Transcription 5

J: Okay, so I'm gonna start kinda from the top. I'd like to know about your history with information technology and communication technologies devices – how they played a role in your life. So think – computers, cell phones, and TV maybe. How were those in your life?

I: They played a big role, actually. I don't really remember when I started to use computers, but when I started I was kinda reluctant to use it, especially the internet. But it grew on me. TV, when I was a little kid I loved it. I used to love to sit like two feet away from the TV and just watch it.

J: How big was the TV?

I: It wasn't even that big of a TV, maybe like a 27" But if I were like 15, 20 feet across the room and my chair was like one of these where it had wheels on it, within 10 minutes I'd find myself like 2 feet away, without even knowing I scooted up.

J: was it that you got that into the show?

I: I guess, I have poor eye-sight too, that too is a factor. I used to get up on Saturday mornings, wake up early, Saturday morning cartoons, come home from school, watch TV.

J: So what kind of shows did you watch?

I: Shows for children, like Arthur, Power Rangers, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

J: Alright, so then you talked a little bit about the computer thing – you were a little hesitant in the beginning. When was the beginning of the computer stuff, did you guys have a family computer at some point?

I: Yeah we had one… [silence] what do you mean?

J: How did you use the family computer? Was it a big deal? Did you avoid it? How did it play a role in your earlier life?

I: At first basically it was a [very quiet - sounds like pain in my neighborhood] because I didn't read—write papers or do other stuff.

J: Did they have computer classes in school or anything?

I: Yeah, they did. Computer class in school. We didn't do much besides maybe learn how to type or play games.

J: Alright, so did you grow up in a rural area, urban area-?

I: Urban.

J: So would you say within the surrounding area was technology a big deal, or was it a technologically savvy town, was it a common thing?

I: Not so much. Most people didn't have the means—if they did have a computer it was a crap computer.

J: Was the internet then easily available in the area?

I: I'm not sure if they had it in libraries at first. I had the internet at my house, so-

J: So a modem and AOL or?

I: Yeah we started with AOL.

J: Did your family ever make the transition to broadband from that?

I: Yeah we've got cable now.

J: Cool. So most of the time you used to play games – did you talk to friends online like on AIM? Was most of the stuff important or just recreational?

I: Maybe a little bit of both. There were the games—you brought up AIM and that helped with socializing I guess—making friends or girls I guess, working with social skills. I can't really think of what else.

J: So then there was the cell phone thing, did you get a cell phone in high school?

I: I got a cell phone somewhere midway through high school. Sophomore, junior year.

J: Did a lot of kids have them at that time?

I: Yeah they did. I got it relatively later than other people. My mom was like 'You don't need a cell phone and I'm not paying for it.' And I ended up cutting a deal with her.

J: Was it a big exciting thing when you got it then?

I: yeah

J: was it kinda like a leash for your parents, or was it more like a talk to your friends all of the time thing, or what?

I: I did talk to my friends a lot more. I used it whenever I needed to ask them a question or call somebody up. The leash thing not so much.

J: You're lucky…

I: Yeah no it was maybe once in a while, but not too much.

J: did it have anything to do with learning to drive? I assume you learned to drive around 16ish?

I: yeah.

J: So was it take the cell phone when you drive somewhere type stuff?

I: I'd always have my cell phone on me anyways.

J: Alright, cool. So fast forwarding to today. Social networking stuff. Did you join MySpace back in high school?

I: No

J: Any specific reason?

I: I saw other people do it, it looked kinda stupid.

J: So it didn't seem to appeal to you. So fast forward to college and you joined Facebook? When did that happen?

I: About a week into.

J: Was there a specific person who got you on or was it an everybody's doing it thing?

I: A little bit of both. The person isn't important, it was just a friend or something and I got carried away and got on it, got an account.

J: Okay cool. So how does Facebook enter into your everyday life?

I: Networking tool. Totally. [inaudible] I totally use it to keep in touch. I check it like my email.

J: Like checking your message inbox or is it more than that?

I: Checking inbox, keeping tabs on friends, other people use it to just [inaudible]

J: Okay, so there are a whole bunch of uses, do you have an everyday routine to it?

I: Not really, basically whenever I check my email I check Facebook too.

J: Do you check your email often?

I: Ah, multiple times a day.

J: So you check Facebook generally when you're doing your email. Is it a long 2 hour session or is it just 4 seconds?

I: Sometimes long, sometimes short. If I'm checking my email and I see one from Facebook, most of the time I'll check my email first, you know how it sends you notifications when someone writes on your wall or messes with you? If I don't see any of those I don't check Facebook.

J: Do you ever click on the little link in the email and go straight to it?

I: I usually don't open up the Facebook email, I just go straight to the website and see, but I just found out you can see the messages in your email, so now I do that.

J: About how much time do you think you spend, on an average day, on Facebook?

I: A few hours a week?

J: I know it's hard to estimate. So I know you mentioned you're online, networking, would you feel out of touch if you haven't been able to log on in a while?

I: Probably, depending.

J: Would you miss it if it were ever deleted or gone or something?

I: A little bit at first, but I think I'd get used to it.

J: You've already jumped the gun already of some of the things you do on there, but before we get to that, how do you see community on Facebook? What communities or groups of people do you interact with on Facebook?

I: Friends, from high school and college, the ones back home.

J: So sounds like a lot of people from all over the place. What would be the range of friends you might have on Facebook? People you know a lot, a little bit?

I: I guess on Facebook some friends I could know a little bit. If I think they're cool or if I like them I might be friends with them.

J: is it always someone you've met in person first?

I: I've had a few random people friend me before.

J: How have you reacted to that?

I: I've confirmed their friendship like once or twice.

J: Why do you think they'd friend you if you don't know them?

I: I guess they're just looking for friends. Usually it's incoming friends. Incoming freshman looking for friends.

J: So how about the specific elements of Facebook. Like say the wall?

I: I just communicate with people.

J: Is it any different from the normal messaging system?

I: The inbox and all that? Yeah I was just gonna get to that. With the messages and inbox they're more private or more personal. With the wall it's something you do that's more open that everybody can see.

J: What about the status box at the top? Ever use that thing?

I: Yeah.

J: Like what?

I: I used to use it a lot more. It's kind of—a lot of people use it to just complain about their regular lives.

J: So is it mostly bad?

I: I wouldn't say mostly, I just think it's annoying. People just start keep complaining a lot and a lot. So I just leave that alone.

J: What might be an example of someone complaining?

I: Oh I don't know… [fake name] is really unhappy

J: So it's usually more about emotions or how a person is feeling then it is something like my car has a flat tire.

I: Yes, yes.

J: Do you ever use it as a way to communicate? Like "I'm going out to the bars at 5, join me if you like."

I: I've done that a few times, but mainly just if I'm going to an event to say I'm gonna show up or something.

J: Why use the status instead of an event to do that?

I: I'm lazy. And another reasons is that most people might not show up anyways. I don't want to take the time.

J: So how do events work for you then, have you ever made any events?

I: I never made any events. Or groups or any of that. I'm guessing it's fairly simple. I know some people who aren't technologically savvy and they do it, and I'm a bit above average so I could probably do it.

J: So do you ever attend events when you get invites.

I: I was about to say once in a while, but rarely.

J: Does it matter who sends you the event? Like if it's your best friend?

I: Maybe, but first I want to see the event. It's a good way to share information, better than a poster on a bulletin board. More people see it.

J: Compared to a poster in a dorm you think it's more effective?

I: It gives more information than a poster. The other advantage is that you can see which one of your friends is goin.

J: Is that an important factor in getting you to go, usually?

I: A little bit.

J: So what do you think about groups then?

I: A lot of groups—they try to be try to be proactive, try to be causes, I don't think they have much effect.

J: What might be an example of a cause that might not be all that effective?

I: Fight against AIDS, fight against cancer, those groups. Maybe if it's an event, like if they're raising money, maybe that could be important, but…

J: So general political causes aren't effective?

I: Yeah. It's like if they're anti this or join this group if you want to—if you believe in… fighting a war.

J: Do you see groups as commonly connecting to real-world organizations?

I: Definitely. They get the word out.

J: Do you belong to any organizations that have a presence on Facebook?

I: UC Hip Hop Congress. I sent out a bunch of invites, Illini Breaks, that was part of Hip Hop appreciation week, we had like seven events that week.

J: So you get an invite to an event and then you join and invite other people?

I: Yeah.

J: Do you ever put pictures up?

I: Yeah.

J: What would those be from, usually? No specifics.

I: Pictures with my family, or pictures from… [inaudible]

J: So no unifying themes?

I: Nah.

J: Any videos or anything like that?

I: Nah, I don't use too many applications. Very few.

J: Yeah that was my next question. So can you think of any?

I: Maybe the music one. I went through a bunch of different music players. I keep having to change, I think the RIAA takes them down.

J: I hadn't actually heard about that.

I: They get sued or something because they take 'em down.

J: I didn't know, interesting form of resistance. Okay so earlier you mentioned networking, how does one network on Facebook?

I: [inaudible]… cause like say there's someone I need to get in touch with or get a resource… [inaudible]

J: So you could just go message them on Facebook then?

I: Usually if it's a pressure setting like a job, I won't do Facebook. If it's something more important I'll use email.

J: So what would you say you learn from Facebook? What kind of information would you say you get from Facebook?

I: … keeping track of friends, I guess, umb events…

J: So when you log on do you usually look for specific information like a phone number, or do you usually just browse from the newsfeed?

I: I usually start with the newsfeed and then events… or I'll skim the through names of my list of closer friends.

J: Sometimes Facebook verifies bits of information, like when someone decides they are going to a given school their network affiliation verifies that they're going. Can you think of any other things that become official once they're on Facebook?

I: I'm not sure what you mean… maybe the friend thing. People think you're friends because you're Facebook friends. Or like the UC Hip Hop thing, you're officially part of the group just because you joined the Facebook group.

J: But if you never showed up to an event…

I: You wouldn't have to participate or do anything, you're just part of the group on Facbeook. I don't think Facebook really makes things official.

J: But people think it does?

I: Some people.

J: So there's this notion of stalking, creeping and browsing. And there might be different ways people see behavior on Facebook. Some actions might be considered normal, others might be creepy, there's a whole range. Where's the line – how do you define what's creepy and what's not?

I: I guess that line is defined on an individual basis. That's probably why Facebook has such privacy settings. You can adjust all kinds of options.

J: So you rock out the privacy settings a lot?

I: I wouldn't say a lot, but I've looked at it. If you don't know a person—somebody that well, and if you go check out all of their pictures…

J: So it depends on what you're up to and the person and stuff like that?

I: Yeah. Either that or how old you guys are from each other.

J: Does intention work into it?

I: [inaudible]… trying to find out more information about them, trying to find out who they are. Yeah it's creepy. I'm a person, who, I prefer the face-to-face rather than online or AIM or using the phone.

J: Okay. So do you feel like people will find out more and look around more on Facebook than they're willing to talk about?

I: People don't want to tell their friends or whatever that they're going around just looking up people's information and just… stalking.

J: So there's stalking going on, but people don't want to talk about it?

I: Yeah.

J: How does what you learn inform the face-to-face world? Like say you see on someone's profile that they really like soccer and then later you could invite them to soccer but only because you knew that. Do you think that sort of thing is common?

I: I don't know… I don't really read people's activities or interests very often, but let's say someone else likes soccer, I probably wouldn't invite them, because I don't know them.

J: Any time that it goes the other way, like say you see someone's religious or political opinions are different than yours, would you ever avoid confrontation?

I: Maybe… once in a while… but I don't know… I don't really go around on Facebook enough for that.

J: So how does Facebook come up in everyday conversation? How does it normally appear when people talk about it?

I: Events. Umb, like if you got invited to an event, people will be like "hey there's a cool event coming up [seen on Facebook] do you want to go?" Or so and so friended me on Facebook, it was kinda weird.

J: Do you ever invite people to find you on Facebook?

I: Yeah.

J: Do they ever talk about it as a place where things happen? Or is it more like a newspaper or something?

I: Kinda like a place where things happen.

J: Earlier you mentioned you adjusted the privacy settings. So you've got friends who can see your profile, you can roughly get an idea of who can see your profile. But you don't know exactly which of them are looking unless they leave a note or tell you or some clue to let you know they were there, and even if you do you might not know what they were looking at or how long they were there. If you were to guess who your invisible audience is, who would you think they are?

I: No idea. Even if somebody isn't on my friends list they could hack.

J: Or use a friend's profile that has access. SO you have no idea at all? Does that regulate what you put up there?

I: A little bit. I don't put too much information on Facebook. Like I was saying earlier, I believe in face to face contact. I've thought about it before. Sometimes I do. You're just curious to know who's looking at you on your profile. I don't really want to know. I do and I don't. I don't really care.

J: What do you mean?

I: I mean, I think everyone wants to know who's looking at their profile. Just the curiosity thing, but sometimes it might be creepy.

J: So it might creep you out if you did know.

I: Maybe, it might be creepy who's looking at it, or maybe how many people?

J: Do you think you'd feel a lot more popular or less popular?

I: Not really that, just the whole creepy level. Yeah…

J: So if you were gonna pick one thing about your profile that you wanted somebody to see first, what would it be?

I: Picture.

J: It's probably one of the first things, right?

I: Yeah, picture.

J: What do you usually look at when you're looking at someone else's profile? Is there a routine or anything?

I: The people's profiles I look at are usually friends. I usually look at the closer friends of mine. I look at their status, umb, the pictures they put up, and just… [inaudible]

J: If you were to describe the image your Facebook profile gives of you, how would you describe it, impression-wise.

I: I think about that actually. Positive? [laughs]

J: Well like what parts of your personality would they see though?

I: I try to incorporate a whole range of my personality… I don't list many interests or activities or music or anything… other than pictures up… profile quotes.

J: Quotes like what?

I: Quotes about what you can tell about a person, who the quote is from.

J: Alright, that's cool. We're just about out of time. Thanks…