

# Building a Professional Presence Online

*Institute for the Humanities*

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*A professional online presence is one of the best tools an author can employ to increase the visibility of their publications, and to find potential collaborators, future co-authors, and readers. This workshop will cover how to create an effective and professional presence online, an essential tool for graduate students and faculty at all stages in their careers.*

*This presentation borrows and builds off the great work already done by folks at [ProfHacker](#) and [Patrick Lowenthal and Joanna Dunlap](#) for EDUCAUSE.*

**Be sure to check out the [slide deck](#) that accompanies the following presentation notes.**

## Introduction

**SLIDE 1:** Who we are

**SLIDE 2:** “...the construction of online identities or persona is now an essential activity for the academic both from the perspective of university value and individual/career value.”

That quote is from a 2012 study aimed at identifying and categorizing different types of academic presences online. And I guess if you're here, you probably already know this, sense this, or have been told you need to start thinking about this...

A professional online presence is one of the best tools an academic can employ to increase the visibility of their publications, to find potential collaborators, future co-authors, readers, jobs and other opportunities in academia.

But what differentiates a professional presence online in the humanities from that of the sciences, is that often humanists are left to develop their professional online presence on their own, whereas researchers in sciences tend to benefit from top down institutional tools that help them build their professional presence.

**SLIDE 3:** So we're here to get you started by looking at:

- What is an online identity, why should I care, and what are some effective examples of an academic/professional online identity?

- Exploring some available options for your online identity
- Deeper look: Planning and implementing a custom domain website

Questions? This is a workshop, so, ask away.

## Part One

### *Google Yourself*

**SLIDE 4:** What is an online identity? Typically, this term is reserved for describing one's online persona established in online communities and websites. Today, we're going to be thinking about online identities on a macro-level: What does the internet have to say about us? How might you go about branding yourself--your knowledge, skills, expertise, and work--more effectively?

**SLIDE 5:** There are several benefits to being visible on the internet:

- increase the visibility of your work and
- promote your scholarship, teaching, and service
  - if google can't find your work or your colleagues, dept, etc. it becomes irrelevant in some ways -- people can't find your work to build upon it.
  - in fact, with decreasing budgets at university presses, if you want to promote sales for your published monograph, you really should work this
    - marketing reps at your publisher are going to ask you if you have a personal website, Twitter account, etc.
- have potential collaborators and co-authors in your field discover you
- to get the word out about a research project
  - especially when there might not be an appropriate publication venue, having a blog or twitter account can be useful alternatives.
- to be seen as a thought leader in your discipline
- establish connections in your field -- often the "currency of the academy"
- land you speaking engagements or consulting gigs
- assist you in your job search
- give you control over others initial perception of you and your work on the internet

**SLIDE 6:** This last point, I want to focus on for a moment. Whether you've done anything about it or not -- if you've published, presented at conference, or are a part of department at the University of Michigan, have a Facebook page, flickr account, appear and are identified in images on the internet, you already have an "online identity" thanks to search engines like Google or Bing. Over the last decade and half, the academic world has migrated online, just as the rest of us have. It is commonplace and expected that we can find information about people by looking them up online.

In effect, the results of a google search on your name form the basis of your online identity to

the greater world. In the academic world, it's not uncommon for us to "meet" people online and learn quite a bit about them before we ever meet them in person. Have you ever googled the plenary speaker at a conference to decide whether their talk was worth attending? Looked at potential co-author's CV online before approaching them about working together? Or found out about a job candidate's life outside of work by scrolling through their Instagram photos? These are all great examples of how conscious attention to your online identity can impact what happens in the real world.

**SLIDE 7:** When might you be "googled" or "google" others?

- On the job market -- employers looking for you.
  - You're on a search committee - it is very likely you googled potential candidates, or even sought out potential candidates to invite.
- Presenting at a conference -- someone sitting in the audience or considering whether or not to attend your presentation.
- Maybe not you directly, but a keyword in your field of study.

Over the next two minutes I want you to google yourself (or yahoo! Bing, or another search provider) and review what the results are. Go maybe three pages deep -- even though people won't look past the first page of results. Are there other things, deeper in the results that you wish were placed higher?

There are probably a few different types of results you may have gotten:

- Your name pulls up one or many other people who share the same name as you. In short, you're lost in the shuffle and it isn't clear which is really you.
- Your name pulls up sites you'd rather not have others see. For example:
  - Amazon wish lists
  - Defunct Myspace pages
  - Silly rate my professor comments/ratings
  - Dead websites you may have built but aren't important anymore, etc. are in the way of a recent publication or presentation.
- Your name pulls up the information that you would like to see about you.

Depending on the results you get, you may just want to clean-up, standardize, or re-work your online identity.

**In other words, today's session is about being intentional with your online identity in two ways:**

1. a version of Search Engine Optimization or SEO for your online identity -- giving you some simple options on how to get control of it so you can effectively promote yourself, and also take things a step further if that seems worth it to you:

- a. SEO is the process of improving people's ability to locate and access your work online by optimizing the chances your work will come up early and frequently when people do a web search on specific search terms
2. If you don't have much or are just starting out, how to manage and then build up your online identity.

### *Types of Online Identities*

**SLIDE 8:** Kim Barbour and David Marshall in First Monday identify different types of academic online identities. We can use these as a model for understanding the different kinds of presence one can have online:

Broadcast identity: Pushing content out to the wider audience of the web, often via social media. This isn't about what you had for lunch, but rather:

- direct people to content
- engage audience in conversation/issues
- Example of a coordinated broadcast effort: Doris Kearns Goodwin
  - [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [web](#)
- Example of a more realistic broadcast effort: Kathleen Fitzpatrick
  - [Twitter](#), [web](#)

### **SLIDE 9:** Fixed Presentation

You will often find artifacts in various places online that are attributed to you or associated with you. These items come up in search results, and they might include publications or presentations you've completed, announcements or press releases, projects you've worked on, and the like. They are usually hosted somewhere else, and though you might not have much control over their presentation, you can certainly build them into any new online identity you create by linking to them.

Once you have a coherent online presence, in the future you might even be able to use these kinds of things to increase the number of inbound links to your own site, which can improve its SEO.

### **SLIDE 10:** Personal and institutional profiles

These pages tend to foreground your achievements and background, and often look like an online CV or resume. They typically live on your institution's domain, and can provide functionality such as linking to publications and courses, directory information, etc.

The institutional profile is usually created using a template or other standard system, while the personal profile can be created using institutionally provided webspace.

Institutional Profile: [David Armitage, Harvard](#)

Personal Profile: [Anne Curzan, University of Michigan](#)

## **SLIDE 11:** Aggregator

Aggregator sites allow you to combine social media accounts and fixed presentations with a profile page. These can be an effective solution if you need to create a web presence quickly, and don't want to worry about hosting and domain registration. Two of the most common include [about.me](http://about.me) and [flavors.me](http://flavors.me).

You can also create your own aggregator site by using embedded widgets in a custom site. Jon will talk more about creating your own site a little later in our presentation.

Examples: <http://about.me/caliellis>; <http://www.miriamposner.com/>

## **Part Two**

### *Get a Plan Together*

#### **SLIDE 12**

1. After Googling yourself, what are some things you want to change? What can you improve?
  - a. If you just want your Amazon wishlist off of your search results, you can set it to "private" at Amazon.
  - b. Maybe you want the opposite -- if your Twitter page doesn't show up, use your real name in the account.
2. Look around in your field. Google the dominant voices and thought leaders. What do they do? What is common for academics in your discipline?

### *Your Name*

#### **SLIDE 13**

For some of us, the best way to differentiate ourselves online is with our names. However, if you have a common name or even if you share a less common name with someone who already has an established web presence online, this might not be an option. You might need to find a variation on your name (using an initial, dashes or periods in a URL, etc.) in order to register a domain or create vanity URLs for popular services.

You could also go another route completely--using a word or phrase that is not your name. As long as you use it consistently across various platforms (e.g. domain name, Twitter, etc.), you can establish a coherent presence that way.

### *Getting Started on Building an Online Identity*

#### **SLIDE 14**

- There are a few easy steps you can take to flesh out your online presence that don't necessarily involve creating your own website.

#### **SLIDE 15**

- Create a Google Scholar Citations Profile: [scholar.google.com/citations](http://scholar.google.com/citations)

- For an example of a profile in the humanities: [Sarah Werner](#)
- You can make your profile public or private. If it's public, it can appear in Google Scholar search results. One advantage to this is that it makes it easier for folks to discover you and your work.
- Google will calculate citation counts and bibliometrics for you.
- For more information:  
<http://googlescholar.blogspot.com/2011/11/google-scholar-citations-open-to-all.html>

## SLIDE 16

- Create a Profile at Academia.edu
  - Billed as a social network for academics, the site has almost 7 million members.
  - Allows you to share info such as affiliations, education, syllabi, publications, etc. and find or follow the work of others.
  - Has good SEO.
  - In December 2013, some users received takedown notices from Elsevier regarding journal articles posted online. (See [Chronicle of Higher Ed for coverage.](#))

## SLIDE 17

- Create a LinkedIn Profile
  - Seen as an essential tool for industry, business, and the private sector. Not specifically for academics, though you will find them there.
  - Looks much like an online resume, with some “value added” functionality like “recommendations” and “endorsements.”
  - Has very good SEO.
  - Has had [lax data security](#) in the past, and will send large amounts of email to you and your contacts if you aren't careful with settings.
- Possible alternatives to LinkedIn:
  - Are there emerging services for your discipline?
    - <http://commons.mla.org/>
    - <http://communities.historians.org/historians/Home>
  - It is possible these communities might be a more effective use of your limited time to devote to professional networking online.

## SLIDE 18

- Fill out your departmental profile page with more information about yourself. A good example of this is [Anne Curzan](#), who has included publications and a link to her own personal website.
- You might be limited in what you can add based on the template your unit uses, but do make sure that the info is at least current. And link to other sites when possible. Inbound links from the umich.edu domain will be good for SEO.

## SLIDE 19

- Archive your publications and presentations online. Material in a repository is easy for both humans and web crawling robots to find.
  - <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/>
  - Aren't sure you have the rights to post a past publication freely? See <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>
  - Try to retain your rights when signing author agreements. This will yield benefits for you beyond the ability to put that material on a personal website.

## SLIDE 20      **Twitter**

- Excellent way to connect with colleagues at conferences, meet new people, have conversations, follow sessions you aren't attending, and have a bit of fun.
- Brian Croxall's "[Ten Tips for Tweeting at Conferences](#)" has useful tips for how to use Twitter effectively.

## SLIDE 21      **Blogging**

- If you find you have thoughts that are longer than 140 characters, but perhaps not right for a journal article, blogging can provide a useful platform for sharing material, working through new ideas, and communicating about your achievements.
- There are a number of free, easy tools out there to enable publishing your content to the web, or you could use a blog as part of your own custom site. Jon will talk about more of this in a moment.
- A blog can be one piece of a larger online identity strategy, but it does require care and feeding, like everything else we've discussed today.
- Blogging can benefit you in a few ways:
  - Learn how to use a content management system and publish material to the web
  - Gain experience with a tool that has potential for [use in the classroom](#)
  - Create a self-reflective record of what you've been working on and accomplishing, which can be helpful when assembling a dossier for promotion
  - Provide a platform for those bits of writing that don't fit elsewhere

## SLIDES 22-23      **Connecting sites and services**

- If you want to push content to multiple channels at once, there are usually options in the settings of the site you are using. For example, [pushing your LinkedIn updates to Twitter](#).
- If you need something more intricate, you can use [IFTTT](#) to automate actions.

## SLIDE 25

- Create a personal website with a custom domain
  - Buy the domain of the name you plan to use
    - .org, .com, .is, .me

*Planning and implementing a personal website with a personal domain*

## SLIDE 26

Personal websites are the easiest way to take control of your online identity, giving you the tools for branding your knowledge, skills, and publications on the web more effectively. If planned accordingly ahead of time, you can have your own personal website with a custom domain up and running in less than half a day and about \$10/month.

- Establishes one central place to host and promote all of your scholarship.
- Creates a consistent web presence regardless of job changes or university website redesigns (and URL changes).
- Drives traffic to your site rather than solely to a university's website (though ideally you are linking to your university pages from your professional website and vice versa).
- Increases options to create additional content (e.g., blogging).
- Provides easy methods to track visitors (i.e., track the number of people who are interested in your work).
- Gives you more control over what and when content is placed on the web (rather than waiting for someone to update your university's page).
- Increases your search engine ranking.

Show example: [jmcglone.com/jonathanmcglone.com/jwmcglone.com](http://jmcglone.com/jonathanmcglone.com/jwmcglone.com)

## SLIDE 27

1. Define: Setup Some Goals/Scope
  - a. How much time do you have?
  - b. How technical are you?
    - i. Maybe you'd like to use this as a learning aide?
  - c. Think about the content you'll have on your site
    - i. Bio
    - ii. CV
    - iii. Links to projects
  - d. How will your audience primarily interact?
    - i. Should it be accessible on mobile devices?
  - e. Do you need a blog?
    - i. If so, create a plan to seed content, create a blogging voice, and know that you'll likely need a webhost with server side scripting and databases.
  - f. Think long-term: How will the site grow with you?

## SLIDE 28

2. Decide on a web hosting service. I recommend going with a web host that also allows you manage your domain name and you probably only need "shared hosting" if only creating a portfolio site. Other things to keep in mind:
  - a. Reliability/Server Uptime
  - b. Customer Service
  - c. Server Space



- d. Bandwidth
- e. Domain Name Purchase and Management
- f. Pricing
- g. Security
- h. Scripting languages and database support
- i. One-click installs

Some good/trusted web hosts include:

- [A Small Orange](#)
  - plans to suit every budget and every need, detailed stats, bit-by-bit upgrades for people who have needs that fall between plans, and more.
  - Smaller company committed to real, quality customer support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- [Bluehost](#)
  - Bluehost starts its shared hosting plans at \$4.95/mo, and for your money you get unlimited bandwidth, unlimited disk space, unlimited file transfer, unlimited email, a free domain registration, and more.
  - Even their basic plans offer unlimited hosted domains, domain parking, e-commerce features, and more, including one-click Wordpress installs
- [DreamHost](#)
  - Dreamhost is one of the web's most popular hosts, offering both standard shared plans starting as low as \$8.95/month and dedicated server plans for customers with larger bandwidth and availability needs.
  - Regular perks and added features for its customers, including one-click installs for blogging and gallery software that make getting your own site up and running fast and easy.
  - unlimited email accounts, support for Google apps, unlimited bandwidth, unlimited databases, and more.
- [HostGator](#)
  - Hostgator rolls out the red carpet for its new customers with unlimited bandwidth, unlimited disk space, tons of easy to install site templates, and an uptime guarantee, all starting at \$3.96/mo for their most affordable plans. Even their low-end plans feature unlimited email, 1-click installs, and a \$100 Google Adwords credit for all of your customer-building needs.
- [Just Host](#)
- [Linode](#)
  - If you're technical or plan on getting deep into things, you'll need a private, dedicated server
- [LunarPages](#)

Still can't decide? Try <http://reviewsignal.com/webhosting> .

## SLIDE 30

### 3. Design/Build/Install Site

- a. If you're in the market for a job, take this part seriously. A design is an argument for yourself as well, and this is your chance to set yourself apart from others in a visually striking way. I tend to lean towards simple and clean designs, especially for portfolios because you typically have less information or text heavy information to pass on to folks.
  - i. Consider a personal logo?
- b. When designing, It is quickest and easiest to go with a web host that allows for quick one click installs of CMS systems such as Wordpress.
  - i. WordPress is helpful for design because it has thousands of free templates you can use with your blog to get a professional and responsive site.
  - ii. A favorite of mine for working out of the box in mobile and tablet environments is the bootstrap theme. <http://320press.com/wpbs/>
- c. Get bids from web designers
  - i. <http://99designs.com/>
    1. tell them what you need and how much you'll pay
    2. launch a competition
    3. sit back and watch designers compete for your work
- d. Just a static site:
  - i. <http://www.freecsstemplates.org/>
  - ii. Find a site you like: View source to see the HTML and CSS behind the scenes.
- e. Establish a clear relationship with your "identity" on the web with linking, and improve your SEO
  - i. Link to your papers and presentations hosted elsewhere
  - ii. Link to departmental pages and other umich.edu sites when possible
  - iii. Link your new personal homepage in other profiles you might have (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

## SLIDE 31

### 4. Track Your Site

- a. Setup Google Analytics so you can know:
  - i. What are people looking at?
  - ii. Most popular content (esp. if you have a blog)
    1. For blogs, this can help you find out who your audience is, and what content could be shared.
    2. Great way now to build a stronger presence on the web. If your content is shared in social networks Google indexes, this is good for you.
  - iii. Where people are coming from, how they are searching your site.

- iv. How long people are staying on your site
- v. The more you post content, the more frequent you'll have visitors.
- b. Setup Google's Webmaster Tools so you can SEOify your site
  - i. Provides you with detailed reports so you can know your pages' visibility on google.
  - ii. Submit your site for Google indexing
    - 1. <http://www.google.com/submityourcontent/>
    - 2. Allows you to optimize for google sear
    - 3. Webmaster Guidelines:  
<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/35769?hl=en>

## 5. IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

- a. MAINTAIN IT!
  - i. Could be as frequent as once a year if just a portfolio.
  - ii. Remember to renew your domain name if you have one. Setup recurring payments so you don't lose it.
  - iii. There is nothing more disappointing than a blog, twitter, or other broadcast medium that hasn't been updated in months, years, or more than that.
    - 1. It also is highly common.
- b. Be Human.
  - i. Are you professional all the time? No. So feel free to break the formalism on your site, show some personality, maybe a sense of humor. This is especially true if you're on Twitter.
- c. Know what you're getting into
  - i. Don't sign up for a social networking platform or Web application without understanding what it does with your data, whether you can maintain the privacy you want, and the conventions that govern the way the community operates.
- d. Consistency
  - i. Carry same voice, image, name, and persona across multiple social networks and your personal website.

## Addenda

- 1. Additional reading - general
  - a. <http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/intentional-web-presence-10-seo-strategies-every-academic-needs-know>
  - b. <http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/creating-and-maintaining-a-professional-pre-sence-online-a-roundup-and-reflection/43030>
  - c. <http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/do-you-need-your-own-website-while-on-th-e-job-market/35825>

- d. <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3969/3292>
- e. <http://www.itcs.umich.edu/frguide/research.php#web>