

Caught! On Facebook

Even if you remove material from a Web site, it is cached by search engines and Internet archives. Once you post a picture, a video or text, it is out there, and you cannot get it back. Ever!

by Carol Taylor

Intending to interview a promising young student, Ana Homayoun of Green Ivy Educational Consulting visited the girl's page on Facebook. She found explicit photographs and commentary about the student's sexual escapades, drinking and pot smoking. "I was just shocked by the amount of stuff that she was willing to publicly display," Ms. Homayoun said. "When I saw that, I thought, 'Okay, so much for that.'"

The wonder (as well as the potential danger) of the Internet is the ease with which anyone can find, download or publish information and pictures. Virtually all that is posted on the Web, whether protected or not, can be copied and reposted somewhere else.

And as Michael Sciola, director of the Career Resource Center at Wesleyan University, says: "People who use social sites should understand that any information that appears online is there *forever* and *cannot* be deleted. Even material that is withdrawn from the Web is cached by search engines and Internet archives. These things have consequences.

Once you put stuff up, it is out there, and it is gone. You *cannot* get it back" (Diane Lewis, "Job Applicants' Online Musings Get Hard Look," *The Boston Globe*, March 30, 2006, emphasis added).



Andy Beal (coauthor of *Radically Transparent: Monitoring and Managing Reputations Online*) reveals that 78 percent of recruiters use search engines in their research when they screen new candidates. He adds that a startling 35 percent of recruiters say they have eliminated a candidate because of something they found on the Web.

Some of the postings that damage credibility are provocative or inappropriate photographs or information. Other problems include evidence of the candidate drinking or using drugs, showing poor communication skills, making discriminatory comments, lying about qualifications, sharing confidential information from previous employers, and bad-mouthing previous employers, coworkers or clients.

David Gerwitz, an author who specializes in technology and security issues, tells social networkers, "Every tweet, every post is being actively indexed by different search engines. It's going to be available in perpetuity" (David Phelps, "Imprudent Posts Online Can Sabotage a Job Search," *Star Tribune*, July 5, 2009).

Social networking sites can help us keep in touch and be a great place for networking. But they can also ruin reputations and careers—perhaps forever. Every comment, every link, every picture and even every friend's picture that you allow on your private site is a potential reputation killer. (You're known by the company you keep!)

And it's not just social networking sites that can get you in trouble. Any video, text message, e-mail, blog and picture can be found, uploaded or scanned into the computer and posted on the Internet for all to see.

There is great wisdom in Proverbs 22:1: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches." With that in mind, realize that you can *ruin* your good name with just one sleazy picture or comment. As Ann Doss Helms of *The Charlotte Observer* says, "Never put in electronic form anything that you wouldn't want viewed by a million people, including your colleagues, students, and supervisors—and your mother" ("Teachers Disciplined for Facebook Postings," Nov. 12, 2008). *VT*

For further reading see:

"[How to Protect Your Online Reputation](#)" by Amanda Berlin, July 1, 2009 - Forbes.com

"[Is Facebook Your 'Permanent Record'?](#)" by Sarah Perez, Feb. 4, 2008 - ReadWriteWeb.com

About the Author

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Comments or Questions

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