A College member writes...

"Why you should not use social media"

Do you feel exhorted to use Twitter, Facebook and other social media? Worried that the world is leaving you behind because you use the Internet only for email and websites? Don't be, you're doing the right thing. The Internet and the web are *free* in both senses of that word: there's no charge to academics for using them and (national laws notwithstanding) you can send anything you like. Twitter, Facebook and other social media seem free, but they are commercial endeavours and the bottom line is money, not discovery or education. On social media, you aren't even a consumer, you are the product being consumed. Advertisers buy from social media companies their knowledge of you, your preferences and those of your family and friends in order to target ads more precisely. A billion people have given social media companies this personal information and in return are able to share trivia about their preferences in music, films and types of coffee. To understand that behaviour, forget rational markets and *homo oeconomicus* and check out what Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan said about narcissism and the adult vestiges of infantile anxiety.

But, say the advocates of social media, *we* the smart people can turn these tools to academic purposes. True, but you don't need them: you can build a web presence, publish a blog or maintain contacts without social media. Build your relationships without them and you'll be helping to keep the Internet truly free for the next generation. And you'll have more freedom yourself. Try uploading your photo of that production of Christopher Marlowe's gay classic *Edward II* or a friend's artwork nudes and you'll soon find that Facebook's censorship rules probably don't reflect your sense of decency.

Exploit the real power of computers. Take the time that others waste updating their Facebook status and tweeting their every move and put it into learning to programme these machines. Suddenly, instead of having to accommodate yourself to what someone else thinks you should want to do when writing an article or marking students' work or creating a song, you're able to make the machine do exactly what you want. Give up relearning your daily routine every time Microsoft changes its Word software and write your own software customized by you to your exact needs. Take charge of these machines and the time you save by working more efficiently will enable you to read more articles, see more plays, write more songs, share more thoughts. If you mainly work with words, learn a programming language like Perl that already understands what a word, a sentence and a paragraph are and can help you automate what you do with them. If that seems too daunting, just learn Regular Expressions, even if it's only those available in Microsoft Office's Search-and-Replace feature. You'll thank me next time converting an essay from American to British punctuation takes 10 seconds instead of all morning. Then, maybe, if you really have to, share *that* experience in a tweet.

By Professor Gabriel Egan, De Montfort University

The views and statements expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

This article is the third in a regular column where a College member writes on matters relevant to the College. If you would like to contribute, please contact Anne. If you have comments on this article, why not post them on the blog or discussion forum in the Members' Area on the PRC web pages?

Fellowships Scheme: Amendment to the review form

We have made an amendment to the Fellowships Scheme review form.

A new separate section of the form has been introduced to allow reviewers to comment separately on the appropriateness of the Leadership Development Plans and Activities that the proposal has outlined. We do encourage all assessors to consider fully the leadership aspects proposed within the content of the Fellowship Scheme.

We have done this in response to feedback from Fellowships panellists who have identified this as an important change in helping them to moderate Fellowship applications.