

TAKING STUDENT DEBATES & DISCUSSIONS DIGITAL

Topic Three—Digital Footprint: Should colleges be allowed to take your “digital footprint” (social media presence, Google results, etc.) into consideration when making their admissions decisions?

Hernandez, Andrea. "What Is the Importance of Digital Footprints?" *Professional Learning Board RSS. Professional Learning Board*, n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

How much do you think about and value your privacy? You might feel upset if a parent or sibling went into your room without permission, or checked up on your Facebook profile. But, "in a world where everyone is connected and anything created online can be copied, pasted, and sent to thousands of people in a heartbeat, privacy starts to mean something different than simply guarding personal or private information" (Common Sense Media, 2009). So while you might think a lot about privacy as it relates to the people you know, you should consider that when every time you update your status on Facebook, tweet, comment on something, post a video, or text a friend, you are making a decision about your privacy as it relates to a lot of people you've never even met. You are creating your digital footprint every day.

You make decisions online every day that may seem short term, but could have long term consequences, long after you've forgotten what happened today. Have you ever posted something online that a friend passed along or reposted in a way you didn't anticipate? Have you ever re-posted something that belonged to a friend without asking them first? Or put "real life" business, like a fight or a break up, online? Who is reading the messages on your Facebook wall? You may think that only your friends would read about it or care, but an adult (such as a college admissions counselor or hiring manager) might see it and think twice about you.



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Bean, Sarah, and Abbi Brenoel. "Follow Your Footprint." *Your Digital Footprint*. The Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University, 12 Dec. 2011. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

The number of employers who report using Google to screen candidate rises every year. There are still some parents, teachers and administrators who hesitate to allow students to publish their work online. They feel “no news is good news” when it comes to an online presence. This may have been the case a few years ago, but today, ones footprint online is the chance to make a positive first impression. Many employers report using information they found online in hiring decisions, both to hire the candidate, as well as not to hire.

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Singer, Natasha. "They Loved Your G.P.A. Then They Saw Your Tweets." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 09 Nov. 2013. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

But colleges vary in their transparency. While Pitzer doesn't contact students if their social media activities precluded admission to the school, Colgate University does notify students if they are eliminated from the applicant pool for any reason other than being uncompetitive candidates.

“We should be transparent with applicants,” says Gary L. Ross, Colgate's dean of admission. He once called a student, to whom Colgate had already offered acceptance, to check whether an alcohol-related incident that was reported online was indeed true. (It was, and Colgate rescinded the offer of admission.)

“We will always ask if there is something we didn't understand,” Mr. Ross said.

In an effort to help high school students avoid self-sabotage online, guidance counselors are tutoring them in scrubbing their digital identities. At [Brookline High School](#) in Massachusetts, juniors are taught to delete alcohol-related posts or photographs and to create socially acceptable email addresses. One junior's original email address was “bleedingjesus,” said Lenny Libenzon, the school's guidance department chairman. That changed.

“They imagine admissions officers are old professors,” he said. “But we tell them a lot of admissions officers are very young and technology-savvy.”

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Mills, Nicolaus. "Does Facebook Hurt Your College Chances?" *CNN. Cable News Network*, 6 Nov. 2012. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

According to the Kaplan survey, 27% of admissions officers checked Google and 26% looked on Facebook as part of their applicant-review process. Thirty-five percent of those doing so -- compared with 12% in 2011 -- found material that negatively impacted their view of a student.

The results of the survey would, I thought, cause college-bound students and their parents to lash out in anger. Students are under so much stress. College costs are up, and winning the admissions race seems harder than ever.

With Harvard's 5.9% acceptance rate and six of the eight Ivy League schools taking in fewer than 10% of their applicants, competition is certainly tough for ambitious students. But for many others, even popular state schools are out of reach. In California, Berkeley and UCLA admit fewer than 22% of their applicants.

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Hausman, Angela. "He Has a Great Personality: Using Digital Footprints to Segment Markets." *Business 2 Community*. Hausman Marketing Letter, 24 Feb. 2015. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.

Extroverts also have different social network characteristics from introverts. Notice in the graphic, who extroverts have both larger and more diverse social networks, while introverts have dense relationships within concentrated groups. Thus, messaging travels differently between introverts and extroverts. Likely, introverts are more influential because of their deep relationships (strong ties) within small groups, while extroverts generate a wider awareness of the message because of their diverse relationships across many groups (weak ties) — based on Granovetter’s notion of strong versus weak ties.

Obviously, extraverts have some strong ties, as well, but their major benefit is in their ability to spread your message.

Facebook already allows message targeting based on some personality characteristics coming from purchased databases — such as Personix. Data allow targeting based on personality within a broad range of characteristics such as family composition, dwelling location (ie. urban versus rural), their media watching habits, hobbies, what they like to eat and drink, preferred sports and teams, technology use, and many others. You can also target based on what they buy, which infers not only personality, but how personality acts on their behavior. I commonly advise clients to use Facebook sponsored posts because of these personality targeting options and the relatively low cost of reaching a particular target audience.

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Blank, Dennis. "Computer Forensics Teams Learn to Follow Digital Footprints." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 08 Mar. 2000. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

The use of computers both as tools and storage devices for crimes is growing. Investigators need to build up teams because things have become so complex, one person doesn't have all the knowledge."

There is a great demand for more law enforcement investigators trained in digital crime-solving techniques, said Carrie Whitcomb, director of the National Center for Forensics at the University of Central Florida, and the university is developing a graduate certificate program. Dr. Leeson's course, which is offered in the summer, is part of the program.

Digital evidence can come from many sources in addition to PC's, Dr. Leeson said. Investigators can also find evidence in Palm devices, fax machines, cell phones and other equipment that keeps or produces data or a record of users' activities.

"How do you catch a criminal?" Dr. Leeson said. "You try to follow the digital trail, just like the gumshoe would follow the trail of evidence."

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Singer, Natasha. "They Loved Your G.P.A. Then They Saw Your Tweets."
New York Times. N.p., 9 Nov. 2013. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

Excerpt from They Loved Your G.P.A. Then They Saw Your Tweets

Of 381 college admissions officers who answered a Kaplan telephone questionnaire this year, 31 percent said they had visited an applicant’s Facebook or other personal social media page to learn more about them — a five-percentage-point increase from last year. More crucially for those trying to get into college, 30 percent of the admissions officers said they had discovered information online that had negatively affected an applicant’s prospects.

“Students’ social media and digital footprint can sometimes play a role in the admissions process,” says Christine Brown, the executive director of K-12 and college prep programs at Kaplan Test Prep. “It’s something that is becoming more ubiquitous and less looked down upon.”

In the business realm, employers now vet the online reputations of job candidates as a matter of course. Given the impulsiveness of typical teenagers, however — not to mention the already fraught nature of college acceptances and rejections — the idea that admissions officers would covertly nose around the social media posts of prospective students seems more chilling.

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Mill, Nicolaus. "Does Facebook Hurt Your College Chances? - CNN.com." *CNN. Cable News Network*, 16 Nov. 2012. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

Excerpt from Does Facebook hurt your college chances?

I asked everyone to answer on the record, and what I found was that none of the admissions officers who responded said they made it a practice to search the Internet for information about their applicants. After that, matters got more complicated.

Debra Shaver, the dean of admissions at Smith College, had this to say of student writing on the Internet: "I do think that students can be held accountable. Those of us at residential colleges are building communities; I want students in my community who behave in a way that is civil and respectful and thoughtful."

William Fitzsimmons, Harvard's influential dean of admission, emphasized that as a general practice, the college does not proactively seek online information about applicants. "That said, we may have occasion to encounter an applicant's digital footprint," he noted in an e-mail. "This often can be positive for applicants to the degree that it helps demonstrate their range of interests and accomplishments, but could be negative if it raises serious questions about character or judgment."

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Excerpt from: "Your Digital Footprint: What Is It & How Can You Manage It?" *Your Digital Footprint: What Is It & How Can You Manage It?* N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

How can you manage your digital footprint?

“The minute you meet someone they are going to Google you,” Koltz says. She goes on to explain that many employers turn to Google before filling any vacant position. If they don’t find something on Google, she says they will extend their investigation to social media.

“Even if you set privacy settings to the max on social media—which I do recommend—the people you know may know somebody who knows somebody,” Koltz says.

So how can you manage your digital footprint? Here are a few places to start:

- Protect your personal data: Don’t disclose your personal address, phone number, passwords or bank card numbers. Consider using a nickname instead of your real name.
- Keep login info under lock and key: Never share any of your usernames or passwords with anyone.
- Think before you post: Once something is posted, it can be difficult to remove. If you wouldn’t want a potential employer seeing something, don’t post it!
- Nix the pics: Any photo you post publicly is fair game for anyone to dig up. If you do choose to share questionable pictures, be sure to set your privacy settings accordingly.
- Google yourself: It may sound narcissistic but if strangers are going to do it, you should too! Search for your name every few months so you’re cognizant of the information others have access to.
- Scale back on social media: Don't be on more social networking sites than you can handle. Keep the profiles you use frequently and delete any accounts you don't update often.

What are the benefits of having a digital footprint?

Before you start having nightmares about the dangers of digital footprints, it’s important to know there are positive aspects as well. It’s a way for you to create a personal brand for yourself. You’re now aware that employers are following your trail, so take advantage of it! There are many ways you can leverage your digital skills to land a job.

“The best thing to do is not to stay offline,” Koltz says. She encourages you to participate in professional groups or forums and network with others in your field. She says creating a personal blog is another way to highlight your strengths and personality online.

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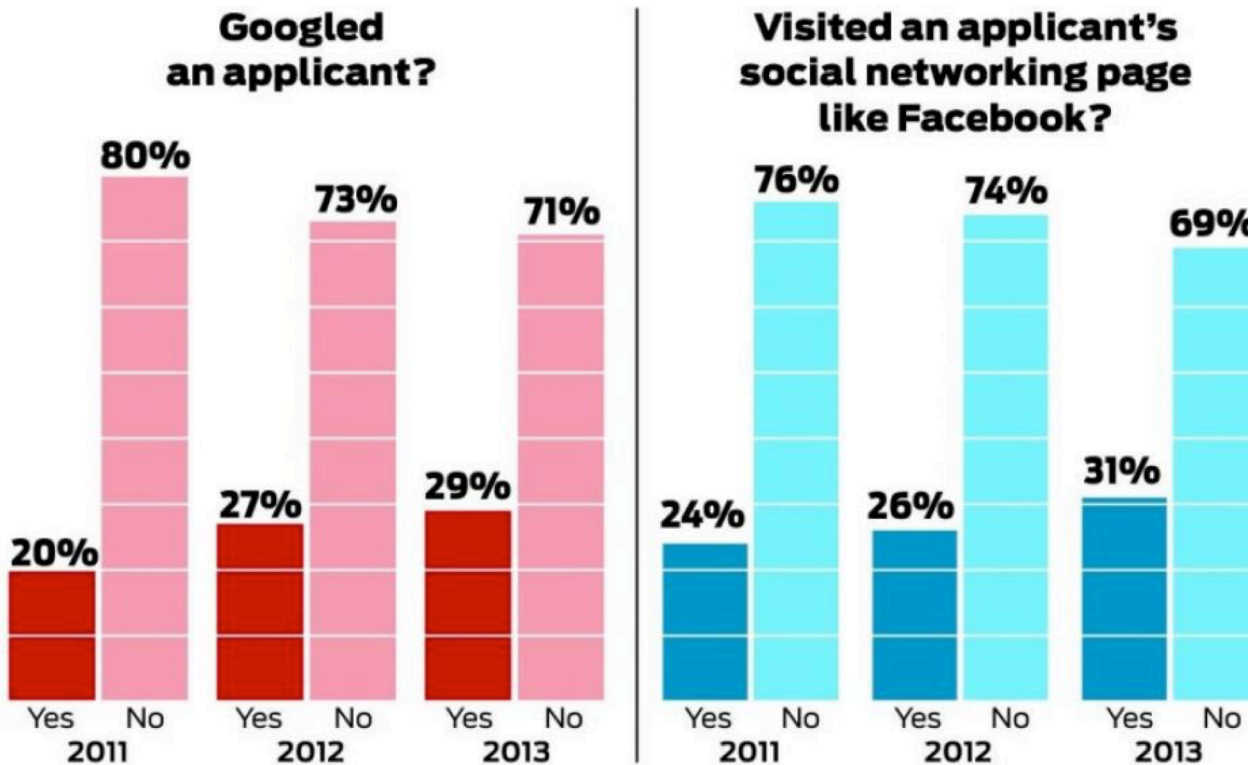
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Asimov, Nanette. “Few Colleges check applicants’ social media posts”
“Few Colleges Check Applicants’ Social Media Posts.” SFGate. N.p., n.d.
Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

Researching college applicants

A survey was conducted of 422 college admissions officers.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT AN APPLICANT



Source: Kaplan Test Prep

John Blanchard / The Chronicle

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Colleen, Ludovice. "Pros and Cons of Your Digital Footprint." N.p., 5 July 2013. Web.

Excerpt from Pros and Cons of Your Digital Footprint

Pros:

- Fraud or legal issues can more easily be detected
- Personalization (like suggested products or related advertising) serves to add value to our use of the Internet
- Companies can more easily offer incentives based on interests and needs, sometimes resulting in cost savings



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"Digital Footprint." - Careers. N.p., 28 Nov. 2014. Web. 26 Feb. 2015

Excerpt from Digital Footprint

What is your digital footprint?

Your digital footprint is everything on the internet that is about you. This could include

- a profile on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn
- photographs that you, your friends or family have posted online
- anything you have written or that has been written about you, for instance on discussion boards, blogs, or in articles.

We are all being encouraged to put aspects of ourselves and our lives online, and much of this content is freely available to view. Each time we add something about ourselves on the internet we enlarge our own digital footprint. Whenever we mention someone else, we enlarge theirs.

Personal information is routinely collected by companies eager to market their goods or services and this can be retained for several years. Equally, your digital presence can be monitored by individuals looking for information about you.