DIGITELL 2014

EXPLORING ONLINE PRESENCE IN CREATIVE PRACTICE

WHEN: **TUESDAY 04 NOVEMBER 2014 -**
14:30 AND 17:00
FOLLOWED BY DRINKS RECEPTION

WHERE: THE **RED ROOM**,
CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ARTS

WHO: UAL STAFF, STUDENTS AND
INDUSTRY PRACTITIONERS

RED ROOM, CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ART.
14.30 - 15.00 - INTRODUCTION
15.00 - 15.30 - DAVID WHITE
DAVEOWHITE.COM
15.30 - 16.00 - CHRISTIAN PAYNE
(DOCUMENTALLY)
DOCUMENTALLY.COM
16.00 - 17.00 - PANEL DISCUSSION.

GREEN ROOM, CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ART.
17.00 - 19.00 - DRINKS RECEPTION

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#DIGITELL

EVENT SUPPORTED BY DIAL PROJECT, CLTAD AND THE UAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FUND.

DigiTell 2014; Exploring Online Presence in Creative Practice

Welcome to DigiTell 2014. During the course of this symposium we will be exploring the wide range of topics and issues surrounding an online presence in the creative industries. Issues such as:

- Why have an online presence.
- What are the barriers for creative practioners in regards to this?
- What constitutes an effective online presence,

This symposium has come about through the research of the DIAL project (Digital Integration into Art Learning), part of UAL's CLTAD department, which has explored how the different communities at UAL interact and participant in the online environment and what UAL can do to support learning and training into this subject.

We would like to specially thank the speakers who have kindly agreed to speak at DigiTell 2014, David White (daveowhite.com) and Christian Payne (documentally.com), as well as Kimberley Cunningham, DigiTell 2014 curator and organizer, Chris Follows, DIAL project manager and Joe Easeman, DIAL project coordinator for bringing this symposium together.

We would also like to thank Filip Bigos, Bowen Lee, and Jheni Arboine, who's work on the CLL project lead to the development of this symposium.

To find out more about DigiTell 2014 or the DIAL project please visit the process arts website at process.arts.ac.uk or scan the following QR code.
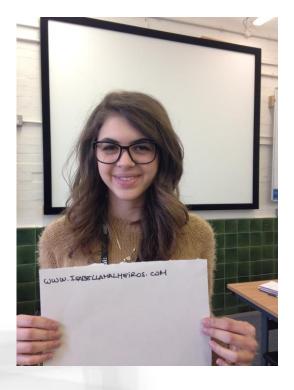
Online Presence in Creative Practice; Focus Group

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On the 22nd of October 2014, we conducted a focus group at LCF, Lime Grove to examine some of the key questions which would be addressed at the DigiTell 2014 symposium, with staff and students at the college. The following is a cross section of some of the interviews, to see more please scan the QR code below.

Isabella Malheiros
Fashion Photography, LCF
www.isabellamalheiros.com

Why have a presence online as a creative practitioner?

Because its online everyone can see it, everywhere in the world, it doesn't matter. Its really open. *Do you have a presence online?* I do, I have a website for my photography. *Do you find that your website is a good networking tool?* I do, people like it and I get good feedback from it. *Do you link that to your social media?* Yeah, I do, so I can get my friends, and get my friends to share and find more and more people, without it just being me, and not sharing it.

What do you feel are the key challenges/barriers for creative practitioners in regards to an online presence?

I think the layout and making the presentation the way you would like it to be, and the way you feel comfortable showing people. Because sometimes I don't share it, because I don't know if I like that, or if other people will like it. Because sometimes even if its just for you, people will see it, and you care about what people think about it. So getting the presentation right is a big challenge. *And do you find that easy on the website your using? Is it a website package, or did you make it from scratch?* I use a WordPress, so its pretty easy and free. You can get cool things for free on websites.

Should UAL support training and advice in the development and awareness of online practice?

UAL helped me with one Photoshop class, but nothing else that I know. *Do you think training is something you would want?* Yeah, I think it would be good to have training on that. *Do you think that should be integrated into the course, or is it something you would like to be additional to find for yourself?* I think additional to find yourself. Because we have so many things to do on the course already. *Do you still feel it needs to be specific to your genre?* No, I don't think it needs to be specific. Because I'm doing photography, but I can show you something that is not photograph in my work. Any kind of help is really helpful.

What constitutes an effective online presence?

Clear and clean. And nice content, otherwise it can be beautiful and stuff, but have nothing on it, and people won't go. Basic something that looks good, and people are interested to go to. *Do you think it needs to be part of a network to be effective?* yes, I feel like I need to put my website everywhere. I think everyone's doing this, because everyone want to show what they do, so you need to put it out there.

How does the public nature of being online challenge the public/professional and private/personal boundaries of arts practice?

Yes, kind of. I keep everything I do on Facebook and stuff private, because when you go for an interview or something, people look at your Facebook etc and see what you have been doing, and what you have been posting online, and maybe even your website. So you kind of have to balance that, which can be really hard, because you really want to show everything and put everything out there, but you have to be very select.

Vasily Agrenenko
Fashion Photography, LCF
www.agrenenko.com

Why have a presence online as a creative practitioner?

To promote yourself, to find clients. I think if you want to make money you definitely have to somehow promote yourself, and the internet is the best way I think. *Do you have a website at the moment?* Yes I do. *And do you find that's a good way of networking and promoting yourself?* I don't put a lot of effort and time into the website. I plan to in the future, but at the moment I just haven't.

What do you feel are the key challenges/barriers for creative practitioners in regards to an online presence?

The most challenging I would say is everything that is related to coding or programming. These are the most difficult, because even some sorts of sites where you can use a template, if you want to customise it you still have to know the basics of the HTMP, for example, and the other languages. *And is that how you have done your website, is yours coded?* Yes, I just used a template. I just did a little research on them, and picked up three or two, and found the one that better suited me.

Should UAL support training and advice in the development and awareness of online practice?

Yes, I think its really important, definitely. *And is that something you would like to see within your course or extra to your course?* Maybe as a workshop, that would be nice to have this kind of opportunity. *Do you feel like it needs to be specific to your particular genre of art?* Maybe not, maybe general things, like how to put your portfolio online, or ways to create a website.

What constitutes an effective online presence?

It should be simple for the viewer, not too over complicated. *Do you think a network of online platforms is useful?* Yes, like Facebook and Instagram. *And do you think that UAL could also support promotion of your site?* Yes, I think everything related to promotion online would be helpful for us.

How does the public nature of being online challenge the public/professional and private/personal boundaries of arts practice?

Yes, I do. As an artist I will only create thinks I am actually interested in, so sometimes it is really hard to create things, as an artist, for the people who see them. So when it comes to your portfolio on the internet, you think about what would be valid to put, related to selling, to find clients, and what they actual want to see from you. I actually have two websites, one for the clients, and one for myself. For the clients it is more commercial works, and the other one is just for myself and other artist, anyone who is interested in art.

Kasia Majewska

LCF Careers

www.arts.ac.uk/fashion/about/lcf-careers

Why have a presence online as a creative practitioner?

Well I'm from LCF careers, so from a careers perspective its quite important, because more and more employers do check your online presence, and it's all about branding these days and how you can sell yourself, and this is just another way of putting yourself out there and saying who you are. So it's something that employers are going to go to straight away? Definitely, especially in the creative areas, because every single company now a days works really hard on their online presence for customers etc. Do you think it's important to build an online network? Yes well again, there are so many platforms these days and different people are active on different ones. To reach out to people, whether you reach out to people about your business or things you do, on your creativity, you do need to be active on all of those, and communicate throughout.

What do you feel are the key challenges/barriers for creative practitioners in regards to an online presence?

I don't think it's about being techy, because I think these things are quite accessible to you, I think it's about being original, and doing the research beforehand. So I think knowing what you want to be, and how you want to present yourself, and being aware that this is a professional platform. Facebook and Twitter used to be used just for friends etc, these days it is your online platform, and people need to think about that when they are setting it up.

Should UAL support training and advice in the development and awareness of online practice?

Absolutely, I think it is crucial. Students I see, especially in illustration, creative direction etc, they are lacking those skills and an understanding of how important their online presence is. I do a lot of workshops with them, but these focus more on CVs etc, things that were very important ten years ago, and still are, but there is defiantly more need for training in online presence. Do you think that is something that could be course integrated, or do you think that could be extra to the course? I think that students are getting quite a lot now, and I know SEE are doing workshops in November, which is great. I find that if there is something that students can choose to go to they are often more willing to go to it, for some reason. So I don't think it would have to be course imbedded, I think it could be something that they can go to and participate.

What constitutes an effective online presence?

It's about quality often, not quantity if you can create your own brand as early as possible, and place yourself in the industry, where you stand, what is your own style and try and differentiate yourself from everyone else, and show that you are passionate about things you do, I thing this is quite important. And I think this should come across in all the networks you are using. So you should have one portfolio everywhere. So is that what you are saying about the emphasis, having as many things as possible? Not as many as possible, am saying that if you are using, for example, Twitter, and you position yourself as a fashion photographer, specializing in luxury, you should do that and you should communicate that through every single other platform. So the message should be the same everywhere, so as not to confuse people.

How does the public nature of being online challenge the public/professional and private/personal boundaries of arts practice?

Yes, I think there definitely is (a conflict), especially with Facebook. I think people still use it more for friendship, which is fine, there are certain platforms that are better for professional platforms, such as twitter, I think people should use twitter more for professional practice than personal and the opposite for Facebook. It's the same with Instagram, Tumblr, these should definitely be your professional presence. It's about making students aware, and showing them that these are the platforms that are there to showcase their work in a professional world, because more and more companies will check your account to see how many people follow you and see how you are managing your account, but I don't think students are always aware of this.

Online Presence
Staff Interview

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During the course of our research into the importance of an online presence in the arts industry we have been conducting a series of interviews with academic staff and course leaders at UAL. These interviews give an overview of the importance of an online identity across different subjects and examine the necessity of this in a genre specific manner. To see more interviews with staff, please scan the following QR code.

If you don't have an online presence then you don't exist.

Interview With Jeremy Till, Professor of Architecture, Head of Central Saint Martins and Pro Vice-Chancellor of UAL

Joe Easeman: What sort of online presence do you think the students should be aiming for within the university?

Jeremy Till: As creative, outward looking, innovative types they should be reflecting that, so that clearly a dull, static PDF of their CV is not going to do them, or anyone, any good. I would be surprised if any of our students, by the time they leave, don't have some form of identifiable web presence, which is more than just a Facebook page or a LinkedIn page. I would expect them to be expressing themselves in some form digitally.

'As creative, outward looking, innovative types they should be reflecting that'

When you are looking around say the degree show here, are you looking for that online presence with the students?

I think if you go round the end of year shows and the students here are giving out cards as they quite often do, its useful to go back to see their website, to remind yourself what they are doings. And to set up a website is not rocket science. To set up a good website is rocket science. So I think there is a huge gap between web presence full stop and good web presence. I think the danger is that it is like everyone thinks that they are graphic designers because their font is available on the web, but not everyone is a web designer. I think that the sense of being intelligent about their web presence is something one does need to learn.

Do you think learning about the online environment is something that could be incorporated into the courses here, or do you think its something students should be finding for themselves?

I think is it something that should be available to them as learning packages. I don't see it as part of a course so much, because I think as soon as you make it curricula its part of the assessment, and it turns into something else. I think if as [for example] an architecture student, you should be concentrating on being a great architecture student, and not trying to create a great website, as it were. But I would expect that most students should have an identifiable web presence by the time they leave.

'As soon as you make it curricula its part of the assessment, and it turns into something else.'

Something that has come up a lot with the academic staff I have been speaking to, and reflecting what you just said, is that there is not enough time to explore that web presence in totality, when they are better concentrating on their work.

But you and CLTAD could be giving pointers to the basic packages. There are tons of portfolio packages for example. Just pointers towards, and positives and negatives or each one, how adaptable they are, etc., and they level you could enter. This would be useful information and I would quite like that. I mean, I once tried to make my own website and it

was a complete disaster, and I tried to learn PHP etc., and it was just horrible. So then I tried to use a standard package and it looked horrible. So in the end I decided that, well I'm head of Central St. Martins, I should employ some graduates, and that's how I got my website. But I can do the back end, so I can update it. I started through really basic, horrible coding, couldn't manage that, I then went to a basic web package called freestyle or something, used that, it was not very nice. It had a few clearer bits, but it was taking me much too long. And by that time all the new type of hacked WordPress or database driven website were becoming the norm.

What is your online presence?

My online presence is the website and Twitter. I Tweet a lot.

And do you find that [Twitter] useful as a professional things as well as a personal one?

Well, it interesting. I thought that when I arrived here they would tell me to pull in my tweeting because it is very variable. I do do stupid things like taking photos of beaches in Brazil and I do do Tweets glorifying CSM, and they thought that was fine. They thought the ones that were purely personal, is not appropriate for someone in my 'dignified possession' [laughs] (the trouble is that laugh wouldn't come across in the interview will it) but equally the ones that were purely CSM puff were just dull and people wouldn't follow, so I have a wide verify of Tweets. I have 4000 followers and I guess they follow because of the balance. And sometimes I quite political on it. So I use my Twitter as a sort of reflection of what is going on in my head, and my head is a mix of both personal and professional. I do use it publically to talk about CSM, but not in that standard [way], if you look at some Vice Chancellor Twitter feeds, it is clear they are written by their press officer, I do my own.

'I use my Twitter as a sort of reflection of what is going on in my head, and my head is a mix of personal and professional'

Do you find people interact with it more, and there is more communication, when it's that personal?

I don't know. One would have to see how many people unfollowed me for that. My variety of followers is very broad, I would say that maybe a fifth are related to CSM, but the majority in some form or another, are probably following me for my architectural writing.

And do you use it as a platform to promote architectural writing or a new article, etc.?

Yes, and its important for that. I don't blog that much, but sometimes, if there is something that is really getting to me then my website has a little blog bit on, and Twitter definitely drives people there. If I didn't have Twitter that bit of the website wouldn't be used.

So you need that more upfront, social platform to drive people there?

Yes, well 4,00 people following, then it's re-tweeted and that triples it, and I know that because it's re-tweeted. So if I've written something and I've put it on my blog site or if its on one of the other sites, [for example] there's this new site called 'The Conversation', which is academics writing in a public manner, and I know it drives people towards that. Or if I have

a new article out, I will [promote] it on my Twitter. Twitter definitely amplifies hugely the stuff that would otherwise sit quite quietly. I don't believe people have the time to view RSS and follow endless blog sites, I just don't believe they do. I think they might have five years ago, but Twitter has now amplified the debate so much that peoples attention span is smaller. I don't think they go trawling through the web. Do you have an RSS feed on your computer? Do you follow any particular blog sites?

'Twitter has amplified the debate so much that peoples attention span is smaller.'

I have to say that most of what I find is through Facebook, but I agree with what you are saying. I think its is similar with video, people will watch a video that is 2 minutes long, but not 10 minutes, and I think its the same, people will read a Tweet that may direct them somewhere, but not a whole blog.

I think they do read blog post, but they are not reading them in a systematic manner. So its not as if someone is sitting down on Monday morning, and thinking 'I must go to Jeremy's blog site, Francis Corner's blog site, Chris Wainwright and Natalie's' people just don't do that.

And do you think that is maybe just because there is just so much out there now that they maybe just need pointing?

Yes.

So I guess that feeds back to what you were saying about students just needing those pointers to develop their online skills?

Yes, and they need to be given a range of opinions and examples, and to use what is available and not try and re-invent it. I mean the websites I've most enjoyed working on are actually the hacked WordPress ones, where you just hack back into WordPress and someone has come up with a new front end for it. But you can still work on the back end.

One of the things we are developing at the moment is a peer run web portal to give students and staff the skills and learning to develop themselves online. What sorts of tools do you think would be useful for that?

I would be very wary about teaching people how to use Facebook, because they will feel patronised. I would be wary of teaching people how to use Twitter because Twitter, as far as I am concern, depends on a non-mediated form of communication, i.e. 'I have this in my head, I think it's very interesting'. Whereas if you try to teach too many Twitter protocols everyone will end up being the same. I am sure there are corporate companies that have courses on how to use twitter, and the yes and no, but I think it is probably wrong for a place like this. I do think, as I said before, I think there could be real traction and usefulness in pointing people towards the way in which there presence can be expressed through websites.

'if you try and teach too many Twitter protocols everyone will end up being the same'

Well, both. Firstly, here are the different ways. Very basic, for example, here is a WordPress site, did you know you can change the way it looks, did you know if you paid a little bit more you could have a bit more control over that, did you know if you if you paid a bit more still and learnt to code you could have complete control and form it into a website. Or take the online portfolio websites and do that as well, here are the online open source web packages, quick guide to those, how much can you adapt them. And then up to full coding. Just give the whole range of opinion, so people can see, and see examples. Rather than try to control it within the university, the university can just act as set of road signs.

Yes, but it has been completely disastrous, because architects thought they could design websites. So architecture website were absolutely dreadful, or else what they thought they could do was to employ lots of flash creators. So architecture websites used to be complete dripping with flash, so you just couldn't get into them. I think they are beginning to learn, but architecture websites are not the place to start. They are generally rather over designed and slow, and they don't get the basics.

Well, at the very basic level, there needs to be quite high up on the intranet and various other portals, a pointer to the various tools within the university. As I said before, I don't think people are even aware of what is available. But also as I said before I don't think the university should be inventing a blogging platform, why would we, who's going to use that, instead of Facebook or another blog platforms. I just don't think that is a very clear use of resources. But there are some bits of some of the website that have been developed within UAL, when I looked at them very briefly, and I haven't used them, I just don't think that people know enough about them. Some of them look quite good.

'I don't think people are even aware what is available.'

Possibly. You probably need some champions, and you do have digital champions in each college. And they would know to a greater or lesser extent what is available.

I think it's incredibly important. If you don't have an online presence then you don't exist.

Saying 'I won't use twitter'…it's like saying 'I won't use the Library'
Interview with Simon Hinde, Programme director, journalism and publishing at LCC

Joe Easeman: What do you think is important in your industry in regards to an online presence both for students and graduates?

Simon Hinde: For a journalist it's pretty key to have an online presence, particularly on Twitter. It's more or less an absolute requirement now a days for a journalist and hence for a journalism student. Partly because it is a very useful research tool, it is a way of keeping abreast of what is going on, finding out what journalists are saying or doing, making contacts, all the stuff journalists need to be doing. It's also a way of building your own presence, making yourself known to potential employers, promoting your own work online. I would expect any serious journalist now to be on twitter.

'I would expect any serious journalist now to be on twitter'

And is that [twitter] used as a networking tool, as much as it is used for promotion?

It can be used as a networking tool, it can be used for research, and it can be used for publishing stories. Some people and organization tweet their stories, for some twitter is the main way in which story are told, it's a very important way of getting an audience to your work. If you're a journalist and you've got 10,000 twitter followers then that makes you very attractive to employers, because they know that you'll tweet your stories and you'll bring that audience to the website or publication.

So is that something that you encourage with the students or your course from the start?

Yes.

And is it something that they take up?

Yes, I think so. I mean a lot of them are on twitter already. They use it in different ways. I mean some people use it just as a social tool, so there is a thing about thinking about how you use it, and what you are using it for. I don't know for an actual fact how many students are actually on twitter, but we make the case, and a lot of them will sign up. And then, certainly into the second year, we teach them about things like Storify and so forth.

In regards to websites and blogs, how are these used by students?

All the students set up a WordPress blog on the university WordPress system, pretty much on day one. Quite a lot of the assessment is done through the blog, they do stories and things, on the blog, and they are accessed on the blog, and we encourage them to use it, and some do and some don't. A lot of them are already enthusiastic bloggers and I find that when I'm interviewing student applicants they say I've got a blog on fashion, or film, or sports, or whatever they do, so it is increasing becoming a thing that they do.

As far as a website goes, is that something that is important in the industry, like a specific showcase website?

It can be, yes. Particularly freelance journalists will often have a website, where they will set out their credentials and show examples of their work, and that sort of thing, so yes that is a thing that people do. But often people just do it through twitter, and tweet a link to their article. I think for a freelancer it's very useful, because it's a way of being found.

Well, I think, amongst the staff, the awareness of social media is patchy, some are very good, and some are not so good. Digital literacy among the staff is at different levels, so I think if staff aren't doing it themselves, then they are unlikely to be able to put across a convincing case as to why students should be doing it, because they don't understand it. So I think that's probably one of the key things, which is that staff have to understand it and embrace this stuff to start with. Tools wise, you know yourself, the tools you need most people have them, a laptop, your phone, a tablet, so there's nothing inherently very sophisticated relative to what the average person has these day, so I don't think it's a tool question as much as it is a skill and awareness question.

To be honest I think it should be up to the individual. Because again, there's not a lot to learn, if you go on twitter there's not a lot to learn, it's wanting to do it, and being aware of doing it, and what you're doing it. I think that has to come from an individual. I doubt the efficiency of getting a load of academics into a room and teaching them about twitter and why they should use it. I mean it might work for some people but I think broadly, it's a question about your engagement with the world, and why wouldn't you use it. Saying 'I won't use twitter' certainly in my field, it's like saying 'I won't use the library' or something, its arbitrarily cutting yourself off from an important source of information, so why would you want to do that. now it may be different in different fields, you know social media may not be so central in other field, I speaking from a perspective of journalist, I would expect that anybody who is active in journalist to have a very full appreciation of the centrality of these things, to the way journalism is conducted in 2014.

'Saying 'I won't use twitter'...it's like saying 'I won't use the Library'

Well I think coding is useful. I think it is becoming increasingly useful. There are opportunities available in journalism to people who can code, that are not available to people who can't and there is a growing field of data journalism, where people do visualizations and get stories through the manipulation of data, and the more digitally literate you are the better. But that's a particular field, I would say that social media is essential for anyone in journalism, but I think there are opportunities for people who are so minded, who maybe have an interest in figures or are comfortable with excel and that sort of kind, who can build on and develop that. I think that is an opportunity as well. Coding can be very useful, you do see opportunities for journalist who code, or journalist who have an awareness of how software development is done, journalist that are familiar with (and these are all things we are teaching on the course) analytics,

management systems, all that sorts of stuff. I would expect anybody going back to when I was running journalistic organization, increasingly you would expect people to come along and be comfortable for you to put them in front of a contact management system and they would be able to pick it up, they would understand how analytics work, they would understand how information spreads through the social web. All those sorts of things, that we do teach, but increasingly you kind of expect student to come with at least some understanding of that stuff, because its stuff that a lot of them will spend a lot of their time doing anyway. So I think the challenge can sometimes be for the staff, that they are less aware of this stuff, sometimes, than students are.

Do you think there needs to be more staff awareness?

Completely. I think in my area certainly any new hire I make; I would expect them to be very comfortable and familiar with those sorts of thing. It's gone from being, in the last ten years, from being a nice thing to have, to being essential. Things like coding, and data awareness are nice things to have now, but they may become essential, it depends on how things develop. I could well imagine that some basic familiarity with coding could become a key thing for journalist to have. It's not at the moment, but it does open doors if you have that.

'...any new hire I make; I would expect them to be very comfortable and familiar with those sorts of things'

In your experience is the learning around online presence something that the staff would like to find themselves if it was made available?

I think that there might well be an interest in a small amount of people in some sort of coding course; I can see how that would be relevant to some people.

So more of a course than a database of information that they can go to?

I don't know, it depends on the individual. the advantages of a course are that people will engage with it, because they have set time a side to do it, and if its something like lydia.com then its something that you generally put off until later, and it's harder to engage with, but that depends on the individual.

Do you think that training into developing an online presence should be something that is integrated into the course, or something that can be developed alongside the course for the students to find themselves?

I think journalism might be a slightly special case, because of the way it (the online environment) is used as a tool within the journalism business, it may not be used as a tool within say the fine art industry, I don't know, so I think that we need to teach from a journalist perspective. There are specific journalistic things, about the use of twitter, and other social media that we would always teach as part of journalism, because you couldn't teach it as a generic thing, it would make no sense. I can imagine that would also be true on the PR courses, or the advertising course, but whether it's true on the design course, etc. I simply don't know. We are teaching the use of these tools in a journalistic context.

Can I ask about your online presence and how that developed?

I was a very early adapted, so in the early 90's when CompuServe came along, I had a CompuServe account and an email account, before the web, and then when the web came along I was interested in that. I was working at the Sunday Times at the time, and I got interested in it, because I wrote some stories about it, so it seemed like an interesting area, and I've always been involved since then. Like everyone else I'm on Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn. As new things come along I at least try them out, and some stick with me and some don't. Pinterest or Instagram don't do anything for me, but I familiarize myself with them. I use them in my life, but I also familiarize myself with them as potential journalist tools, I've used them in my journalism to some degree. I have always worked in businesses where they are the forefront, because I've always worked in digital businesses. It was a core of what we did, so it's been something in my life for 20 years.

And what is your online presence at the moment?

I have Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn, and I try to use them. I think like a lot of people, your use of these sort of grows in a slightly incoherent way. So I have friends on Facebook, who aren't really friends, so I'm trying to get rid of them and put them on LinkedIn, and then twitter is my sort of personal face to the world, but I do use it to interact with friends as well. And Facebook is just about my friends. So I'm trying to try and cull my Facebook to people who are actually my friend, and people I want to hear from and then build my twitter, as being a sort of, a professional profile and research tool. And then LinkedIn is just my CV and business contacts and all that sort of stuff. But inevitably there is overlap between them. At the moment that's enough for me. I'm on google+ but I don't really use it. As I say when new things come along, I get an account and try them out, so I'm at least familiar with them, and then if they're interesting to me, they're interesting to me. There's not enough time in my life to be manipulating a presence on dozens of different social platforms, so for the time being I stick with those three, and I may change as new things come along.

And is that advice you would give to the students, to try things out and see what works?

Yes, definitely to try things out, and see what's useful and what works. But also to see what you are using them for, what are the characteristics of Facebook, and twitter and LinkedIn, that make them useful for one thing and not for another. What sort of presence do you want to have; you might be more relaxed about the way you come across on Facebook, with a smaller group of people who might be friends, with the right privacy settings. On twitter you are broadcasting to the world, everyone can see you; future employers can see you so you might want to think about that. Think about what these networks are, what you are using them for and how you present yourself on these networks, bearing in mind that this stuff doesn't go away. I look on twitter a lot and I see people putting things on twitter that I think really are not the most sensible things to do, given that employers look at it and so on, so forth. Whereas on Facebook you can put things not here, put them behind privacy settings and be a bit more relaxed about it. LinkedIn you need to be more

'There are people in journalism who have created themselves on twitter, quite young people, who have become quite big figures, in large parts through their social media communities'

careful, because it's the first place employers go. It is difficult talking to the perspective of an 18 year old, who may not be thinking about employers and what employers think of you and the rest of it, but the nature of these things is that it doesn't really go away and potentially people can see it. We've all seen examples of people doing daft things on twitter that do actually blight their futures, and rightly or wrongly people need to be vigilant about it. but that's sort of the negative side, and the positive side is that particularly with twitter you can build a presence and a profiles, or a 'brand' as people like to say these day, that can be enormously valuable in terms of future employment and getting yourself out there. There are people in journalism who have created themselves on twitter, quite younger people, who have become quite big figures, in large parts through their social media community, so it's a big opportunity. You have to think about it and what you are doing, and the people who really succeed are the people who have a very clear view of what they are doing and why they are doing it.

There are a lot of things out there that remains latent, remains as potential, because people haven't figured out interesting things to do with them.
Interview with Jeff Dennis, Senior Academic Lecturer for BA Fine Art at Chelsea.

Joe Easeman: Our last project looked at the understanding of developing an online presence with different communities at the university. What is your view of developing an online identity or presence?

Jeff Dennis: I suppose, when this sort of question is raised, you start to think about who you are, and what your experience of these things is. And I suppose I should say something about my own history of these things [online resources]. In some ways I bear the scars of some encounters with attempts by various institutions to introduce communities, and way, way back, I was volunteered to introduce blackboard, which was University of the Arts first embodiment of the virtual learning community. I could see, even though my own practice is really not digital at all, I could see the advantages of having certain kinds of things. The certain kinds of things that you would traditionally put on a notice board, or expect students to come into an office to ask about, or collect a form for, you could put all of them on a computer platform and they would be much more accessible. But it was really an uphill struggle to try and interest other staff in using things in that way, and if you couldn't get the staff to make it part of their course structure then you couldn't expect the students to be at all interested in using it. So it was almost a dead duck from the start, until a few years later in become almost imposed from the top down and everyone just accepted it, it was there. It perhaps wasn't very good, or very friendly, but people just used it like you would a noticeboard or something, so I suppose from that I'm wary of institutions attempts to invent or impose or build their own ideas of what online communities suit students. I think students, particularly art students are naturally sceptical of institutional structures or they simply find something outside of that structure that does what they want more quickly, or easily, or in a more user friendly way. So they start to use that instead, they find a way, or ways, around whatever 'official' thing you set up. Which is rather brilliant in a way, but it can also mean that a lot of people quite frankly waste a lot of time. For example with Moodle at the moment, there are wonderful aspects to Moodle, and if you used it to its maximum it could be a very powerful tool, you can make a blog on it, you can have an online e-portfolio system, there something called workflow. I don't want to sound too sceptical about these things, its great they are there and available, but sometimes it is seen as some sort of institutional package, which makes it in itself, less amenable to students, and seems like someone else is in control of it all the time.

'I think Students, particularly art students are naturally sceptical of institutional structures…they find a way, or ways, around whatever 'official' thing you set up. Which is rather brilliant…'

I remember when I was studying BAFA at Chelsea, your tutor group, which I myself wasn't part of, was encouraged to set up their own blogs, I understand that is now a general part of the course structure that is introduced in the first year.

Yes, and that's generally works very unproblematically, in that you can immediately see the chronological development in the students' work and you can track back what they did before. It's all there for them to look back on and reflect, and its stays there, so they

can cut and paste things, and enhance things they have put on their blog before and develop them in the form of essays, in the form of portfolio project proposal, or just part of their extended memory of their own work and developments they have made in the past. So I'm very keen on that, although I do know that some students think it is a replacement for something not digital, like a note book or a sketchbook or something like that. And I have to work quite hard on say, 'no, that's ok; it's not trying to take the place of those things. You can documents your photographs, you can document your notes from your notepads, your scribbles on the back of an envelope, and you can put that on your blog if that works for you.' it's just a way of preserving things in a stream.

> *'Some student's think it is a replacement for something not digital…it's not trying to take the place of those things. You can document your notes from your notepad, your scribbles on the back of an envelope, and you can put that on your blog.'*

Is that something that has been recently introduced? One of the things that came up at the Chelsea community was that, when it was taught as part of the course integration, students were more likely to input into a blog chronologically, but if it was just something that students were encouraged to produce as part of their research then they tended to do it all in the last few weeks and change the dates on the blog. Do you find now, with it being introduced to the students in first year, as a course integrated subject, that students are more likely to develop it throughout the course, alongside their work, as appose to seeing it as a requirement?

Well different tutors have different approaches to this. I have been keen to say 'look this is accessed as part of the course, it is a formal requirement, but if I was you I would try and keep this going and no one has to see it if you don't want them to see it, it can be a kind of online lock up of your thoughts, and your developing work, and you can reflect back on it.' I think it can be useful to keep it ticking over, even if it's not a major part of your work. It doesn't mean to say that you are a particular kind of artist, a digital artist or anything; it's really just a tool. So I try and down play it as much as possible and say it really is there for you, there's no need to get anxiously about it, or make a fuss about it, it may be life changing for you, or it might be simply useful.

I suppose it's like introducing to say an A level student that a sketchbook isn't just for part of your final grade, it's for your own personal development.

Do you find that students on your course are quite capable of setting up websites or other online identities?

I think so, well, again I must be wary of someone of my generation pretending to have an overview of the happening situation now of someone in their 20's, but I can see that most of them are comfortable with most forms of social media and this forms an increasing role in the way they communicate with each other. It was quite interesting, the other day I asked a first year student how much they use email, and he almost laughed at me, as if it's like saying whether you use semaphore of something. It instantly became clear that for a certain generation email has become something that is OK for

institutional purposes and formal kind of things, but it's not a way that they communicate with each other. I think that many people of my generation haven't grasped that. Email is still this massive tool that consumes their working week, and they should maybe condense that. It is seen as a requirement, and it is a way of getting certain kinds of information across, it's never going to be any more of a dynamic thing that enables something new to happen.

'…for a certain generation email has become something that is OK for institutional purposes and formal kinds of things, but it's not a way to communicate with each other.'

I'm wary too of people who get excited over any one particular platform, thinking they can use something like Facebook, or some other social media platform in order to unlock some great new creative potential. I mean some artists have explored these things for their own sake, and they make work about how these things change the ways we communicate with each other, and how a virtual identity can become more real than an offline identity. But I think that for most people, you have got to see that it is out there, and it's a way to keep in touch with one another, but I would be very wary of become evangelical about it, believing that it is going to unlock some great creative potential.

I think that short term, I can see it being very useful to create a coherent group around a project. A Facebook group might be a quick way to create an online meeting space for people to some short term ends, a project that has got to happen, in a similar way to people who have got to organize a party or something. I think it is clearly great for that. I am wondering how long that lasts, and whether it become obsolete after a while. Whether people set up groups and they contribute to the Facebook group, for example, for a certain period of time and then it's left to whither. And I think a similar thing happened with blogs, that they have a kind of, radioactive half-life, and then they wither away, and don't get used anymore, they are probably still out there somewhere but no one looks at them anymore.

Within the art industry how important is social media, and your social media presence?

It can be exciting and can offer a potential, but it can also have a downside to it. If you set up a webpage as an artist then you have got to take responsibility for it, and it has got to be something that you think clearly represents you, it can become a bit of a nightmare I think. If you've got something up there that's out of date, or just the way you've put it together, the style, etc. it can do you a disservice. You can realize that this is not what you want to project of yourself as an artist. [And I suppose if you ever you to change the perception of yourself as an artist, then it's very hard, because these things are already in place?] Well that's a very interesting question; because I suppose that it enable you to do that. You could write your current webpage for example, and put up something completely different. You could reinvent yourself in that way. [Are you still worried that the images will still be there somewhere?] I think everyone has to take that on board now. I think you have to assume that it's all out there forever.

Do you think some learning about navigating yourself online could be integrated into the course? Do you think the online environment is an important enough space to warrant that sort of knowledge?

I think this is a really interesting question, but I am at the limits of my competence to comment on this. I certainly wouldn't think it's my role to further stir the anxiety that people may already have about their online identities or how their projected on the web, and through social media. I see my role as more to calm those anxieties and to rebalance where people attention is and what they are thinking about when they come into a course like this and how they are thinking about their own work. I don't want them to be day-to-day worrying about whether they have the right online identity. Having said all that I think as we said with the project blogs, and with Facebook groups, for short term projects, I think all of those are just really useful things, and I'm happy to encourage their use if students are comfortable with using those things themselves. I'm a great joiner in, rather than an innovator in these things, and I often depend on students telling me about things on the web and how they use it, and I credit myself on being quite quick on the uptake on the potential of these things, thinking 'well if you can do that, then you could do this thing on it as well, and you could make contact with these people, etc.' [so there is a sort of cross level learning then]

'I'm a great joiner in, rather than an innovator in these things, and I often depend on students telling me things on the web and how they use it'

Would you say it was vital for the student to have knowledge of how to develop themselves online in terms of skills such as coding etc.?

What any student needs both digitally and in every other aspect of their work, and thought, is going to vary from person to person. It might be right for one person to get deeply involved in coding for example, but it might be a waste of time for another. I would be very reluctant to prescribe. We all only have a limited amount of time to try and develop work, so you have to quickly become an expert in where to spend your energies.

'We all only have a limited amount of time to try and develop work, so you have to quickly become an expert in where you spend your energies'

What is your online presence?

It [my online presence] consists of not very much really. Having set up a web page just to make it easy for people to contact me if they were interested in my work, which are painting, which are not digital, I set something up some years ago, and then had to keep tweaking it and re-doing it and re-designing. But I've tried to pare it down to a minimum presence that I don't have to constantly think about, or else I wouldn't have any time to do anything else, to think about paintings.

So do you use it mostly for networking and a portfolio?

Yes, as a communication tool, with people who have somehow seen my work, or got to hear about my work and want to get in touch with me, and they seem to do it through the site first. As far as that's concerned, it works, and I am not making any larger claim than that.

The Fine Art industry is hard to define as one thing, where as in other industries it's very clear to say, 'this is what it's about', in fine art every genre, from painting to video etc. is so different. Is it important to have an online presence?

I think you'll have it one way or another. If you have any online presence at all, you'll have an online presence that you will have somehow made yourself or would have been choreographed for you. I think that is an interesting situation, and perhaps an interesting proposal for a future online identity for an artist, that they create a sort of ripple around themselves, instead of trying to kind of control it directly themselves, by creating a webpage or spending all of their time on Facebook, or something. They do something that is intrinsically interesting, and people create a kind of digital ripple around that work, or presence.

I think that's a really interesting concept. Coming from my practice in participation and performance art this is always something that we are trying to create, to get people to take photos and videos and share, it is about this ripple of identity.

Are you worried about misrepresentation online? What with the online environment being so much about sharing and re-appropriation, do you find that there is a fear of misinterpretation or misrepresentation?

I think that's always there, and would be there even if we weren't talking about the digital world. You cannot completely control and dictate how you are going to be interpreted as an artist by other people. and if you get over anxious about that then it will stop you spending your energy in the most interesting and fruitful way, because you will constantly be trying to control how people interpret your work. This is a whole area that is interesting. Artist are often seen as control freaks, and constantly trying to steer how their work is written about, how their work is curated, what context they're work is seen in, and it is seen as perhaps an extension of professionalism, but I think that can lead to a kind of negative anxiety.

I think it's just increased a lot recently, because before, where you had the potential of someone being written about that a small group of people would see; now you have the potential of any number of people seeing it.

Yeah, although, if I may take your comment in a slightly different direction, I think this concept of the small group is interesting, and one thing that digital interaction does let you do is to create a small group amongst strangers, so you can collaborate with people who are a long way away. There is a sort of global local thing that is quite exciting and interesting. Online interaction enables you to have, and I'm using this word with caution, a sort of professional intimacy with co-workers, and collaborators, that would be perhaps a lot more difficult without that web of interaction.

'Online interaction enables you to have... a sort of professional intimacy with co-workers, and collaborators...'

Your communities that you have been working on through the 'communities of practice' project, 'Paint Club', does that have an online presence?

Yes, it has a webpage that acts as an archive, so people can get a flavour of past events, and there is as much as possible that is document online, and you can watch conferences and discussions that's happened in the past. It operates as a sort of digital noticeboard as well, to involve people in future events and let people know what is happening. It also has a Facebook group. I often find that some people come to it through the web page, some people come to it through word of mouth, some people like it on Facebook, other people watch the twitter feed. I think people are comfortable with different forms and all you can do is try and accommodate these different forms and know that some of them are going to work for some people some of the time.

Yes absolutely, and I think that is a really important point. Some people just don't look on the webpage at all and only know it as a Facebook page, some people don't know any of that, and like it as something where people talk together in a space, in the pub or at the Tate, and they need a word of mouth nudge that something is happening, other people just like getting the email out and joining in that way. So it's dangerous to become evangelical about one platform or one way of communicating I think, you miss out on a lot that way. It is easy to become annoyed with people when they say 'well, I didn't know' and you say 'well it's been on the web page for months', but for some reason they just don't look at that and are waiting for something else to happen, for someone to tell them, or for a letter to arrive through the post, or a flyer to be left in the studio. It's amazing how good the low tech stuff is, how much more effective these can be sometimes, rather than the outcome of hours and hours of trying to put them into some sort of digital form.

'...it's dangerous to become evangelical about one platform or one way of communicating...'

I suppose it about that sort of personal interaction that you don't get online

Yeah, I think we are all kind of blind or deaf in certain ways and we only pick up on certain channels of information. So maybe we have to shut down a bit to certain things. You know some people will get way too many emails and if they replied to all of them it would use up all of their lives.

What sort of tools would be useful for the students?

I think the best tools would be sort of things that the students find for themselves, and then you can adapt them, or accommodate them with your own interactions with the students. If you've invented something you may think is phenomenally useful and inventive, and that nobody has used before, but the more you try and force people to use it the more resistance people become to it, they'll say 'no, I don't want to use that, I want to use this instead'. Having said that, I think we have moved a long way and things like the communities of practice and things the process.arts have enormous potential.

You mentioned workflow earlier; you said it wasn't very widely used with your students?

Well that maybe too dismissive, because I don't actually understand it myself. I think the best thing, probably to get those things launched is to give them to the students and ask

the students to see what the potential of them was, and then get the student to teach the staff how to use it [you mean in a project context?] Well saying 'there's this thing we've got, you see what you can do with it, we will pay you a little bit of money to spend a bit of time playing with this, to see what it is capable of, and then come back and feedback to the staff', and then the staff will get excited about it and feedback to the students. So you get a sort of circular or spiral flow of interaction. I think there is a lot of latency with these things, aspects of Moodle and workflow are set up by very clever people in rooms, and they remain there, at the top of the toolbar, for years, and nobody amongst the staff has time to go, what is this. But if they could be shown the potential of it, and perhaps if the students were using it already then suddenly it would be more accessible. Much like when you come into this canteen at a busy time of day there would be more mac PowerBooks than you can shake a stick at, extremely powerful things that used to be known as super computers, and there export used to be limited by the United States government, because they were considered too dangerous to be let into the wrong hands, because of course most people are using them for, maybe a bit of Photoshop or such like, but mostly Facebook etc. so here they are, these amazingly powerful machines, and they are not being used to their full potential. There are a lot of things out there that remains latent, remains as potential, because people haven't figured out interesting things to do with them, that aren't immediately relevant or what they are trying to do on the course or on the project.

DIGITELL
2014

Changing the Learning Landscape (CLL) was an HEA funded project to explore the understanding and importance of an online presence within the UAL community of staff, students and graduates. Four 'Community Developers' built communities of interest across the college group to explore the issues related to this topic. To find out more about the CLL project, please scan the following QR code.

Online Identities Projects at UAL

Over the past two/three years the DIAL project have been working closely with staff and students exploring aspects of 'online identities' e.g. the extent in which we engage or not with our 'presence' online and the challenges faced in understanding, supporting and developing online presence.

What we did:

We worked closely with CSMs Performance Design and Practice programme area, including its course director, staff and students. Together we looked at the challenges faced in understanding, supporting and developing online presence at course level. Our progress was documented in the Professional Online Identities group (POI) on process.arts.

We developed a pilot programme with the course staff and students: Spring & summer 2013 pilot programme

We then developed a second pilot programme, this time with the students only, outside the course schedule based on the finding below: Term One: November/December 2013

POI headline findings:

Lack of support: Little or no support in online practices at course level

Course integration: We found difficulties running/fitting in this training with busy course teams and department staff

Awareness: Students & staff would like to be more aware of this practice

Students would like this training: Students across all years preferred and appreciated being asked/supported and encouraged into developing their digital skills and practices in this area

Defining DLs and competencies: needs to be an agile on-going process

In 2014 we carried out a wider scoping project as part of the HEA 'Changing the Learning Landscape' (CLL) with staff and students across all UAL colleges. We shared what we learnt from the previous project with 4 student community developers who were each asked to build on this work and develop their our communities of interests around the topics of online identities within their college. Project documentation, reports and related links can be viewed here.

<u>CLL Headline findings:</u>

- Web making: There is a need for more information on how to build your own website.
- Course integration: The communities felt that information about establishing an online identity/presence was important and should be part of the course from the first year onwards.
- Industry input and insights: So to understand professional perspectives
- Face-to-face and online tutorials/training: The communities felt they would like a mix of both.
- More staff awareness and knowledge: The communities felt staff need to know more about online identities and professional presence.
- Industry and discipline specific: Be mindful when developing training of the different creative industries across UAL, which have such different expectations and ethos. Students also wished to share experiences across disciplines and colleges.
- Forwards in response to the above findings and collaboration with UAL staff and students:

<u>Over the next 3 months we hope to complete:</u>

A pilot online student magazine/training website for exploring and developing awareness, skills and confidence in 'online identities/practicing online'.

DIAL are currently developing a pilot platform in collaboration with staff and students, see Online Identities: Student led course/website project including:

Stakeholder scoping (Staff, students, Industry etc.)

Student led workshops/activities

Rapid web development: Agile web development

Pilot online learning/personal learning networks activities

Dissemination: Proposal for a Online Identities Symposium (student led)

Learning Studio events

Online Identities Symposium (student led):

A series of talks discussing ideas of online identity exploring the challenges of merging personal, professional boundaries in online practice and presentation.

Aims of the CLL online identities project

To establish what help and support students, staff and graduates at UAL needed in order to establish their professional online identity and presence.

Key findings from the CLL online identities project

- How do you build a website

- How do you establish your online identity

- Increased industry input

- Mix of face-to-face tutorials and online forums

- Increased staff awareness and knowledge on discipline specific online identity

- Industry and discipline specific learning

- Interconnectivity between courses and colleges

- More learning on copyright issues.

- Setting up of an online platform

- Activities to build social and team skills online

Where next?

With the findings from this project and the previous 'creative online identities' project with DIAL we are looking at how we can support the university and graduate community at UAL to establish and maintain their online professional presence. This support could come from more course integration regarding online learning, increase communication between technical and academic department or an online hub to focus on these issues.

For more information on the CLL online identities project, visit http://process.arts.ac.uk/category/project-groups/changing-learning-landscape

And for more information on the COI, project visit http://process.arts.ac.uk/category/project-groups/professional-online-identities

WHAT WE FOUND

/ ONLINE PRESENCE

How do we use social media platforms to benefit our practice? Are our personal online identities affecting our future job prospects?

/ BUSINESS TRAINING

More industry input was needed, so that students knew what was expected really of their online presence. It was also felt that this should be discipline specific.

/ STAFF PRESENCE

The communities also felt that more staff awareness and knowledge was needed on online identities and professional presence. It was felt that if the staff had a strong and comprehensive knowledge online professional identities and how to set yourself up as a professional online, then they would be able to pass this information onto the students, and tailor their courses to have more integration of online issues.

/ STUDENT PRESENCE

There is a lack of student presence due to the insufficient solid web training available. For example to establishing an online student magazine at UAL.

/ WEB TRAINING

Web training needs to be up to date and keep up with the online trend and our work online. identities affecting our future job prospects?

/ DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC

We need to begin to understand what the difference of an Online Presence for an Art programme vs. a Design vs. a Writing programme. The development of Online Identities could become a way for cross-collaboration between the courses within UAL.

/ INDUSTRY INSIGHT

/ STUDENTS ACCESSIBILITY

Some course descriptions do not meet with their expectations due to a limitation on Online training skills. Students need a clear guideline as to what is accessible to them during and after their studies trend and our work online.

Industry and discipline specific learning is important, as the different creative industries across UAL have such different expectations and ethos'.

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