Chapter 1
Social Media in Tertiary Education: Considerations and Potential Issues

Ann M. Simpson
Unitec Institute of Technology, New Zealand

Social media use is prevalent throughout the world and is now commonplace in higher education. The devices, support technologies, and social media applications used in higher education are in a constant state of change. Using social media in education creates new and sometimes challenging issues for institutions, instructors, and students. This chapter attempts to address some of the considerations and potential issues that impact our use of social media in the higher education classroom. It examines social media as an educational tool in higher education, possible pedagogies for social media use, potential educational contexts, and privacy concerns raised by social media use in educational environments. This chapter also provides a possible definition for social media and introduces some themes that will be explored in further detail in the following chapters.

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter introduces the potential for social media as an educational tool in higher education, possible pedagogies for social media use, potential educational contexts and privacy concerns raised by social media use in educational environments. Beginning with a brief account of the extensive current use of social media applications throughout the world, the chapter
Social Media in Tertiary Education discusses a variety of meanings for social media. Possible pedagogies for social media use are explored and potential educational contexts investigated. Some privacy concerns about the use of social media in educational environments are raised. This chapter also provides a possible definition for social media and introduces themes that will be explored in further detail in the following chapters. In addition, throughout this book, there are vignettes, case studies, or examples of how social media has been used in educational contexts which will assist in describing the content as well as providing potential examples for practitioners to experiment with.

BACKGROUND

Social media use around the world has increased at a phenomenal rate. The Global social media research summary, 2017 states that the number of Facebook active users alone stands at 1.8 billion users (Chaffey, 2017). At the time of writing, the total world population sits at 7.5 billion people (United Nations, 2017); this means that approximately 24% of the world’s population is actively using Facebook daily (Chaffey, 2017). In addition, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger and other popular social media platforms have approximately 1 billion active users each (Chaffey, 2017). Instagram has 600 million active users, Twitter has 317 million active users, and SnapChat and Skype both have 300 million active users respectively (Chaffey, 2017). WeChat and QQ, applications popular in China, have more than 850 million active users each (Chaffey, 2017). From the sheer volume and number of social media application users, it is undeniable that social media use is prevalent, worldwide, and will continue to grow. Although worldwide statistics on active student use of social media applications are not readily available, it is possible to surmise that many students’ personal use of social media is included in those numbers. That is, some students will have experienced social media for personal use, business use, or both.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

At the core of social media is what Miller et al. call ‘scalable sociality’ (2016); two scales that describe the way in which people associate with each other to form social interactions or relations through social media (Miller et al., 2016). The first scale allows users to control the level of privacy for a
Extracting Social Relationships from Social Software
www.igi-global.com/chapter/extracting-social-relationships-social-software/60322?camid=4v1a

The Impact of Internet Connectedness on Voluntary Social Activity in UAE
www.igi-global.com/article/impact-internet-connectedness-voluntary-social/58930?camid=4v1a