Chapter 14

E-Learning Records:
Are There Any to Manage? If so, How?

Luciana Duranti
University of British Columbia, Canada

Elizabeth Shaffer
University of British Columbia, Canada

ABSTRACT

Through the lens of an archival theoretical framework, this chapter examines the digital outputs of the use of social media applications by students, faculty, and educational institutions, and discusses the need to control and manage their creation, use, maintenance, and preservation. The authors draw on a case study that explores the identification, arrangement, description, and preservation of students' records produced in an eLearning environment in Singapore and is used as a starting point to highlight and discuss the implications that the use of social media in education can have for the management and preservation of educational institutions' records as evidence of their activity and of students' learning, to fulfill legal and accountability requirements. The authors also discuss how the use of social media by educators in the classroom environment facilitates the creation of records that raise issues of intellectual property and copyright, ownership, and privacy: issues that can further impact their maintenance and preservation.

INTRODUCTION

The participatory nature of social media applications has challenged the way in which knowledge is traditionally imparted and learning developed, as educators can enlist any number of social media tools to enhance "social learning" (Brown & Adler, 2008, p. 18) and engage students as participants in their education. As Armstrong and Franklin (2008) note, educational institutions report three key advantages to Web 2.0 use in higher education: 1. Affordances not present in other technologies such as co-creation and online collaboration; 2.

Students' engagement fostered by familiarity; and 3. No cost, as these technologies are often free and without the restrictions that accompany those offered by institutions (p. 3). Blogs, wikis, social networking sites (SNSs), discussion fora, virtual worlds, and other tools are utilized by faculty to deliver content in novel and engaging ways, and by students to meet course requirements and interact with one another and faculty in active learning environments. But, what do we know about the documentary products of these interactions and how to manage and keep them? The documentary by-products and outputs of these new and emerging pedagogical practices and engagements are replacing traditional academic records, such as exam papers, term essays, or multiple answers tests, and Paul Wu Horng-Jyh even believes that "the emerging pedagogical practices inevitably change the ways records are defined in a learning space" (2010, p. 68).

Through the lens of an archival theoretical framework, this chapter examines the digital by-products and outputs of the use of social media applications by students, faculty and educational institutions, and discusses the need to identify among them which constitute evidence of the learning process, and to control and manage their creation, use, maintenance and preservation. Further, it examines how issues of intellectual property and copyright, ownership and privacy can further impact their management through time. This discussion of the educational use of social media is situated in the learning, teaching and administrative activities of higher education (post-secondary) environments as the majority of current research on the educational use of Facebook and other social media tools primarily focuses on college and university student environments (Hew, 2011).

These authors primarily draw their observations from a case study conducted in the context of the third phase of the InterPARES (International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems) Project, an international multidisciplinary research endeavour which aims at developing the theoretical and methodological knowledge essential to the long-term preservation of authentic records created and/or maintained in digital form (www.interpares.org). The case study explores the identification, arrangement, description and preservation of students' records produced in an e-learning environment in Singapore (Wu Horng-Jyh, 2010) and will be used as a starting point to highlight and discuss the implications that the use of social media in education can have for the management and preservation of the records of educational institutions which are to be kept as evidence of teaching and learning in order to fulfill legal obligations and accountability requirements.

Used to assess students' achievements and ability to meet course requirements, the by-products and outputs of the use of social media, although different from traditional record types, are still subject to the same retention and access rules, thus, this chapter will also propose ways of respecting such rules by implementing policies and procedures capable of ensuring that the digital records of e-learning can be treated and maintained as institutional records – clear from intellectual property challenges, and as evidence of teaching activity, learning progress, and institutional assessment of both teaching and learning, for the benefit and accountability of all parties involved and the memory of the future.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND EDUCATION

Web 2.0 and Social Media

Web 2.0 (often referred to as the read/write Web) is an evolution of the Web, a shift from an environment of passive consumers to one where individuals can readily create, contribute and collaborate with other users (O'Reilly, 2005). Used to refer to the participative Web, Web 2.0 is an umbrella term that encompasses the ideas underpinning

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