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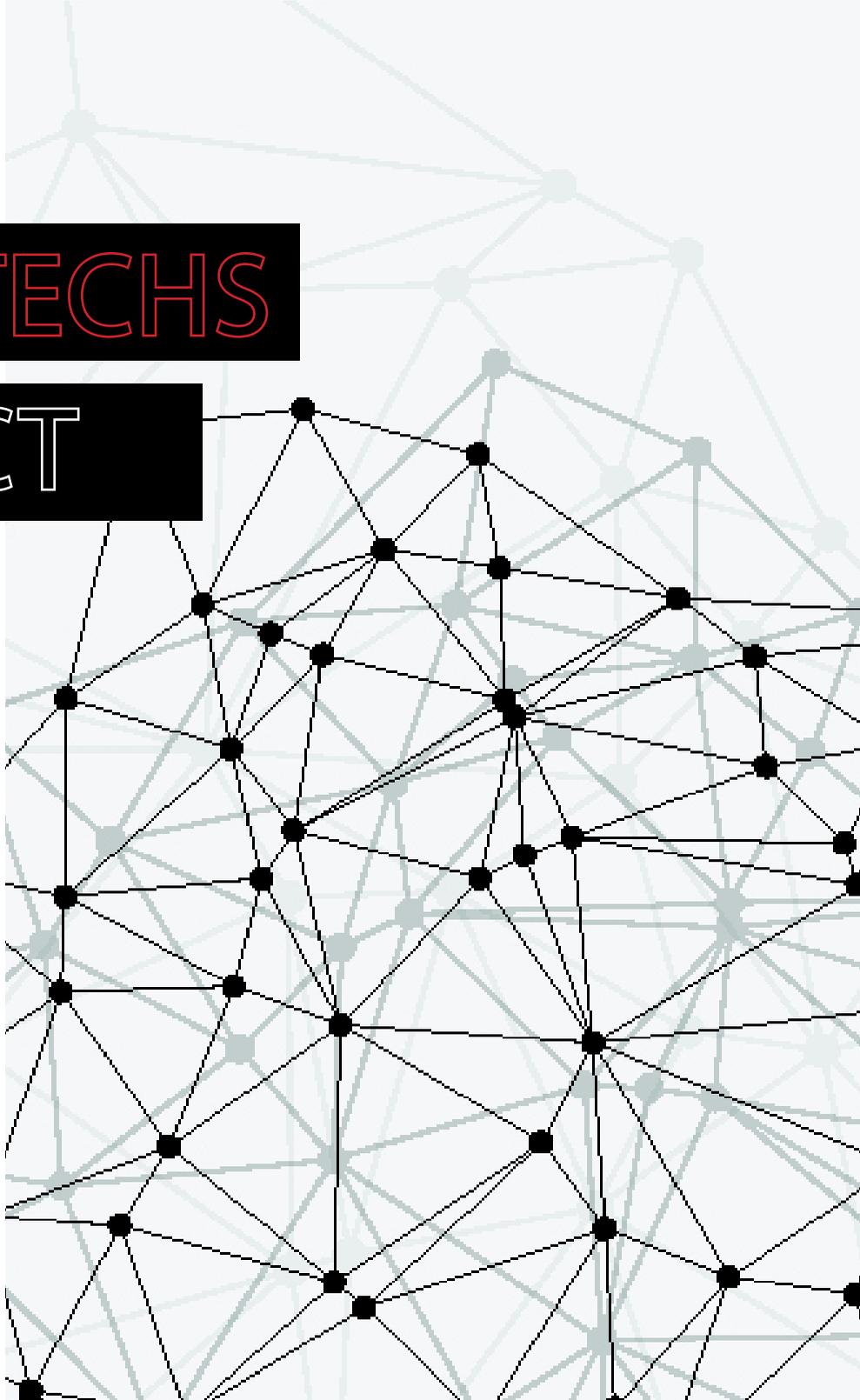
ARCHITECHS

PROJECT

VOLUME 02

How to work,
govern and learn in
a hyper-connected
world.

THREAD



WELCOME I TWEET, THEREFOR I AM

The 6 Stages of Online Identity Evolution

In Volume 1 we looked at the macro trends that were laying the foundation for ArchiTechs. Volume 2 turns our focus inward and examines how the Internet is affecting our sense of self. We'll explore the evolution of online identities and look back at some of the most important developments that helped shape our notion of our online selves.

Philosopher David Hume theorized that our identity as we know it is merely a collection of "impressions," snippets of thoughts, feelings and attributes that combine to form our concept of who we are. For example, our concept of a Granny Smith apple is actually a bundle of individual impressions: the colour green, a spherical shape, smooth waxy skin, a tart and tangy taste. These individual components come together to form our identification of that apple.

The same process applies to individuals, though our impressions are understandably more complex. For example, if you were to think about Michael Jordan several different impressions might come to mind: tall, bald head, basketball player, the Chicago Bulls, Air Jordan sneakers, Nike, athletic, strong, dunk. All these impressions and individual components form the concept of Michael Jordan.

Today, the Internet has enabled us to create a new host of impressions that build on our own identities and influence our perception of others. Each Tweet, Instagram picture, blog post or status update leave a digital footprint that make up our digital identities. In the past, our musings would have been limited to whoever was physically around to hear them, but now

we have access to a broader online audience. The creation of Angelfire and LiveJournal gave rise to our ability to share thoughts, ideas, and feelings with a much broader audience than we've ever had access to before. For the first time, thanks to technology, sharing information about our lives was instantaneous and effortless. Sites like Wordpress, Blogger, Technorati, and Tumblr further empowered non-tech savvy users to easily share content. As of April 2015, Tumblr listed over 227.1 million blogs.¹ Wordpress has over 75.8 million blogs with a combined audience of 409 million people resulting in 18.6 billion page views every single month.²

Back in the early 2000s, the rise of social networks added a new layer of complexity to our online interactions by allowing us to map our offline relationships and interact with our family and friends in this digital space. Today, 11 years since Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook, the social networking giant counts over 1.44 billion active users who upload their pictures, locations and thoughts in order to stay connected to their family and friends. Each profile page represents a life-log of impressions, carefully curated, stored and shared. So what can we learn from the evolution of our online selves? What divides between online and offline selves have endured?

Thoughts on this and more in the following pages - we hope you enjoy .

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Rahaf & Riwa Harfoush,
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**USERS PRODUCE ABOUT
56.1 MILLION NEW
POSTS AND 68.1 MILLION
NEW COMMENTS EACH
MONTH.**

¹ <http://www.statista.com/statistics/256235/total-cumulative-number-of-tumblr-blogs/>

² <http://wordpress.com/activity>

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

SOUTH KOREA

identity | *governance* | *privacy*

In South Korea, you receive a resident registration number upon birth. This number is comprised of 13 digits which include information such as your date and place of birth and your gender.

In response to the rise of destructive online behaviour masked by anonymity, the South Korean government launched an initiative to link a person's online activity to their real life identity, hoping that the increased transparency and accountability would put a stop to cyber-bullying, spamming, phishing and other Internet scams.

Launched in 2005, any citizen who published online content was required to verify their identity using their resident registration number. Additional legislation was passed in 2007, requiring any website with more than 100,000 daily visitors to verify the real identities of their users.

Unfortunately for South Korea, in trying to protect their citizens from one type of crime, they inadvertently exposed them to another vulnerability. In 2011, Chinese hackers breached CyNet, one of the country's most popular messenger websites and stole personal information from over 35 million users. Compromised information included their real names, addresses, phone numbers and resident registration number. Shockingly, almost 70% of the Korean population were estimated to have been impacted by this online theft.

In response to this act, the Korean government changed their internet regulations again. As of 2012, South Korean websites are not allowed to request the resident registration number except for payments, and websites were forbidden from storing this information on their servers.

As of 2014, the South Korean government continues to face massive challenges with regards to identity theft and are considering an overhaul of the entire system - an undertaking that could cost close to \$1 billion.

It is estimated that due to the unchangeable nature of the resident registration number - you can't change them if your identity is compromised - hackers now hold the numbers for nearly 80% of the population, resulting in a sharp increase of online crimes.

South Korea is an interesting case study in the debate of the need for a divide between our online and offline selves. On one hand, increased transparency and accountability does have an impact on what people post online. On the other hand, it also exposes those people to an entirely new world of risk. It's a perfect example of how systems that have been in place for decades (the RRN system was introduced in the late 60s) can be made extremely vulnerable in a few short years thanks to the rise of technology.

In fact, in this case the hackers are ArchiTechs: they are forcing governments from around the world to reevaluate their systems and policies with regards to protecting their citizens' identities both on and offline.

“In trying to protect their citizens from one type of crime, they inadvertently exposed them to another vulnerability.”

THE EVOLUTION OF ONLINE IDENTITY

Since the pace of technology moves so rapidly, it's easy to forget how we've arrived at this point. To understand where we're headed, it's essential to understand where we've been, so let's go back in time and look at the inception of our online identities.

1 The Birth of Online Handles



The creation of the Internet provided users access to a new and unexplored universe, with little guidance on how to best engage in this new and exciting domain. Online interaction was largely defined by user-names- called handles- that were used by people to identify themselves on various websites, internet chatrooms and message boards. This was the first big moment in the development and evolution of our online identity. A person could pick whatever handle they wanted, and for the most part there was a big divide between

their online and offline identities. The two existed separately, protected by the anonymity provided by online nicknames. Users could interact with each other for years without ever knowing who was on the other side of the screen.

2 Link to Real-Life Identity



The second big moment came with the widespread adoption of Facebook. While not the first social network (it was preceded by MySpace, Friendster, Hi-five amongst others), it was one of the most influential in shaping our online identities. Initially launched and targetted at university students, Facebook required an academic email address in order to open an account, resulting in the majority of their members using their real names. In fact, it was a part of their Terms of Service: users who wanted to activate an account had to use the legal

names as they appeared on their government issued identification. Pseudonyms were not allowed. The site opened up to the general public, and by 2011 had over 750 million members, making it arguably the biggest push for the convergence of our online and offline identities in the history of the web. Suddenly, users found their real names linked to their behaviour within Facebook. Now, there was a link between our online and offline selves that existed within the vertical of this one internet site.

3 Data Portability: Beyond the Walled Garden

The third big push in the identity space occurred with the introduction of services that enabled people to use their Facebook or Google account credentials to log on to various sites around the web. This eliminated the pesky need to create a separate account and login for every different website we frequent.

Our online identity, once anchored within our social network of choice, could be extended to other major websites, including CNN, CBS, the HuffingtonPost, TechCrunch and thousands more.

According to a statement by Facebook CEO, Mark Zuckerberg: "For example, you can use Facebook Connect with the reviews website, Citysearch. You can easily log in using your Facebook account, and from there, you'll be able to interact with all of your Facebook friends. They'll be able to see some of the same profile information they can see on Facebook, which is

fully controlled by your privacy settings. When you write a review for a restaurant, you'll have the option to publish that story back to Facebook, where your friends can see it, too," he posted on Facebook. "This makes finding your friends' reviews on Citysearch a snap. With Facebook Connect, it will be easier for you to share and connect with your friends across the Web."

We could now see our friend's activities on various sites, as well as publish our own activities across the web back to Facebook. It was getting easier and easier to have a consistent web presence that was not confined to just one site. Our online identity was becoming more complex and multi-layered with different types of content but also increasing the linking between my online activities and my offline self.



4 Geo Spatial: Erasing Online/Offline Boundaries

The fourth big push forward came with the introduction of geo-spatial technologies such as FourSquare, Facebook Places, interactive Google Maps and their uses through mobile technology. Using a smart phone, we could now share our offline location with our online networks. The online self could now be situated within the physical world and this forged an irrevocable connection between who we are and how we portray ourselves. Where we are, and where we choose to become data that we can add to the rich set of impressions that make up our identities.

This evolution also opened the door to leave and find digital content in physical places, to connect people based on proximity and to use location data as another input to profile individuals and to understand what they might want and when. This new layer of data represents a underlying system that dictates the way we interact with the world; it normalizes the way we think about

our online identity in relation to physical space.

As geo-spatial technology created unprecedented data points and new interactions, it also further blurred the lines between online and offline and repositioned our online identity as a seamless extension of our offline self. This convergence has created a new concept of our Identity, and we are still currently dealing with the ramifications.



5 Aggregation and Quantification : The Sum of our Parts

The fifth stage was the aggregation, analysis, and visualization of our online identities. With hundreds of millions of users constantly sharing information, we are seeing the emergence of services that are attempting to translate the deluge of this overload into something logical. There are a host of companies that offer services enabling users to dissect their own social media accounts, highlighting things like most often used keywords, frequency of posts and most interacted with users. These services represent the introduction of new metrics: measuring online influence, credibility and reputation.

For businesses, understanding and decoding customer behaviour is big business. The danger here lies in the type of information that these sites are collecting. We are very wary of sites that want to log and track passive activity online. For example, in addition to Facebook collecting all of your

status updates and photo uploads, the site also records which profiles you view the most, how much time you spend on the platform and which links you click. It was revealed that the company has a data lab which can accurately predict³ big life events such as purchasing a new house or finding a new job - before they take place.

The sum of these parts can tell a powerful story about who we are and who we may one day be. With identity at the core of this issue, debates on ownership and privacy will be more important than ever.



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<http://www.theverge.com/2013/10/28/5038830/facebook-researchers-predict-relationship-failure>

6 Post Transparency

Currently, we are in the post-transparency phase. We are beginning to see the implications of sharing our lives online. By now, we've all heard countless stories of lost pets being reunited with their owners, criminals being captured or people losing their jobs thanks to online behaviour. The effects are polarizing with people actively and deliberately choosing how they wish to move ahead with managing their online/offline identities.

Some will double down on 100% transparency, also known as the nothing to hide approach. This is best captured by Eric Schmidt, the executive chairman of Google who responded concerns about what information Google was collecting by saying "If you have something you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place."

On the flip side, there is also an emerging counter-philosophy that is much more pro-privacy. The creation of Ello, a privacy focused social network is the perfect example of this trend. Ello differentiates itself from other social networks by being explicitly ad-free. The site

promises to never sell user data to advertisers or third parties, to never show advertisements, and to never enforce a real name policy. We are seeing the increasing use of VPN, TOR, and other privacy protecting tools. According to a 2014 survey by GlobalWebIndex, 56% of users surveyed reporting feeling concerned that the Internet was eroding their personal privacy. It is estimated that 28% or 415 million⁴ people worldwide use tools to protect their anonymity online.

In terms of weak signals, we are seeing the emergence of industries specifically focused on protecting regular consumers from surveillance in the real world. For example, hoodies that protect you from CCTV, makeup that can derail face recognition software, etc. These industries are being created in direct response to the merging of our online and offline selves.

When you consider that in 2014, Facebook introduced software that could identify someone in a picture with 97.25% accuracy, inventions like glasses frames that can thwart these new services don't seem so crazy.



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<https://www.bestvpn.com/blog/8518/huge-rise-use-online-privacy-tools-reported-fears-privacy-erosion-grow/>

COMING NEXT VOLUME 03

avatar | anonymity | death

We continue our assessment of online identities by exploring the issues of anonymity, identity ownership, and what happens to your online identity after you die. We'll also take a look at how online spaces such as virtual games play a role in influencing our behaviours in the real world.

ABOUT US

CONNECTING THE DOTS IS WHAT WE DO
BEST.

Red Thread is a do-tank that specializes in strategy, foresight and digital culture. A balance of exploration and action, our unique perspective helps us spot the possibilities, opportunities and contexts that others miss.

Founded by sisters Riwa and Rahaf Harfoush, Red Thread is a globally distributed network of strategists, designers, anthropologists, researchers, photographers and producers who collaborate on exciting projects and exchange ideas.

Work with us on special projects or speaking, or visit Red Thread's Institute of Digital Culture to learn more about how we develop organizational intelligence through thought-provoking courses and workshops.

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