

What this is

The *Innovative Instructor* is an article series (<https://ctei.jhu.edu/ii>) and a blog (<https://ii.library.jhu.edu>) related to teaching excellence at Johns Hopkins

Article categories

Best Practice

How to use technologies and apply innovative instructional methods

Pedagogy

Hopkins professors share successful strategies for teaching excellence

Technology

Information about emerging technologies, who is using them, and why you should know

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About the CTEI

The Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation partners with faculty, postdocs, and graduate students to extend instructional impact by connecting innovative teaching strategies and instructional technologies

CENTER for
TEACHING
EXCELLENCE &
INNOVATION



Facebook

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What it is

Facebook (www.facebook.com) is an online social networking service, designed to enable users to build communities of people who share interests. Social networking services provide different ways for users to interact online through tools such as virtual bulletin boards, blogs, wikis, e-mail, and instant messaging. Users can also share content, such as photos and videos. The name “Facebook” comes from the term for printed directories of student pictures and information distributed each year to incoming college freshmen so that they can identify each other.

Why it was made

Facebook was started by a group of students at Harvard in 2004 in response to a need for an online space where students could share information and pictures, comment on each other’s posts, and otherwise communicate in flexible ways. It was initially limited to use by college students. In September of 2006, it was opened to anyone over age 13 with a valid e-mail address. It now boasts over 500 million users.

Why it matters

Everyone from your grandmother to your co-workers to your teenage son is using Facebook to stay in contact with friends, relatives, former classmates, and colleagues. It is an easy way to get introduced to the Web 2.0 phenomenon. Web 2.0 is the term used to describe web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing and collaboration. For faculty members and academic departments, it offers a means of creating Groups and Pages (more below) for communicating with students and colleagues, providing information updates, and sharing announcements of events and news.



Who’s using it

Over 1 billion people worldwide are using Facebook. There are nearly 50,000 fans of Johns Hopkins University Page and over 5,600 fans of the JHU Alumni Page.

Around JHU, the Johns Hopkins University, Johns Hopkins Alumni Association, Sheridan Libraries, Admissions, School of Engineering, and School of Medicine are using Facebook Pages and Groups to keep alumni, faculty, students, and staff updated on events and news.

Groups and Pages serve different purposes on Facebook. Pages are created to represent a real organization, business, celebrity, or band, and may be created only by an official representative of that entity. Pages are a promotional tool intended to foster public communication. Groups, on the other hand, can be created by any user on any topic, as a space for fellow users to share their opinions and interest in that subject.

Groups can be closed to the public through the use of Facebook’s controlled membership settings. For example, *Johns Hopkins University* and the *Sheridan Libraries* have Pages. So does Omar Little, a character from the HBO series *The Wire*. Anyone may become a fan of these pages, regardless of his or her connection to JHU, the libraries, or HBO. They are open to the public to read, but not to modify. Each of the current JHU undergraduate





From The Wire, Omar Little's Facebook Page



Johns Hopkins University Facebook Page

classes has a Group, as do the JHU Band and a number of other student organizations. These Groups are open only to the members of the class or the organization, and all members may share information within the group.

Where it is going

Although technology pundits have been predicting for several years that Facebook's popularity has peaked and will begin waning, particularly among the cohort for whom it was created (college-age students), the evidence suggests otherwise. Faculty and staff are finding that creating Facebook Pages for programs, majors and minors, and departments is a great way to connect and communicate with students through a medium they are already using. Facebook Groups with access limited to students in the course are another way to facilitate collaboration communication in a class.

How to get started

<http://www.facebook.com>

Fill out the information under Sign Up. You will be asked to provide your name, date of birth, a valid email address, and to state whether you are male or female.

Additional Resources

- Facebook's Help Center, found under Account → Help Center, has very good instructions on all aspects of Facebook use, applications and features.
- Keeping your information secure and sharing only with Friends is a concern for most Facebook users. Check Account → Help Center → Security → Protecting Account Security for information on Editing Your Privacy Settings to keep your information between you and your friends.
- You can make use of Friend Lists to determine which of your contacts can view pictures, posts, and other information. In the Help Center, do a search for "lists" to get instructions on how to do this.

Author's Background

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Virginia (Macie) Hall has provided instructional technology support to faculty since 1987, first as Curator of the JHU History of Art Visual Resources Collection, then as a Senior Information Technology Specialist in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, and more recently as a Senior Instructional Designer in the Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation (CTEI). Macie investigates the application and implementation of technology to the faculty scholarly and pedagogical issues in a wide variety of academic disciplines. She is interested in visual literacy, effective presentation techniques, and Web 2.0 technologies. (vhall2@jhu.edu)