Guide for the Pedagogical Use of Social Media

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Introduction

Target Audience

This guide is designed for teachers, pedagogical advisors and anyone interested in integrating social media into teaching and learning.

Objectives

Its main objective is to support teachers in the pedagogical use of social media. It consists of four sections dealing with various aspects of the integration of these tools into the practice of teaching.

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The Discover section aims to:

- Define social media and identify related issues;
- Introduce the concept of online identity.

The Plan section shows how to:

- Identify social media's added value to teaching and learning;
- Develop a learning activity using social media;
- Choose technologies that are appropriate for the pedagogical objectives.

The Implement section provides advice on how to:

- Ensure that social media are used effectively and responsibly;
- Successfully carry out a learning activity using social media.

Finally, the Evaluate section suggests ways to:

- Evaluate learning;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of an activity that integrates social media.

The Authors

Editorial and Production Team

This guide is the result of a collaborative effort by participants in the Labo VTÉ, *Utiliser les médias sociaux sans crainte*, held in the spring of 2012:

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Context

Summary

- Introduction
- Social Media and Quebec's Youth
- Social Media's Pedagogical Potential
- Empowering Students

Introduction

Social media are everywhere. Whether one likes them or not, they cannot be ignored because millions use them everyday to send messages, organize events, manage personal profiles or find information.

Organizations also use social media. These include educational institutions attempting to reach out to current and future students wherever they may be.

Image: Ed Yourdon | Flickr | CC BY-SA 3.0

Social Media and Quebec's Youth

According to the Centre facilitant la recherche et l'innovation dans les organisations' (CEFRIO) 2011 study, *L'engouement pour les médias sociaux au Québec*, nearly all of Quebec's youth between the ages of 18 and 24 use social media at least once a month (91.8%) and spend an average of 8.6 hours a week doing so. Furthermore, among these Quebec Internet users:

- 65% visit social media sites at least once a day and 27%, at least once a week.
- 51% interact with others via social media every day and 35%, at least once a week.

In view of these findings, one should not be surprised if teachers turn to these tools not only to remain in touch with their students, but to carry out learning activities.

Social Media's Pedagogical Potential

Given a concern for extending learning beyond the classroom (e.g., inverse pedagogy), social media are the tools of choice for finding information, collaborating and carrying out projects anywhere, anytime. They allow teachers to adopt different approaches for transmitting content and evaluating learning. They also provide students with the opportunity to develop communication and basic noncognitive skills (ethical behaviour, professionalism, respect for intellectual property, etc.) using simple and readily available tools.

However, some institutions are reluctant to encourage the use of outside social media tools out of a concern for protecting privacy and intellectual property. Even though real risks are involved, educating citizens for 21st century should include training in the use of social media and information technology. In fact, once students leave their educational institution, they no longer use its IT services or have access to its digital learning environment or limited-access Internet laboratories. In their personal and professional lives, they will use and produce content through social media and search engines that are generally free and easily accessible. In its study, Gérer les enjeux et risques juridiques du Web 2.0, CEFRIO states that "[Users] are remarkably well equipped to produce, transmit and share information. It is imperative that they be made aware of the issues and risks associated with their online activity."

Empowering Students

Because they contribute to the education of young people, teaching institutions have a role to play in empowering students in the use of the Internet and developing their technology skills. For example, the REPTIC Network developed the ICT Profile for College Students that identifies a series of ICT related skills, including one associated with online communication and collaboration. The *ICT Profile* is gradually being implemented across the college network.

Social media are part of students' lives. They can facilitate communication and even the achievement of learning objectives. However, considering the issues involved, adequate preparation is needed to ensure that they be properly integrated. This guide proposes guidance and resources that can help to contribute to the design of successful learning activities using social media.

Discover

Summary

- Introduction
- What Are Social Media?
    - Definition
    - Types of Social Media
- What is Online Identity?
    - Definition
    - The Many Facets of Online Identity
    - The Myth of Online Anonymity
    - Types of Web Presence

Introduction

This section deals with two questions: "What are social media?" and "What is online or Internet identity?"

The purpose here is not to examine every type of social media, but to define and describe their basic characteristics.

Online identity is inherent to the digital world and goes hand in hand with the use of social media. While digital, it remains very real and linked to each of us. This section is designed to introduce teachers to this concept in order that they may integrate it into both their decision-making and teaching.

What Are Social Media?

Definition

Social media employ digital Web-based technologies to facilitate the development and sharing of user-generated content, collaboration and social interaction. The expression "digital Web-based" is meant to emphasize the distinction between social media per se and other types of non-digital media that can also be social in nature.

This phenomenon began at the turn of the century, at a time when the Web's evolution empowered users by reducing the level of technological skill required to publish content, thereby allowing them to become actors rather than mere spectators.

Social media can be used not only for personal purposes, but also for pedagogical, promotional, administrative and institutional ends.

Panorama des médias sociaux 2012
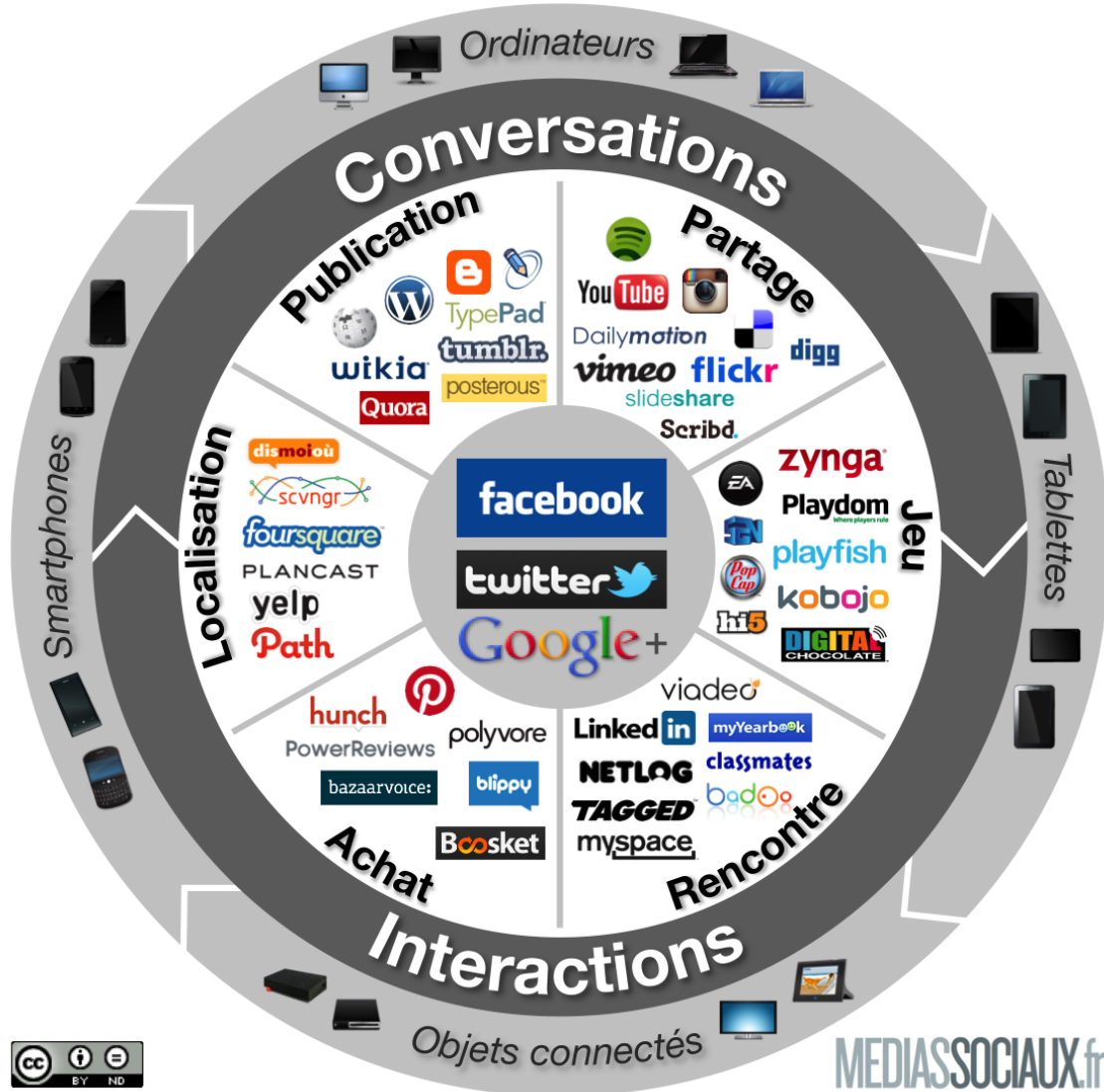
Types of Social Media

Social media include blogs, wikis, folksonomies (or social classification sites), video- and podcast-sharing sites and social networks. Several typologies have been developed (e.g., that of Frédéric Cavazza, from which the following figure was taken, and those of Deschênes, 2012 and Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nevertheless, classifying these various tools remains risky because the field is constantly evolving.

What is Online Identity?

Definition

Our identity consists of all that characterizes and distinguishes us from others. It can be compared to a disco ball with each facet reflecting one aspect of our personality. Our identity changes over time, evolving with our experiences, environment, the people that we meet, etc. Furthermore, as Philippe Buschini wrote in an article published on his blog, "In the digital world, one must not confuse 'identity' or someone's online persona with authentication which is the process of determining someone's identity."

Figure: the online identity ecosystem according to Frédéric Cavazza's diagram

The Many Facets of Online Identity

Internet identity consists of many bits of information generated by either individuals themselves or members of their network.

The disco ball analogy is especially useful in this regard. In addition to reflecting an individual's distinctive features such as tastes, values, beliefs or habits, each facet also mirrors an image created by what others think, say or write about him/her.

Today, part of who we are is unavoidably digital. Even someone who has never been on the Internet or used social media most probably has an online identity consisting of information posted by organizations or other individuals. Taken separately, these bits of information may seem inconsequential. Nevertheless, they have the potential of drawing a surprisingly accurate portrait. A journalist has already tested this out by creating a "Google portrait" of a fictitious person. He published his findings in a fascinating article. A video of a Belgian clairvoyant also offers dramatic evidence of the kind of personal information that one can find on the Web.

The Myth of Online Anonymity

From the minute we begin to surf, we also begin to unconsciously leave traces of our identity behind on the Web. For instance, the photos that we post and camera used to take them are often geotagged without our realizing it.

Moreover, some individuals and businesses specialize in collecting and analysing personal data found on the Web, mainly for advertising purposes.

Finally, our digital footprints are difficult to manage because they can be easily reproduced and we rarely have control over the servers that store them. They are permanent.

We have to be aware of this and act cautiously, bearing in mind that online identity is very real and can affect many tangible areas of our lives such as job hunting or applying for a loan.

Types of Web Presence

The sociologist Dominique Cardon[1] devised an interesting typology of the various types of online presence in the Web 2.0 era. It is featured in Philippe Buschini's article.

He identifies five visibility formats organized by online identity/type of sought-after visibility (see figure below).
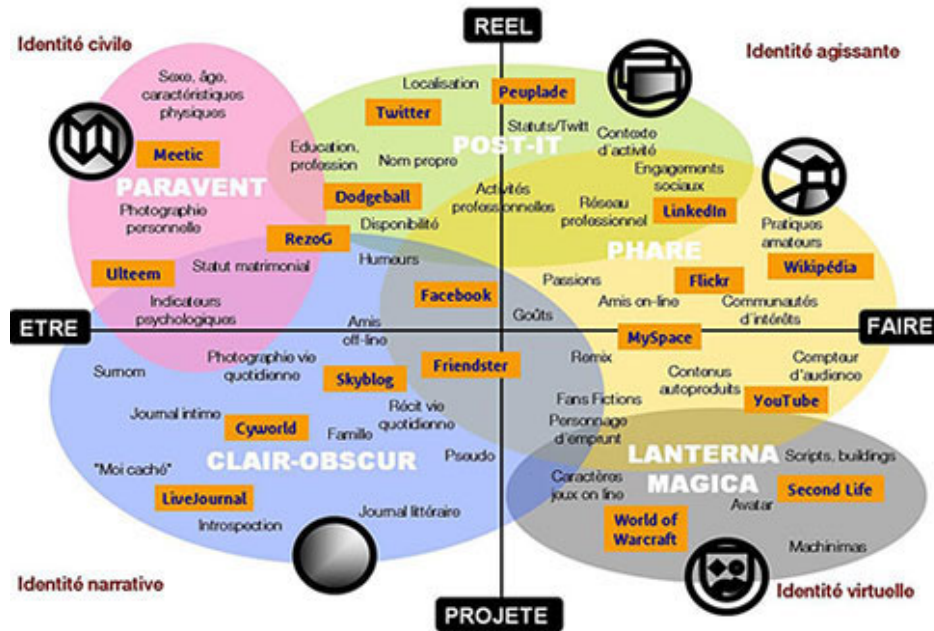

Figure: D. Cardon | InternetActu.net | CC BY-NC 2.0

Obviously, this is only a summary. This concept interests people working in a wide range of fields (IT, marketing, law, ethics, etc). The web-id-numérique wiki pulls together many related documents. If you would like to contribute to it and thereby add a new facet to your online identity, please feel free to do so.

In conclusion, we all have a more or less extensive online identity. It is not something for which we are solely responsible and it is subject to change over time. Even if it is virtual, it remains very real and can affect us. That is why it is important to learn how to properly use the Internet and social media.

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[1] Dominique Cardon is a sociologist with France Télécom R&D's Laboratoire des usages and associate researcher at the Centre d'étude des mouvements sociaux of the École des Hautes études en sciences sociales. http://bit.ly/12YPjU.

Plan

Summary

- Introduction
- Pedagogical Applications of Social Media
- Integration Process
    - Defining an Activity's Objectives
    - Designing an Activity
    - Selecting the Right Media

Introduction

Social media have obvious potential not only as teaching and learning tools, but as training targets. However, their use in the classroom requires harmonization with the pedagogical objectives to be achieved and sound planning for their integration.

The purpose of this section is to identify various pedagogical applications of social media and propose a way of integrating these tools that will assist teachers in their planning.

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Pedagogical Applications of Social Media

Teachers and students who master social media develop new uses or affordances.

Eight affordances inherent to social media are presented below. The uses that a teacher will integrate into the planning of an activity will flow from the targeted learning objectives. It should be noted that an activity can incorporate several uses simultaneously.

Discovering

Examples of learning activities: research, monitoring.

Publishing and Content Sharing

Examples of learning activities: text-based content, multimedia content, experience narratives, professional portfolios.

Communicating and Interacting

Examples of learning activities: communication with experts, communication with one's peers, voting, parallel discussions (backchannel), distance collaboration.

Problem Solving

Examples of learning activities: multimedia projects, collaborative projects, videoconferences.

Constructing Meaning

Examples of learning activities: collaborative knowledge bases (Knowledge Forum), online learning portfolios, content organization and structuring (keywords).

Networking

Examples of learning activities: identification and creation of professional networks, learning communities, communities of practice.

Developing Cognitive Skills

Examples of learning activities: study and learning techniques, intellectual and language skills, effective exploration of ICT.

Developing Noncognitive Skills

Examples of learning activities: online identity management, compliance with a code of ethics.

Integration Process

Based on current approaches,[2] that for integrating social media consists of three components. It should be mentioned that this process will not necessarily be applied in a linear fashion.

Defining an Activity's Objectives

The first component consists in identifying the learning activity's objectives, which can include:

- Prescribed objectives and standards;
- Objectives established by the teacher or the course and stated explicitly in the prescribed objectives and standards, such as:
  - professional attitudes;
  - cognitive and language skills;
  - content knowledge.

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[2] There are several models for integrating IT into education. In her blog on an approach for managing change, Pauline Douanla Doungtio presents a variety of models for teachers. The reader is also invited to look at those found at Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) and in the work of Carole Raby of the Université du Québec à Montréal.

- Objectives established by the teacher that extend beyond those of the course:[3]
  - ICT integration;
  - intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors;
  - study and learning techniques;
  - ideologies or values.

Designing an Activity

The second component consists in devising the pedagogical activity and its implementation context. This involves developing the tools needed for achieving the stated objectives. It may be appropriate to begin by sketching out an overall plan. Based on it, the following will require further development:

- The pedagogical activity's structure:
  - learning activities;
  - teaching activities;
  - activities and evaluation criteria (including those related to compliance with intellectual property laws and rules of communication);
  - course management tools;
  - technical procedures;
  - activity and course sequencing.
- Implementation context:
  - venue;
  - required materials;
  - format (individual or teamwork);
  - duration.
- Types of interaction:
  - public or private;
  - synchronous or asynchronous;
  - personal or professional.
- Etc.

Selecting the Right Social Medium (Appropriateness)

The final component consists in matching pedagogical objectives with the right technological tools. The factors to be considered are:

- the tool's functionalities;
- potential pedagogical applications;

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[3] These are referred to as "didactic transpositions". They include individual factors related to a teacher's experience, values and perceptions, institutional factors supporting or undermining pedagogical practice or other types of teacher initiatives and, finally, contextual factors providing an ideological and political framework for participation in civil society (McCowan, T. 2008. Theory and Research in Education, 6(2), 153-172). Also see: Philippe Perrenoud (1993) *Curriculum: le formel, le réel, le caché* and Michel Verret (1975) *Le temps des etudes.*

- financial and administrative limitations;
- the tools' ergonomics;
- etc.

Analysing these factors when choosing a tool will allow for the optimal achievement of the pedagogical objectives.

Since tools and functionalities evolve rapidly, it is recommended that a specialist be consulted (i.e., an educational technology advisor).

Implement

Summary

- Introduction
- Conditions for Successful Integration
    - Guidance in Exploring Social Media
    - Student Awareness of Issues Related to Online Activity
    - Ethical Communication
    - Respect for Intellectual Property

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Introduction

Over and above content-specific competencies, carrying out a learning activity integrating social media involves cross-disciplinary skills associated with the use of digital tools and the Internet. These "Web citizen" skills, as illustrated in Florence Meichel's mind map, allow people to create, communicate and collaborate using information and communications technology (ICT) in an ethical and responsible manner. These elements must be considered in order to successfully integrate social media into a pedagogical context.

Conditions for Successful Integration

One can mistakenly assume that students, considered digital natives, generally have "Web citizen" skills and master not only the technology, but what underlies it. However, a study conducted by Poellhuber et al. (2012) among 30,000 Quebec college students showed that "only 13% could be considered experienced users with mastery of a wide range of technological tools and social media," and that nearly half (48%) fell into the beginner category.

Therefore, when attempting to carry out a learning activity using social media, several factors must be considered. They are presented here in checklist form. This list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. Rather, it aims at providing guidelines and suggestions designed to help to avoid unwanted surprises when carrying out an activity.

Guidance in Exploring Social Media

- Identify a teacher or student's prior familiarity with the chosen tool;
- Establish a procedure for mastering the tool and plan training time;
- Provide access to technical support:
    - A mediagraphy listing information resources on how to use the tool;
    - Resource persons (teachers, peers, technicians, etc.).

Student Awareness of Issues Related to Online Activity

- Managing one's online identity:
    - Sensitize students to the concepts of public sphere and online identity;
    - Sensitize students to the importance of managing their online footprint.
- Saving and storing student work:
    - Identify the general functionalities and conditions of use of the chosen social media;
    - Determine the manner in which student work will be organized, classified and archived.
- Ensuring privacy and security:
    - Establish the confidentiality parameters and conditions of use of the chosen social media;
    - Adjust the confidentiality parameters;
    - Discuss confidentiality parameters with the students;
    - Consider opening individual accounts;
    - Establish what content will be shared and how.
- Contextualizing student work:
    - Indicate on the chosen social media that assignments are part of a learning process.

Ethical Communication

- Sensitize students to the rights and responsibilities associated with the exercise of free speech and the need for trustworthiness;
- Identify every actor's (students, teachers and college) roles and responsibilities according to a code of ethics for online communication and existing regulations;
- Establish a strategy of moderation;
- Identify sanctions for inappropriate behaviour.

Respect for Intellectual Property

- Raise student awareness to intellectual property rights as they relate to the activity;
- Demonstrate the distinction between rights of use and rights of distribution;
- Recommend ways for students to protect their rights (e.g., Creative Commons licenses);
- Include respect for intellectual property in the evaluation process.

Evaluate

Summary

- Introduction
- Evaluation of Leaning
- Evaluation of the Effectiveness of an Activity That Uses Social Media

Introduction

Just as Word can be used to prepare a report or PowerPoint a presentation, so can social media be helpful in carrying out learning activities aimed at achieving a variety of objectives. Teachers who integrate them into their teaching may feel the need to assess their effectiveness and appropriateness according to specific standards and requirements, much as one may want to assess a report or presentation.

Students as well as teachers are invited to think reflectively on their use of social media. It is also vital that teachers assess a pedagogical activity's effectiveness. The purpose of this section is to identify the means and motives for evaluating student use of social media and an activity's effectiveness.

Evaluation of Learning

A learning activity that uses social media necessarily aims at achieving certain objectives (see the Plan section). It goes without saying that the evaluation of learning must be consistent with stated objectives.

We will not go into a detailed discussion of the evaluation of content knowledge of which teachers are the experts. However, cognitive and noncognitive skills associated with the use of social media must be assessed in relation to desired outcomes. These include 21st century or "Web citizen" competencies, notably ICT, communication and content creation skills.

When assessing the integration of social media into pedagogical activities, it may be useful to bear in mind the elements mentioned in the Implement section when developing criteria and headings for the evaluation or self-evaluation of learning. These same elements can also serve as the basis for student or teacher self-assessment of uses or behaviour.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of an Activity That Uses Social Media

In the interest of constantly improving learning experiences, teachers are urged to assess the effectiveness of their teaching practices. We advise them to consult REPTIC's work on ICT and academic success to identify the most appropriate methods for a given situation. Among other things, they could evaluate:

- Student motivation;
- The development of certain types of learning;

- Compliance with stated pedagogical objectives;
- Positive impact on infrastructure;
- Positive impact on indicators (e.g., academic performance).