

Stagecraft

An exploration into online role identity-based management.

U.C. Berkeley School of Information
Final Project

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Introduction

The Stagecraft system is an alternative take on online presentation. At the heart, Stagecraft is a social networking system that allows a single user to control multiple online self-presentations. Social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook and LinkedIn are built around a paradigm of “one user to one identity.” On these sites, users create a single account and present information that reflects how they want to be perceived by that site’s entire audience. Stagecraft is built on the idea that this one-to-one model does not adequately support the myriad of roles and identities that people assume on the Internet.

Stagecraft has been designed as part of an investigation into creating social presentation software focused around role identities. The project has included literature reviews, user surveys and studies, as well as a working prototype exploring some of the technical and interface issues surrounding this alternative approach.

Overview

The Stagecraft project is a role identity-based social software prototype designed to give users presentation control over several online identities. The application allows users to create multiple identities, each with an online profile page. The user can then interact as these identities on any external site that implements OpenID, a standard for single sign-on authentication. These features allow users both to engage as multiple identities on one system, and to reuse these same identities across multiple systems.

To develop the prototype we began with a conceptual design utilizing several theoretical perspectives: self-presentation, identity theory, and social identity theory. We conducted user interviews before and during the development process. We then administered an online survey to further investigate online self-presentation. After completing the interviews, we developed and distributed a survey of online community users to further our investigation. Finally, we implemented a prototype to address the design issues identified in our conceptual and user-centered investigations.

Our approach was to broadly investigate issues of role identities and self-presentation on the Internet. We chose to implement the prototype for the domain of players of a massive multiplayer online game (MMOG). This specific context enabled us to explore a group of users that have multiple identity presentations (in-game characters) drastically different from their real-life role identities. However, we believe there are many contexts in which Stagecraft could be implemented where users desire more control of presentation.

Theoretical Background

Our design process began with theoretical investigations into self-presentation and role identity. We wanted to consider social and psychological research in these areas before analyzing how current online systems handle identity. Self-presentation and identity theories grounded our conceptual design of the application.

Self-Presentation

Using a dramaturgical metaphor, Erving Goffman proposed a framework for understanding self-presentation in the context of social interaction.¹ According to Goffman, individuals perform in front of others, to guide the “frontstage” impression the audience forms of the individual, while still maintaining a “backstage” retreat from the performance. We suspect this theory is particularly relevant in online self-presentation. Online, individuals have the potential to interact through several roles. For example, an individual might interact as an employee, family member, friend, colleague and a science fiction fan. The performances given to any online audiences will be tailored for norms and expectations of that role.

However, when an unintended audience views an individual’s performance, there is potential for disruption. As Goffman notes, “[w]hen individuals witness a show that was not meant for them, they may, then, become disillusioned about this show as well as about the show that was meant for them.” This situation can also occur online. For example, a potential employer might discover a social networking profile (e.g. MySpace or Facebook) of an applicant, which may embarrass or discredit the applicant depending on the degree to which the performance tailored to classmates or peers contrasts with the performance given to the company. Revealing immature unprofessional behavior could result the applicant failing to be hired. This particular scenario is potentially becoming more common, and colleges are responding by advising students to restrain themselves from posting too many details of their social life. (Facebook cite)

To avoid disruptions in performances Goffman argues “[t]he answer to this problem is for the performer to segregate his audiences so that the individuals who witness in one of his roles will not be the individuals who witness him in another of his roles.”² We argue that properties of computer-mediated communication can break down audience segregation. In reference to social networking sites, danah

¹ Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday Garden City, NY.

² Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. (pp. 137) Doubleday Garden City, NY.

boyd notes: “[p]ersistence, searchability, replicability, and invisible audiences are all properties that participants must negotiate...”³ These issues can complicate impression management for users.

Identity

Our system has a basis in identity theory, a sociological perspective that subdivides the self into multiple identities, all of which are based on the roles assumed by an individual. These role identities are "distinct components of self... for each of the role positions in society that we occupy."⁴ Role identities then have their own norms for behavior prescribed by social context.⁵ Some examples of role identities may be that of a student, a professional, a mother, or a member of a sports team; each role has associated expectations that may affect appropriate behavior.

Social identity theory may also be a useful aid in understanding the influence of audiences. Social identity theory is a social psychological perspective that considers an individual's identity to be more strongly based on membership in social groups or categories. In the formation of social identity, an individual will try to maximize similarities between self and groups in which one is a member, while also maximizing difference between self and groups in which one is not a member.⁶ This in turn also affects behavior. Currently, the system we are developing focuses more on the notion of identities as role-based constructions. However, future plans include the implications of group relationships as well as visual presentation of social connections. These features will provide more support for users to identify themselves based on membership and group identification.

Self-Presentation and Identity in Online Communities

Many online community systems appear to only increase the difficulty of segregating audiences online. Audience and privacy control structures are often binary or overly simplified. These sites also typically only allow one screen name per user account. A user can work around this by having multiple accounts.

³ danah boyd. First Monday 11(12), December 2006.
http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_12/boyd/index.html

⁴ Hogg, M.A., Terry, D.J., & White, K.M. (1995). A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 58(4), 255-269.

⁵ Callero, P.L. (1985). Role-Identity Salience. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 48(3), 203-215.

⁶ Stets, J.E., & Burke, P.J. (2000). Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 224-237.

However, even this is not trivial, many systems require different email addresses for each new account, and multiple accounts requires re-logging into a system manage ones' identities fully.

In addition, some sites, like Friendster and MySpace, allow for people to find users by email address. Therefore, to ensure only a certain audience have access to online presentations, the user must register for an account with the email they only use with that audience. This creates a tension between the cost of potential exposing a performance to an unintended audience, and the cost of maintaining separate accounts for impression management.

Self-Presentation and Identity in Stagecraft

We believe that the desire to present different role identities to different audiences extends to online self-presentation. It is possible, if unwieldy, for users to manage multiple identities in various ways: for example, via multiple accounts distributed over various online systems or via multiple accounts on any single online system. In contrast, the Stagecraft system is built on the premise that a user should have the ability to manage and present each of these role identities from within a single online system. As such, we are investigating and creating a social networking site designed to address the following aspects of role identities:

- Control (the *creation* of role identities: privacy, stigma, context, management, preferences)
- Interaction (the *actions* performed by role-based identities: media and event sharing, group membership and participation, storytelling, emergent uses and communities)

That is, Stagecraft will grant *expressive control* to those who wish to exercise *role identity-based presentation*. Role identity-based presentation is the core design principle of our system. All self-presentation (e.g., profiles, user portraits, other shared media, blog posts, relationship formation, and group interaction) is attached to identities, not users; unless visibility is explicitly chosen by the user, the connection between any identity and its related user is not disclosed to anyone other than the user him or herself. Via these identities, the user chooses what to display to each possible perceived audience.

User Research

Identity on the Internet

The Internet has no lack of test beds for identity and self-presentation theory. Sites such as MySpace and Facebook can be seen as a place for actors to define themselves through an online performance. Each of these sites positions itself around a specific audience, but these boundaries are porous and not always well defined. Often a lack of these boundaries can cause tension and work against a user's desire to control their self-presentation to others.

Identity within Games

Developing multiple roles-identities is often a key component of massively multi-player online roleplaying games (MMORPGs). In these games, users may create discrepant roles and identities with which to engage other people within the game world. Given the structure of the game mechanics, players are often forced to take specialized roles. Some players provide supportive roles while others take on more central roles; to maximize success players of all roles are often required.

Clearly online gaming represents a very specialized case of online presentation. Yet we feel this specialized case provides us with all the key components of presentation and representations that we wish to examine. As research participants, online game players have the added benefit of already being comfortable discussing the existence of multiple online identities. These are the issues MMORPG players deal with regularly. It is not unusual for a MMORPG player to have two or three different avatars that they assume. Thus to test a system with a clearer mapping to the Goffman model of presentation and role definition, we propose the use of one these virtual worlds for our initial foray.

These worlds also help us focus the spectrum of possible presentation data. Unlike real life, the salient attributes that can be used to describe an avatar are from a finite set prescribed by the game mechanics. This allows us to focus our attention on a narrow set of presentation features while still providing value. Overall, our goal is to build a system that supports the wide range of roles people assume all across the Internet, but for simplicity of development, we will start with just one.

Looking at Identity within World of Warcraft

Blizzard Entertainment's massively multi-player online roleplaying game World of Warcraft (WoW) boasts of having more than 7 million subscribers. In a few short years, it has become the undisputed leader in

MMORPGs for American gamers. In addition to online play, these gamers are bringing their experiences and avatars to the world outside of the game. At last count, over 7,000 Flickr images had been tagged with "Warcraft." The official MySpace page for WoW has over 10,000 friends. We believe that the meta-game (interaction outside of the game) is becoming a very important space.

Although we argue that an identity-based presentation is a valuable approach to general social software, the ability to create an identity is an especially salient design feature in the context of WoW-specific social software. There is a natural mapping between the avatars WoW players create and the identities built in our system. Players can easily make different identities each of their WoW characters, or for any identity that they assume online.

The popularity of this game combined with an already demonstrated interest in meta-game activity makes WoW an ideal test platform for our identity system. However, we believe that our system will provide a greater control over all online self-presentations.

From Theory to Practice

With our theoretical research as a framework for analysis, we conducted our own user research to explore the issues behind users' desires and behavior in self-presentation to online communities. What determines how similar or discrepant a user considers his or her roles and groups? When considering audience, how do age, occupation, and other factors come into play? What is the effect of the structures of community, such as topic, common interest, participatory incentive, or social function? What is the contribution of privacy and anonymity concerns? In turn, how will all of these factors affect the way users would use frontstage presentation online in a system such as Stagecraft?

For our research we initially conducted a series of open-ended interviews to help identify key behaviors and issues that current online users experience. With these interviews as a guide, we then constructed a multi-question survey to help us understand current identity usage trends.

First Round Interviews

Our initial round of interviews consisted of four participants all of which were self-proclaimed "gamers." These individuals spent between 5 and 20 hours a week playing Blizzard's MMORPG World of Warcraft. They were also all actively involved in game-related communities external to the game. These communities often took the form of player-organized "guild" message boards and email lists where

participants would discuss a variety of topics with other players of the game. The WoW players were selected non-randomly from a group of known game participants.

Questions were prepared in advance and each interview lasted for approximately one hour. Our goal was to discover how people interacted in-game and out of the game with fellow players.

Early on we identified a key behavior directly related to identity formation. The practice of "alting" existed where players intentionally created several distinct alternative identities within the game. Players we spoke to created several avatars or character with which to explore the game. One character was often assigned a "main" status and seen as the primary representation within the game, but secondary characters, known as "alts" were also created. These alts often took on different roles and even belonged to different player guilds than the self-defined main characters.

One participant talked of how she used separate in-game identities in order to provide herself sanctuary from "guild drama." She had created a non-guilded character whose connection was unknown to the majority of her guildmates. This allowed her to "take a break" from her more well known identity. In this way, she was able to separate her audience through the establishment of a new identity.

This connection between social networks and privacy came up several times in our interviews in regard to privacy between the user and their in-game characters. In several of our interviews, we noted a keen desire to remain in control of real-life personal information, often over privacy concerns.

There also appears to be an unspoken privacy norm among online players. Even players who knew each other in real life were extremely reluctant to reveal real-life information when in-game, not for a strong desire to stay in character, but from an established norm that "what happens in real life, stays in real life." For many players, this was founded in concerns of safety. One interviewee expressed a concern that personal information regarding a woman in their guild might leak out and expose her to a risk of "cyber stalking" or other unwanted behaviors.

"I learned a long time ago that [online/offline] separation is necessary... I don't always tell people I meet on the street who I am, though I might talk with them or meet them regularly. Online, I think personal information (like real names or locations) is divulged on an as-needed basis, and on a 'comfort with the person on the other side of the interaction' basis. In a game about taking on personas and avatars, real life info is not necessary to game play."

It was our finding that this progressive disclosure was an important part of the friendship building process. One user described how he used the exchange of personal information to tighten bonds.

“At first you just talk about game stuff, then [as friendship is being established] you talk about other things, about ones life. Like: ‘So hungry right now’ or ‘I’ve been up for the last 36 hours.’”

Much like real life, online friendship contains many degrees. Any system supporting identity formation system would need to support diverse relationship statuses in order for the user to more accurately construct their identity. The ability to "opt in" relationships between the characters is also a feature of the identity presentation important to WoW avatar presentation. Interview subjects reflected on the need to control the group in which they were identified with.

These initial interviews reinforced our notions over the importance of identity control within the online world of WoW. We saw clear examples of how identity establishment was important and gained a glimpse at some of the factors that shape this identity. The next step was to explore identity presentation in the larger context of the Internet.

Additional Research

Expanding on these themes of online alt privacy, we discovered a blog that posed its readers a question similar to ours. The blog author asked MMORG players about the idea of automatically connected alts, many players expressed a need to keep these "retreat" alts private. One player noted:

"Personally, I'm not that keen on the idea, mostly because sometimes you do want to just have a quiet session of gaming without being pestered or dragged into guild dramatics."⁷

Another player stated automatic and complete linking of alts was a privacy concern, an aspect explored later in this paper.

"Automatically listing all alts to anyone who bothers to check... it opens up a can of worms in terms of net-stalking. Being able to divest yourself of a stalked alt without having to change servers or get a new account (only letting those you wish to know that it's still you) is incredibly valuable, and shouldn't be idly set aside."⁸

While not necessarily representative, this did reinforce our theory that identity and audience separation is in fact an important part of online games as well.

⁷ Burke, Timothy (11/07/2006). Terra Nova: Calling All Alts. Retrieved December 8, 2006, from Terra Nova Web site: http://terranovalogs.com/terra_nova/2006/11/calling_all_alt.html

⁸ Burke, Timothy (11/07/2006). Terra Nova: Calling All Alts. Retrieved December 8, 2006, from Terra Nova Web site: http://terranovalogs.com/terra_nova/2006/11/calling_all_alt.html

Second Round Interviews

Our second round of interviews consisted of five semi-structured sessions. Similarly for these, questions were prepared in advance and each interview lasted for approximately one hour. With the second set, our goal was to garner a general understanding of the way people think about their identity online in general. We wanted to find out how important identity separation was to people and what actions people undertook to keep these online identities separate from each other and from their offline selves.

This second pool consisted of master's students from the UC Berkeley School of Information who volunteered to be interviewed by the team. The group consisted of first and second year master's students with a varying degree of online usage. None of the second group played MMORPGs.

While this interview group was far too small to form any meaningful hypotheses, we did discover a trend towards three different identity-use behaviors. We categorized these behaviors as *singularity*, *shedding* and *chameleon*. Keeping these behavior patterns in mind helped inform our survey design as well as construct target identities for our interface design.

Users exhibiting *singularity* viewed their online representation as a pure extension of their "real life" self. Users fitting this behavior pattern used screen names and handles that were often direct derivations of their real name. Consistency and reputation was also important to this group; users kept their screen names fairly constant between online communities. One user described his frustration when his "standard" user name was not available. One user expressed his desire to allow his "friends to always find him."

In this small sample, these users also appeared to have mostly homophilic communities. One user described his active communities as all being focused around software and technology. Singularity pattern users did not express a need to have multiple screen names.

"Everybody knows who I am."

The second pattern we saw emerge was that of *shedding*. Much like singularity patterns, these participants tried to keep a consistent screen name across multiple communities. For one participant this name was related to the participant's name, in another the connection was more obscure.

However, unlike the singularity pattern, these users reported having shed old screen names over time. For a given point in time, the screen name was constant, but over time one identity would fall into disuse

and a new one would replace it.

Users gave a variety of reasons for these *sheddings*. One user reported wanting to distance himself from previous postings and community contributions. Another had fallen out with a particular social group and wanted to make a clean break. One user even was in the process of considering a new identity to coincide with his new academic interests. The effect for these users was a serial string of identities, often tracing some aspect of their life.

The third pattern that was beginning to emerge was that of *chameleon*. Participants exhibiting this behavior often simultaneously keep two or more separate identities. The identities or screen names were usually unrelated and certain effort was made to avoid an obvious connection between the two.

In one case, an interviewee was a member of two seemingly discrepant groups. One group was dedicated to the exchange of information regarding the participant's school the other as a community of fans of a series of novels. While it is impossible to gauge the true overlap between those two groups, the perceived notion was that the two groups would have little in common. She expressed on several occasions her strong desire for one group not to learn about her membership in the other.

In having separate identities, the user also afforded herself a greater degree of information disclosure control. She expressed appreciation at the idea of sharing the same degree of personal information to the fan-based community as she did to her school community. She explained how she used very deliberate disclosure within the fan Yahoo Group, only revealing pieces of personal information on her profile as she felt comfortable.

Summary

It is difficult to draw any conclusions based on such a limited and non-random sampling. Our purpose in these interviews was simply to provide direction for our survey and identify some key persona types on which to build our interface. To this end, we used the issue of identity permanency as one of the focal points of our survey. We hoped to discover if the previously identified patterns existed in a larger community and if so, what factors influenced their emergence. We hoped to find out what some of the possible factors were and what, if any, impact they had on identity separation habits.

Survey

In order to delve further into the observed trends, we had to ask: how do we investigate identity within

the context of a survey? Translating theoretical ideas of identity and audience into questions that could be easily posted to a web-based survey forced us to simplify our concept of identity and roles. Our solution was to use screen names or handles as a proxy for online identity. While screen names do not encompass the entire range of behaviors that make up identity presentation, we do feel that most online identities will require a screen name. Thus, unique screen names provide a strong positive indicator and at least a minimum requirement for any online identity.

Method

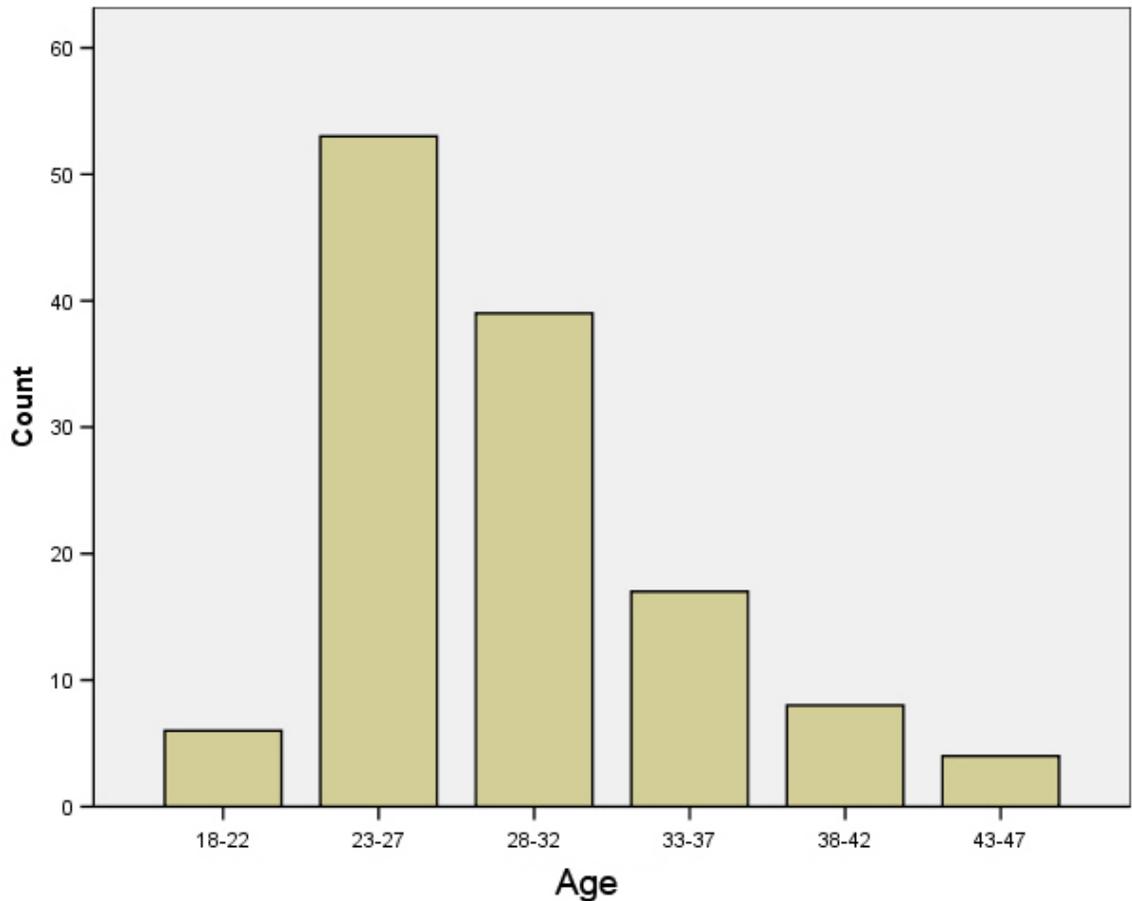
The survey instrument was distributed online to a convenience sample of 151 respondents. The researchers through direct contact or via email lists recruited the respondents. The initial respondents were colleagues and acquaintances of the researchers, or part of the University of Berkeley community (e.g. faculty, staff, students, alumni). Respondents were encouraged to share the survey with friends and family.

The survey contained 14 questions and required approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, respondents had the option of submitting their email to participate in a raffle for a \$20 dollar gift certificate to Amazon.

Results

Demographics

Of the 128 respondents reporting gender, 56.3% were male and 43.8% were female. From the 127 respondents reporting age, most were between 23-32 (77.2%). The following was the age distribution.

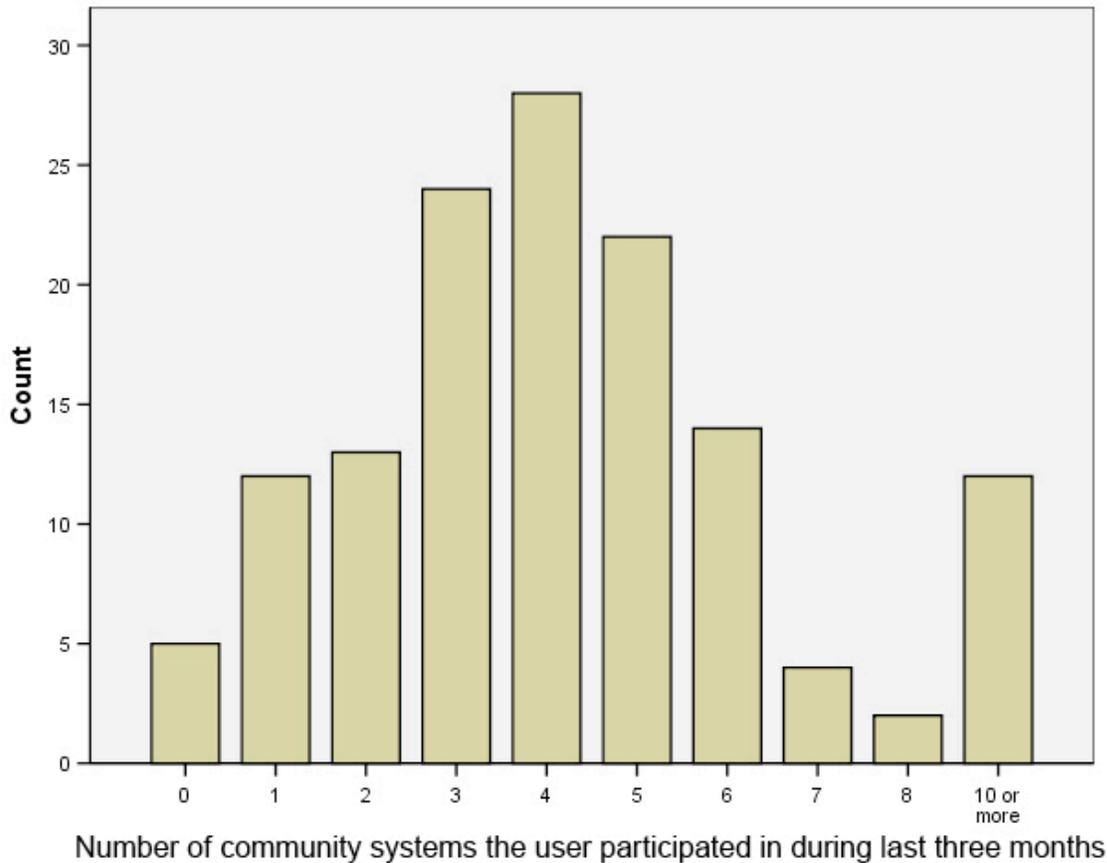


Length from First Participation

Of the 136 reporting the length of time since they first began participating on online community systems, 26.5% reported 0-6 years, 33.8% reported 7-10 years, and 39.7% percent reported 11 years or more.

Number of Systems in the Past Three Months

Respondents were asked how many online community systems they have used in the past 3 months. The range of options was an interval from zero to “10 or more.” The median number selection was 4 systems with a mean of 4.26 from those reporting. The following is the distribution of reported responses.



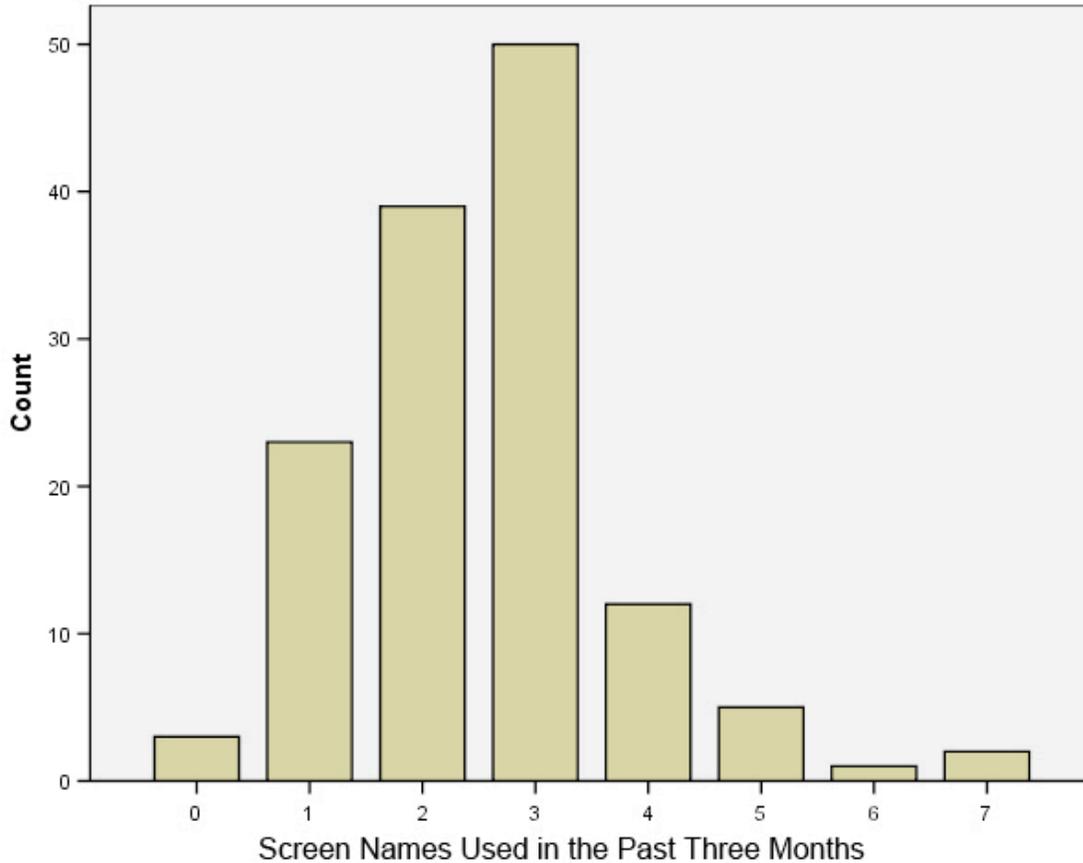
Screen Name Use

We asked whether respondents try to use a single screen name, a set of multiple screen names, or a new screen name for every system, or if the given responses do not apply. Only 2 of the 136 respondents used a new screen name for every system, and 5 felt the responses did not apply. We removed these respondents from the analysis to concentrate only on both users that try to use one screen name and users that employ multiple screen names.

Of the 129 users in this analysis, 27.9% tried to use one screen name, while the remaining 72.1% used multiple screen names regularly.

Number of Screen Names used in Past 3 Months

In the past three months, 51.9% of the 135 people who responded recalled using 3 or more screen names. The distribution was the following:



Considerations for Screen Names

Respondents were asked about possible considerations they might have when creating a screen name for an online community system. The responses were on a one-directional 6-point intensity scale from “Not Important” (0) to “Very Important” (5) with “I don’t know” as an additional option.

Three of the considerations were based on the management of multiple audiences between communities. These consisted of maintaining a separation for social circles, interest communities, and professional and personal life. From these three responses represented the intensity of multiple audiences considerations when creating a screen name, creating a multiple audiences metric.

We applied the same process to three questions aimed at measuring privacy considerations, creating a privacy metric. These covered general privacy concerns, maintaining anonymity, and whether the screen name reveals personal information to a community.

To analyze the association between multiple audiences and privacy considerations, we conducted a correlation test between the multiple audiences and privacy metric. These variables were strongly associated with each other with a Pearson Correlation of .689 at a two-tailed significance of 000.

We then analyzed the relationship of the multiple audiences metric and privacy metric with screen name behavior. Screen name behavior only included respondents that had one screen name they regularly use or multiple screen names they regularly use. We chose to run the analysis for multiple audiences and privacy separately because the high correlation between these metrics suggests they are not independent factors.

We ran a logistic regression for the multiple audiences metric and screen name behavior controlling for age, gender, and length from first participation. The result was an estimate of .5265 and a *p*-value of <.01, showing an association between multiple audiences and screen name behavior. This created a model predicting that individuals with higher consideration for multiple audiences are more likely to choose multiple screen names. For example, the model predicts that a male between the ages of 23-28 who first participated in an online system between 7-10 years ago who has the highest value for the multiple audiences metric as measured by our survey, would have an 87.8% chance of choosing multiple screen names. However, an individual with the same characteristics who has the lowest value for the multiple audiences metric as measured by our survey would have a 34.1% chance of choosing multiple screen names.

	Estimate	Std. Error	P-Value
Intercept	-3.20	1.12	0.004 **
Multiple audiences metric	0.53	0.17	0.002 **
Length since first participation	0.85	0.31	0.001 **
Gender (Female)	1.02	0.53	0.052 .
Age	0.16	0.19	0.391

Signif. codes	*** 0.001	** 0.01	* 0.05	. 0.1	
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We then ran a logistic regression for the privacy metric and screen name behavior controlling for age, gender and length from first participation. The result was an estimate of (.5457) and a *p*-value of < .001, showing an association between privacy and screen name behavior. This created a model predicting that individuals with higher privacy consideration are more likely to choose multiple screen names. For example, the model predicts a male between the ages of 23-28 that first participated in an online system

between 7-10 years ago who has the highest value for the privacy metric as measured by our survey, would have an 85.5% chance of choosing multiple screen names. However, an individual with the same characteristics who has the lowest value for considering privacy as measured by our survey would have a 27.8% chance of choosing multiple screen names.

	Estimate	Std. Error	P-Value
Intercept	3.13	1.0536	0.003 **
Privacy metric	0.55	0.1537	0.000 ***
Length since first participation	0.70	0.3053	0.022 *
Gender (Female)	0.85	0.5124	0.095 .
Age	0.12	0.19	0.536

Signif. codes	*** 0.001	** 0.01	* 0.05	. 0.1	
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Perceived Homophily

We asked respondents how similar the participants were between the online community systems they used along lines of age, occupation, and interests. From these three responses we created a metric to represent the intensity of perceived homophily between groups.

We analyzed the association between the perceived homophily metric and both the multiple audiences metric and the privacy metric. We found no significant association with a Pearson Correlation, and no significance when including homophily in the logistic regression models for screen name behavior.

Discussion

Our results have several limitations because participants were drawn from a convenience sample and the method was self-reported. Though the participants are not representative of all online community system users, we believe the sample represented a subset of online community users whose responses may highlight issues in the design of self-presentation and identity in systems, and point to areas for future research.

Our results suggest that self-presentation theory plays a role in the selection of screen names for some users in our sample. This finding leads us to believe that a market for our system does exist. The logistic model constructed from the results predicts that users with higher consideration for social circles,

interest communities, and separation between personal and professional life when creating screen names were more likely to be managing multiple screen names. In addition, the results also suggested that the same positive association between screen name behavior and considerations for privacy, anonymity, and personal information are a motivation. Although it is not surprising to suggest that individuals with concern over multiple audiences and privacy are more likely to maintain multiple screen names, it does highlight possible design considerations for online systems.

There has been some consolidation among major online community systems. Yahoo and Google have purchased or developed blogging, media sharing, and social bookmarking sites in order to provide several social software services on one platform. This consolidation increases the potential for users to be interacting with multiple audiences within the platform. If there is a one-to-one mapping between the user account and role identity presentation, such as screen name, then our results suggest some users in our sample would maintain multiple user accounts. This would be usability issue for single sign-on for multiple online community systems because of the transaction cost for logging in and out of the system. A similar argument can be derived for the usability of OpenID because most current implementations would require users to have multiple user accounts to use multiple OpenID names.

The study also highlights issues with designing for privacy within systems. Respondents in our sample with strong consideration for privacy were more likely to use multiple screen names. This suggests that these respondents might be using these screen names as a way to manage privacy. One possible interpretation is that current systems do not have adequate privacy controls, motivating these particular respondents to manage privacy with multiple screen names. Another interpretation is that screen name is a crucial component to maintaining privacy within and across systems for these respondents. We believe these interpretations are not mutually exclusive. We argue that privacy controls could reduce the need for separate accounts in some cases, and associating contributions (e.g. posts, pictures, comments) to different screen names may be necessary to achieve a desired level of privacy.

We were unable to find to find any association between perceived homophily and screen name behavior. This result was surprising because we thought that the more divergent the characteristics of participants in online community systems, the more the individual would have motivation to consider multiple audiences and privacy. This result could be because the survey instrument did not effectively measure perceived homophily. However, other factors may play a role instead of perceived homophily. For example, perceived risk of self-presentation to unintended audiences could be a motivation.

There could be many reasons for this result. We believe that investigating possible motivations for considering multiple audiences and privacy would shed light on why some users have these

considerations and others do not. A better understanding of what causes these considerations to be salient to users might allow developers to know when to design for multiple audiences or privacy controls.

Limitations

The results and implications are limited to the population of our convenience sample. A more generalizable study is needed explore the relationship between multiple audiences, privacy considerations, and screen name behavior among online community systems users.

Prototype Design

Goals

Our goals for this prototype were to develop a system on which we could test some of the underlying identity principles that we had established through our research and user studies. Primarily we wished to discover both the technical and usability issues associated with creating a system that adhered a multiple-audience role-based view of identity.

Comparative Analysis

A crucial first step in our design process was to examine how current online systems handle identity formation. As part of this investigation, we explored several existing online social systems, including: Blizzard's World of Warcraft Armory, Everquest 2 Profiles and Rupture.com. For non-game specific systems we examined Yahoo Profiles and MySpace.com.

With the exception of Yahoo Profiles, each of these systems was developed to primarily support the one account to one identity paradigm. Users were encouraged to create a single identity that was in keeping with the audience of the system. Participants could always create multiple accounts, but this required the creation of a new username and password.

It is worth noting that while exploring MySpace.com we encountered a number of game-related "fakesters."⁹ These fictional accounts were often set up to either be that of a World of Warcraft avatar or that of a non-player character (NPC) that exists within the game. It is impossible to know from observation if the same user created more than one of the user profiles visited; however, these fakesters often had complex social networks and friends of their own. Some of these friends existed within the same world; others clearly bridged into real life. This bridge occurring between worlds led us to design a system in which would allow for identities between realms to freely communicate and interact. Clearly maintaining boundaries between worlds was not a concern to these users.

⁹ danah boyd. First Monday 11(12), December 2006.
http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_12/boyd/index.html



Figure 1: MySpace Friends Page Showing Realm Crossover

We also cannot know if the creators of these fictional profiles had their own separate profile pages, but for the most part no personal information as to the identity of the creator was ever revealed in these fak-ester pages. If they chose to put forth a more real life focused profile, they may have created a separate account.

Spaces like the Everquest 2 Profile site and the WoW Armory used game data to automatically build profile pages of in-game characters. In these sites, no personal information about the user is exposed. These sites take the opposite extreme and provide only fictional, game-world information. Everquest 2 Profiles page does allow the addition of creative content by the user. A player may pen biographies and upload media to share related to that character. They may also choose to expose information on other characters that they player controls. These “alts” as they are known, can either be completely shown or completely hidden. There is no notion of hiding some links and exposing others. Both the Armory and the Profile site present guild identification prominently upon the character's profile page. There is no way of hiding this information and both sites make it easy to navigate between the individual page and the group listing page. Group identification, even if not by the player's choice, seems to be a crucial part of a character's identification.



Figure 2: Everquest2 Profile Page Showing Alt Listing for an Identity

The independent site Rupture.com falls somewhere between MySpace and the Armory; it links all characters a user plays with a profile of the user herself. Visitors of the site seamlessly browse from real life profiles to character profiles. There appears to be no way to produce an in-game profile without first building a real life page. While only circumstantial, several examples of context clashes did occur. Often the gender of the real life player became part of the conversation on the character's page.

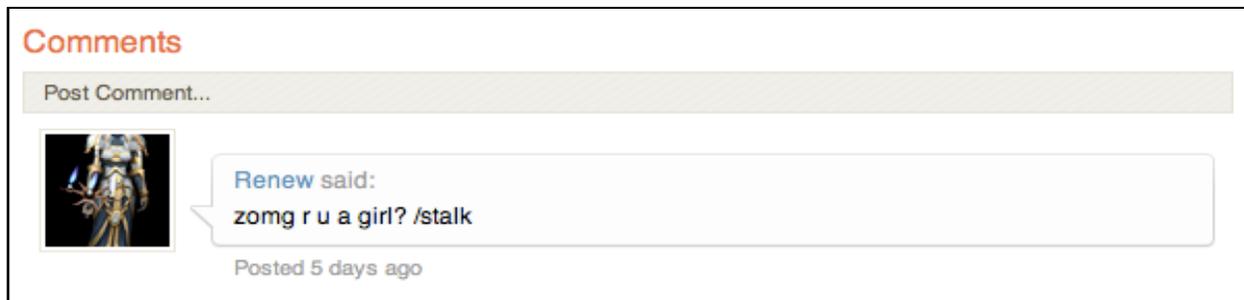


Figure 3: On Rupture.com, Personal Information Can Cause Context Clashes

Yahoo Profiles was the only site we examined where a single user account was allowed to make multiple and separate profiles. These distinct identities then could be used to author and contribute to any of the several community sites contained within the Yahoo brand (Groups, 360, Messenger, etc.). We were unable to gauge how frequent this use was; however, one of our interview participants did use this functionally to help keep her fan community profile separate from that of her school.

From the examined sites we established a set of basic design decisions. We acknowledged the desire to use identity as a form of play. Our system must support the creation of fakesters and allow for inter-

action across realms usually not supported by the social software. Group identification should be fully supported but not required. Social connections and connections between other identities controlled by the user should be only shown if desired. No real life information should be required on any identity page.

Design Decisions

Identity

The key design decision focuses around the desire to keep the user's real life identity separate from those created within the system. To that end, the main flow of the site involves branching from the single user login to a series of online identities. Each of these identities is designed to be unconnected to each other or to the user.

Interface

Our design philosophy was to facilitate the creation of multiple identities from a single user account. To this end, we streamlined the process from login to a page that presents an aggregate view of all the user's identities. Content coming in from contacts of these identities can also be assimilated into this "backstage" view. The backstage needed to provide the user with all the relevant information they might need to craft their performance. This included lists of what other people in their audience were doing in an aggregated even blog view, as well as which identities they had available to them. The goal was to backstage queues that would aid the presentation. In addition, clearly presented on this page is a button to create a new identity.

The new identity process was also designed to be as simple as possible. We hope to get people to freely make new identities with little extra overhead. Only the minimum information is collected from the user during the creation process. We wanted the process to be quick and simple to encourage experimentation. Our belief is that it is in part the additional effort of identity creation what limits the number of identities people assume.

Once the profile page is built, the user then has the option to flesh out the profile with content and more detailed information. However, only a name and a base location are required. Users may choose to expose as little or as much of additional information as they like.

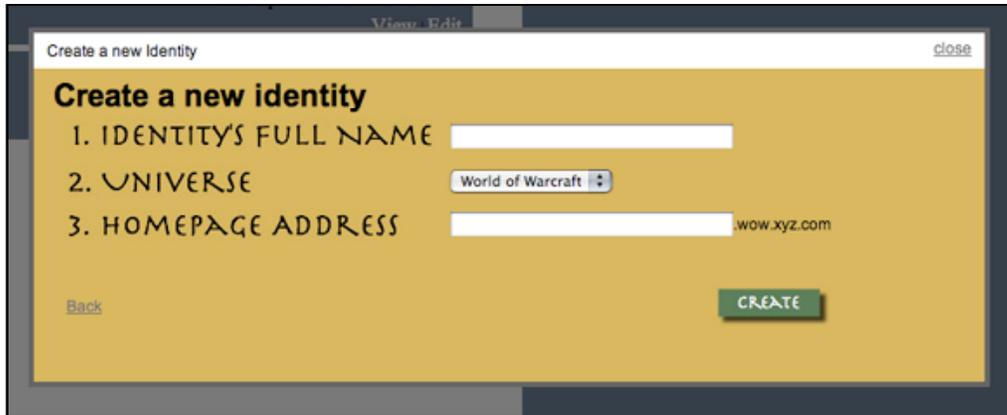


Figure 4: Stagecraft New Identity Creation Process

The profile page itself has a modular design. In the future we will allow additional communication modules to be swapped in and out to further customize the information displayed by the identity. Elements like media sharing, contact lists and message boards can be easily adding and swapped in to a user's profile, enriching a users means of expression and presentation.



Figure 5: Stagecraft Biography Editing Module

A clear and visually distinct style was used to demarcate the edit mode from the presentation mode. This was chosen to highlight the distinction between the backstage and frontstage. We wanted to be sure the user knew exactly how others would view her identity page while at the same time providing customization features when editing.

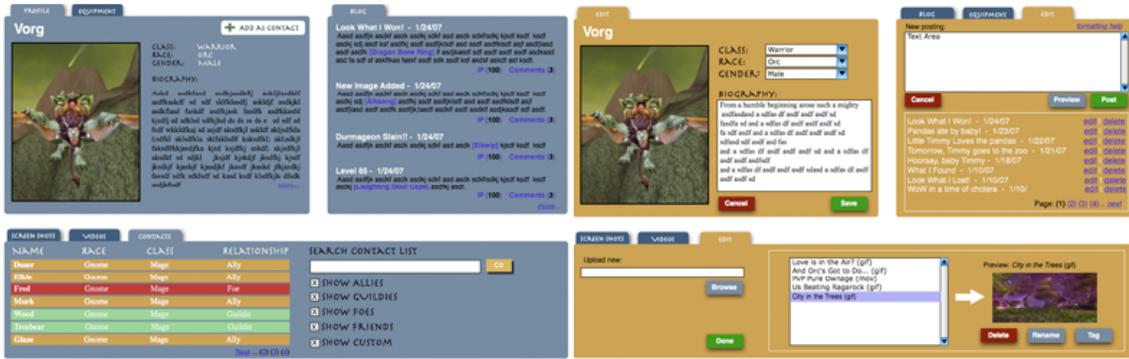


Figure 6: Stagecraft’s Two Modes: Viewing and Editing

Sign up and account information is kept to a minimal set. We request only a user’s email, a login name and password. Part of the intended draw of our site is that it allows for users to keep their personal information private if they wish. We did not wish to confound this with requiring more than the bare minimum sign-up information. Any additional information a user wishes to post can be done so through the deliberate act of creating a more personal identity page. Our survey showed a strong connection between multiple identity usage and a concern for privacy.



Figure 7: Stagecraft Signup Process

We believe participation and interaction is one of the primary use cases for having online identities. If social identity theory is true, much of how we form identities relates to our interaction with others. To

support those interactions, either within our site or through our external OpenID support, we allow users to freely comment, post and upload media as any of their established identities. Different identities within the site can belong to their own groups and all media and blog contributions are attributed to a specific identity rather than a user. This means we require the user to select which identity to which to attribute the contribution; no default identity is used. This also helps avoid accidental contributions, which might expose connections between identities. It is these cross-audience exposures that Goffman suggests leads to awkwardness and embarrassment on the part of both the performer and the observers.

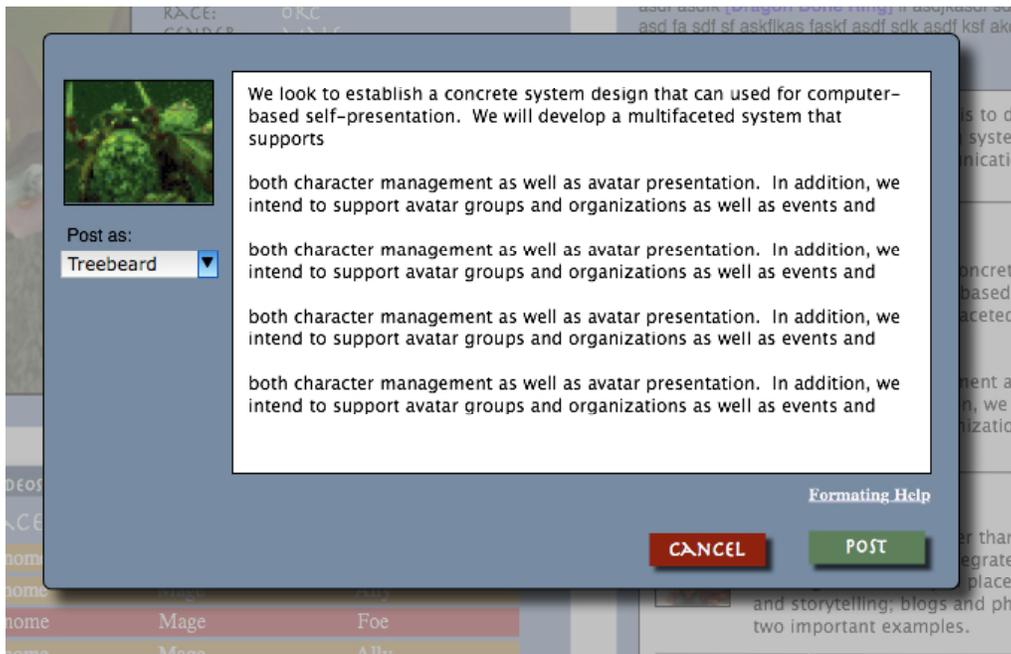


Figure 8: Stagecraft Dialog for Leaving Comments as a Specific Identity

While we have highlighted some of the more important design choices in this section, a more detailed view of the interface and its design decisions can be found in the appendix.

Data Overview

The data architecture of Stagecraft is primarily designed around the fact that all presentation and interaction is based on *identities*. All identities have an associated *user* in a many-to-one relationship. Users exist for login and account management purposes and any data associated with a user is not visible to anyone other than the current user logged in.

Events and objects (e.g., blog posts, screenshots, character portraits, weapons, comments, OpenID, etc.) are all optionally associated with identities. Relationships (e.g., friend, foe, guildmate, alternate, etc.) would be constructed between identities. Memberships (e.g., member of group, member of guild, member of universe, etc.) would be formed by identities. Therefore, most primary data entities would have relationships with the *identities* entity.

As currently implemented, the physical database design supports user account creation flow, identities creation, media and blog posts associated with an identity, and interacting on other sites via OpenID. An entity-relation diagram can be found in the Appendix.

Technology Overview

Ruby on Rails, OpenID and Stagecraft

Much of our system was developed upon two open source projects: Ruby on Rails and OpenID. Ruby on Rails is a streamlined web development environment targeted at developers looking for quick and modular deployment. OpenID is a lightweight identity exchange protocol for internet applications. The protocol was developed by LiveJournal developers as a way for separate servers running the LiveJournal open source software to allow users to comment across systems. Most early-adopting applications have been developed with a single user obtaining a single OpenID identity, creating a single sign-on and allowing identity to persist across systems.

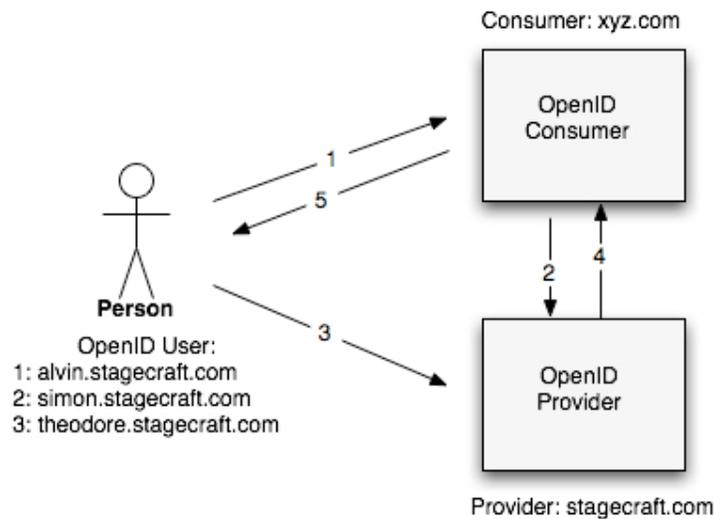


Figure 9: An Example Use of the Stagecraft OpenID System

Stagecraft has been developed with OpenID capability for these benefits. However, the system is designed to allow several identities for every user account. This allows users the simplicity of single sign-on, but the additional ability to connect contributions across applications to one of their many identities. Users submit one of their multiple identities to a site, and then login on the Stagecraft site with their user credentials to verify the OpenID session.

Conclusion

The Stagecraft project has been a valuable exploration into role identity-based presentation. Informed by the theoretical perspectives of self-presentation, identity theory, and social identity theory, our research and design process illuminated many of the considerations users face when presenting and interacting with multiple identities online. While there is much more to explore, we feel this systems provides a solid framework on top of which to build.

Design Considerations

We propose that our project has broad implications for the design of online identity management applications. We believe that issues of self-presentation and role identity exist online as they do elsewhere. When users engage as multiple role identities online there is a possibility for great discrepancy between these self-presentations. As such, we agree that the persistence of online presentation and the possibility of unintended audiences highlights the growing importance of online self-presentation management.¹⁰

Our user research supports these arguments, and specifically suggests some people use screen names as part of managing online self-presentation and identity separation. In our survey, users that give strong consideration to multiple audiences and privacy when creating a screen name are more likely to segment their audiences using screen names. We advocate for strategic design of self-presentation depending on the system's purpose and the identity needs of its users and stakeholders. Different self-presentation functionality will be appropriate for different applications. For applications with the potential for multiple audiences and privacy issues, designers should consider functionality for greater privacy control or multiple self presentations.

Future Work

The next steps will involve supporting the full myriad of identities that exist on the Internet. We will continue to explore the space of MMORPGs but look to open up the system for less restricted roles such as “blogger” or “Wikipedia contributor.” In addition to broadening our identity support, we also hope to add features that will help increase the presentation flexibility users have within our system. By adding capabilities for media sharing and social network visualization we hope to add value, interaction and par-

¹⁰ danah boyd. First Monday 11(12), December 2006.
http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_12/boyd/index.html

ticipation in our system. Each of these features, in turn, increases the tools a user has to control her presentation and identity online.

It is our long-term plan is to establish system principles that will ultimately be extendable to all forms of online representation. For the purposes of this project, we chose to focus on a single online world. Yet, we strongly believe that the platform that we have designed will be extendable to any online world in which the player assumes an alternative identity. This system may also be useful for other forms of online self-presentation; bloggers, Flickr users, IRC users all frequently assume identities separate from their real-life identity. With our system, all these representations could have a home. The data surrounding the identity would be different, but the need would be the same: provide a separation between the user and her role identities.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Professor Coye Cheshire for his invaluable help and advice throughout the process, Sarah Hawley for her statistical analysis advice and the Ruby on Rails community for their guidance during development. Lastly, we would like to thank our friends and families for all their support

Appendix

A - DATA DESIGN DIAGRAM

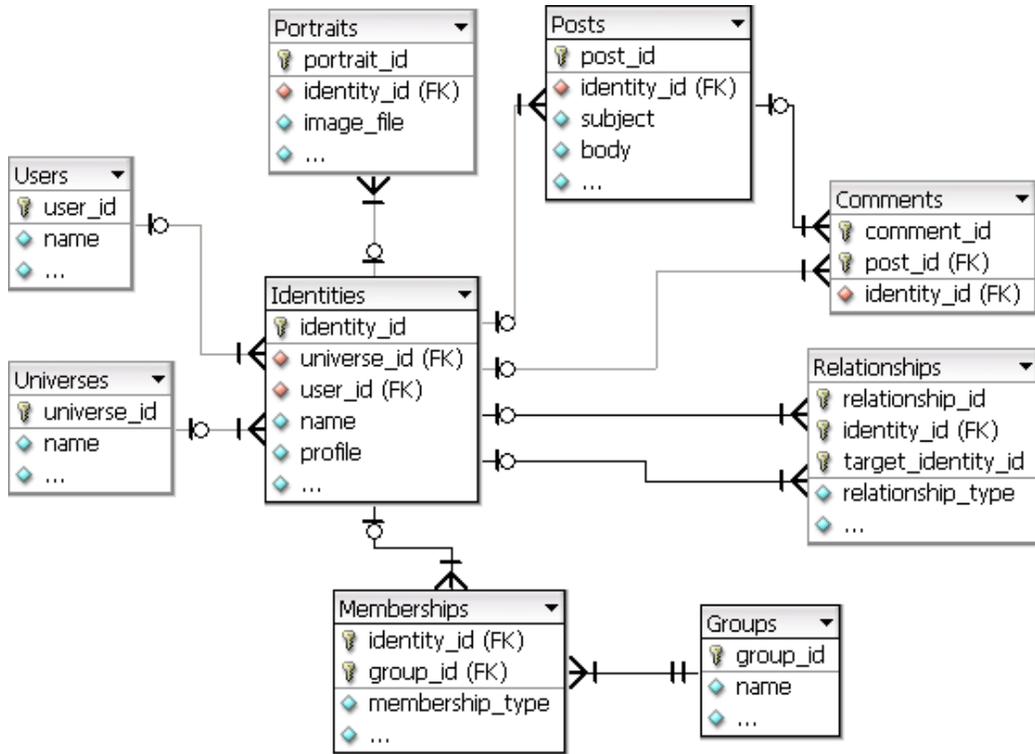


Figure 1: Stagecraft Database Entity-Relationship Diagram

B - TECHNOLOGY DIAGRAMS AND DESCRIPTIONS

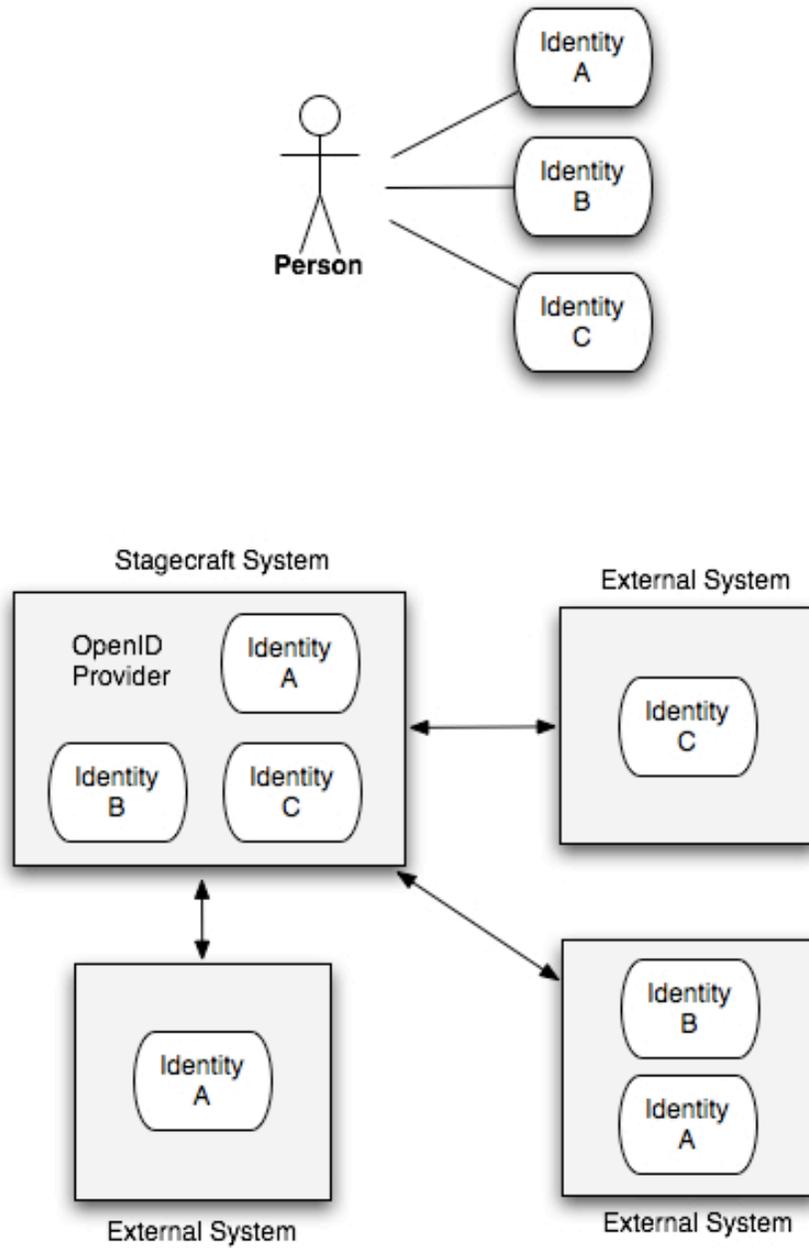


Figure 1: OpenID Data Flow Diagram

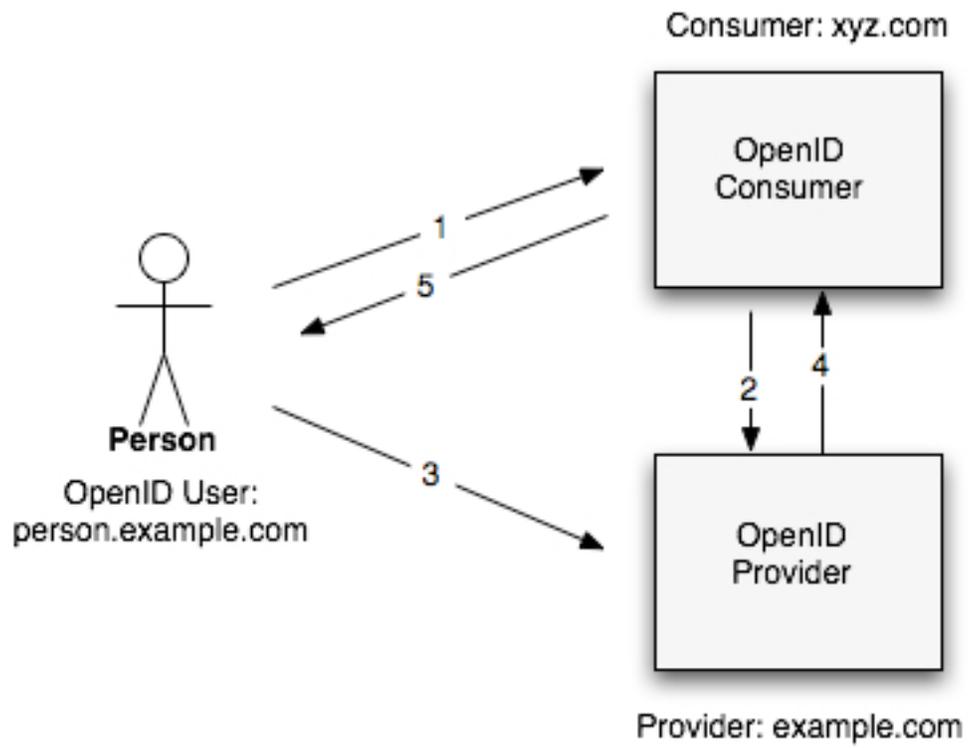


Figure 2: OpenID System Diagram

C - INTERFACE SCREENSHOTS AND NOTES

The following is a more detailed walk-through of some of the key design features of the Stagecraft system. Some of these features exist in mock-up only and were cut from the prototype due to time constraints.

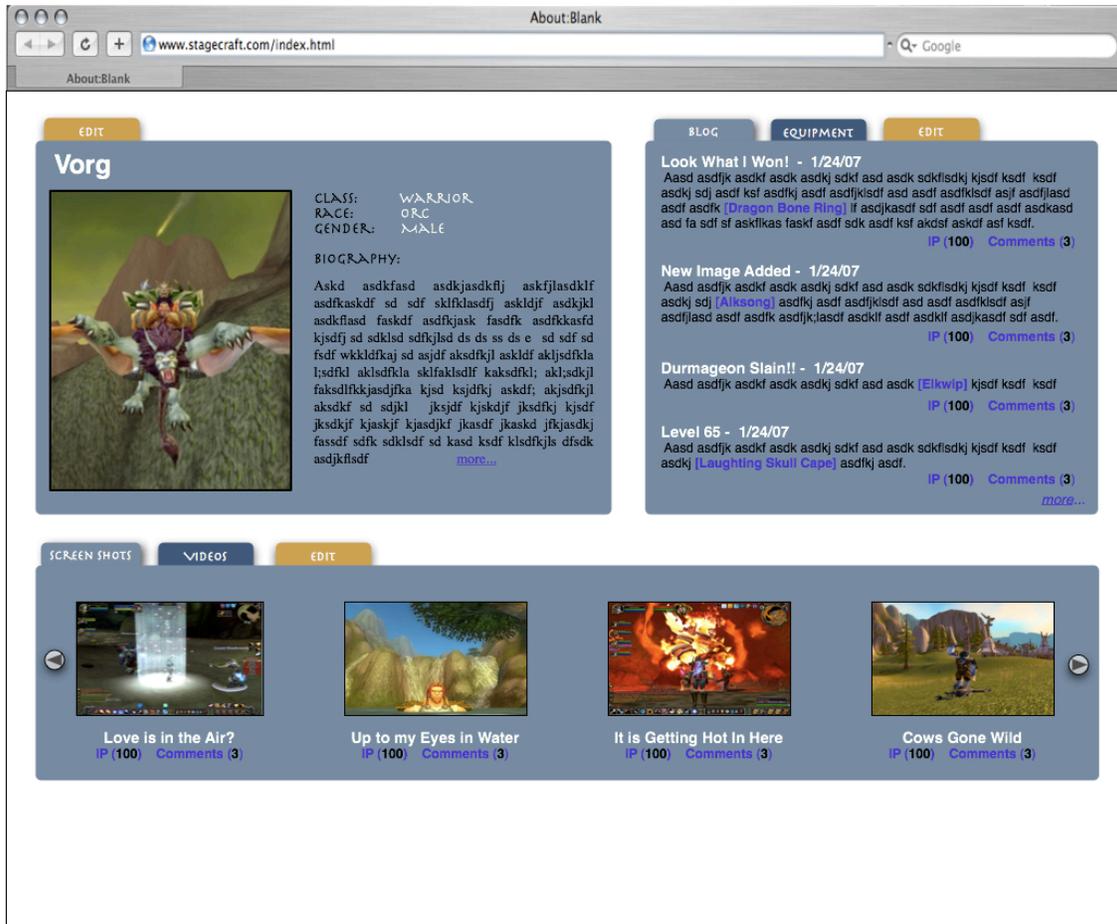


Figure 1: Profile Presentation Screen

Perhaps the most crucial part of our system is the frontstage avatar presentation. In this screen we let the user highlight the important parts of her avatar's presentation. The screen is broken down into a series of frames or modules. Each module can be moved or removed based on the presentation needs of the user. Our goal was to create a modular system that gave the user maximum control over the final presentation. Each frame was inspired by user findings or our research. The details of this screen will follow.

BLOG

Look What I Won! - 1/24/07
 Aasd asdfjk asdkf asck asdkj sckf asd asdk sckf/sdkj kjsdf ksd f ksd f
 asdkj sdj asdf ksf asdfkj asdf asdfjksdf asd asdf asdfklsdf asjf asdfjlasd
 asdf asdfk [Dragon Bone Ring] lf asdfkasdf sdf asdf asdf asdf asdkasd
 asd fa sdf sf askflkas faskf asdf sdk asdf ksf akdsf askdf asf ksd f.

Comments: [Add comment](#)



The crux of our project is to develop an avatar-based social networking system based in sociological and communication theory and user research.

Posted by: [Glaze](#)
1/24/2007



We look to establish a concrete system design that can used for computer-based self-presentation. We will develop a multifaceted system that supports

both character management as well as avatar presentation. In addition, we intend to support avatar groups and organizations as well as events and

Posted by: [Murk](#)
1/24/2007



Storytelling tools. Rather than creating a maverick web site, we hope to integrate and leverage existing tools already in place for presentations and storytelling; blogs and photo sharing sites are two important examples.

Posted by: [Glaze](#)
1/24/2007

[more \(2\) \(3\) \(4\)](#)


Coins (23)


Add comment

Figure 2: Events Frame

The Events frame is part of a larger system of audience interaction. Working partly as a blog and partly as personal news feed, the Events section facilitates the sharing of important events and milestones. The user can create a post at any time that builds a narrative around their presentation. In addition to these manual posts, events will also get added automatically during specific milestones in the character's development. These are the action-based presentations. For example, if the character achieves level 60, an event will get created commemorating this event.

Events will trigger based on level milestones, equipment finds, important accomplishments and the addition of media into the system. All of these events can be set to automatically be inserted into the Event frame. This feature is our primary attempt at solving the dilemma of expression versus action detailed in the design principles section.

On displaying these events, they will be automatically parsed for names of avatars in the user's social network. If found, the name can be transformed into a link providing a direct connection between the avatar mentioned and the avatar's profile page.

All of these events can then be broadcast to any interested party. An RSS feed will be available for individual consumption as well as for guild leaders to create amalgamations of their member's feeds. We feel this will strengthen the guild community by providing constant reminders as to the progress and of their members.

In addition, important to the design was interaction between the individual and her audience. We wished to support this with the addition of comments and a positive rating system, known as coins, in order to encourage interaction between members. Social identity theory suggests that this interaction is actually a crucial part of identity formation.



Figure 3: Avatar Image Frame

Central to the avatar's profile is a portrait of the avatar. During our interviews we noticed that self-portraits were one of the most common forms of shared game images. One user we interviewed even set his desktop image to be his avatar striking a triumphant pose.

The second part of this frame allows for the user to present information about her avatar that she feels most significant. Common data might be race and class, but almost any profile information can be displayed. In addition, links are provided for more detailed statistics and equipment views. Our web research shows that a large part of meta-game presentation focuses around a character's equipment. Equipment and character stats often serve as a stand in for accomplishments. Much of the in-game items can only be achieved through a character surviving a trial, thus they can provide very reliable assessment signals as to the prowess of a character. Since stats and items are not important for all users, we wanted to allow for a degree of control as how prominently, or even if at all, this information is displayed.



Figure 4: Guild Status Frame

The Guild frame shows guild membership as well as avatar specific guild information. Users may wish to display the date at which they first became a member of a guild as well as their current rank. However, if such information is not important to an avatar's presentation, this information can be hidden.

Guilds are an important part of WoW. Over 66% of all WoW players are in guilds and all of our interviewees were also members.¹¹ At any time, players can voluntarily join these semi-structured player-made organizations. Our interviews showed guilds often provide a feeling of community and often are a source of pride among players. Cohen also argues that group membership is also about establishing a boundary between their members and people outside. For these reasons, we felt that guild identity is an important part of presentation.¹²

¹¹ Ducheneaut, N., Yee, N., Nickell, E., et al. (2006). "Alone together?": exploring the social dynamics of massively multiplayer online games. Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in computing systems, 407-416.

¹² Cohen, A. (1985). The Symbolic Construction of Community. Routledge.

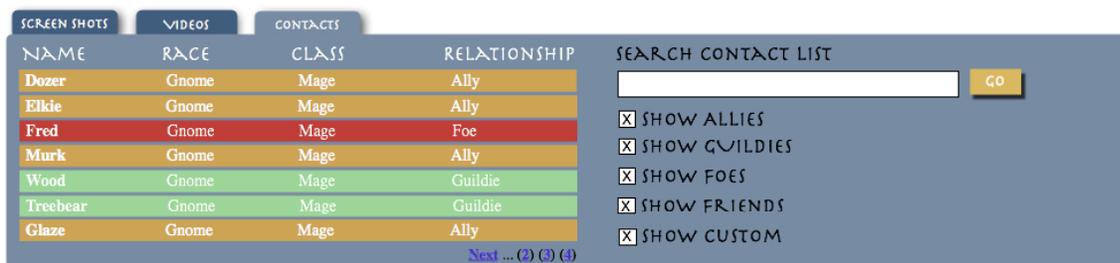


Figure 5: Contacts Frame

Ducheneaut et. al. reminds us that "MMORPGs are BOTH games and communities."¹³ (emphasis original) It thus seems only natural to emphasize the community aspect as well as the game play in our system.

The structure of the game allows for relationships more complex than just "friend." People can be guildmates, allies, foes, close friends and even characters played by the same user (alts). Users interviewed eluded to a distinction between "friend in real life" and "friends within the game." We feel that it is important to be able to represent this distinction. To allow for these richer relationships we wanted to enable more complex social relationships to be represented within our system.

Aside from some predefined relationships, we wish to give users the opportunity to define their own kind of connection. Akin to tagging, we will allow people to define their own categories of relationships that best fit their online experience. With this added flexibility, we also allow for a more playful interaction with other users. Players can define relationships that enhance an avatar's presentation and enhance their own interaction with the audience.

In addition to being able to represent these alternative relationships, we felt it was important to provide the user with an opportunity to utilize their social capital. Much of the game's social capital comes from knowing characters of the right level or class to help the player achieve her goals. By providing search functionality, users will be able to rapidly pull from their extensive contact network to find people who might be of most use to them. Search in combination with the visualization also helps users quickly understand the social resources available. A player can quickly determine the number of warriors in the guild or which characters are actually played by the same person.

¹³ Ducheneaut, N., Yee, N., Nickell, E., et al. (2006). "Alone together?": exploring the social dynamics of massively multiplayer online games. Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in computing systems, 407-416.

Unlike traditional contact lists, we intend to populate the top slots of the contact list with those characters that interact most often with the avatar. Leaving comments on an avatar's photos or videos will form a connection with that user. The more connections and the more recent those connections are, the higher on the contact list that character will become. While this feature can be disabled, we feel this will more accurately represent closeness than systems where contact ranking is seen as purely a status symbol. We hope that this will help add meaning back into the ordering of the contact list.

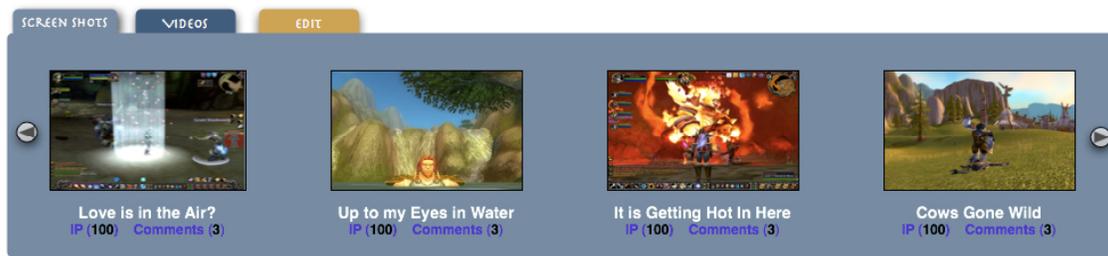


Figure 6: Media Sharing Frame

Media sharing is one of the primary meta-game activities that we observed. Players frequently share images and video from their in-game adventures. Every participant interviewed participated in either producing or consuming of this content, and while currently this sharing is done through general channels, such as Flickr and YouTube, such sites often discourage the posting of game materials.¹⁴

Not only would our system provide the ability to share in-game media, but also we allow the media to be linked to a specific avatar. With our system, players looking to present themselves with images and video can now integrate this information in with their character's presentation rather than having it exist in a separate space.

It is also our hope that in-game "add-ons" can be developed to allow us to imbed images with additional metadata. Metadata such as time, place and grouped members could further enrich the in-game images.

Our belief is that the use of a 'view count' and 'comment count' may help increase the user's feeling of social presence in the dynamic online world. This feedback serves as a constant reminder of an invisible audience. It provides them a crude estimate as to how interesting their stories are to others. As subtle

¹⁴ Craig, Kathleen (6/14/2006). Wired News: Flickr Cracks Down on Screenshots. Retrieved December 8, 2006, from Wired News Web site: <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,71119-0.html>

¹⁴ Walther, J. B., & Slovacek, C., & Tidwell, L. C. (2001). Is a picture worth a thousand words? Photographic images in long term and short term virtual teams. *Communication Research*, 28(1), 105-134

as this interaction is, it may be enough to foster a feeling of greater social presence than media alone.¹⁵ If nothing else, there is a chance that these feedback mechanisms could lead to a social approval incentive for those who share interesting content. However, further research of this would be required.¹⁶



Figure 7: Timeline Frame

Typically, current character presentation system only allow for a current snap shot of the user's profile to be displayed. The user's latest achievements and equipment is shown, but there is little in the way of history. Sometimes this history can be as much a part of the presentation as the final state. Many users pride themselves on the speed at which they achieved a level, or the length of time they have been part of a guild. Our timeline visualization allows for this information to be apart of that presentation. Users can decide which events to place on the time line and help add another dimension to their presentation.

¹⁵ At the current moment we feel this is only a hunch based off our understanding of Coye Cheshire's upcoming publications. Considerable more research would be required to validate this hunch.

¹⁶ Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. (pp. 44) Doubleday Garden City, NY.

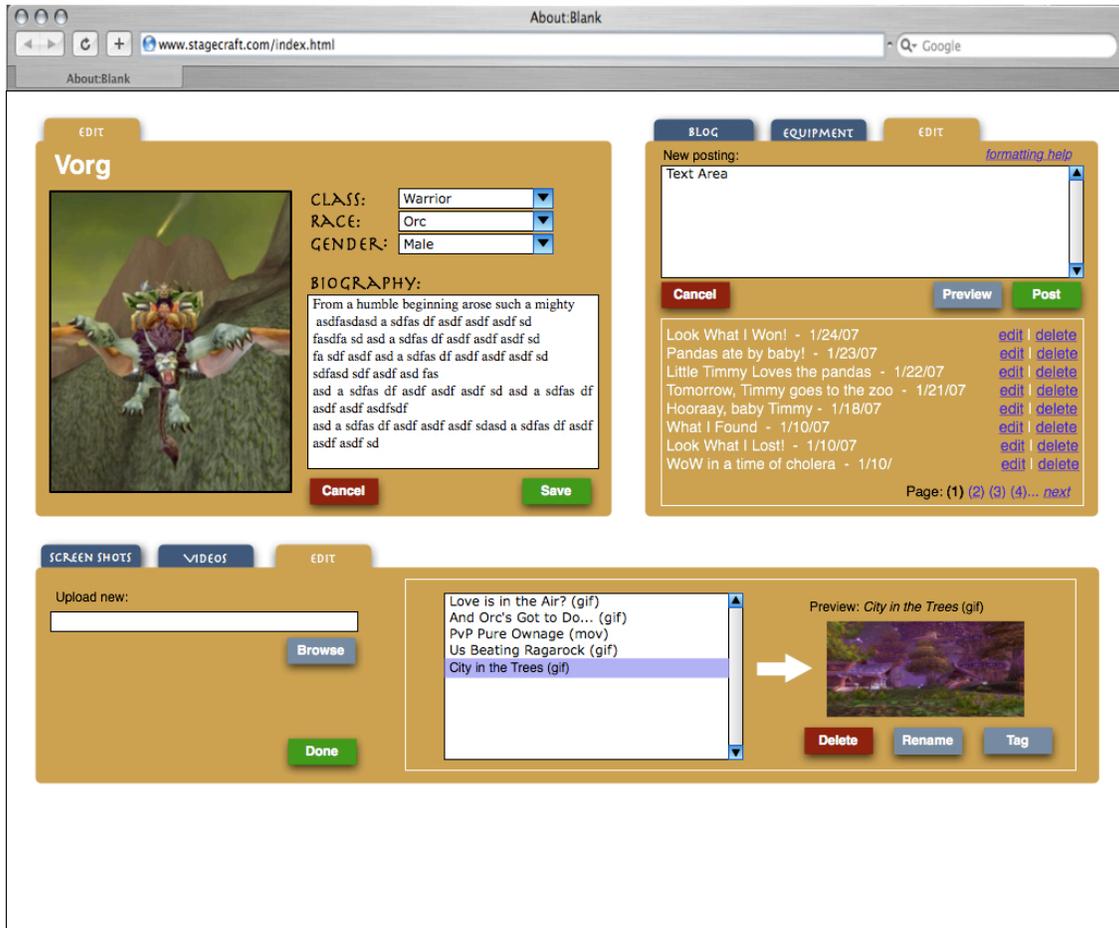


Figure 8: Profile Management Screen

One of the key aspects of presentation management is allowing for full presentation control. In this "backstage" view, the user can decide which modules to display and where on the page they wish to put them. All modules can be dragged around the page and edited to include more or less information. Users are also given the option to completely remove a module if they feel that it is not part of the face they wish to present. For some characters, media will be the most important aspect, for others it will be their collection of contacts. Our system will support all these forms of presentation. For each module the user would be able experiment with settings before publishing them to the "frontstage". According to Goffman, the desire to have drafts that our not visible to an audience is a crucial aspect of presentation. He notes:

"...in those interactions where the individual presents a product to others, he will tend to show them only the end product, and they will be led into judging him on the basis of something that has been finished, polished, and packaged."

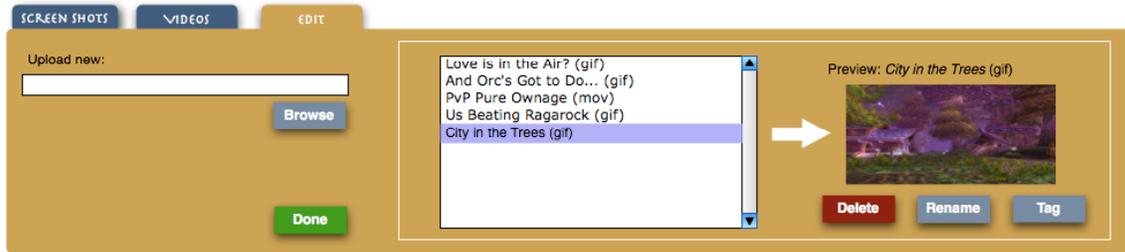


Figure 9: Media Control Frame

User can control, hide or remove every module of the interface. Even within a frame, the user can decide which features it should display. In the media frame, tabs can be removed or added based on the types of media the user wishes to show. If no media is desired, the module can be removed completely making room for more important aspects the of user's presentation. This allows the user to construct a presentation, optimizing her cues given to the audience.

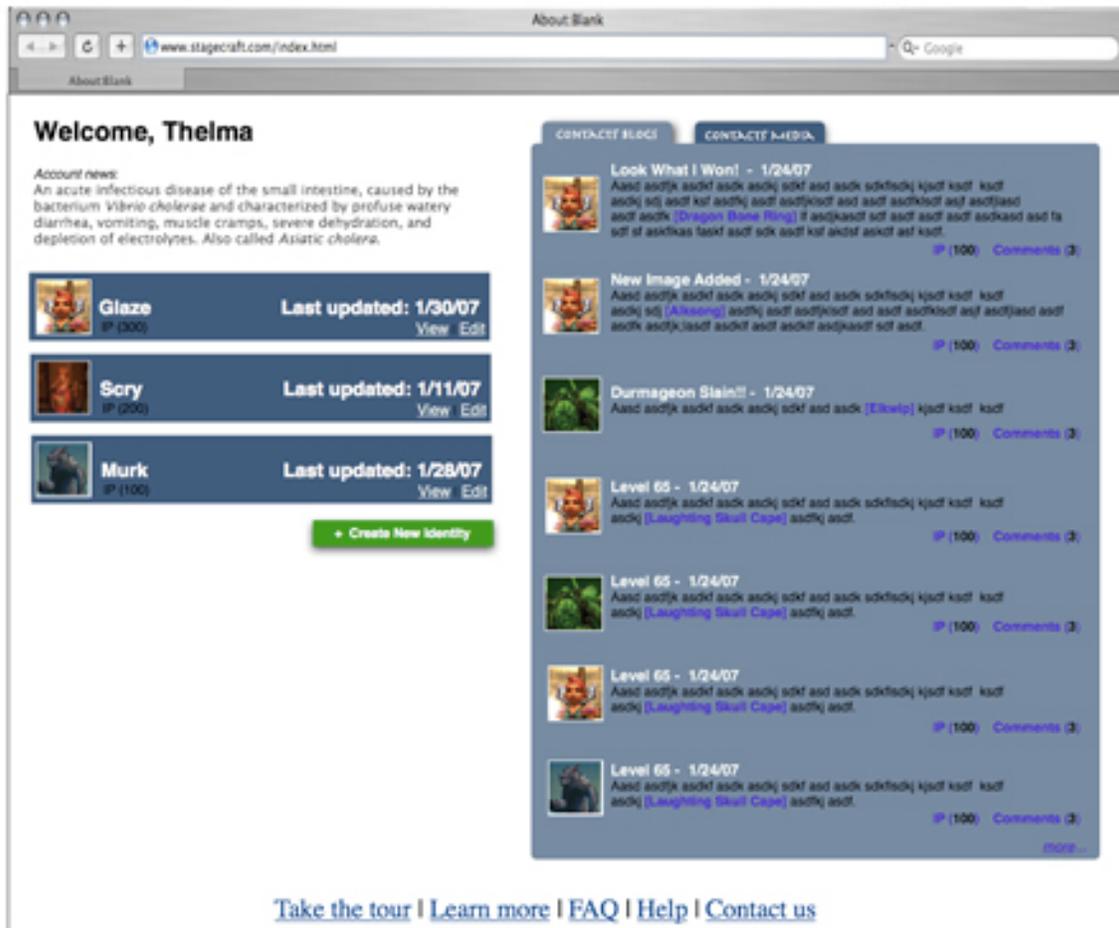


Figure 10: Backstage Avatar Management Screen

This screen represents the Avatar Management screen. This is a backstage view that only the user ever sees. From here, the user can easily access any one of her avatar profiles. This central location prevents the need for multiple logins or separate accounts.

Players can also view this screen to get blog roll style view of the events of their contacts. From this one central location, they can read about postings and achievements that their contacts have chosen to report. By building this system into the user account from the beginning, users will quickly understand the potential audience of their events.

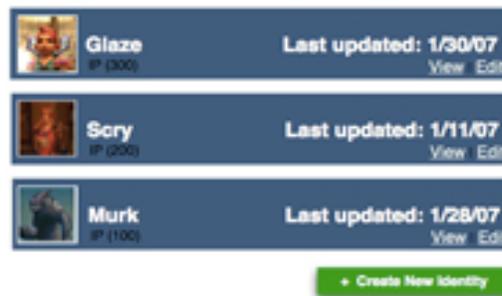


Figure 11: Avatar Dashboard

This management screen allows for a single login and management area for all of a user's avatars. Users can organize several separate avatars without increasing the burden of management. This area also provides a quick review of any comments made to that avatar. This helps reinforce the users understanding of a dynamic audience for their performance.



Figure 12: Contacts' Events Frame

The Contacts' Events frame is a quick way for a user to get a rundown of what other avatars are doing in and out of the game. It gives an easy way to switch roles and become the audience for someone else's performance. As an audience member, we hope the user will be able to view other identities and in turn become more aware of the ways they would like to express and present themselves through their avatars.

Many of these features will require extensive user testing before their true value and impact is known, however, we feel these features are based on sound research and worth exploring.

D – DESIGN PERSONAS

Roger Coleman

Roger is a fairly successful 2nd year law student. He works hard, and even enjoys his school work. Of course, all of this is new to Roger. Before attending Boalt, he glided through school, doing only what he needed to get by. He is glad finally to found his academic passion.

Of course Roger has another passion: World of Warcraft. While not what people would call “hardcore,” Roger does still spend a fair amount of his now-limited free time wandering the virtual world of Azeroth. For him, it is mainly a social outlet. He has many close friends from home for which the game proves to be the most reliable way to stay in touch. Sharing virtual adventures with them provides a great distraction from his case studies.

Roger also keeps in contact with his friends through message boards and screenshots he takes during his latest adventures. However, he worries what his classmates would think of him if they knew he was such an avid WoW player. He worries they might take him less seriously in class, if they knew about his alternate life as a troll priest.



Melissa Soladad



Melissa is pretty much your typical book nut. She lives for novels and the written word. Her job at the local library gives her plenty of time to keep up with the latest fiction.

Yet, her mild-mannered library side hides her other passion, fan fiction. Ever since high school she has been dabbling in creating her own stories. She has passing dreams of writing her own best-selling novel, but for now loves crafting new stories based in other people’s worlds.

She has three different Live Journal accounts all which interact in different fan fiction worlds. “Hemmy4Ever”, her *nom de plume* in the Harry Potter world, has already written 4 novelettes, all to glowing community reviews. She is glad of the reputation she has within that community, but is not sure she wants all of fandom to know her real name. She thinks the distance is healthy

and likes the fact she remains mysterious to the fan community. Melissa only reveals small shreds about her “real identity” and only as she becomes more comfortable with the other members.

Principal Ginnus



A distinguished high school principal of 24 years, no one would also guess Mr. Ginnus is also a crack shot in Counter Strike. It started innocently enough, an investigation into current trends in youth media, but wouldn't you know it, it turns out the popular first-person shooter is actually fun.

And it also turns out Mr. Ginnus has a knack for leading an in-game squad. It must have been all those team building conferences the school district had the school staff attend.

Mr. Ginnus is a very well respected principal. The PTA regularly recognizes him as a leader in education innovation and strong advocate for the school. He also has several education books to his name. All this makes him even more concerned about maintaining his reputation as a serious educator. With the stigma of gaming what it is, he worries his gaming hobby could erode his credibility on the educators' stage.

And, of course, if word got out of his Counter Strike hobby, he would never hear the end of it from his students and their parents. He would like to keep up with his Counter Strike team, but worries that one day the connection to his “in-game identity” will be discovered.

Dirk Collins



Dirk is entering his final year as an undergraduate at UC San Diego. He has lead an active campus life. He regularly attends political rallies and contributes to both the school paper as well as several independent student blogs.

As he prepares to graduate, Dirk worries what future employers might think of his blog posts. While he is not ashamed of any of his expressed views, he feels that potential employers were not the intended readers when he wrote the entries. Dirk is passionate about his causes, but would also like to land a good job in marketing. He worries that with his posting identity discovered, managers might be turned off by his strong political views. He would

hate to be denied an interview because of his beliefs. He always wrote under a pseudonym, but is worried that some day, the posts will be connected back to him.

Owen Fishburn

Owen is a gamer's gamer. He loves video games and he loves talking to his friends about them. His high school teachers worry about his lack of commitment to his studies, but there is little doubt that Owen's computer expertise and video game market knowledge will land him a good job when he graduates.

There isn't a new game that Owen won't try once and his understanding about current gaming trends is exhaustive.

Owen's biggest worry in life is staying involved with his gaming friends. He jumps around from game to game and he wants his friends to be able to find him. He also wants to be able to find them. Each of his online games require him to create a new avatar or screen name. He then must remember to email all out these new IDs so other people coming to the game can look him up. When Owen logs on, he wants to be able play with people he knows.



Brie "Darkheart" Tory



Brie is a diehard *Everquest 2* fan. Since the first public beta release she has invested herself fully in the game.

Working at theatre costume shop has given her unbridled access to anything she could possibly need to realize her avatars' real life representation. She is always a hit at the Sony fanfares.

While her main avatar, Darkheart, is well-loved online, sometimes she wants to get out of the spotlight and out of the turmoil that can surround her online life.

She maintains several alternative avatars for just such escapes. With different names and friend circles, she treats these avatars as distinct identities. Some people know that they are played by the same person, and others don't. And she would like to keep it that way.

She gets enough drama in her real life without having to have her online life filled with it too.

E - OTHER SURVEY DATA (INCLUDING QUESTIONS)

Stagecraft Survey

1. Welcome!

1. We are a student group from the School of Information at University of California, Berkeley. We are interested in participation in online communities, and are conducting a survey to learn more about this topic.

This survey should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. At the end you will have the option to be entered in to a random drawing for a \$20 Amazon gift certificate. Thanks in advance for you time.

Unfortunately, we can only use information from individuals 18 years of age or old. Please check here if you are 18 or older.

I am 18 or older.

2. Intro page

* 2. We are interested in participation in online communities, which includes social networking sites, chatrooms, media sharing sites, and almost any site that allows many people to interact with one another in an online environment.

Please read through the following list and select all of the sites or systems to which you have ever participated by contributing some type of content. For example, this might include: posting messages, adding comments or media, setting up a user profile, interacting with other individuals through the system, etc. [Please check all that apply]

Message Boards

Newsgroups (e.g. Usenet)

Chatrooms (e.g. IRC Channel)

Blogs (e.g. Blogger, Wordpress)

Wikis (e.g. MediaWiki, Wikipedia)

Social Networking Sites (e.g., MySpace, Friendster, LinkedIn, etc.)

Media Sharing (e.g., Flickr, YouTube, etc.)

Email Lists

Online Games (e.g. Poker, World of Warcraft)

Other Online Community Systems

I have NEVER participated in an online community system

3. Identity preferences

* 3. Think about the online community systems to which you have contributed or participated in some way. In your

best estimate, about how long ago did you ever FIRST participate in an online community system?

Less than a year ago

1-2 years ago

3-4 years ago

5-6 years ago

7-8 years ago

9-10 years ago

More than 10 years ago

* 4. In the last three months, about how many different online community system have you participated in? (e.g. posted messages, added comments or media, set up a profile, OR interacted with other members)

* 5. In many online community systems, an individual can create a unique screen name or username. Think about the types of names that you have used specifically in online communities. [Please check all that apply]

I have used screen names based on my full name

I have used screen names based on a variation of some part of my name

I have used screen names not related to any part of my name

I have used screen names that nobody would be able to connect to me

I have used screen names that only my close friends would be able to connect to me

I have used screen names almost anybody could connect to me

None of the above apply to me

* 6. Which of the following best describes you.

When joining online communities systems...

I try to use the same, single screen name

I have a few screen names I regularly use

I try to use a new screen name I have not used before

Does not apply

* 7. In the past three months, approximately how many screen names have you participated with?

4. The big grid question

* 8. When deciding what screen name to use for an online community, please rate how important the following considerations are to you.

Not Important 0 – 4 Very Important, 5 I Don't Know

Maintaining separate screen names for different social circles (e.g. friends, family, co-workers)

Reflecting the spirit the community

Using different screen names for different interest communities (e.g. school, art, games, politics),

Privacy concerns

Creating a consistent representation of myself

Whether it reveals personal information to the community

Associating contributions to different communities (e.g. posts, comments, profiles) through a common screen name

Creating a screen name related to the topic of the community

Interacting as a new identity

Availability of a screen name you regularly use

Creating a separation between your professional and personal life

The number of different screen names you have to manage

Maintaining anonymity

5. Homophily

* 9. Think about the members in a few communities that you are most active in and mark the following from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Strongly Disagree 1- 4 Strongly Agree, 5 I do not know

The people in these communities have similar interests.

The people in these communities have very different occupations.

The people in these communities are around the same age.

6. Logistics

* 10. Mark the following from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Strongly Disagree 1- 4 Strongly Agree, 5 I don't know.

I have trouble remembering which screen name I use on which system.

I use the same screen name on every system so people can easily find me.

* 11. Mark the following from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Strongly Disagree 1- 4 Strongly Agree, 5 I don't know.

I would use more screen names if I thought I could remember in which systems I used them.

I would use more screen names if I thought it would be easier to share new screen names with my friends.

I would use more screen names if I didn't have to login to each system.

* 12. What do you use to help remember which screen name you use with which community? (Check all that apply)

Pen and paper

Text file

Spreadsheet

Software tool

I don't use any methods

Other (please specify)

7. Demographics page

* 13. What is your age?

18-22 23-27 28-32 33-37 38-42 43-47 48-52 53 or above

14. What is your gender?

Male Female

8. Answers complete, prize

Your survey is complete. Thanks for your answers!

15. (Optional) If you would like to be entered into a raffle for \$20 gift certificate to Amazon, please leave us your email address. Thanks again for your participation.

9. End page

Thank you.