
IDENTITY REPRESENTATION IN DIGITAL INTERACTIONS

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Abstract: In a context of mobility, ambient intelligence and increasingly complex and evolving digital value chains, the individual becomes the central point of convergence for digital networks and services. Digital Identities, their nature, formation, assertion, negotiation, defence and use, is therefore one of the most challenging issues of the coming years. The "Active Identities" programme will focus on the opportunities that digital identities provide for individuals and organizations, while not losing sight of risks and threats. We will explore identity as a resource, a means for individuals to control their life and, for organizations a source of innovation and value creation. Organization of the workshop: (1) Launching session: Introduction to the different aspects (characteristics, statement, evolution) of the central topics by three or four short presentations followed by a discussion session on the main issues; (2) Short parallel workshops: Work in small groups on highlighted topics stemming from the discussion; (3) Final session: Feedback, workshop reports, areas for future work.

Keywords: active identity, digital identity

Workshop framework

FING, the *Next-Generation Internet Foundation*, is a multidisciplinary team whose mission is to foster a dynamic of digital innovation that balances economic performance and human development. Working at the crossroads of technology, business, the arts and social change, FING is a network, an idea accelerator, a think tank and a resource for innovators.

On September 1, 2007, FING launched its "Active Identities" action programme. This programme's goal is to identify, support or promote innovative tools, services, methods and infrastructures that will allow individuals and organizations actively to manage their own digital identity/ies. In this programme, "digital identities" are considered as resources and assets, as means to organise our lives, to reach our social goals, to protect and to reveal ourselves, to be who we are and become who we wish to be.

Within the framework of this programme, Fing is organizing a workshop on **Identity Representation in Digital Interactions**, connecting subjects from identity management, knowledge representation, digital worlds, web 2.0 and user control. The aim is to bring together innovators, experts and stakeholders from different areas in order to identify new paradigms, new issues, new ideas and opportunities relating to the representation of identities in the digital (or digitally equipped) world.

This workshop will take place in Maastricht (The Netherlands) on **October 16th (starting at 14.00)**, hosted by the HCSIT (Human Capital and Social Innovation Technology Summit) conference: <http://events.eife-l.org/HCSIT2007/>

“Active Identities”

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From identification to Active Identity: an augmented concept

In this programme, "Identity" does not stand only for "identification" or for the identity-related data enabling one's identification. "Identity" will be a broad concept, relating to all forms of personal identifiers and data, self-expression and self-representation. Identity becomes plural and "identities" will be the preferred form of this term in this programme. "Identities" will encompass manifold aspects including traces, profile, presence, location data, collective being, avatars, self-presentation, reputation, etc. "Identities" will be regarded as an augmented concept for which the reasoning and the strategy could become the key structuring drivers of its "digital manifestations".

Representation of our identities

Digital interactions are a growing reality and individuals or organisations become more and more components of digital networks where the representation of identities is the main gateway.

At first glance, "representation" covers three principal fields of actions:

- identification, or the act of claiming an identity,
- negotiation, or the management of identity-related information disclosure in social and other interactions,
- expression, or self-representation through various means.

This workshop will focus on negotiation and expression; however it would also be to discuss the influence of identification on negotiation and expression: It is likely that strategies for disclosure and forms of self-representation vary when one's identity is considered to be known by others, or not.

What is new?

The central hypothesis we wish to discuss during this workshop is that the advent of "social computing", in its various forms, is dramatically changing the ways in which the representation of identity is managed and used, both by individuals and by the people and/or organizations they interact with through digital means.

The most obvious trend is the growth of self-representation through blogs and other networked publishing tools. Another is the strategic use of multiple and sometimes rich "digital identities" related to different contexts, social circles, goals, etc. One's eBay profile could be different from one's messenger profile(s), and wholly remote from the same person's professional profile.

But social computing is also blurring the formerly clear distinctions between "negotiation" (e.g., the more or less controlled disclosure of personal information to vendors or potential employers) and "expression". As examples, public profiles, electronic resumes, reputation systems, past appearances on various webpages, music listening logs, etc., tend to stand in between the formalized world of transaction and the less formal world of social interaction. They may both be processed by datamining software, as "data", or analyzed by individuals, as clues or messages. Personal data become means of expression, content becomes processable personal data. Both sorts require new means of control and are subject to new production and disclosure strategies.

New issues also arise, such as standardization of interoperability. Many "social software" tools that become central tools for interaction (such as business contacts sites, auction sites, picture-sharing sites, etc.) tend to lock their users and their contact into proprietary formats, thereby reducing possibilities granted to individuals and raising migration costs to very high levels.

Open questions

- How do individual strategies for asserting and representing one's identity/ies evolve on today's Internet?
- What forms of identity representation emerge as structuring tools for social and other interactions?
- What innovative tools, technologies and services could empower individuals with better means to control, express, disclose and/or protect their identity and privacy?
- What kinds of mediators could emerge in this field?
- What implications could these changes bring for social relationships, trust, commerce.

Organization of the workshop

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- Final session: Feedback, workshop reports, areas for future work.

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