

# Digital Footprints

## Your trail on the Web may come back to haunt you!

Akira Kamiya

### I Googled a Job Applicant

A few years ago we were conducting a job search for an open position at our office. I had a stack of resumes to look over to see who might make a good match. I was curious to know more about the applicants, so I decided to try a Google search on the names of the job applicants.

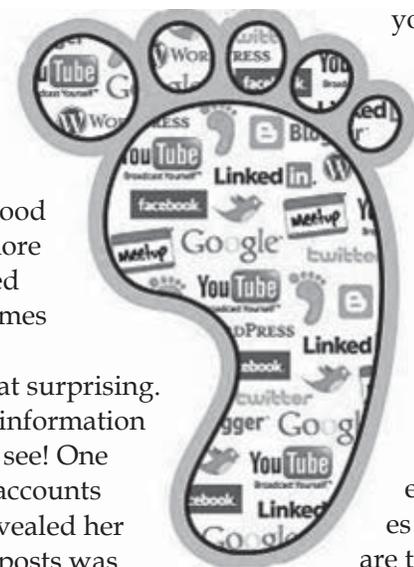
What I found was somewhat surprising. I was amazed to see how much information was just out there for anyone to see! One person's Twitter and Facebook accounts were largely public and fully revealed her personal side. Nothing in these posts was too out of the ordinary. She just liked to have fun, and she liked to talk about it.

But since the side of herself that she showed in her resume was so different from the side she showed in social media, it was hard to reconcile the two views of her. Despite my trying very hard to be objective about it, I admit it was now hard to get myself to see only what was revealed in her resume! As it turned out, she was not really a potential candidate. But if she had been a good

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I bring up this story because it might be the case that you are looking for a job or trying to rent an apartment. While it is true that anti-discrimination laws protect your rights in some ways, you don't want to make it hard for

yourself by creating a digital footprint that allows potential employers or landlords to invade your privacy! Others may not be as open minded about what you say in a forum that you think is private.

### Even the IRS Might be Looking You Up

Recently it was reported in the news that even the IRS has assigned people to the job of trolling the Internet for information about potential tax evaders. They are looking for bits and pieces of data that might reveal people who are trying to hide wealth so they can avoid paying taxes.

Be careful what you say on the Internet. You may never get to live it down. Posting online is different than speaking during a conversation.

At least during a conversation, even if you are in a fairly public space, your words only enter the ears of those around you. Your words live only as memories. With an online post, however, someone can copy and paste it to their computer, and then share it, and you will have no control over it.

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### Protect Your Privacy

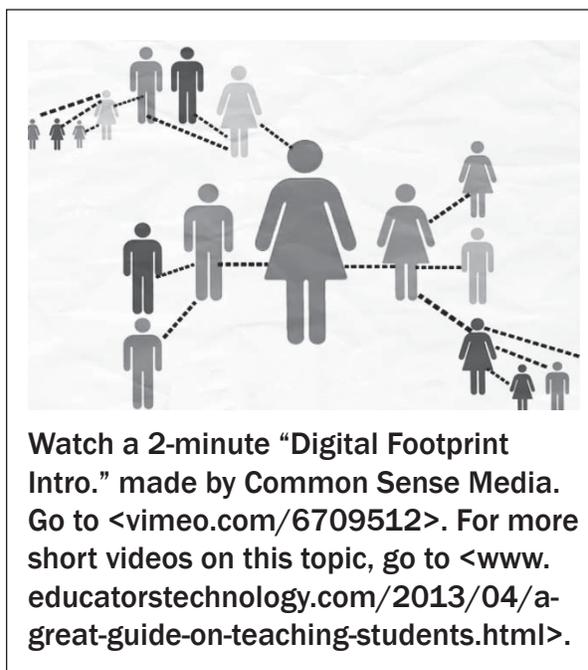
Don't think that what you are posting is just between you and your small circle of friends! One way to test this out is to Google your full name, or your email address. If you see anything that comes up that you wouldn't want a potential boss,

work mate, room mate, or landlord to see, then either make it private or delete it! Also search for your self on Facebook and see how much of your account is public. You may be surprised to see how many posts and photos of yourself are visible to the world!

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Another way to protect yourself is not to create social networking accounts under your full and real name. If your name is unique, it is quite easy

for someone with bad intentions to track you down. For instance, my name is rather unique in the Boston area. I once wrote a letter to the *Boston Herald* expressing opposition to the mounting U.S. attack on Iraq in 2003. I signed my name and my home town. Well, someone using the White Pages looked me up and wrote me back a threatening letter. The threat was not serious, but it was unnerving to think the writer knew where I lived. Now I am careful to make sure my digital



Watch a 2-minute “Digital Footprint Intro.” made by Common Sense Media. Go to <[vimeo.com/6709512](http://vimeo.com/6709512)>. For more short videos on this topic, go to <[www.educatorstechnology.com/2013/04/a-great-guide-on-teaching-students.html](http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2013/04/a-great-guide-on-teaching-students.html)>.

footprint is not so easily traceable to my physical location.

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### **Review Your Privacy Settings on Facebook**

- 1.** Go to “Timeline Settings” to see what your Timeline looks like from the perspective of others. Go to your own Timeline by clicking your own name, and then click the Gear Icon near your Activity Log.
- 2.** Under “Review what other people see on your timeline,” click “View As.” It will show you what it looks like to the general public and also to the eyes of specific friends.
- 3.** If you find that “The Public” can see more than you want, go to your Privacy Settings. (Click on the Gear Icon in the Top Blue Menu Bar.) There you can limit “Who can see your

future posts” and also “Who can see your past posts.” At a minimum, this should be set to “Friends.”

**4.** You can also create subsets of Friends, such as “Close Friends” or work- or school-related friends. (Do this from your own account page, under the Friends Link along the top. You have to do it individually—friend by friend—by clicking their Friends Button and Selecting “+ New List.”)

**5.** When you create a new post, you can select which List of Friends this post will be available to.