Teens and Social Media: Where Are We Now, Where Next?

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ABSTRACT
This panel will discuss the current state of research and present new work examining teens and social media. Panelists will share work that approaches this area in new ways, including an examination of question asking practices on social media, message sharing practices on Facebook, and teen social media and information uses during game design work. The panel will conclude with an interactive discussion designed to identify future research collaborations, directions, and priorities at the intersection of teens and social media. ASIS&T SIG USE has agreed to sponsor this panel.

Keywords
Teenagers, adolescents, youth, social media, information behavior.

TEENS AND SOCIAL MEDIA
Research has consistently shown that social media is an important element in many teens’ lives (boyd, 2008; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Early work focused on describing social networking sites (SNSs); in their 2007 article, boyd & Ellison defined social networking sites as services where individuals could develop a profile, develop a list of connections, and “view and traverse” those connections on the system (p. 2). Later work highlights tools for public communication as another important element of SNSs (boyd, 2010). Research has examined the myriad ways teens use social networks and social media, including how social media and ICTs are used for communication (Agosto, Abbas & Naughton, 2012) and identity exploration (Livingstone, 2008). Research is also developing better understandings of those who choose not to engage with social media (Tufekci, 2008), as well as the reasons for differences in levels of use (Hargittai, 2007), though this work often focuses on college students rather than only teenagers.

Contexts of Use
In addition to the variety of ways young people use or do not use social media, the diversity of contexts where teens interact with social media is also important to consider. The large scale study conducted by Ito et al (2009) found that teens engage with new media in ways that fall into three main categories: hanging out, messing around, and geeking out. These ways of engaging take social factors and personal interest into account: hanging out is oriented to spending time with friends, while on the other end of the spectrum, geeking out is interest-driven and can lead to new relationships.

Gasser, Cortesi, Malik, and Lee (2012) find that research examining youth and information focuses on academic, personal, and social contexts, with much existing work centered on academic contexts; they also note that contexts can overlap, with practices developed in one context informing those used in others. Reynolds and Chiu (2013) highlight the importance of investigating the role of context in studies of digital learning among youth, and investigate the role of formal vs. informal context factors in a game design educational intervention. There are a variety of ways to break down context, but the importance of considering it is a key factor in many studies.

Variety of Stakeholders
While research may have a focus on teens and their practices, they are not the only people invested in and informed by this work. Parents, educators, librarians,
policy-makers, healthcare providers and other stakeholders are all interested in this area of inquiry, as evidenced by the diversity of perspectives informing this kind of research.

Many stakeholders are focused on protecting teens from the potential risks of social media use. Yardi and Bruckman (2011) examine on the difficulties surrounding parent and social media use, while work in the area has had a tradition of attempting to identify and mitigate risky practices (Williams & Merten, 2008) and classifying and preventing exposure to online meanness (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr & Rainie, 2011; Sengupta & Chaudhuri, 2011; Tokunaga, 2010) and sexual predators (Beigler & boyd, 2010; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). Based on their ethnographic work with teenagers, Marwick and boyd (2011) discuss drama as performative actions that now occur online through SNSs. These aggressive and gendered practices are distinct from online bullying/cyberbullying, but are often referred to by adults with the same language, highlighting the subtlety of teens’ online experiences and the need for deeper study of online aggression.

Other work has examined the health benefits of engaging with social media (Bonie-Nissim and Bara, 2011). Educators and researchers interested in improving learning are also engaged in studying social media, examining issues of academic performance and learning (Ahn, 2011), as well as employing game design and social media use for working against existing digital inequalities in learners (Reynolds & Chiu, 2013a).

Open Problems & Opportunities
While we have deepened our understandings of teens and social media use, there is more to do. Current work finds that “one in four teens are 'cell-mostly' internet users” (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013, p. 2). This demonstrates that methods of access to the Internet and web-based technologies are changing, which may in turn have an impact on when, where, and how teens use social media. In addition to the changing landscape of access, the rapid growth of options for social media use is also an important consideration; the use of different services and types of practices continue to evolve (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010; Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi & Gasser, 2013; Rainie, Smith, & Duggan, 2013).

PANEL ORGANIZATION
In order to deepen our understanding of teen social media use and help to further develop community research priorities, this ASIS&T SIG USE sponsored panel will provide an overview of existing work in the area, and then discuss three current studies that examine teens’ social network practices. These will include work on question asking on social media, message sharing on Facebook, and teen social media and information uses driven by a Constructionist productive game design work task. During the last half of the session, we will engage in conversation that elicits and engages with audience perspectives on future research directions examining teens and social media, with the goal of identifying future research collaborations, opportunities, and priorities.

Participants and Contributions
Rachel M. Magee is a doctoral candidate at the iSchool at Drexel University, where she researches everyday life information practices, with a focus on teens. Her dissertation examines the spectrums of teens’ technology use in home settings, with an eye to the values and relationships that inform these practices. Magee will give an overview of research focused on teens and social media, and discuss gaps in the literature that reveal potential areas for collaboration.

Denise E. Agosto is an Associate Professor at the iSchool at Drexel. She studies youth and information, with a particular interest in how libraries and other information agencies can best serve youths’ information needs and interests. Agosto will discuss ongoing research for an IMLS-funded research project entitled, “Libraries and the Social Web: Developing the Next Generation of Youth Information Services” (with Andrea Forte, Rachel Magee, and Michael Dickard, all of Drexel). This project includes surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews at two high schools, one in Pennsylvania and one in Texas.

Preliminary findings indicate that these teens are asking a range of questions via social media, but that there is no one online community that dominates their social searching or social interaction activities. Rather, the early data point to these teens’ reduced active participation in Facebook and other large-scale social networks in favor of a range of more specialized social networks, apps, etc., which appears to echo a larger national recent trend of adults spending less time on Facebook (Rainie, Smith, & Duggan, 2013). The panel presentation will discuss these initial findings in detail and consider the implications of teens’ social search and other social media use practices for the ongoing study of youths’ online information behaviors.

June Ahn is an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park. He holds joint appointments in the College of Information Studies and College of Education. His research focuses on the design, implementation, and evaluation of social technologies for learning and education. His work has examined young people’s use of social media and its link to their personal development and learning, the use of social computing to promote open education, and learning analytics from data culled from social media platforms. Ahn will discuss urban teenagers’ information sharing practices in Facebook from a study of teens’ Facebook Feeds.

He will discuss preliminary findings from a detailed content analysis of nearly 1,500 messages culled from the Facebook feeds of 13 urban teenagers. The findings highlight how a majority of messages shared between these teens and their networks fall under categories of everyday life reports, personal disclosures of identity, and networked information sharing. This presentation will outline the implications of
Rebecca Reynolds is an Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science at Rutgers University. Her research focuses on the learning that occurs during young people's social media use and digital media content creation, and the ways in which such activity contributes to the development of new literacies. She will present results stemming from her research on the Globaloria game design program, which embodies the principles of Constructionism and distributed cognition (Harel & Papert, 1991; Salomon, 1997).

Reynolds will discuss findings from a study analyzing student and teacher interview and observational video data collected in the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 school years, addressing student collaboration and resource uses. The guided discovery-based intervention offers only limited structure and scaffolding for student teamwork and information literacy and supports student agency. Results offer insights into student-driven actions, strategies, challenges, and creative solutions, for teamwork and collaboration when engaging in complex design tasks in a studio-based work setting. Findings inform instructional / e-learning system design improvement and bear implications for design of information systems for youth more generally.

**Discussion**

After hearing from our panelists about existing work as well as late-breaking findings, we will transition to a conversation intended to involve the audience, focused on future research directions of work examining teens and social media. We will conduct a ten minute introductory networking activity to identify commonalities in research perspectives and interest in areas of future work. Participants will brainstorm three key terms that describe their interests and priorities in teens and social media. Using these terms, we will then divide into small groups based on common focus to discuss open questions and brainstorm future projects and possible collaborations. These discussions will last for approximately 20 minutes, during which each group will focus on a specific open question and develop strategies to further our understanding in the area. Potential questions and topics for discussion include:

- How do we define social media? Is this changing or evolving?
- Should social media be incorporated into learning environments, and how so?
- How should researchers address the overlapping contexts of teens’ use of social media?
- How do we examine different levels of use and motivations for engaging with social media?

**What differences do we see when we compare naturalistic youth engagement in social media technologies, versus more ‘idealistic’ designed interventions?**

**What implications do such findings have for scholarship in the information sciences as it relates to information and socio-technical systems design? Librarianship and other information and education services?**

**How can research discoveries emerging in both naturalistic and experimental contexts inform and contribute to the larger conversation occurring nationally around digital media and learning in formal and informal contexts?**

After the small group discussions, we will spend 15 minutes reporting back to the full group about the techniques and strategies we develop.

**CONCLUSION: WHERE SHOULD THIS RESEARCH GO NEXT?**

This panel will provide participants with a background in research examining teens and social media, present late-breaking results from a diverse collection of work in this area, and help establish connections between researchers with common research questions and goals. These conversations and connections will enable participants to help determine the future directions of research on teens and social media.

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