



Privacy and unintended consequences of online narrative

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When using social networking applications users seek to find associations and build narratives that meet social standards so to reach acceptance. Part of one's identity is portrayed through these networking interfaces and constructed via an, often public, narrative. Social networking sites are not just used to connect users but also to show and tell. Applications such as MySpace and Facebook have facilitated identity construction and reconstruction through the sharing of large amounts of personal information, unlimited image uploads and profile design. Blogs and journals are being replaced by modern applications such as Twitter, Instagram and Vine, and textual narratives are integrated or replaced by images and multimedia representations. The collection of several images and statuses are equivalent to an autobiographical book. This intuitively creates a story of lifestyle and habits, summarizing the individuality of a person whether it is distorted or not. We present a study of the construction of an online autobiography, which unfolds both intended and unintended autobiographical elements. The user selectively shares contents aimed at creating a chosen narrative. However, this intended information can be exploited and consequently tell what is meant to be untold. This public unveiling of unintended content challenges in a new way the extent to which a person has control over his/her own narrative. Through different sources such as IP address extractions, application misuse, interference of a second party or misinterpretation, an organized narrative becomes an overflowing story revealing more than what the user intended. This in turns jeopardizes the validity of the initial narrative impacting social relations and identity formation. Furthermore, while users of social networking applications obviously have a different sense of privacy if compared to older generations, we explore their level of awareness with respect to the diffusion of unintended content.