the one hand, Nicole B. Ellison and danah boyd have noted that “people’s self-presentation on social network sites may be less highly embellished when compared to sites without visible connections, such as online dating sites” (164), because on SNSs posts and comments from other people tend to bolster the credibility of individual members’ claims.⁸ Faking a life on a “nonymous” (Zhou, Grasmuck, and Martin) social network such as Facebook is likely to take significantly more effort than perpetuating a blog hoax. On the other hand, on sites like Facebook and Instagram, the processes of curation and produsage we discuss above, coupled with an array of social expectations that vary from audience to audience, foster lower-intensity, finer-grained embellishments and omissions that deserve more attention from auto/biography scholars, as they raise old questions about truth-telling in autobiography in the context of a new configuration of cultural norms and technological means of self-representation. As Gillian Whitlock similarly argues in her analysis of pseudonymous Iraqi blogger Salam Pax, digital forms of auto/biography reflect “transformation and experiments in ways that selves are imagined and constructed now,” and “create new horizons for thinking about . . . autobiographical practice” (4, 1). Within these new horizons, questions about truth continue to have urgency:

media coverage of the suicide of nineteen-year-old University of Pennsylvania undergraduate Madison Holleran in 2014, for example, dwells on the marked discrepancy between Holleran's Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter posts, all of which projected the image of a happy, well-adjusted student athlete, and the extreme distress she was privately undergoing. Kate Fagan's observation that Holleran "seemed acutely aware that the life she was curating online was distinctly different from the one she was actually living" ("Split Image") points to the ambivalent connotation "curation" has recently acquired in public discourse, where it not only serves to designate the practice of assembling, styling, and caring for collections but also at times impugns it as window-dressing and disguise.⁹ Within the context of auto/biography studies, this ambivalence comes as no surprise. If we accept curation as an autobiographical act, we understand that its products will correlate no more reliably or consistently with the actual lived experience of their creators than do the outcomes of any other process of self-representation.

In fact, we might ask if Holleran's selective posts are really any different from the smiling photographs and cheerful letters with which people covered up their sorrow in the days before the Internet. Moreover, since social networks are, after all, *social*, we might ask if her process of selection is any different from what Erving Goffmann describes in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* as an individual's constant negotiation between the "frontstage" and "backstage" areas of her life (see 128). If we consider the time frames within which people are now staging their online presentations of self in the form of visual and verbal texts, however, we may recognize an affective, phenomenological shift in the complex and not always fully conscious act of what Goffman calls "impression management" (206) when it moves onto social network sites. Describing autobiography's inherent susceptibility to duplicity, Susanna Egan has called attention to the gap between flesh-and-blood autobiographers and the "textual identities" they construct; in her view, "the space between the living, breathing human being who writes and this verbal construct, this textual identity, provides room for the imposture" (26). At first glance, less-than-factual textual identities on social media do not distinguish themselves significantly from their offline counterparts, but given the speed at which their composition moves to their publication for ever-present audiences who offer immediate feedback, it does seem that something has changed in the nature of the "space" that facilitates pretense for authors of online self-representations. Many of the reports on Madison Holleran's suicide highlight the detail that only an hour elapsed between Holleran's last post to Instagram—a photograph of holiday lights in Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square—and her death (Babcock and Saul; Fagan, "Split Image"). In

SNSs, the interval between writer and text, which Egan imagines in spatial terms, might be better figured temporally, as an experience of time characterized above all by the urgency of the demand on “living, breathing human beings” to sustain the visual and verbal online constructions that purport to represent them. As many critics have pointed out, this pressure to update entails an expectation to conform to protocols of self-presentation, enforced by the interfaces of SNS platforms, the social conventions of their users, and the cultural scripts of late capitalism (see, for example, Cover 61; McNeill, “There Is No ‘I’” 67–70; and Morrison 116–17). Although it is hardly the case that we all routinely bend the truth about our lives to fit predetermined, “likable” molds, our exposure to the constant, expectant gaze of prospective audiences creates a rhetorical situation that pressures us to take on, simultaneously and perpetually, the roles of curator, dramaturge, and censor of our moment-to-moment performances of selfhood within our online networks. As Laurie has suggested, we are “learning to shape [our] offline narratives and selves in Facebooked ways” (“There Is No ‘I’” 67), evaluating at least some of our immediate experiences in terms of how our photos and descriptions of them might be received by our friends and followers and making our selections accordingly. What Egan identifies as a largely static, “spatial” gap between living, breathing authors and textual identities in the medium of print, in social media becomes a dynamic, “chronic” condition of serial (and more or less dissembling) self-editing, with symptoms ranging from exhilaration to anguish.

In search of rigorous, sensitive approaches to the various forms of faking and filtering we find in social media, scholars can draw upon the substantial body of recent work on imposture in print autobiography, including Egan’s *Burdens of Proof*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson’s essay “Witness or False Witness,” proposing a supple set of “metrics of authenticity” for assessing first-person witness narratives (to which several authors in our issue refer), and Leigh Gilmore’s recent “Learning from Fakes: Memoir, Confessional Ethics, and the Limits of Genre,” in which she cautions against uncritically privileging autobiographical transparency and overlooking “the ongoing appeal of certain kinds of stories and the identificatory desire they elicit” (23), even when those stories turn out not to be true.¹⁰ Although these critics focus primarily on memoir, testimony, and trauma narrative in print, the theoretical insights they offer can help frame studies of examples of online strategies of self-fashioning that also invite us to rethink the place of fact and fabrication in autobiography. Ethnographic projects like Patricia Lange’s *Kids on YouTube*, which Lange describes in this issue, suggest strategies for accessing people’s own understanding of the incommensurable aspects of their on- and offline lives. In addition, because both high- and low-intensity forms of online imposture so often entail sustaining a coherent, convincing narrative, Julie

Rak's essay, in which she interrogates our cultural and disciplinary investments in seeing life as a "story," and explores the potential of virtual-reality simulations as alternative means of living and telling a life, may also inspire new ways of thinking about what it means to tell the truth or to dissemble in autobiographical discourse, and why it matters to us to know the difference.

Precisely because the private and public spheres no longer map neatly onto offline and online life, the stakes of coming to terms with the theoretical, ethical, and political implications of Sidonie Smith's question about auto/biography in *Web 2.0*—"To what extent do these phenomena affect the organization of consciousness?"—are quite high. As Poletti and Rak suggest in their introduction to *Identity Technologies*, careful scholarly attention to the impact of the Web and other digital technologies on auto/biographical practices can help us understand "what older identity forms such as citizenship might mean in light of proliferating forms of self-expression through various media" (20). We would like to suggest, in turn, that although it entails real risks, our constant exposure to the curated, produced, filtered, and sometimes falsified online lives of others offers us many ways to enrich our experiences of selfhood, expand our communities, and shape our social institutions by participating in the political process. It is certainly true that too many people know who we are online (and that we can't always know who *they* are), but giving in to the temptation to build firewalls to mitigate that exposure and uncertainty is likely to cut too many people, too many encounters, and too many occasions for self-reflection out of our lives. "With fewer strangers," Dean writes, "the tightly knit networks into which we retreat are comforting insofar as they buffer us from the open uncertainties disrupting our attempts to sense who we are or might be" (57). The right to privacy is certainly worth protecting, and as cases like Steven Salaita's and Saida Grundy's indicate, we need to clarify jurisdictions across private, public, and professional spheres of online life. At the same time, we have to preserve the opportunities social media afford us to sustain and expand our relationships with others, relationships through which we participate in the moral and political life of our society and within which—if we take the notion of the relational self at all seriously—we have become and are perpetually becoming who we are.

OVERVIEW OF CONTRIBUTIONS

"Online Lives 2.0" is made up of essays of three different kinds. Along with five full-length scholarly articles, we have included "updates" from four of the original contributors to the 2003 "Online Lives" issue, along with four essays by authors who, in different ways, represent practitioners of online auto/biography. Throughout this introduction we have gestured toward many of these

contributions; to help orient our readers to the collection as a whole, we offer the following synopses of what each author brings to the conversation.

ARTICLES

We begin our ensemble of full-length articles with an essay that combines an innovative methodology with a compelling critique of some of the fundamental concepts within the field of auto/biography studies. In “Life Writing Versus Automedia: The Sims 3 Game as a Life Lab,” Julie Rak elaborates on a proposal she and Anna Poletti advance in their introduction to *Identity Technologies*:

if certain kinds of autobiography are thought about not as episodic and generative but as a series of scenes, which can become episodic (but may not, or may for someone else who performs this act of recognition), then it becomes more possible to think about how autobiographical discourse surfaces within different types of media, in ways that may not be temporal and may exceed the original terms set for them. (19)

As a demonstration of an online environment’s potential to foster non-narrative modes of autobiographical performance, Rak’s contribution to our issue reports on an experiment she carried out in the virtual world of *The Sims 3*, in which she created a household made up of two male Sims, Michael Jacko and Michel F., and set them loose in the Sims world with minimal interventions. The directions these two virtual lives take are both amusingly unpredictable and theoretically provocative. Rak’s analysis of these results reinforces her conviction that we must rethink one of the prevailing presuppositions within the field: that our lives necessarily “become stories,” as Paul John Eakin proposes, and that these episodic life narratives shore up the coherence of our individual identities. This assumption, Rak argues, too often compels scholars to impose the model of narrative “life writing” on all manner of cultural artifacts that come under the purview of “auto/biography” yet manifest themselves neither as narrative nor in writing. Rak suggests that the designation “automedia” provides a more supple, inclusive marker for game- or simulation-like performances and other on- and offline auto/biographical practices that foreground processes over products. In addition to her own experiment, Rak examines a popular Sims story, Robin Burkinshaw’s *Alice and Kev*, which provides another example of virtual cultural production that might best be understood as automedia.

Taking up the case of writer James Lasdun’s experience of being stalked and impersonated online, Molly Pulda’s “Victim/Victor: Stalking the Subject of Online Life Writing” explores the ethical ambiguities that arise at the

intersection of online identity construction and online identity theft. In his memoir *Give Me Everything You Have: On Being Stalked*, Lasdun recounts a five-year period during which a former creative-writing student, an Iranian-American woman he calls “Nasreen,” barraged him with email messages, accused him of plagiarizing her work, then strove to sabotage his reputation by assuming his online identity and posting offensive comments under his name. Pulda draws on Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler to elaborate an “ethics of interruption” that encourages a more nuanced assessment of Lasdun’s situation than the outright condemnation of Nasreen’s actions that for many readers might seem like a natural and appropriate response. Pulda points to the significant differences in gender, age, privilege, and prestige between Lasdun and Nasreen, but she moves beyond a familiar analysis of asymmetrical power dynamics to illuminate the mesh of mutually constitutive vulnerabilities and complicities inhering in what superficially appear to be straightforward roles of victim and perpetrator.

The theme of online imposture returns in another form in Kylie Cardell and Emma Maguire’s “Hoax Politics: Blogging, Betrayal, and the Intimate Public of *A Gay Girl in Damascus*,” a study of an infamous 2011 blog hoax in which a straight, white, middle-aged American man, Tom MacMaster, posed as a young lesbian living in Syria, garnering an enthusiastic following and large-scale media attention until he was unmasked. Like Pulda, Cardell and Maguire seek to resist off-the-shelf judgments of such incidents without ignoring or justifying the abuses they commit. Following the lead of critics like Susanna Egan and Gillian Whitlock, Cardell and Maguire point to the role of audience desires and expectations in creating the conditions of possibility for the hoax, especially when it exploits current public interest in particular issues, such as the status of women in the Middle East. Cardell and Maguire adopt Lauren Berlant’s formulations of “intimate publics” and “juxtapolitical” social relationships, as well as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s characterization of “card-carrying listeners,” to show how MacMaster’s imposture recruited its audiences’ antihomophobic sentiments in ways that reinforced the Islamophobia and anti-Arab prejudices that underwrite US interventions in the Middle East. As does Pulda, Cardell and Maguire encourage us to view incidents of online auto/biographical fraud as opportunities for rigorous critical inquiry rather than aberrations worthy only of opprobrium.

Autobiographical forms tend to draw the lion’s share of scholarly attention in auto/biography studies, regardless of the medium in which the work appears, and biography gets short shrift. We are pleased to be able to buck this trend by including Pamela Graham’s essay “‘An Encyclopedia, Not an Experiment in Democracy’: Wikipedia Biographies, Authorship and the Wikipedia

Subject,” which examines the cultural politics driving the production of biographical entries in the world’s most-consulted online encyclopedia.¹¹ In her essay, Graham takes account of the generic constraints governing Wikipedia entries on individual lives. Comparing biographies of Nelson Mandela and Jennifer Lawrence, she shows how these conventions can obscure significant differences among the wide variety of subjects of Wikipedia biography. In conjunction with this discussion, Graham raises questions about the protocols for inclusion in Wikipedia, pointing to an instance in which advocates for an entry on a popular Nepalese musician failed to convince other Wikipedia author/editors that he was “prominent” enough to warrant a biography. In addition, Graham considers the meaning of acts of vandalism on Wikipedia as well as the practice of “sockpuppeting,” yet another mode of online fraud in which a person endorses or promotes herself on the Web—emending her own Wikipedia biography, for example—in the guise of someone else. Graham’s essay exemplifies an important feature of rigorous scholarship on online media insofar as she looks “under the hood (or bonnet)” of the Wikipedia biography, taking into account not only the immediately accessible final results of Wikipedia’s biographical production but also the behind-the-screen exchanges among editors in the site’s discussion pages, where much of the political wrangling over Wikipedia entries plays out.¹²

Rounding out our collection of articles, Gillian Whitlock’s “The Hospitality of Cyberspace: Mobilizing Asylum Seeker Testimony Online” focuses on video footage, captured on a smartphone and published on YouTube, documenting the terrifying experiences of asylum seekers from Iran and Afghanistan whose attempts to relocate to Australia are thwarted by that country’s “tow-back” policy, which forcibly returns “illegal migrants” to their point of departure—in this case Indonesia—in enclosed lifeboats towed behind Australian navy vessels. Examining the reception of this footage by the Australian news media and visitors to the YouTube site, Whitlock reflects on how the model of “hospitality,” as elaborated by thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, might apply to our response to this kind of testimony. Whitlock’s article also illuminates the enduring yet changing nature of the “digital divide” since the advent of the smartphone, which has given people powerful means of documenting their experiences without necessarily granting them adequate access to channels for circulating that testimony. With her elaboration of a “hospitality of cyberspace,” Whitlock draws on the same philosophical legacy Molly Pulda recruits to support her proposal of an “ethics of interruption.” Although the details of their situations are quite different, identity, integrity, and stability are at stake for James Lasdun as well as for the citizens whose interests the Australian government’s tow-back policy presumes to represent.

Whitlock, like Pulda, challenges us to imagine a response to that precarity that does not simply throw up barricades around the self and demonize the other. As we complete this introduction in June 2015, news reports of the hundreds of asylum seekers amassing along the borders of Europe, of the dire conditions of Syrian refugees packed into camps in Lebanon, and of the more than two thousand people who since January of this year have drowned while attempting to cross the Mediterranean from North Africa all serve to underscore the timeliness of Whitlock's study.

UPDATES FROM 2003 "ONLINE LIVES" CONTRIBUTORS

We are grateful to Madeleine Sorapure, Andreas Kitzmann, John B. Killoran, and Elayne Zalis, all of whom contributed articles to the 2003 special issue, for accepting our invitation to contribute reflections on how their scholarship, teaching, and creative work have developed over the past decade alongside the burgeoning of Web 2.0. We start this section with Sorapure's update, in which she returns to the four concepts she used to organize her study of online diaries, "Screening Moments, Scrolling Lives: Diary Writing on the Web": interface, interactivity, organization, and database. Sorapure describes how these key features in the composition of online self-representation have evolved, suggesting that, as the plug-and-play systems of social media bind users more tightly within the constraints of interface design, those systems have become increasingly more constitutive of their users' experiences of selfhood. Reconsidering her 2003 discussion of the increasing importance of databases in everyday life, Sorapure points to the intensification of data-gathering and quantification as a means of self-knowledge and self-representation, a development reflected in the Quantified Self movement and the data visualizations Nicholas Felton publishes as "annual reports" on his life. Sorapure draws on her expertise in graphic design to offer a nuanced analysis of Felton's work as an example of data-driven, non-narrative auto/biographical production.

Andreas Kitzmann reports that he has moved from the research represented in his 2003 essay "That Different Place: Documenting the Self Within Online Environments" to investigations of the interaction of memory and objects in people's construction of life stories. Kitzmann's emphasis on the materiality of our resources for self-representation links these projects. He has recently given particular attention to the powerful agency of objects in the lived experience of immigrants, who must build new lives while preserving memories of the past, memories that are often embedded in the things they have brought with them. Like Sorapure, Kitzmann is intrigued—and in his case, somewhat troubled—by the growth of life-logging and data analysis as a means of understanding and representing the self, a development that in his view threatens

to objectify individuals and subject them and their stories to the manipulation of algorithms that are ultimately not designed to serve those individuals' best interests. For Kitzmann, the Narrative Clip emblemizes this surrender of agency: a wearable camera, the Narrative Clip not only records images of life moments but uploads them to a software engine that sorts out those it judges most valuable and assembles them into a narrative sequence. Although in terms of their computational sophistication, such devices are a far cry from the Web cams Kitzmann examined in his 2003 study, he acknowledges a continuity in the impulses spurring individuals to appropriate new technologies to document their days, shore up memories, and sustain communal bonds.

In 2003 John B. Killoran brought his expertise in rhetorical theory to bear in "The Gnome in the Front Yard and Other Public Figurations: Genres of Self-Presentation on Personal Home Pages," a study of the first incarnations of the personal Web site. In his update, he reaffirms the value of the concepts of *kairos* and the *chronotope* as a means of getting a grip on the interactions between individuals' acts of online auto/biography and the rhetorical situations that call them forth. Killoran is especially interested in the protocols of self-revelation governing the presentation of self on the Web in private and professional contexts. In an effort to understand the reasoning that shapes individual authors' decisions, he queried 240 professionals about their rationale for sharing or withholding personal information on their business Web sites, and the results suggest a wide range of strategies for leveraging the details of private life to appeal to audiences of prospective clients. Encompassing a large number of individual autobiographical acts, Killoran's investigation illustrates one of the social-science methodologies that can augment the close-reading approach that is still the model of much scholarship in auto/biography studies.

The direction Elayne Zalis's career has taken since her essay "At Home in Cyberspace: Staging Autobiographical Scenes" appeared in "Online Lives" exemplifies the opportunities open to scholars of auto/biography who are willing to traverse the boundaries separating scholarship, personal memoir (and other modes of self-representation), and creative writing (and the other arts). Taking up the gauntlet she throws down for readers of her 2003 essay, Zalis has gone on to stage her own set of "autobiographical scenes" in the form of *Arella's Repertoire*, which she calls "more a laboratory exercise than a conventional novel" (287). *Arella's Repertoire* presents its story, a mix of memoir and fiction, as a series of online diary entries leading up to the turn of the millennium, posted by a woman looking back over her life in the twentieth century and anticipating the adventures, both on- and offline, that await her in the future. Augmenting her text with "letters, diaries, journals, autograph books, yearbooks, photographs, audio recordings, home movies, videos, and assorted

memorabilia” (287), Zalis repurposes the genre of the novel into another version of the “life lab” Rak imagines in her article on *The Sims*.

Designed by a team crowd-sourced through crowdSpring and released as a print-on-demand book through Amazon’s CreateSpace service, *Arella’s Repertoire* also exemplifies the new publishing channels Web 2.0 now offers authors, who are no longer beholden to the gatekeepers of conventional publishing companies. Although the power of older apparatuses of vetting and distribution have not withered away, the system of cultural valuation is shifting, and self-publishing is emerging as a viable means of connecting authors and audiences, especially when the work does not fit into market-tested categories. Scholars of auto/biography seeking to experiment with hybrid forms might look to the examples of artist/researchers working in the domain of electronic literature and Internet art, for whom the Web provides not only a publishing venue but also a powerful battery of technologies for crafting “texts” that combine word, image, sound, and motion.¹³ Auto/biography studies can only be enriched by more projects melding research and creative work, reminding us that our scholarship, from our selection of primary sources to the theorizing that frames our analysis, is always a kind of creative practice, and that by the same token the artifacts we select as our primary sources are always the products of research informed by a set of guiding concepts.

REFLECTIONS FROM PRACTITIONERS

We are very pleased to include reflections on practice by four individuals who have, in their own digital practices, significantly contributed to how “online lives” are made and understood. David Clark, danah boyd, Diane Josefowicz, and Patricia Lange responded to a call for such reflections we sent to a number of individuals who have made “online lives” a significant part of their personal and professional identities, and influenced how others also approached digital auto/biographical acts. In our call, we asked practitioners to think about why they began their projects, what they saw as the project’s purpose, and how those frameworks may have shifted over time. We were interested, too, in how the online life narrative connected to the offline, and the role of audiences in that narrative. Finally, we invited them to consider how their practice may have changed in response to technological, social, economic, and political shifts, as well as any personal transformations. Interestingly, and frustratingly, many of the practitioners we wished to include were unreachable: they may be “living online” in multiple places (blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), but they don’t readily invite readers to make one-to-one contact (instead of public posts on Twitter or Facebook pages, for example). Even when we used the contact routes available, many producers did not respond,

which we take to be another indication of the trend toward a kind of withdrawal and personal firewalling in online life, the behavioral equivalent to obfuscating an email address to hide it from trawling spambots. This was a substantial shift from our experiences in 2003, when the majority if not all the bloggers and producers featured in articles in “Online Lives” had public, personal email addresses that they monitored, and responded (in most cases enthusiastically) to inquiries from the journal.

Practitioners’ firewalling may point to another developmental phase in how the public-private realms are negotiated. The reluctance to engage with readers is, perhaps, also a feature of these individuals’ status as “A-list,” as Clay Shirky characterized early blog-stars: their celebrity status requires that they protect their time and their privacy from overly eager audiences. As A-listers, they also may be reflecting a pattern that has developed since our earlier issue and that is characterized by producers’ suspicion, even dismissal, of the academy. Axel Bruns has noted that collaborative communities organized around produsage have unseated the traditional authority of individual, institutionally validated “experts,” relying instead on the cumulative competence of contributing members (see especially 214–19). In like fashion, communities of online life writers, critical of scholars who are not themselves practitioners, position themselves as experts, not needing the authorizing mechanisms that traditionally have come with academic interest. Although we do not share Andrew Keen’s critique of this attitude in *The Cult of the Amateur* as misplaced, even hubristic, our own experience has shown us that traditional cultural hierarchies of expertise are being challenged by the space that Web 2.0 makes available for different contributors, even if the much-hailed “democratizing” potential of the Internet has not fully borne fruit, as danah boyd suggests in this issue. Indeed, the opportunities for exchange between different kinds of experts is what drew danah boyd and Patricia Lange to blogging and vlogging, respectively: Lange writes in her contribution to this issue how the YouTube community accommodated both amateur and professional producers, with both groups positioned to learn from the other. Lange’s experiences doing auto-ethnographic work with vloggers on YouTube, work requiring her to participate in the communities of practice she studied, offer one way scholars might bridge this divide. But we also pause on the idea that scholars might only study phenomena from within, a suggestion that seems to attach quite specifically to research on auto/biographical acts, and especially those online, rather than on other modes of cultural production (one need not be a novelist to study novels, for instance, though perhaps it is assumed that the cultural practices and rhetorical situation of novels would be well-known to scholars, while those of emergent online communities might not be). Notably, three of

our four practitioners are themselves also scholars, a statistic that supports our speculations about this new, voluntary form of “digital divide.”

In “Pictures in the Stars,” David Clark reflects on his 2008 project *88 Constellations for Wittgenstein (to be played with the Left Hand)*, a “born-digital” Internet artwork, built in Flash, that explores the life and after-lives of Wittgenstein. The project combines voice-over, visuals, and additional content activated when users type keys with their left hands, resulting in a sort of “meta-biography” or “mash-up” of what has already been written about Wittgenstein, including the many “playful fictionalizations” of his life such as Derek Jarman’s 1993 film, *Wittgenstein*. Users experience a network of stories and ideas, not in chronological or thematic order, but linked associationally by the routes the individual chooses on the site. These unique patterns are the constellations the project’s title signals: they act “both as a navigation device as well as metaphor of how we make meaning (or pictures of meaning as Wittgenstein would say)” (294). *88 Constellations*, while reporting “the facts of Wittgenstein’s life,” focuses on the “external relations of his life to the outside world,” a focus that reflects “the hyperlinked world of digital media” (295). Wittgenstein, for Clark, is a “conceptual snowball” around and through which other ideas and narratives accumulate. He sees in an online biography the potential to produce a “new kind of textuality that examines the relations of exteriority a life story has to our current situation” (296), addressing the snowball and all that’s adhered to it. In other words, Wittgenstein’s life, as it is taken up by others, is a conduit for others’ associations, networks, and links out to other things.

In taking as its subject how Wittgenstein’s life has become a “navigational device” for others, Clark’s project highlights the playful and productive potentialities of digital life narratives. It illustrates that, for public figures, the materials of a life/story take on life of their own, in ways that the subject might not have imagined and cannot control. For bloggers boyd and Josefowicz, and vlogger Lange, becoming such public figures through their online auto/biographical texts has meant negotiating the tension between the personal/individual and the (reading/viewing) public, who take up—or in Josefowicz’s case, take *on*—their lives. Their reflections remind us of how complex and fraught the public/private issue remains for practitioners. Significantly, of the three, only boyd continues to blog.

A blogger since 1999, boyd reflects on over fifteen years of living online, and the costs and opportunities associated with such a practice. She began writing online to meet an undergraduate course requirement for online self-reflection, and she continued, producing very personal entries that aimed for self-understanding rather than community or audience building. As boyd’s public profile grew, she committed the “heretical act” of deleting many of these

early entries, because they were “the wrong introduction” to her later online lives. The blog, for boyd, is a personal and public space, with these realms still in tension. As she characterizes the findings of her work with teens’ use of social networks, there is a distinction between a desire to “be *in* public” from a desire to “be public,” and that’s a distinction that is particularly hard to negotiate for individuals who, like her, have seemed to be “living . . . in public.” One’s personal motive for or experiences of writing or, as she notes, “Being in public. Being a public figure. Being public with my feelings. Being public” (305), can be in conflict with how one is consumed, read, taken up by others.

Diane Josefowicz also began blogging in 1999—though, she explains, “it wasn’t really a blog. It only looked like one” (307)—drawn to the form as a kind of “accidental art,” and to the idea of a blogger as “a writer who says things mostly to herself while hoping that what she’s saying might resonate” with anyone “who happens to be listening in” (307). Within this framework, Josefowicz wrote about “writing and motherhood,” and life in general at “‘Self Self Self,’ as my mother used to say,” building the blog for about a dozen years. What ensued, however, is “a cautionary tale about the interplay of public and private in online writing, and the risks of self-exposure” (307), as Josefowicz contended with an online stalker, an old friend who apparently resented Josefowicz’s “hubris” in daring to speak about her self, and the life she had that her friend envied. Josefowicz’s experience points to the porousness of online lives, and the ways they can be co-opted for others’ narratives. Josefowicz compares her experiences to those of James Lasdun, whose encounters with online stalking and identity theft are explored by Pulda in this issue. Ultimately, Josefowicz decided to stop feeding the troll(s): she shuttered her blog, “dropped off” Facebook, and moved the sharing of good news offline. This (self)silencing remains a shared point of concern for Josefowicz and boyd: boyd notes how the promised “democratizing” of blogs instead led to the amplification of some voices and the continued silencing of others, something she tries to resist by writing back to public criticism she found “dehumanizing.” Josefowicz wonders more broadly about the social mores online exposure can foster, “a weirdly pernicious kind of reading,” and “a hostile voyeurism” as individuals consume others’ lives. She asks the key question, “What is making [trolls] so hungry?” (309).

Patricia Lange writes of her own reluctant turn at living online. She began vlogging in 2006 as part of a postdoctoral research project in anthropology on digital youth, studying youth, technology, and new media, in particular YouTube. Following the disciplinary practices of anthropology, and what she perceived as the community practices of YouTube, she felt she had to be a participant-observer to do this research effectively: “to be an anthropologist in this space meant picking up a camera and doing what others in the cultural group

did, which in this case was to create short, interesting videos for a global audience” (299). As a result, she began producing weekly videos on *AnthroVlog*, work she found both “grinding” and edifying. Throughout, though, the idea of being so public remained almost anathematic to her. How, she wondered, could she be a “good” vlogger and stay within her own “personal, ethical limits”? For Lange, the solution was to vlog as an anthropologist, maintaining a public research identity, but not disclosing more personal details than she felt comfortable doing. This meant that, when the project finished, so did her vlogging. Lange’s participant-observer approach to studying the culture of vloggers, like Killoran’s survey research on professional self-presentation online, represents another valuable addition to the methodological repertoire of auto/biography studies.

CODA

We begin and end this issue with essays that explicitly gesture toward the future of auto/biography studies in relation to digital technologies. Beginning with Rak’s exhilaratingly speculative reflection on the experiential and theoretical promise of simulations in “life labs,” as represented by *The Sims*, the collection wraps up with a coda by Paul Arthur, the former editor of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and a leader in digital humanities approaches to life writing studies, who gives us a glimpse of the potential of large-scale data analysis and computer modeling to push the field in challenging new directions. In fact, we were struck by the structural similarity between Rak’s experiment with her characters Michael Jacko and Michel F. in *The Sims* and Arthur’s account of a digital humanities project led by Anton Bogdanovich and Tomas Trescak that seeks to use 3D modeling and artificial intelligence to simulate social life in the earliest human societies. Both experiments create virtual entities in a virtual space and put a set of more-or-less common variables into play in an environment that encourages (and constrains) permutation and evolution in order to watch the emergence of individuated yet still relational “selves” in a dynamic social context. Although their theoretical stakes are quite different, both projects challenge us not only to imagine new methodologies for research in auto/biography studies but also to rethink our assumptions about what constitutes an auto/biographical act or artifact—and, for that matter, our presuppositions about what constitutes a “life.”

LEARNING TO LISTEN

In the conclusion of his introduction to the 2003 “Online Lives” issue, John turned to a set of images documenting the Sony Hypermask, a system for

projecting animated faces onto motion-tracking masks in real time, and reflected on how that kind of projection technology might be pressed into the service of auto/biographical performances (xviii–xix). As we wrap up this introduction, we turn to an artwork that also makes use of projection, this time explicitly to engage questions regarding auto/biographical representation. The image on the cover of this issue is a photograph of Christopher Baker’s 2008 *Hello World! or: How I Learned to Stop Listening and Love the Noise*, a multimedia installation made up of an imposingly large screen (twelve feet high and sixty feet long in some exhibitions) onto which cycles of clips from more than five thousand online video diaries are projected to create a moving, speaking quilt of faces. In the multi-channel audio recording, clearly discernable individual voices arise from and fade back into the murmur of the crowd. John was fortunate to experience Baker’s installation firsthand in the summer of 2011, when it was on display at the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, North Dakota. In addition to the powerful aural impact of the work’s hypnotic babble punctuated with bursts of coherent speech, what particularly struck him was the visual-kinetic effect of the enfolding of the spectators’ bodies within the projected images, the bright ranks of faces slipping across their backs as they moved along the giant screen and unavoidably cast their shadows onto it (Figure 2).¹⁴

Describing his motivation to create *Hello World!*, Baker cites a set of concerns that many scholars of online auto/biography share. “I continue to be interested in the ways that new technologies affect our perceptions of self—particularly in the ways that technologies expand and extend our capabilities as humans,” he reports, going on to say that his installation explores “the promise of this technology to give formerly marginalized people the opportunity to be heard. This is incredibly attractive from a social justice and democratic perspective, but with each new speaker the cumulative effect is to drown out other speakers” (Cusak). Echoing danah boyd’s assertion in her essay in this issue that despite its promise of inclusion, the Internet still constitutes “the new mechanisms by which marginalization happens” (306), Baker observes that “it seems like we’ve created technologies that effectively amplify the voices of individuals, but we have yet to create technologies that enhance our ability to listen thoughtfully” (Cusak). The demands Baker’s installation places on its visitors are essentially the same demands that all online auto/biographical forms place on the scholars seeking to understand them. Faced with the overwhelming array of lives represented on the Internet, we have to pick and choose our objects of analysis, or following the lead of digital humanists, we have to devise methodological strategies for examining large numbers of auto/biographical acts and drawing defensible conclusions about them. We have



Figure 2. Installation View of Christopher Baker's *Hello World! or: How I Learned to Stop Listening and Love the Noise*. Photo by Sarah Rust Sampedro. © Copyright and reproduced with permission of the artist and photographer.

to appreciate how much we can gain by drawing on the qualitative and quantitative work of our colleagues in other disciplines, including anthropology, communications, economics, media and film studies, psychology, and sociology. We have to recognize that the particular theories and methods we bring to bear in our projects will illuminate only some aspects of the phenomena we choose to study while casting shadows over others. We have to learn to “listen thoughtfully,” tuning in to voices that are not always heard and to meanings that are not immediately apparent. Above all, we have to talk to each other, in the way visitors to a museum talk to each other, about the ideas our contemplation has awakened in us.

As life online increasingly becomes simply *life*, the field of auto/biography studies is adapting accordingly, posing new questions, creating new concepts, making new connections to other disciplines, and tapping new resources for research and writing. We believe that “Online Lives 2.0” has captured some of that energy, and we hope our readers will be inspired by the outcome of what for us has been—and, we expect, will continue to be—a wonderfully collegial and thought-provoking conversation.

NOTES

AUTHORS' NOTE: We are deeply grateful to all our contributors for sharing their work with us and for being so responsive to our questions and commentary throughout the process of assembling this issue. Cynthia Franklin, Craig Howes, Laura E. Lyons, and Stan Schab all read our introduction at various stages of its development and offered enormously helpful advice. Christopher Baker kindly provided images of his artwork for the cover. We both warmly thank the team at *Biography*—Cindy, Craig, and Stan—for being so enthusiastic about the idea of a follow-up “Online Lives” special issue and for all their support along the way. Finally, we want to acknowledge the important contribution of the International Auto/Biography Association, which has provided a forum for our conversations with the many colleagues whose work has helped shaped our understanding of the intersection of auto/biography and digital media.

1. Statistics generated May 5, 2015.
2. Viral posts that circulate on social media about Pinterest fails—with many of the best captured at the aptly named blog *Pinterest Fail: Where Good Intentions Come to Die*—play for humor the ways that individuals fail to meet the aspirations that the site trades in. These posts, however, still leave in place the idea these aspirations are desirable, if not as universally attainable as the pin-board suggests.
3. Brun's theory also plays an important role in Elizabeth Ellcessor's 2012 analysis of former *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* actress Felicia Day's cultivation of her Internet stardom.
4. An extreme instance of this appropriation can be seen in the controversial work of artist Richard Prince, whose 2014 “New Portraits” exhibit consisted of blown-up copies of others' Instagram photos, used without their permission. Prince's canvases sold for over \$90,000 US each (Tempesta).
5. Nicole Cohen's political economy analysis of Facebook, and in particular her discussion of how the SNS uses crowdsourcing, is one such corrective.
6. Just as auto/biographical misrepresentations entail ethical and political ramifications, so too can accusations of autobiographical misrepresentation be used to suggest ethical and political failings, as witnessed by attacks on US Senator Elizabeth Warren arising from her claims to Native American heritage (see Itagaki).
7. “Catfishing” is the practice of using social media to create a false identity to lure other users into relationships, often romantic, and at times with the aim of financially defrauding the victims; the term became popular following the release in 2010 of Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman's documentary film *Catfish*. In “sockpuppeting,” as Pamela Graham notes in this issue (236–37), people promote their own interests online by presenting themselves as independent, disinterested parties—editing their own Wikipedia biographies, for example, or posting favorable reviews of their own companies' products. The closely related practice of “astroturfing”—or “fake grassroots,” as Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green describe it (77)—involves employees of an organization masquerading online as devoted fans or satisfied customers.
8. An extensive body of scholarship on self-representation in online dating profiles has emerged over the past decade. Recent work focusing in particular on embellishment

- and deception includes Nicole B. Ellison, Jeffrey T. Hancock, and Catalina L. Toma's "Profile as Promise: A Framework for Conceptualizing Veracity in Online Dating Self-Presentations" and Rosanna E. Guadango, Bradley M. Okdie, and Sara A. Kruse's "Dating Deception: Gender, Online Dating, and Exaggerated Self-Presentation."
9. The page on the ESPN site presenting Fagan's story includes a video documentary titled "Life, Instagrammed," featuring a compilation of Holleran's Instagram pictures and interviews with friends and family members. The ESPN editors also encourage readers to share their own stories without "curating" them to weed out negative aspects of their experiences and to mark them with the hashtag #LifeUnfiltered. In a companion story, Fagan presents a series of cheerful photographs of five of Holleran's friends along with their descriptions of what they were actually feeling at the time the images were posted to social media (Fagan, "Madison").
 10. See also Timothy Dow Adams's 2008 essay "Confessions of an Autobiography Scholar; or, You Can't Handle the Truthiness." Adams describes how he was compelled to rethink his earlier defense of "lying" as an unavoidable component of autobiography (initially advanced in his 1990 book *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography*) in response to his students' sanguine tolerance of "complete fabrications" and their lack of concern "about misrepresentations of any degree of severity" (341), an orientation Adams attributes in part to the cultural impact of the Internet, digital photo editing, and reality television.
 11. Biography, in practice and in theory, is also represented in this issue by David Clark's extended artist's statement about his Flash-animated rendition of the life of Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as by Paul Arthur's coda, in which he describes how the study of biography and all forms of auto/biography might be enhanced with digital tools.
 12. The fields of digital literary studies, critical code studies, and platform studies cultivate this kind of engagement with the symbiosis of the material conditions of possibility for digital technologies and the cultural contexts in which they are created and used. See, for example, Anastasia Salter and John Murray's *Flash: Building the Interactive Web*, Sam Tobin's *Portable Play in Everyday Life: The Nintendo DS*, and Jessica Pressman, Mark C. Marino, and Jeremy Douglass's *Reading Project: A Collaborative Analysis of William Poundstone's Project for Tachistoscope [Bottomless Pit]*. Within the field of auto/biography studies, Aimée Morrison's and Laurie McNeill's discussions of Facebook represent an engagement with the specific design features of the platform and their impact on their users' practices of self-representation. In this issue, Rak's attention to the design of *The Sims*, and in particular the settings for characters' behavior, also serves as an important reminder of the material conditions shaping online self-representation.
 13. For many examples of this kind of work, and in particular the auto/biographical projects of J. R. Carpenter, Sharon Daniel and Eric Loyer, Talan Memmot, and Melinda Rackham, see the two volumes of the Electronic Literature Organization's online *Electronic Literature Collection*, edited, respectively, by N. Katherine Hayles et al. and Laura Borràs et al.
 14. The video documenting the *Hello World!* installation on Baker's Web site provides good examples of this effect.

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