

# Privacy on Facebook

Amy Grude, Matt Scholl, Robert Thompson

In the tech world, we have a bad tendency to view the concept of 'private' as a single bit that is either 0 or 1. Either it's exposed or not. -Danah Boyd

# What is Facebook?

- Social networking site targeted for college student
- Localized networks of users
- 9+ million accounts
- Named as the second most "in" thing among undergraduates, tied with beer and losing only to the iPod (AP June 2006)

[View More Photos of Me \(1\)](#)[Edit My Profile](#)[Create a Profile Badge](#)**▼ Status** [edit](#)2 updates this week. [See All](#)

Robert is hitting refresh on the harris poll – lol florida.  
Updated on Sunday

**▼ Michigan Friends**47 friends at Michigan. [See All](#)**Robert Thompson**Michigan Grad Student '07  
Ann Arbor, MI[Share](#) [+](#)

Sex: Male  
Birthday: July 14, 1980  
Hometown: West Des Moines, IA

**► Mini-Feed****▼ Information**[edit](#)**Contact Info** [\[ edit \]](#)

Email: robthomp@umich.edu  
Mobile: 734.358.0926  
Current Town: Ann Arbor, MI  
School Mailbox: 276  
Website: <http://www.oculon.org>

**Personal Info** [\[ edit \]](#)

Activities: Beer Brewing, Hiking, Cooking, and Homework :(

Interests: Baseball, The InterWeb, eCommunities, Yacht Rock, Something Awful, Slashdot

Favorite Music: A smattering of Indy, some electronic crap, and lots of nostalgia bands...

Favorite TV Shows: Golden Age Simpsons, Battlestar Galactica, Futurama

Favorite Movies: Dr Strangelove, Raging Bull, The Blues Brothers, Blazing Saddles, Pulp Fiction, Ghandi, Serenity

Favorite Books: Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Breakfast of Champions, Hitchhiker's Guide to

# Other Social Networking sites

- Friendster - Launched in 2002, by 2004 edged out by MySpace
- MySpace - 70 million users, open to everyone in a homogenous network
- LinkedIn - Professional Oriented Networking site

# Privacy across different social networking sites

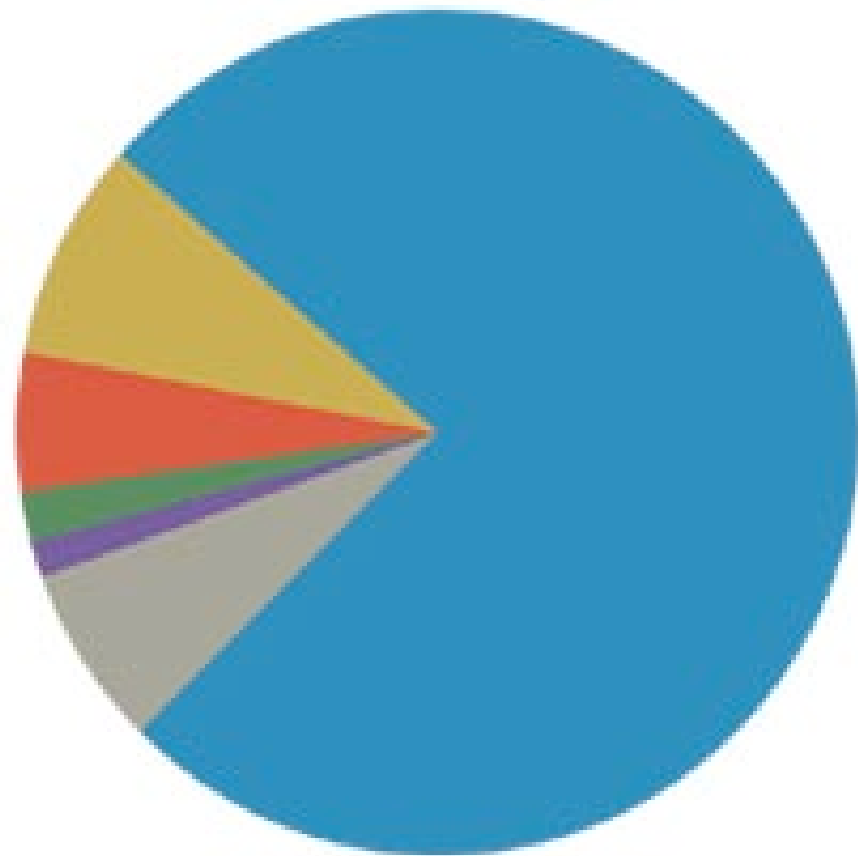
- **FB:** The viewing of detailed profile data is restricted to users from same network or confirmed friends
- **MySpace:** Profiles visible to all members by default
- **LinkedIn:** 'Connections' see full profile, users in your network see limited profile, others see anonymous profile

## MARKET SHARE OF VISITS TO SOCIAL-NETWORKING SITES

With MySpace gobbling more and more of the social-networking market, sites like Xanga, which held a 30 percent market share a year ago, have slipped.

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| 1. MySpace      | 76.3% |
| 2. Facebook     | 8.3%  |
| 3. Xanga        | 5.3%  |
| 4. Facebook HS* | 1.9%  |
| 5. MSN Spaces   | 1.4%  |
| 6. Other        | 6.8%  |

\*High School



Source: Hitwise, 2006

Source: <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,1979700,00.asp>

## Market Share of US Internet Visits

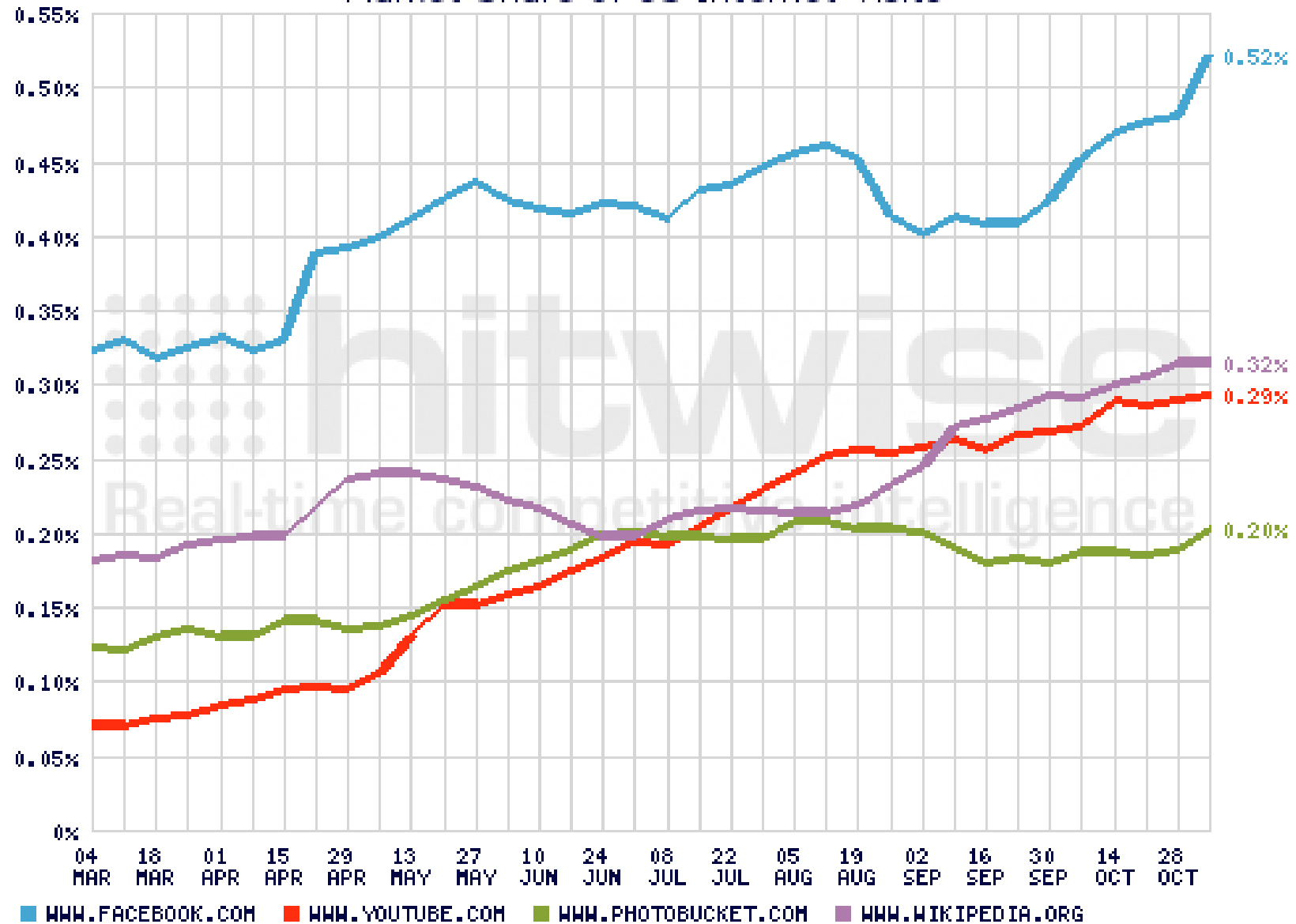


CHART OF THE WEEKLY ALL SITES MARKET SHARE IN 'ALL CATEGORIES', BASED ON VISITS.  
 TIME PERIODS REPRESENTED WITH BROKEN LINES INDICATE INSUFFICIENT DATA.  
 GENERATED ON: 11/08/2006. COPYRIGHT 2006 (C) 'HITWISE PTY LTD'.

Source: <http://weblogs.hitwise.com/leann-prescott/2006/11/>

# Why Study Facebook?

- Lots of interesting privacy, trust, and awareness questions
- People share lots of information about themselves on the internet... why?!
- What privacy concerns are there?
- What was longer term reaction to the Facebook Feeds feature?

# Methods

- Competitive Analysis
- Interviews (Undergraduate and Masters Students)
- Sampling of profiles
- Lit Review

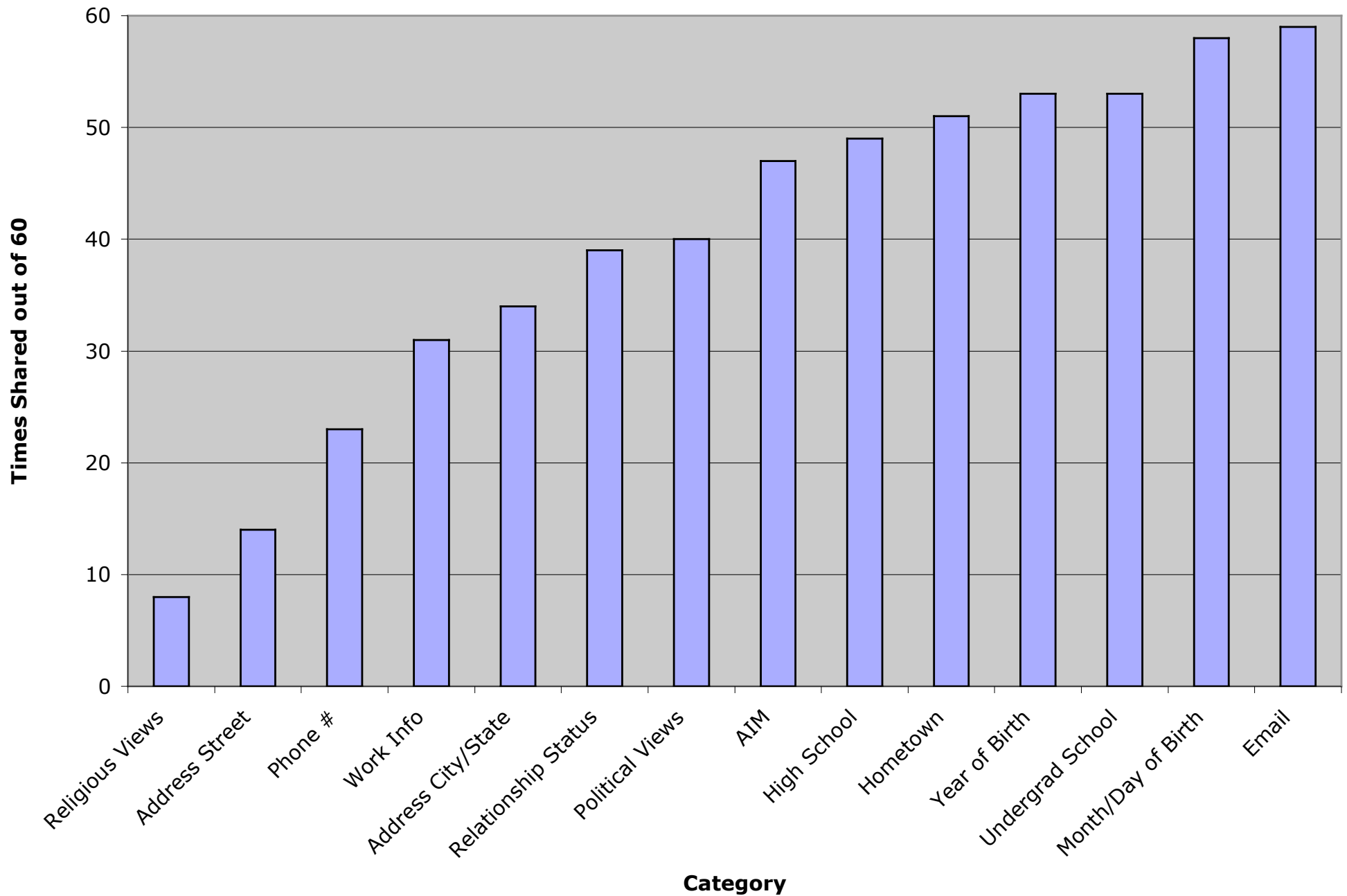
# Focus of Evaluation

- Focused on trust and awareness aspects in the context of privacy
- Usability does not seem to be so much of a factor with these network sites (example: MySpace [ugh!])
- Wanted to answer what and why people share, not how.

# Topics

- What people share
- Why do people use Facebook?
  - Benefits
  - Connections
  - Trust
- Outrage about feeds
- Summary
- Challenges to developers

# What People Share



# Why do people use Facebook?

- It's fun and beneficial to use
  - Very popular among certain demographics (College Students)
- Easy to make new connections
- People seem to trust it

# Facebook Benefits

- Social awareness information
  - Invitations
  - Groups
- A way to stay connected with people of interest
  - Find old friends
  - Stay in touch post-graduation

# Facebook Benefits

“Overall I want to stay in the loop. I check birthdays, spy on high school friends, check up on people... and poke people. “

“I use Facebook to see what’s going on with people, and a lot to stay connected with people I met in Australia”

# Facebook Connections

- Everyone interviewed had some connections that weren't really friends
- Why do we do this? (Dana Boyd)
  - To be nice to people that you barely know
  - The link may enhance your status
  - Keep face with people that you don't like
  - Connect with people you find interesting

# Sharing with Connections

- People seem unconcerned with who is seeing their information as long as they are a “friend”
- Most people are fairly discerning about what they put up in the first place
- Users constantly monitor their image
  - Anything embarrassing is usually removed or untagged

# Definition of Trust

- You believe that another person will not take advantage of you when you put yourself in a position of vulnerability
- You believe that someone will look out for your best interests when you cannot control the situation

(Source: SI-689 Lecture slides, November 21, 2006)

# Trust in Social Networks

- People must trust the tech architect's dedication towards protecting their identity
- People must trust the architecture to convey the appropriate context and validity of information, while simultaneously allowing for a variety of mechanisms for social exchange, identity presentation and relationships management
- People must trust others in the system to operate by the same set of social norms and refrain from abusing the architecture

# Why People Trust Facebook

- “...much more private-by-default system than Friendster or MySpace” (Jones et al, 2005)
- Access to your profile is limited to your network
- Robust Privacy Controls
- Many of your friends are already on it
- Clear distinction about what’s public and what’s private

“I wanted to create an environment where people could share whatever information they wanted, but also have control over whome they shared that information with” -Mark Zuckerberg

## My Privacy

## Privacy Overview

Facebook wants you to share your information with exactly the people you want to see it. On this page, you'll find all the controls you need to set who can see your profile and the stuff in it, who can find and contact you on Facebook, and more.

## Networks

You are in three **networks** and you can edit your settings for each network to control who can see your profile, contact information, groups, wall, photos, online status, and status updates.

**Michigan** is a college network and is your primary network.

[Edit Settings](#)

**Pfizer** is a company network.

[Edit Settings](#)

**Ann Arbor, MI** is a regional network.

[Edit Settings](#)

## Features

## Search

You can control who can find you in searches and what appears in your search listing.

[Edit Settings](#)

## News Feed and Mini-Feed

You can control what actions show up in your Mini-Feed and your friends' News Feeds.

[Edit Settings](#)

## Poke, Message, and Friend Request

You can select which parts of your profile are visible to people you contact.

[Edit Settings](#)

## Friends, Notes, and Facebook Development Platform

Set who can see your friends and notes, and what applications may use your information.

[Edit Settings](#)

## Block People

If you block someone, they will not be able to search for you, see your profile, or contact you on Facebook. Any ties you currently have with a person you block will be broken (friendship connections, relationships, etc).

Person:

## Limited Profile

If you want to hide some of the information in your profile from specific people, add them to your limited profile list below.

[Edit Settings](#)

Person:

- ☐ **Everyone** (This includes people inside and outside your networks)
- ☒ **Restricted** (Some people will not be able to search for you and add you as a friend)

Select people from **inside your networks** who can find you in search results:

- from **Michigan**
- from **Pfizer**
- from **Ann Arbor, MI**

Select people from **outside your networks** who can find you in search results:

- ☒ People in college networks
- ☐ People in high school networks
- ☒ People in company networks
- ☒ People in regional networks
- ☒ People with no networks

# Use of Privacy Controls

- 5/9 Interviewees restricted access to their profiles
- 6/9 Restricted the information in feeds
- Some people began using privacy controls when the feeds came out
- Vital to peoples' feelings of trust in FB

# Facebook Feeds

- Introduced in Sept 2006
- Users not warned
- No way to opt out or limit information

A week before launch, when asked if he [Mark Zuckerberg] was concerned about a privacy backlash, he appeared surprised, saying, **"No, these people share stuff already and they get something out of sharing."** -Business Week

## News Feed

[Preferences](#)

 [Andrew Walters](#) joined the group [Help world hunger](#). 8:12pm

 [Amy Grady](#) is thinking about how awesome CSCW is! 7:52pm

 [Andrew Walters](#) added "American Dad" to his favorite tv shows.  
5:29pm

 [Elizabeth Jones](#) commented on [Victoria Wengert's photo](#). 3:13pm

“ This isn't the London Bridge. :) ”



 [Andrew Walters](#) and [Melissa Wengert](#) joined the group [Valley High School in the WDM!](#). 2:53pm

 [Steve Walters](#) is attending [Christmakha Potluck event](#). 2:33pm

 [Caitlin Swartz](#) added a new photo to a group 2:13pm



**I've Been Drunk @ 120 S. Summit**

8 photos

a group by [Tj Hudson](#)

 **Updated:** [Steve Walters](#), [Melissa Wengert](#) and [Elizabeth Jones](#) changed their profile pictures.

10:11am



# On the feeds...

“The news feeds feel so stalkerish”

“At first I was freaked out... It’s weird that something is tracking your every move.”

“At first I found it “creepy” but now I like it because I can see really quickly if people have changed information.”

# Why were people so upset?

- Feeds change the nature of sharing
  - No longer simply posting information, you are broadcasting it
- Lowers cost for others to get your information
- Makes authors conscious of larger (and more attentive) audience

# What is it about broadcasting?

- People see a process instead of a finished product
- Author mentality changes from producing a profile to be consumed wholly to a string of items to be consumed individually
- Shame factor, people see what you're doing and how you're active

# On Broadcasting...

“If I do something like change my picture three times in a row, I will delete those notices from the feeds because I don’t want people to think I’m stupid for changing my picture so often.”

“Before posting, I think “Do I want people to see this?” For some things, like wall posts or comments that I make, I don’t want everyone to see them so I delete them from the feeds.”

“Lets say I’ve been watching Dr. 90210 a lot, and I was like “maybe I’ll add that to my favorite tv shows” but then it’s going to come up on the news feeds as “<subject4> added this” and they will be like “why did she add that? Does she think that we care that she likes that show?”

# Other Side Effects

- Feeling of being watched
- Feeling of accountability for actions

# On being watched...

“... when you change anything it shows up on the feeds, so if X and Y break up, the whole facebook community knows that.”

Yeah, when it's on the feed everyone sees it automatically, so when you put it on facebook, it's not just putting it on facebook, it's that you're telling everyone on facebook.

“Again, I don't want to feel like I am being monitored or that people have visibility to everything I am doing in facebook.”

“We really messed this one up.” -Mark Zuckerberg

# So What Happened?

- Anger from the community led to online “protests”
- 3 days after launch, privacy controls added to limit what information is shared

“...we didn’t build in the proper privacy controls right away. This was a big mistake on our part, and I’m sorry for it.” -Mark Zuckerberg (Open letter to Facebook Community)

# 3 months later...

- Most of our interviewees like it now (surprising to us)
- Decreases the amount of time needed to gather information
- All are happy with the privacy controls (6 of 9 use them)

## My Privacy

## News Feed and Mini-Feed Privacy

[Back to Privacy Overview](#) without saving changes.

Facebook will only publish stories about you on your Mini-Feed and the News Feeds of your friends.

Publish stories when I...

-  ☒ Remove Profile Info
-  ☒ Write a Wall Post
-  ☒ Comment on a Note
-  ☒ Comment on a Photo
-  ☒ Post on a Discussion Board
-  ☒ Add a Friend
-  ☒ Remove my Relationship Status
-  ☒ Leave a Group
-  ☒ Leave a Network

[Have something you'd like to see here?](#)

Mini-Feed can show the time when stories were published.

- ☒ Show times in my Mini-Feed

Save Changes

Cancel

**Please Read This!**  
**It's very important**

News Feed and Mini-Feed will **never** publish stories about:

- Pokes
- Messages
- Whose profile you view
- Whose photos you view
- Whose notes you read
- Groups and Events you decline to join
- People you reject as friends
- People you remove from your friends
- Notes and photos you delete

News Feed and Mini-Feed may publish stories about:

- Things you add to your profile
- Photos you upload or are tagged in
- Notes you write or are tagged in
- Groups you join or create
- Events you create or attend
- Networks you've joined
- Content you've posted to your profile
- Status updates

For more info, [visit our help page](#).

# Similar Stories

- Aggregation becoming a popular focus for web development
- Similar privacy uproar here at SI over Scllops
  - Scllops aggregated blogs of SI students without notifying them
  - Blog authors were very upset

# Summary

- People use Facebook because it's helps them stay connected and they trust it with their information
- Changes to the way information is shared can hurt that trust
- ...and make people really mad!

# Our Challenges to Social Network Developers

1. Communicate with your users (warn them when something might affect privacy)
2. Listen to your users, adapt according. Admit when you're wrong
3. Give your users control over their information and the ability to opt out
4. Innovate! Find new ways to foster social interaction, while keeping these principles in mind