Managing Your Professional Identity Online: A Guide for Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

Kathryn E. Linder

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Review by Marie-Eve Monette

Whether we are academics or independent scholars, most of us are public intellectuals now, because we are connected digitally. As Katie Linder explains in *Managing Your Professional Identity Online: A Guide for Faculty, Staff, and Administrators*, most of us use online platforms and tools to connect in synchronous and asynchronous ways in order to network, to highlight and exchange pedagogical practices, and/or to disseminate knowledge. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the need for participating in virtual forums has become more important than ever, making this book a crucial tool to think about the ways in which we are shaping our online identities, and about where we fit in the ever-changing digital landscape. Katie Linder shares strategies and steps to take to improve our presence and interactions online, including ways to overcome the discomfort and time restraints that may have impeded us from investing in our online identities before now.

The introduction to *Managing Your Professional Identity Online* presents these ideas, and concludes with a section about how to use the book, which is where the traditional scholarly book format ends. Rather than provide a linear order of the chapters,

Linder makes suggestions about where the reader can start, depending on their interests in and needs to develop their online identity. She recommends that the reader consider the reasons for reading this book in the first place and, depending on their answers, that they select the chapters that will address their questions and concerns. For instance, to learn about what makes an online identity professional, Linder suggests reading chapters 1 and 3, and to know more about how a reader can prioritize where to be online and how to represent themselves, she points to chapters 2 and 8. Throughout the chapters, she refers to previous and upcoming chapters that are relevant to the current one, in case the reader wishes to go back or jump ahead to those linked chapters and complement their reading.

The different chapters of the book continuously refer to the six criteria of a strong digital identity: consistency, accuracy, organization, professionalism, quality, and finally, representativeness. In order to ensure that these pillars of the reader's online identity are strong, Linder invites them to harness their training as researchers, to evaluate their own presence online according to the six aforementioned criteria, and to research and evaluate the features, strengths and

limitations of different platforms, tools and apps necessary to update and manage their online identity. For those less familiar with the options she provides, many chapters include lists of platforms, tools and apps to look into, with brief descriptions and links to each. A Glossary listing them all can also be found at the end of the book.

Additionally, Linder provides guidance with regards to the ways the reader can build their professional branding. On the one hand, a few chapters are dedicated to content. For instance, an entire chapter focuses on the different components of online CVs and résumés, another shares information about building a professional website, and yet another proposes strategies for creating and sharing content with large audiences. On the other hand, Linder offers chapters that highlight different forms of online engagement – from finding existing communities and building new ones, to tweeting, blogging, and podcasting. One chapter approaches the challenging subject of responding to conflict online, and ways of seeking support from colleagues and institutions when conflict arises. For both content and forms of online engagement, chapters include tables with exercises and questions the reader can complete as they explore the different ways in which they want to professionally represent themselves online.

Managing Your Professional Identity Online would be incomplete without the inclusion of the voices of several professionals whose roles as academics, alt-acs, and post-acs provide clear examples of the varied ways to develop an online identity. Emphasizing the social nature of our online presence, each chapter becomes a conversation between Katie Linder and the directors of centers for learning and teaching excellence, associate professors, higher education consultants, podcasters, entrepreneurs, coaches, and others whose experiences and knowledge are shared in complementary boxes embedded within the main text. This way, the reader sees concrete examples of the ways in which these professionals have intentionally built their online presence, experimented to find the right online spaces, used professional websites to start conversations, engaged in various communities to model behavior for students and to build connections and host conferences, blurred the lines between the professional and the personal, and taken digital sabbaticals. While these examples are extremely helpful, Linder also recommends that the reader visit the online profiles of other academics, alt and post academics, to get an even more diversified idea of different strategies and intentions behind presenting oneself and interacting with others online. Finally, in the spirit of reinforcing the interactive nature of online identities, Linder's book closes on the words of three scholars: one whose active digital presence has opened doors to opportunities never before imagined, another whose numerous tweets led to a job and career change within academia, and finally, the last who refuses to develop an online identity over concerns of individualism and the commodification of academic intellectual production.

While the book seems mostly aimed at faculty, staff and administrators, it is also a trove of information for independent scholars. *Managing Your Professional Identity Online* is not just a book about platforms, apps and tools. It is about negotiating who we are as professionals. As Linder explains in the introduction, she intends this book "to be as much a 'how-to-be-online' guide as it is a 'how-to-be-yourself' reflective experience" (8). Leaving academia can be an extremely challenging decision, and rearticulating our identities as independent scholars, especially when we lack institutional affiliation, can prove difficult and frustrating. Linder's book may not provide the solution to resolving that challenge, but it can certainly serve as a road map. Following its guidance, we can start thinking about our online identities as independent scholars, improve our connections to research networks, and enhance the visibility of our own independent work.

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