Digital Civics in Pedagogy: A Response to the Challenges of Digital Convergence in the Educational Environment

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Digital Civics in Pedagogy:
A response to the challenges of digital convergence in the educational environment

Estelle Clements, MA, BEd, BA (Hons).
Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dublin Institute of Technology

Supervisor: Dr. Brian O’Neill

School of Media
College of Arts and Tourism

September 2017
Abstract

This thesis argues for the inclusion of digital civics in twenty first century pedagogy. It presents a model for digital civics pedagogy that formulates a theoretical framework around ethical agency in the infosphere and operationalizes that concept through an action-based project designed to foster the development of critical ethical resources. Explored ethnographically, the findings revealed the presence of an organically occurring system of ethics specific to digital interactions, which I have labelled “virtel ethics”. This formulation of virtel ethics included the use of systems similar to Platonic virtue ethics; a focus on self-regulation; thematic interest in the concepts of shame and memory; and a hierarchical emphasis on accessing information through the digital level of abstraction over the physical level of abstraction. The research presents digital civics as essential to preparing students for ethically responsible participation as citizens of a digitally convergent society. Such pedagogy will enable educators to proactively engage digital convergence in an educational context.

This research draws on the philosophy of information, specifically the work of Luciano Floridi (2007), to argue that digital civics must fully comprehend the implications of the digital environment, and consequently an informational ontology, to deliver to students an education that will prepare them for full participation as citizens in the infosphere. Within this framework the research discusses the ethical implications of ontological change in the digital age and the ability of virtue ethics to respond to these implications as a “critical ethical resource” (Ess, 2010a).
Declaration Page

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the DIT's guidelines for ethics in research.

DIT has permission to keep, lend or copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material of the thesis be duly acknowledged.

Signature ______________________________
Acknowledgements

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I would like to extend deep appreciation to the Shanley Family, for their immense support and involvement through numerous projects. I would also like to recognize Miranda Al Raad, whose enthusiasm and reliable expertise contributed greatly to this work’s success.

For reading and commenting on various drafts, I would like to thank: Dr. Michelle Gamble, Dr. Anne Sappington, Dr. Emily Donoho, Dr. Tamara Hamilton, Dr. Noel Fitzpatrick, Kimberley Gould, Jennifer Gerrits, Miriam Schroeder, and Terry Clements (I would also like to thank the cardiac team who treated my father after he finished reading my first draft).

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Introduction

“We will be in serious trouble, if we do not take seriously the fact that we are constructing the new environment that will be inhabited by future generations”

-Luciano Floridi (2007)

The subject of this thesis is digital civics pedagogy. Digital civics refers to civic behaviours, citizenship, or democratic engagement in the digital realm, encompassing various dimensions of ethical and responsible behaviour in online contexts. It is currently establishing currency as a term. For the purposes of this work I offer the following definition, that takes into account notions of citizenship and the nature of the environment in which the digital is present as discussed by Luciano Floridi.¹ By digital civics, I mean the following:

*Digital civics: the study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens who inhabit the infosphere and access the world digitally.*

I shall expand on this definition in Chapter 1 to elaborate what informs this definition in detail: situating it within the philosophical tradition of information philosophy as expounded by Luciano Floridi (Floridi, 2002). It will also be linked to human rights and behavioural responsibilities, aligning itself with the International Bill of Human Rights.

This work presents the philosophical and historical underpinnings of digital civics, formulating an understanding of life in the digital age, and what this means for citizens within it. It identifies the ontological change occurring in the digital age, and

¹ For more on Luciano Floridi see: [http://www.philosophyofinformation.net/](http://www.philosophyofinformation.net/)
the implications of this on human self-understanding as described in the work of Floridi (Floridi, 2009a; 2008; 2002). This work then considers the impact of these shifts in human self-understanding on human behaviours, specifically behaviours of an ethical nature, and the educational response necessary to cope with such changes. It explores how digital civics might be implemented in pedagogy through the presentation of a project useful to media educators. In so doing, it presents a new model for digital civics pedagogy in formal education, which employs social media and live performance aimed at secondary aged students.

This work addresses digital civics in pedagogy by taking account of the challenges faced by media educators resulting from digitally convergent technologies. Concerns over digital civics arise from the presence of digitally convergent technologies in the classroom that have created, and continue to create, numerous challenges for educators.

In attempting to define convergence, the European Commission’s 1997 green paper states “The term convergence eludes precise definition” (EC, 1997: 1) demonstrating how complex and challenging the term has become, particularly due to its broad use. In describing its practical technological and business components, digital convergence is often defined as “the coming together of previously distinct products [such as phones or computers] that employ digital technologies” (Yoffie, 1997: 2). But a broader and more informationally based definition useful to the stance of information philosophy taken in this research comes from information scholar
Milton Mueller, who describes convergence as “the digital takeover of communication and information” (Mueller, 1999: 11). 2

The concept of communication and information converging into a “digital nexus”, a perspective discussed at the MIT Media Lab, has been around since at least the 1970s (Mueller, 1999: 1). According to Stewart Brand, Nicholas Negroponte first used the term convergence in 1978 (Brand, 1988). He identified that the point of intersection between computing, printing, and broadcast technologies as the area where the most growth and innovation occurred (Mueller, 1999). Negroponte’s concept of convergence is useful to this work, through his exploration of bits (the smallest units of information) and their capacity to manifest in numerous different ways (even individually personalised) (Negroponte, 1995: 19). This suggests both the importance of information in the digital age, and its ability to foster an interactive environment with users.

Though definitions of digital convergence differ across disciplines such as business, technology, media, and information studies, there is wide agreement of its far-reaching impact on society. In exploring the consequences of digital convergence, Mueller states that convergence “produces a new kind of interchangeability and interconnectedness among different media forms” (Mueller, 1999:11). And Luciano Floridi notes that digital convergence is largely responsible for the “radical re-ontologization of the infosphere” (Floridi, 2014a: 5) and “frictionless information transfer” (Floridi, 2007: 5). The increased influence of information connectivity, changes in human self-understanding, and the subsequent behavioural responses to

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2 Mueller observes that the concept of digital convergence has been explained through various other definitions such as ‘comcommunications’ (Oettinger, Berman, and Read, 1977), and “telematique” (Nora and Mine, 1980) (Muller, 1999).
this change in self-understanding (both individual and communal) are all results of
digital convergence (Floridi, 2007). It is these consequences of digital convergence
on aspects of ethical behaviour within an educational context that this research will
address.

Questions, with respect to the ethical behaviour of young people in the digital
age and the behaviours they will enact as citizens, have come to be important themes
in education and civics discourse (Borba, 2016; van Deursen at al., 2015; Bannink et
al., 2014; Turkle, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2006; Silverstone, 2004). In response to these
behavioural concerns, insights to address education and civics instruction in the
digital age have also been presented (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Ess, 2009,
2010a, 2010b; Ohler, 2010; Ito et al., 2010; boyd, 2008; Negroponte, 2006; Papert,
2006; Rieber, 1996). Yet, at the same time educational establishments, despite
extensive investments in promoting ICTs in schools, struggle to integrate and educate
students about these digital technologies and their philosophical implications on
everyday life in the digital age (Saklofske et al., 2012).

Central to these questions is the need to emphasise that the nature of the world
must be differentiated from the manner in which it is accessed. More explicitly,
this means one must recognize the digital (or online) world and physical (or offline)
world as both existing within the greater environment of an informational reality or
“infosphere.” In order to understand the nature of the environment citizens inhabit, I
employ Luciano Floridi’s philosophy of information. This describes the informational
nature of the world and the role of digital technologies within it (Floridi, 2002), and is
explained in detail in chapter 2. As Floridi observes “The information revolution is
not about extending ourselves, but about re-interpreting who we are” (Floridi, 2008a:
6). As will be shown, the implications of this insight on human self-understanding, particularly of an ontological nature, raise important questions as to how behaviour, and specific to this work, ethical behaviour, will be affected by digital convergence.

Consequently, effective solutions to the educational quandary I address are not issues of digital technology, but rather of the perceptions and philosophies regarding digital technologies within this greater environment of the infosphere. Digital civics must fully comprehend the implications of the digital environment (and an informational ontology) to deliver to students an education that will prepare them for full participation as citizens, activating and exercising their civic power of expression in the infosphere. By civic, this work refers to the connection between a citizen and the greater community (or communities) to which a citizen subscribes and actions taken by those citizens “to address issues of public concern” (APA, 2016).

Thus the definition of “digital civics” I have offered encompasses an understanding of the defined informational environment from a relevant philosophical framework, as well as the expectations (rights and responsibilities) which contribute to human behaviour; this requires ethical considerations to be presented.

This research is primarily concerned with particular social challenges in education that have arisen in the infosphere as a consequence of digital convergence, and advances a solution to the pedagogical and policy related problems that arise from young people’s interactions within an educational context. These solutions are to be found in digital civics pedagogy: an educational practice for fostering ethical online behaviour. As such, the aim of this research is to present how digital media education might meet the challenges of preparing students for ethically responsible
participation as citizens of a digitally convergent society through digital civics in pedagogy.

To construct this pedagogical approach to digital civics, this research explores the digital interactions of young people in an educational context. In April of 2010 I launched a project in Dublin, Ireland in order to demonstrate the successful implementation of digital civics in pedagogy. I employed a community informatics approach to create an international multi-platform learning space for civic interaction using social networking media, whilst concurrently launching related spectacle and promenade theatre events to highlight the convergent environment. Through a combination of ethnography and recursive abstraction (Polkinghorne & Arnold, 2014), I analysed the data from this project and observed what appeared to be the presence of an organically occurring system of ethics with similarity to “virtue ethics” (Hursthouse, 2013) specific to digital interactions, which I have labelled “virtuel ethics” and which is useful to future digital civic education initiatives.

In developing its hypotheses, this research draws on the work of Luciano Floridi, and the philosophy of information (Floridi, 2007). It also employs the work of Charles Ess (2009), who utilizes the philosophy of information as a useful philosophical underpinning in approaching issues of digital media ethics and digital citizenship and observes the importance of employing virtue ethics as a “critical ethical resource” (Ess, 2010a). Further, this research provides one potential solution to addressing the dilemmas and conflicts that arise for educators by utilising the “messing around” or “geeking out” space as identified by Mimi Ito (2010; Ito et al.,

3 Geeking out can be considered a genre of participation describing a way of interacting with media and technology (Horst et al., 2010).
through the implementation of a play based learning environment as a tool for pedagogy. It engages with social networking and new media phenomena, not only as educational tools for civics and ethics, but also in exploring ethnographically to provide further knowledge of the space to contribute to the “broad based awareness” Ito identifies as “missing”, to “proactively engage kids” educationally (Ito, 2011: 03:40). In this respect, the research also draws on scholarship on the educational value of play, for example, as presented by Rieber who recommends exploring this fun space in “the design of hybrid interactive learning environments” (Rieber, 1996: 43), particularly through the use of the social networking environment, Facebook (Dalsgaard, 2016; Dyson et al., 2015; Menzies et al., 2017).

This research differs from Rieber, Ito, and Ess in the following ways, and seeks to contribute further to this field in that it: (1) presents a new model for digital civics pedagogy for formal education which employs social media and live performance aimed at secondary aged students; (2) addresses the incorporation of social networking in school specifically as a means of developing greater convergence with the community in education; (3) and presents a newly observed set of organically occurring ethics in the digital environment which I refer to as “virtuel ethics” (in chapter 6).

The introduction of new technologies into the classroom has already begun to change the ways in which students interact with one another, their teachers, and the material they learn (Livingston &Sefton-Green, 2016; Ohler, 2010). Schools are “tightly controlled environments” able to “engineer environmental stimuli” to change behaviour through their use of operant learning approach (Wong, 2012); behavioural conditioning strategies that rely on teachers’ and administrators’ ability to maintain
this control over the educational environment, and can be compromised when technology breaches the controlled space. Digital convergence has made containing the traditional classroom away from the rest of the community as a safe and segregated space an increasing impossibility, creating difficulties for educators. In response to this, schools have had two choices: engage with this greater community, or place an increasing number of barriers on dealing with the intrusion of “the real world” into the learning space. Many schools appear to be attempting to place increasing barriers and restrictions on the use of convergent technologies, through policies banning or restricting their use\(^4\).

This action has led some (including parents, teachers, students, and other community stakeholders) to express frustration at the system of education that has been teaching students not to engage with the technologies in their lives, or that entirely ignored the realities of digital technologies in the lives of young people for the sake of preserving order in the school environment (or to avoid filling in long forms on student conduct) (noted by school principal Vic Wilson as reported in McDaniel, 2014; Robinson, 2010; Gatto, 1992).

Behaviours enacted by students can be monitored like never before given that for the first time, teenagers record and share openly most of their daily activity on digital platforms for the world to see (and scrutinize); including these individuals’ apparent inability to moderate their own behaviours online. Administrators and educators, together with society at large, have become aware of the potential for serious consequences which might affect the school environment: not merely from

\(^4\) Such as the Toronto District School Board's ban on mobile phones from 2007 to 2011, reinstated in 2017. Beland and Murphy examined the prevalence and compliance of such bans in depth when considering their impact on test scores (Beland & Murphy, 2015).
the ways in which students might behave toward one another, but from the risks posed by the wider environment including inter alia sexual predation, or the litigious exposures a school might face (Sharples et al., 2009; Verstegen, 1998).

Plans and policies can deal with the immediate issues presented by technology in the most expedient ways. However, an overarching sense of what is happening (the changes resulting from digital technologies and convergence), at a fundamental level, are not necessarily reflected in the policy being developed, or in the practical use of ICTs in the classroom (OECD, 2015).

Failure to develop the mechanisms for a healthy and productive society lead to a range of detrimental consequences for humanity; from geo-political instability to a broad spectrum personal crises. As Floridi rightly observes, “We will be in serious trouble if we do not take seriously the fact that we are constructing a new environment that will be inhabited by future generations” (Floridi, 2007:8) The problem of educating about tomorrow’s developing world lies in the fact that we do not properly understand or teach about today’s. While modern educational establishments struggle to catch up with new scientific ideas and technological developments, new innovations have already superceded them (Goldin & Katz, 2009). The science of quantum mechanics is a century old, and has still not arrived in the formal classroom. How much less, the pioneering developments that will shape the lives and society of today’s young citizens (Murray, 2015; Robinson, 2010; OECD, 2015)? And this loss is critical, for without exposure and education at a formative age, how will citizens best formulate the skills to survive in a world that is increasingly filled with technological change?
A personal reflection on the motivation of this research

Given the ethnographic nature of the research undertaken, in which a researchers own biographical perspective and motivations for undertaking research should be reflexively presented (Williams & Treadwell, 2008: 56), I also considered my own experiences. I had been a student at Acadia University and before that, Morinville Community High School, where pioneering technology integration initiatives in the classroom had been implemented with varying degrees of pedagogical success, and teacher satisfaction. I discuss both these experiences in contextualising the practical work that is undertaken in formulating this research project, in chapter 4. On a personal level, undertaking this research was motivated through my own experiences in the classroom as a teacher with a background incorporating ICTs into educational practise. While working, I had begun to reflect on the situation playing out: both in interactions with secondary level students, and with educational colleagues struggling to take account of the technological changes and policy responses in the school environment.

In all cases, it appeared that difficulties arose from policies that were fragmented. This suggested a variety of solutions originating from various, and sometimes, competing philosophies. Like many of my colleagues in the classroom, I had struggled to cope with the dissonance between the controlled classroom environment, which disallowed engagement with the convergent technologies central to the lives of most students, and the life of students outside the classroom, filled with material and information for which they had no guidance to engage. Administrators made decisions, educators dealt with the outcome, and students experienced the
consequences. “On the ground” it seemed reasonably clear that students were walking out of classes having learned to take tests, and give compliant answers. But maintaining test scores, and quiet classrooms came at a high price; students weren’t learning how to survive in their world.

Whether present-day teenagers behave worse than their predecessors cannot be determined; there has never been a previous instance of so much data on teenage life being available for public consumption. Numerous arguments however, have suggested that such unchecked access to technology could prove globally devastating, and it was necessary to protect students from its influence (Postman, 1993; Christ & Potter, 1998). (Indeed, such protectionist arguments seem to persist as justifications for the banning of technologies in schools.) Each student’s infraction of poor judgement could be presented as proof of the need to restrict technology in the classroom. Technology was cast as potentially dangerous by scholars such as Neil Postman (1993) and protectionist policies were put in place. The argument follows that students had to be taught how to behave, not because it was advantageous to shape a “good” or “just” society, but because now the survival of the planet was their full responsibility.

The need for ethically responsible participation in the digital age was an urgent matter, but what did this actually mean? Without wanting to incite a political debate, I came to view this term as behavioural activity that demonstrated a reflexive awareness of the consequences of one’s actions and a desire to act in a way that was ‘good’ or ‘just’ for both the self, and the community (local or global).

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5 This was particularly relevant in Canada, where Postman was informally understood in teaching circles as McLuhan’s inheritor, and consequently enjoyed much of the same influence over policy and curriculum as his predecessor.
How to achieve such “ethically responsible participation” however, how to develop a pedagogical approach to cultivate it, was a larger question, and became the broad focus of this research.

My personal view, reflecting as a teacher, was that the restrictive stances of school policies in regards to convergent technologies negated the lesson of self-regulation. (Some teachers, like Gatto, suggested there might be need for an ‘unschooling’ movement [Gatto, 1992].) Self-regulation (the ability to regulate one’s own behaviour, beyond a simply consequentialist approach) was a pressing matter, given that it seemed to be the expected response articulated by educational philosophers and policy-makers (such as Reding, 2007; Byron, 2008). I considered the uses of digital technology in the classroom, and technologies that played a large role in the lives of students that were absent from the classroom environment. Social networking sites were increasingly popular, and yet teachers were not permitted, or even afraid, to integrate them into teaching practise given the potential for consequences. For example, teachers or education officials might be considered culpable for misconduct that led to child endangerment online, and subsequently lose their job, or fall prey to crippling litigation. But students were using the social networks in school time regardless, and it was difficult for teachers to impose restrictions, as students carried their digital access (mobile phones) on their person. I had observed, for a number of years (since my teacher training in 2004 and persisting to the present) a pantomime taking place in the classroom, where many teachers and officials pretended technology hadn’t breached the school, whilst students quietly texted, tweeted, and posted to Facebook, with their phones behind their desks. This seemed to be supported by research that suggested mobile phones were interrupting
lessons (Beland & Murphy, 2015; Ling, 2000); and noted the lack of effective policy regarding actions such as sexting (Ringrose et al., 2012). There was, it seemed clear, a need to take account of digitally convergent technology, to consider the self-regulatory lessons which students would require, and to acknowledge the digital social networks that had growing impact on the lives of students, and citizens, in the digital age.

Philosophical and historical tools to engage with digital convergence in the classroom

Taking account of digital convergence in the classroom requires an awareness of the current and future context in which learning takes place. This raises fundamental philosophical questions as to what it means to be a citizen, the nature of the civic environment, and the direction of change that might reasonably be anticipated. Such a task necessitates the identification of a philosophical theory that can act as an underpinning upon which such questions can be framed and developed. Luciano Floridi’s discussion of the fourth revolution provides a solid grounding from which to work, and his description of the infosphere, an environment that incorporates both the online and offline worlds, and considers the nature of reality to be informational, is an essential tool in this research for making meaning out of swiftly occurring digital age changes. The use of Floridi’s philosophy also has precedent as a foundation for digital media ethics education thanks to the work of Charles Ess (2009).

There are of course, other pressing matters outside of addressing self-regulation and the need for a consistent philosophical approach. A host of apparently new issues has arisen, unique to the digital age. For example, where racist and intolerant hate speech arises online as cultural collision occurs daily, local morality is
no longer sufficient to navigate daily life. Increasing access to people via the use of
digital communications means that financial scams can be enacted, and certainly the
threat of new technologies resulting in global destruction looms large over our
potentially doomed planet. There is also widespread concern regarding cyberbullying
resulting in increased violence, even death of children, and the failure of authorities
to adequately address this problem. While claims were made that these problems
were new, my background in history handed me a pre-digital example for almost
every “novel” issue online. This made it clear that the challenges presented by
technologies are not always new. For example, “bullying is not a contemporary
problem” (Koo, 2007:107) a notable incident from 1885, in which a 12 year old boy
at King’s School, Cambridge died as a result of bullying reports how none of the
bullies involved were punished, how teachers were unaware of the problem, and how
the council announced that bullying was simply “a normal part of a boy’s school life”
(Koo, 2007:110). The New York Times of the 1800s identifies the same confidence
trick letter scams, known as ‘The Spanish Prisoner’, that pervade email now as the
“419 scam” in search of those willing to share monetary or bank details (New York
Times, 1898). The threat of the world’s end, precipitated by a decline in ethical
behaviour, had been well documented in biblical times (Ulansey, 2000), and the
pessimistic technological determinism of the lost city of Atlantis had its roots in the
Victorian era (Donnelly, 1882). As to local morality, the words of the 5th century BC
historian Herodotus, whose ethnography captured the sentiment of cultures colliding
throughout the ancient world, provide an answer. “Nomos basileus”: Custom is the
king of all. (Herodotus 3.38).

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6 Or equally, BCE. Dates in this work are provided in BC format but equally refer to the Common
[Christian] Era, as per the Scientific Style and Format, CBE Manual for Authors, Editors, and
A number of other scholars also noted the historical parallels and relevance of history. Classical scholar David Ulansey’s work discussed a number of parallels from Alexander the Great to Cyberspace that seem to indicate history has a lot to offer our understanding of the digital age (Ulansey 2000). His insights on changing ontology and cosmological views, and the crisis this precipitated in which new ethical responses were required had much in common with Floridi’s discussion of the fourth revolution (Floridi, 2007). The legacy of Plato in western civilization seemed as prevalent in the digital age as it had been in the pre-digital age thanks to the insights of scholars such as Ulansey (2000) Coyne (1999), Davis (2004), Floridi (2001), and Ess (2007). Their work revealed similarities such as the importance of memory and the self-regulatory nature of virtue ethics in the work of Plato, and demonstrated the legacy and potential impact of Platonic philosophy on the digital age. Notions of virtue ethics seemed in keeping with the self-regulatory nature of the infosphere, and had an apparent role to play (Ess, 2010b) in the development of educational processes.

Structuring the Research

Central to this research study is the creation of a living digital laboratory in which the core ideas of digital civics pedagogy were explored and developed. This educational environment, designed for digital civics, was aimed at secondary school pupils aged 15-17 and functions in both formal and informal learning environments. As a consequence, I designed my research around a core group of students (six) willing to take part in the project outside of school hours. The research materials generated from this study (including the Facebook pages themselves, interviews,
Based on previous educational work I had conducted with Dublin City Library and Archive’s “One City, One Book” program, I devised a month-long series of both digital and live action events that would recognise the blurring of boundaries between these worlds in the Floridian infosphere, and integrate with the Library’s own program of community events. The purpose of the project was to use the digital world to encourage civic participation and show the crossover, between the online and offline worlds. Platforms such as Facebook and YouTube provided educational opportunities that I hoped to harness and would also allow me to collect data for later analysis.

I focused on observing how students construct personal digital philosophies, which I defined as: the attitudes and ideas regarding online conduct that serve as guiding principles for ethical behaviour in the infosphere.

This work was to engage students in a sustained process of philosophical questioning where they could identify and develop their personal ideas and beliefs regarding ethic and civic behaviour in an environment that took account of the changes brought about by digital convergence.

I recruited 30 participants, including actors, teachers, university professors, retirees, undergraduate students, and other interested persons, to take part in a month-long digital reconstruction of Oscar Wilde’s Victorian London in 1891. They constructed character Facebook profiles, posted about their character’s personal lives, and discussed a daily range of topics relating to community, ethics, and technology, similar to a microworld as described by Rieber (Rieber, 1996). That is, that the project capitalised on the use of a fun space (Rieber, 1996; Ito 2010) and was
designed as a “hybrid interactive learning environment” (Rieber, 1996: 43). Oscar’s London came to digital life through multi-platform and narrative building to explore identity (a transmediated experience [Jenkins, 2006a; Elwell, 2014]). As the Character Participant playing William Holman Hunt declared on his first day in the digital world:

Fig. i: Holman Hunt and Father Time

The characters also undertook live appearances, allowing for crossover: a descriptive term I use to denote the act of movement between the online and offline worlds.

It was necessary to divide the planning and administration of the research project into two roles: the researcher, and the program director. The program director took on all the tasks that might be done by a teacher or educator: created the environment, organised the set-up of the project, worked with local businesses, acquired participants, and any other planning and creative tasks that arose. The researcher’s role was to collect data and analyse it later. Consequently, they yielded distinctly different areas of knowledge: while the researcher was concerned with new knowledge of ethics and digital civics, the program director was creating a new pedagogical program. During the project’s inception, the researcher considered the parameters. However, the program director handled the logistical operations for the implementation phase of the fieldwork. This was in order to preserve a distinction between the motivations of a program manager, who might interfere in the outcome of data by making alterations to the research environment to improve the project.
whilst it is in progress, and motivations of the researcher seeking to preserve the integrity of the research data.

Bringing all this data together, I present an ethnography, and subsequent series of observations through a process of qualitative data analysis called recursive abstraction (Polkinghorne & Arnold, 2014) to help analyse the information gathered. The two methodologies worked well together, given they are both recursive, iterative and abductive reasoning processes (Green et al., 2012).

The results of this work advance a model for digital civics pedagogy that could be applicable to a number of situations and could be modified for work across an array of subject areas. It also identified a specific system of ethics as practised in the infosphere which I refer to as “Virtuel Ethics,” a label that is intended to incorporate the behaviours of citizens in the infosphere as they enact digital civics as reported in this research. I choose this term, not because I feel that the citizens virtually (but not quite) practice ethics, but rather, in that such a title reflects both the nature of the normative branch of ethics with similarities to what is being practised (Virtue Ethics) while making reference to the digital environment (sometimes referred to as the virtual world).

The argument of the thesis is organised into three distinct parts: a philosophical portion, a case study, and a set of conclusions. The philosophical portion sets the scene of the research: it explores the theoretical underpinnings of digital civics and considers what ideas might prove central to digital civics pedagogy. This comprises the first three chapter of the work. The following two chapters, 4 and 5, provide a case study, which actualises these ideas through the design and implementation of a pedagogical project (the Facebook Laboratory). In this portion, students explore and
develop their own personal digital philosophies through experimentation in the
learning environment: both in their character’s development, and their interactions
with other participants. Finally, the third portion of the research provides conclusions
for digital civics. Presented in chapters 6 and 7, analysis of the case study yields
insights on digital civics pedagogy and a provisional model for future
implementation.

The chapters are arranged as follows:

**Chapter One:** I consider the current challenges resulting from digitally convergent
technologies, with which educators must contend. Considering the ubiquity of digital
convergence in the educational environment, I explore the apparent conflict between
competing educational philosophies and policies, and consequently, the challenging
position in which educators find themselves. I present the potential for innovative
strategies to impact education with specific focus on community learning initiatives
and the opportunity for the incorporation of social networking in the classroom.
Finally, I postulate the idea that digital civics education is a suitable means of
responding to these challenges and suggest the necessity of appropriate philosophical
and historical underpinnings in formulating such a pedagogical response.

**Chapter Two:** To provide a philosophical context for digital civics pedagogy, I
present Floridi’s philosophical framework (Floridi, 2007), considering the ecological
landscape in which digital media interactions occur. I place this philosophy into an
educational setting specific to digital civics education presenting Floridi’s ideas with
reference to educational scholars and projects occurring in an educational
environment (such as Ess, 2009, and boyd, 2008). I examine three key themes in
Floridi’s thought on information philosophy. First, in discussing the infosphere, I analyse the consequence of a changing ontology and its relationship to ethical responses. I then discuss how behaviour in the digital environment is understood as an integrated part of the human (Floridi’s “inforgs” and their interconnectivity). Finally, I examine the ways in which the digital mediates civic behaviours, including concepts of both organic and artificial agency.

**Chapter Three:** offers an historical context for digital civics pedagogy, presenting a number of historical parallels between the Classical age Greeks and the current digital age. This contributes a useful perspective on the foundations of philosophical thought on ethics, and contextualises the profound changes currently being experienced in the fourth revolution. Drawing from the work of Classical scholar, David Ulansey (2000), and 5th century (Hellenic) resources such as Plato, and Herodotus, I explore the legacy of Platonic philosophy in the current digital age with specific references to virtue ethics, memory, and the theory of the forms. I consider the potential of digital civics pedagogy to address ethical questions resulting from ontological and cosmological dissonance. Further, I discuss the need to incorporate the discipline of history, as well as behavioural systems such as virtue ethics, to create an effective program of digital civics pedagogy.

**Chapter Four:** outlines the methodological approach to the empirical phase of this project. It develops an action-based project incorporating a model for digital civics in pedagogy using digital technology with focus on the social networking site Facebook, called the “Facebook Laboratory”. It facilitates a play-based learning approach
(Rieber, 1996) similar in design to a Rieberian microworld (Rieber, 1992; 1996; Papert, 1981). While role play is a long established meme in education, digital role play is emergent, and the use of Floridi’s philosophical ideas in this context makes for a unique pedagogical deployment that combines digital technologies with theatrical role play and a philosophy pertinent to the digital age (the philosophy of information). The planning and administration of the research is divided into two roles – that of researcher, and of program manager – to allow logistical necessities to be addressed throughout the project without unintentionally compromising the data. Explanation is subsequently given of the methods of analysis that will follow, explaining the collection and use of data from the Facebook Laboratory to develop ethnography. The usage of, and reasoning for, recursive abstraction (an iterative process explained in chapter 4) to further analyse the data is also discussed.

**Chapter Five:** Provides the ethnographic research from the Facebook Laboratory. The month-long interactions are presented, culminating in an event run by the student participants. Interviews and observations on participant behaviours at live events, behaviour at Facebook events, and Facebook interactions undertaken by the “characters” played by the research participants make up the data and are summarised thematically with reference to behaviours both as individuals and as members of the overall community. Interactions from the research participants’ digital characterisations are illustrated in the form of ‘print screens’ taken from the Facebook environment. This chapter further explores the ethnographic research, observing the converging of various aspects of the project in an educational context, including: the online and offline worlds; discipline areas; and the community learning environment.
Chapter Six: This chapter comprises an analysis of the ethnographic research, presenting the project findings. It comments on the relationship between the research participants’ behaviours in approaching ethical and social problem solving, and Platonic philosophy. This discussion of ethical behaviour culminates in the presentation of an organically occurring ethics specific to digital interaction, here titled “virtuel ethics”. The formulation of virtuel ethics is described in detail and includes dimensions of: compatibility with Platonic virtue ethics; a focus on self-regulation; thematic interest in the concepts of shame and memory; and a hierarchical preference for accessing information through the digital level of abstraction as opposed to the physical level of abstraction. Finally, I present the culmination of this analysis, outlining a model for digital civics pedagogy.

Chapter Seven: the conclusion summarises the research findings and assesses its contribution in light of the current state of the art of digital civics in pedagogy. I assess the benefits and constraints of the research study, reflecting on the model for digital civics in pedagogy. I take account of the merits and limitations of this contribution, and comment on the need to further advance this area of study.

Below, in chapter 1, I shall contextualise the problem addressed by this research by considering the challenges currently faced by educators in formal education regarding the ubiquity of digital media and digital devices in the education environment. The presentation of competing philosophies and subsequent implementation of inconsistent and conflicting policies regarding digital technology and its integration in educational settings demonstrate the difficult and at times
frustrating landscape that educators face. In formulating an understanding of the overall environment in which digital interactions take place, as noted above, I have employed Luciano Floridi’s infosphere, which takes into account the various aspects of the “digital age” environment. By “digital age” I refer to the current historical time period, and not merely the use of digital technologies.

I also consider the lack of historical context present in discussions of digital education, and the impact of this educational omission on the ethical behaviour of students in the digital realm. The revelation of this dearth of a consistent over-arching educational philosophy pertaining to civic education in the digital age establishes the need for such a philosophy, which will take into account philosophical and historical context when considering an ethical system of digital civics education. (These points are further examined and discussed in chapters 2 and 3 respectively.) I then consider the necessity of civics and ethics education and of self-regulation as a means of navigating the digital world. Finally, in chapter 1, I present the potential value of integrating new digital technologies, such as social networking, into the formal education environment, with a view to setting out the research project that is presented in chapter 4. I begin however, by considering the educational landscape with which educators must contend and its dissonance with the digital world of convergent technologies.
Chapter 1: Situating digital civics in the educational establishment

I’m sure students made threats on paper and pencils when they first came into schools, but we didn’t ban paper and pencils – Vic Wilson (Hartselle City Schools Superintendent), 2014

1.1 Defining digital civics

In this chapter I explore the challenges raised through the introduction of digitally convergent technologies in the formal educational environment; the experiences of educators who are left to cope with inconsistent educational philosophies regarding the implementation of these technologies into the classroom; and postulate the idea that digital civics education is a suitable means of responding to these challenges. Digital civics education addresses these challenges through preparing citizens for life in the digital world. This work formulates a concept of digital civics, around which a pedagogical program is developed and implemented, giving rise to a model for digital civics pedagogy. Research suggests “…the nature of political culture is greatly determined by the distribution of education” (Almond & Verba, 2015: 383). An educational approach in preparation for civic life, or indeed, as part of civic life, has long been valued. The Classical age Greeks considered the city-state an educational community, in which life-long learning took place through the practice of ‘excellence’ to develop virtues: active engagement in civic life was critical to the success of society as a whole (Crittenden & Levine, 2016). This practice is still explored today through civic republicanism (Wolin, 2004; Barber, 1992); its focus on responsibility toward others and civic virtue provide critical support for digital civics. Another approach, liberalism, focuses on individual freedom (Rawls, 2001; Benn, 1988) and has been critical of the potential uses of civic education as a means
of the institutional control of citizens, observing it can impinge rational autonomy and critical judgement (Mara, 2008; Habermas, 1996). The liberalist criticisms of civics education are useful when developing a program of civic education; particularly for a world that is technologically interconnected. Thus, both of these approaches provide useful ideas to the construction of a digital civics and and both can be drawn from to develop a strategy toward digital civics pedagogy. Indeed, such an approach that conjoins individual and relational selfhood, known as ‘hybrid selves’ (Ess & Fossheim, 2013: 46; Ess, 2011: 20; Ess, 2010b: 116), intended to “sustain high modern ethical norms and political commitments” (Ess & Fossheim, 2013: 50) is already a useful tool in formulating digital age ethical responses to challenges, in which the individual and the community must reconcile different approaches or beliefs. For example, such an approach is helpful when navigating the treatment of personal data in public contexts, a current challenge in information privacy (Nissenbaum, 2010).

Similarly, while this thesis focuses on the development of individuals, and individual philosophies, (that is, it is constructivist in approach), it does so in deference to an environment that is interactive and social.⁷ Thus, digital civics sole focus is not on the individual, nor is it disinterested in concepts of the relational self, nor the surrounding environment. Rather, as will be explored in chapter 3, such early concepts of civics as discussed in the context of ancient Greece prove useful to formulating strategies for digital civics pedagogy. Thus, as an exploratory exercise of digital civics and its pedagogy this thesis explores how digital civics pedagogy might occur through the formation of personal philosophies, but emphasises that further

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⁷ Thus there is an element of social constructivism that integrates aspects of social theories of learning (such as Vygotsky [1978]) with more traditional views of constructivism (such as Piaget, [1936]) (Wood, 1998: 39).
research across the areas of both digital civics and digital civics pedagogy will be necessary to provide greater insights for the success of this emerging area of research.

Digital civics acknowledges the global, intercultural phenomenon brought about by digital technologies and formulates civic mechanisms to respond through the use of participatory practices and civic virtues. In this context, digital civics acknowledges the digital’s ubiquitous interrelationship with humanity, prompting the inclusion of the digital in citizenship education, and grounds itself in a longstanding tradition of civics and civic education that continues to develop in emerging areas of digital ethics.

Thus, I define digital civics as the study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens who inhabit the infosphere and access the world digitally. This incorporates an understanding of the environment within which civic actions take place, the information philosophy that underpins this environment, and the policy discourse that addresses the basic rights and ethical responsibilities of citizens. The environment articulated in this definition, the infosphere, is underpinned by Luciano Floridi’s Philosophy of Information (Floridi, 2002); a field that considers the use of computers and the philosophical issues that arise from them. Thus, the definition of digital civics in this work identifies with an informational ontology, and the philosophy of information as set out by Luciano Floridi, and the implications discussed in this philosophy, on society. This includes ethical issues, as well as changes in self-understanding that result in behavioural changes or challenges. This complex philosophical underpinning, and its implications on ethical behaviour will be explored fully in chapter 2. In understanding the nature of reality as informational,
the infosphere encompasses both online and offline experiences, and their interrelationship, representing the complete environment in which citizens live.

This definition further includes a rights based approach for citizens, linked to responsibility. In doing so it aligns itself with the International Bill of Human Rights, acknowledging its significance as a globally recognised, foundational compendium of international treaties and agreements for the establishment of freedom, justice, and peace, and also the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the European Convention on Human Rights). In specifying ‘responsibilities’ this definition makes particular reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, resolution 217 A (III), Article 29, which recognizes “duties to the community” and “respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society” (UN 217A (III) 29, 1948). Thus, digital civics incorporates an understanding of human rights within a digital age environment, and a level of self-awareness in regards to the ethical behaviours enacted in this environment, including an appreciation of duties, obligations, and rights as a citizen. It is also important to acknowledge the role of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which addresses specific issues in regards to young people and participation in the media environment, and indeed, the role of the United Nations in approaching the issue of a global agenda for children’s rights in the digital age (Livingstone & Bulger, 2013). In this thesis, consideration of children’s rights and experiences in a civic, digital age context, are explored through research that investigates digital media’s impact as well as through the use of qualitative and participatory research, an approach endorsed by Livingstone (Livingstone, 2016).
These are philosophical questions that speak to the fundamental nature of what it means to be human, and how our self-understanding impacts our behaviours and interactions. The pedagogical intention of digital civics in this work then, explores these underlying philosophical questions that are raised: to assist the individual student in developing an understanding of the informational environment in which they live; to become aware of their ethical responsibilities and obligations arising within this environment; and to identify and engage with their own ethical ideas (their moral code) and behaviours in the digital age. In this work, I present an action-based project where this can occur through the provision of learning opportunities using social media, in which students construct their own digital identities and communities in a scaffolded, that is, an educationally structured and supported (Wood et al., 1976), environment. Consequently, I conclude this chapter by discussing the potential of social networking in the classroom as a means of addressing educational challenges as well as achieving appropriate learning outcomes.

This chapter is organised as follows:

1. Identifying the issues and challenges raised by the introduction of digitally convergent technologies into the educational environment which has spurred the necessity of this pedagogical response, considering the struggle of the educational establishment to take account of the convergence or interconnectivity innate to the digital age.

2. Noting the inevitability of digital convergence to saturate the classroom environment despite attempts to prevent it, I then explore the challenge for educators,
left to cope with the result of this with no consistent set of guidelines or overarching philosophical theory to follow.

3. Through a review of the literature of civics and ethics education as a means of addressing the challenges raised by ubiquitous technological convergence, I then outline a program of digital civics education as a means of taking account of digitally convergent technologies in the classroom. In suggesting the shape such a project of education might take, I consider the groundwork for introducing digital technologies into the classroom already present, identifying the potential of social networking as a means of enacting this digital civics pedagogy. I conclude by arguing that such a means of education is supported by a philosophical and historical understanding of the digital age, leading to chapters 2 and 3.

1.2 The educational challenges of digital convergence in the classroom

When commenting on the educational environment of the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan identified the dissonance experienced by students who lived in a 20th century world but were educated in the manner of the 19th century and the subsequent failure of this educational model to provide a student with educationally relevant experiences:

Today’s child is bewildered when he enters the 19th century environment that still characterises the educational establishment where information is scarce but ordered and structured by fragmented, classified patterns, subjects, and schedules (McLuhan, 1967: 18).
The classroom described by McLuhan is at once apparent as incompatible with the digital convergence prevalent in today’s society, in which media, entertainment, I.T (Information Technology), and telecommunications all ‘converge’ (Strasser, 2013; Grant & Wilkinson, 2009; Garcia-Murillo & MacInnes, 2003). In the digital age, information is critical to our self-understanding (Floridi, 2007; 2010). The classroom McLuhan describes seeks to separate information, the convergent environment of the infosphere, to bring it together. The pedagogical approaches employed in many classrooms however, tend to reflect the industrial 19th century approach described by McLuhan. “The school curriculum in many countries… is designed around a 19th-century industrial-pedagogical model” (Potter, 2012:115). A model that some educators and policy makers observe is inadequate and ill-suited to education in the 21st century (Murray, 2015; Robinson, 2010; Heppell, 2005).

The drawing together of information in the educational environment is not the only implication of digital convergence that presents challenges to educators. The blurring of boundaries between the online and offline worlds (later addressed as ‘levels of abstraction’) (Floridi, 2007) is another consequence of digital civics that sits at odds with the 19th century classroom environment. Victorian pedagogy does not include the accessing of information through digital tools (for obvious reasons). However, students increasingly mediate their world through digital technologies, posing challenges to teachers in communicating about the world for which students are being prepared, and in communicating with students in a way they understand. Yet another issue raised by the digitally convergent environment is the increased informational interconnectivity that prevents the closing off of one environment from another. Schools in the infosphere can no longer be disconnected from the rest of
society as was possible under the old system of Victorian pedagogy. The opening of the school environment to the greater community creates a number of issues regarding how to keep students safe and protected: be it from outside distractions (like text messages), misinformation (from unreliable sources), corporate interest (targeted advertising) or sexual predators. Digital convergence has also had a vast impact on human self-understanding (Floridi, 2007), and thus the way in which humans perceive themselves and their world has vastly altered (and will be discussed in detail in chapter 2). Teaching increased interconnectivity and healthy social interaction is challenging when using a pedagogical style that orients desks into rows facing a teacher, a layout specifically designed to limit peer-interaction.

Addressing the challenges of digital convergence in the educational environment could potentially occur: through the coming together of information, such as specific subject areas (perhaps through an appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of information); through the coming together of the ways we access information (such as through the appreciation of both online and offline channels of communication contributing to a more complete picture of the world); or even through the coming together of various community stakeholders to contribute to or participate in, a child’s education (concepts explored in the project’s design in chapter 4 ), as opposed to the fragmented and informationally scarce environment in McLuhan’s depiction. Additionally, pedagogical styles that encourage collaboration and healthy peer interaction through their design might be employed, encouraging students to consider the impact of their changing self-understanding, both individually and communally. But these approaches are little practised in the typical state school educational establishment (for a variety of reasons I explore below)
(OECD, 2015). In fact, the convergence present in the digital age is an extremely complex issue with broad philosophical implications that should prompt educational methods (particularly those concerned with behaviour and interaction) to take account of these factors. Consequently, in order to fully contextualise the digitally convergent environment within a broader philosophical understanding useful to exploring ethics and pedagogy in this research, I utilise Floridi’s notion of “infosphere” which I explore in chapter 2, to describe the digital age environment in which convergence occurs.

In observing the difficulties of the current education system in regards to convergence, a parallel can be drawn between the work of McLuhan, and the later work of retired American schoolteacher John Taylor Gatto. In an article highlighting the differences between public and private education, Gatto identified the same issue outlined by McLuhan, that schools did not accurately reflect the world in which students were expected to live and contribute (Gatto, 1992). Gatto expressed frustration that the formal educational establishment existed as a mechanism of social control (an argument he shares with Chomsky, 2003) and that far from developing active and capable citizens, students were instead indoctrinated to follow a lifelong path of state control, facilitated by the isolation of the classroom environment from the greater community (Gatto, 1992). Formal education environments, through their very structure, delivered mixed or confused messages to students, teaching them lessons within restricted space that could not apply to the ‘outside’ world. Disjointed, fragmented, and awkward, the learning space sat at dissonance with ‘real life’ and made school an unnatural environment for genuine and life-applicable civic learning.
Accurately reflecting the convergence of the digital world seemed impossible in this environment:

The first lesson I teach is confusion. Everything I teach is out of context... I teach the unrelating of everything. I teach disconnections... Even in the best schools a close examination of curriculum and its sequences turns up a lack of coherence, full of internal contradictions. Fortunately the children have no words to define the panic and anger they feel at constant violations of natural order and sequence fobbed off on them as quality in education (Gatto, 1992: 2).

Frustration regarding the persistence of 19th century pedagogical approaches and their inability to teach skills useful to modern life and cope with digital technologies are not isolated to academic spheres: they are raised by educators ‘on the ground’ as well. Former headteacher of Eton, Tony Little, warned that England’s exam system was “little changed since Victorian times” obliging students to “sit alone at their desks in preparation for a world in which, for most of the time, they will need to work collaboratively” (Little, 2014). While, in a 2014 interview with Forbes, Bob Harrison related how the very source of the problem with school’s approaches to digital technology was their traditional teaching methods, asking: “Why are we chucking digital technology at a process that was designed in the Industrial Revolution?” (Morrison, 2014). This is echoed by research for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), coordinated by the OECD, on ICTs and learning, which recognises that “the real contributions ICT can make to teaching and learning have yet to be fully realised and exploited” (OECD, 2015: 15). And further suggests the need “to provide educators with learning environments that support 21st-century pedagogies and provide children with the 21st-century skills they need to succeed in tomorrow’s world.” (OECD, 2015).
The classroom depictions given by McLuhan, and subsequently Gatto, Little, and Harrison nearly 50 years later, demonstrate the continued inability of formal education to take account of the convergence – its interconnectivity and community collaboration – innate to the digital age. Indeed, “The industrial era alignment of interests between existing educational institutions and economic, social and political needs may be, in many instances, turning into a conflict” (Tuomi & Miller, 2011: 1). A linear structure of seating, a predictable pattern of a sequential day, a lesson dictated by the teacher instead of the student, all contribute to a hidden curriculum which is at odds with the mutability of a digital world and therefore fails to produce citizens who feel confident living and interacting in a digitally mediated society. A point evidenced by the numerous reports and research observing young people’s trepidation and challenges in the online world (Wineburg et al., 2016; May-Chahal, 2015; Xu & Jaggers, 2014). Further, the isolation of the classroom away from the greater community means that students lack the opportunity to develop skills to participate in a convergent environment. Considerable time and effort has been invested into strategies in e-learning for the secondary school classroom (Clark & Mayer, 2011; Prensky, 2006; Warschauer, 1997), and even on student-centric curriculum for the digital age (Rosenberg, 2001). Ostensibly, this has either met with resistance to implementation, or failed to overturn the 19th century environment that continues to characterise the educational establishment (Tumoi & Miller, 2011). Perhaps this is because, as Prensky suggests in discussing the problems of e-learning and schools, “there are some old concepts and languages that are just very difficult for us to throw away” (Prensky, 2012: 35).
There are numerous reasons why there might be resistance to integrating channels of digital communication into the traditionally offline classroom (what I later come to refer to as ‘Converging levels of abstraction’ in chapter 5); to teaching subjects in an interdisciplinary fashion (what I later come to refer to as ‘Converging learning content’); or to opening the classroom to the outside world (what I later come to refer to as ‘Converging the educational community’). Such challenges include, for example, the logistical challenges that might arise in requiring the collaboration of all staff members to teach convergent subject matter. In addition, many teachers feel their autonomy in the classroom is being challenged by school reform and restructuring, (Lundström, 2015), by interruptions from digital technologies (such as mobile phones) (Beland & Murphy, 2015; Ling, 2000), or by easily accessible data (which can be acquired from professionals and experts available via email or out of context, on websites like Wikipedia). Teachers are also challenged by the increasing number of ways that students access their information; not simply through books and printed media, but also through television, film, mp3s and podcasts, and even tactile and kinaesthetic means such as the rumble function on gaming consoles, and Wii. At the same time, schools “have a range of statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and child protection” (Lefevre at al., 2013: 15). In pursuing child protection, educators communicate other legitimate fears regarding concerns resultant from educationally broadening the classroom landscape to include the ‘outside world’. For example, the intrusion of commercial entities (Richards et al., 1998), the threat of sexual predation (Sharples et al., 2009), and the ensuing litigious consequences of exposure to either of these (Verstegen, 1998), all threaten to interfere with student education and well-being and make convergence with the greater community a seeming impossibility in the educational environment.
1.3 Inevitability of interference into the classroom as a result of convergence

Yet, the ongoing convergence of technologies in all facets of contemporary life, and their consequences, continues unabated (Van den Bulck & Donders, 2014; Reding, 2005; Yoffie, 1997). Adopting the i2010 initiative in 2005 for the European Commission, Viviane Reding observed, “Today, we see digital convergence actually happening” (Reding, 2005). As Yoffie states in accessing its impact “there is something real to the excitement over digital convergence” (Yoffie, 1997: 1). It is certainly forcing policy-makers to take account of the changes it is causing in the industrial environment (Van den Bulch & Donders, 2014). And noting its consequences, Floridi discusses how the increased information connectivity will eventually make it impossible for humans to function when not connected to the flow of information (Floridi, 2007).

The fears that educators or policy-makers present against opening the classroom to the larger environment (or ‘real world’) (Sharples et al., 2009; Verstegen, 1998; Richards et al., 1998) and their subsequent actions to circumvent potential consequences from broadening educational interaction and interconnectivity however, do not necessarily lead to the desired outcome of student protection.

The protectionist attitudes prevalent in European and North American discourse on digital and media literacy in the 1990s as the world entered the digital age, highlighted the concerns of educators and policy makers regarding the lack of control over information (particularly corporate and branding information) in classrooms, resulting in attempts to ‘inoculate’ students against media manipulation (Christ & Potter, 1998). However, such messages were often taught with the same
confusion discussed by Gatto, and did not necessarily lead to the protection of students from the outside world. For example, whilst attempting to block out corporate advertising from the classroom, educational authorities often found themselves in financially vulnerable positions, particularly in more socially deprived areas, and turned to corporations to finance their schools with new facilities and technology. This was a not a typical procurement practise at the time, as government funding had traditionally covered the majority of educational expenses, at least in public schools. For example, in Canada, (where this researcher received their teacher training and spent time as a teacher), the P3 school initiative, launched to create a partnership between private and public organizations, allowed corporate entities unlimited access to the school environment, often with little or no control placed onto those corporate entities (Lapointe, 2010). Corporate advertising appeared both on walls and bathroom stalls (whilst students couldn’t hang posters on bulletin boards without permission). Students were robbed of the opportunity for self-expression in their own school, whilst at the same time being exposed to a barrage of corporate advertising and branding sanctioned by the educational establishment. The project was labelled a “failure” by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA, 2016: 6) for a number of reasons, including “safety violations that placed students at risk” (CCPA, 2016: 6). Protectionism seemed to offer little protection when it was possible for the wealthy corporate entities one attempted to protect against, to easily buy their way into the educational space (Schor 2004; Manning, 1999). Placing this insight into the context of digitally convergent spaces raises further concerns as to the commercial interference that impacts students in the educational environment. Not simply regarding the inability of schools to block advertising, but in the commercialisation of the digital spaces they access at school (both for learning and
social purposes), the collection of their personal data, including their physical location (which purports a safeguarding risk), and their consumption habits (which can be used for profiling and direct marketing toward students) (Boninger, & Molnar, 2016). This normalises to children the legitimacy of corporations’ roles in their education and life and teaches them to “take for granted that others have a right to keep their behaviour under constant surveillance for marketing purposes – even at the cost of their own well being.” (Boninger, & Molnar, 2016: 3). This is a problem which grows progressively concerning in the digitally convergent environment, given the rise of individuated advertising aimed at young people, particularly given Floridi’s insights (to be discussed in chapter 2) that branding in the digital world has a strong impact on identity (Floridi, 2009a).

1.4 The complex professional role of teachers

Corporate interference is not the only area in which schools struggle to protect young people. There are many other issues in the digital world that the current classroom cannot protect against, and which place teachers in a precarious position. The threat of student sexual exploitation within the school environment, through issues such as texting, for example is a terrifying possibility, especially when one considers that “a class is likely to contain varieties of victim, abuser and bystander simultaneously” (Ringrose et al., 2012: 7). Even if social networks could be banned in the school environment, their effects cannot. The incidence of cyber-bullying

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8 Anecdotally, I had experienced a number of school staff meetings and parent teacher interviews where a fear of such potential exploitation was raised as a justification for the banning of convergent technologies in the school environment, and certainly colleagues had shared similar stories with me: that they were not to encourage students to have their own webpages, because they could be used by paedophiles to hunt potential child victims.
online, particularly in regards to sexual crimes has received widespread media coverage. An illustrative example is provided in the case of Rehtaeh Parsons⁹, a story that received international attention and placed a media spotlight on the complexity of sex and social media amongst young people, and the expectations placed on the school system to deal with issues connected to it in an ethical context.¹⁰ Parsons was a 17 year old student in Nova Scotia, Canada, cyber-bullied by schoolmates who posted images of her apparently being gang raped, on social media. Parsons endured “bullying messaging and harassment”¹¹ that led to a suicide attempt from which she later died. The alleged perpetrators of this crime were not unknown paedophiles lurking anonymously in the digital ether, rather, they were Miss Parson’s local peers; her harassment and humiliation spilling over into her school experience, and placing teachers in a complicated position. The statement from the hacker group Anonymous – who reportedly assisted in having the Parson’s case reopened and tracing the perpetrators¹² – highlights the expectations and culpability placed by the public onto teachers:

"What we have learned is certainly appalling ...we point our fingers at the Cole Harbour school system. It is truly disturbing that this level of bullying could happen in one of your schools without you noticing. Worse, child porn was apparently viral in your halls and you had no clue…it’s your job to know.” (Anon Insiders, 2013).

The difficult situation of teachers in this regard is noted by the United Nation’s research into bullying which found that “episodes of bullying, which are carried out  

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⁹ Parson’s story was covered extensively by the Canadian National Broadcaster CBC, and in depth coverage on the story is available at: http://www.cbc.ca/ns/features/rehtaeh-parsons/

¹⁰ For example, the Parson’s case was covered by the CBC, BBC, and CNN, as well as receiving interest from hacker group “Anonymous”. A Google of “Rehtaeh Parsons” retrieves over half a million sources.

¹¹ The phrase comes directly from a statement made on Facebook by Rehtaeh Parson’s mother addressing the incident: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=352733178159763&id=352644484835299

¹² See their YouTube video after which the case was reopened: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_D_zvizzKA
in plain sight in school environments, may not always be visible to teachers, who may not be able, willing or trained to read the signs of peer-to-peer bullying behaviour” (UN, 2016: 8). However, this same research also suggested that students did not report instances of cyber-bullying to teachers because they fear reprisals from the bully for telling, or the consequent loss of their own internet or mobile phone privileges (UN, 2016: 8).

In contrast, teachers express other sentiments, which highlight the precarious positions within which they find themselves. In Kay Seo’s 2013 work on social media in the classroom, she reports the obstacles and limitations of social media in the school environment, noting specifically the problematic nature of its “blurring effect regarding the roles of student and teacher” (Seo, 2013: 24); and the ways that teachers may be made to feel “uncomfortable” as a result of this (Seo, 2013: 24). Having taught in the province of Nova Scotia myself, I asked colleagues still teaching there to articulate their position in regard to the policy and practise of Nova Scotia (where the Parson’s incident occurred) and social media. Their responses were similar to those reported in Seo’s work. They agreed only to speak under promise of anonymity (which in itself suggests the sensitivity surrounding this issue). Two statements below provide some insight into the challenging role of teachers in this context:

1: “Teachers… are advised by our unions and the department of education not to be involved with students in online communications…I am always afraid of someone accusing me of having too much contact with me (sic) students (via social media) and being brought up on charges of sexual harassment. Even if proven that I was innocent it would mean the end of my career … Why don't I get involved? For fear of being raked through the coals of public opinion and losing my job.”

2: “We are told during professional development sessions about teaching to use social media… but then told not to dare touch it at staff meetings… When things go wrong
teachers are faulted for their interactions with students through social media – it is deemed inappropriate. This is juxtaposed with when students commit self-harm or bullying it is asked why teacher’s weren’t more involved? … We have no back up from our administration or the school board if something goes wrong even if we are not at fault. The “Policy” makes sure of that.”

Indeed, the proliferation of rules that regulate teacher’s digital interactions, not merely in regards to their school time, but their personal time as well, suggests the growing constraints and harsh consequences that teachers face in regards to social media (Warnick et al., 2016; Eckes, 2013; Simpson 2008). Unfortunately, there is not enough research into the impact of policy on teachers and teaching practise (Evetts, 2009). And while the social networks where such issues originate may be banned in schools, it is simply impossible to ban the subsequent behaviours within school that result. Yet teachers fear the repercussions of bringing convergent technologies, such as social media, into the classroom and the resulting responsibility for educating students to use these tools and networks appropriately. The aforementioned concerns of litigious culpability and sexual exploitation are further exacerbated when it transpires that legally under-aged students may be exploiting one another. As a 2012 study for the NSPCC on sexting observes “For young people, the primary technology-related threat is not the ‘stranger danger’ hyped by the mass media but technology-mediated sexual pressure from their peers” (Ringrose et al., 2012: 7). The NSPCC study further observes that, “at present there is little or no effective policy in place regarding sexting among teenagers” (Ringrose et al., 2012: 55). Teachers, as the example of Miss Parsons's case demonstrates, already face repercussions, with no over-arching system in place to help them deal with these issues, or at least, not one with which teachers feel comfortable.
1.5 Conflicting Guidance

The response to dealing with the challenges described in the preceding section has often come in the form of conflicting guidance provided to educators outlining how best to deal with the intrusion of digital technologies and new media in the learning environment. Policies can differ from school to school, let alone school board to school board, or even nationally or internationally. This is succinctly demonstrated with government documentation and statements for teachers. One of the more publicised accounts in Canada, providing an interesting insight into the struggle to deliver a cohesive approach to digital media, and specifically social networking media in education, comes from Ontario, Canada, where various conflicting ideas were reported:

With new forms of social media rapidly expanding and bombarding young people daily, the messages they convey can have a significant influence on the lives of students. ...To develop media literacy skills, students need opportunities to view, analyze and discuss a wide variety of media texts (Ontario Curriculum Connection, 2013).

Yet, this is apparently contradicted by research that advises:

Social media such as Facebook, Snapchat and basic texting are distracting because they engender always-on practices where students feel compelled to engage in communication (Isabel Pedersen, Canada research chair in digital life, media and culture, interview, 2013).

In fact, within the Ontario College of Teachers’ advisory document on electronic communications and social media, once again contradictions abound:

Electronic communication and social media create new options for extending and enhancing education (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011: 3).
However:

Maintain your professional persona by communicating with students …through established education platforms (ibid: 6).

The established educational platforms did not include social media. However, advice is still given for deviating from the “established platforms” and using social networks:

Notify parents/guardians before using social networks for classroom activities. Let them know about the platforms you use in your class to connect with students… (ibid: 6).

This was complicated because teachers were instructed to:

Decline student-initiated “friend” requests and do not issue “friend” requests to students (ibid, 6).

This meant that there could be no social networking contact between students and teachers, regardless of the confusing advise that had been given regarding incorporating it into classrooms, and advising parents. Lacking social media contact with students seemed to negate the further advice to:

model the behaviour you expect to see online from your students (ibid: 6).

Contradictory instructions and inconsistent policies demonstrate the inability to respond to digital convergence in formal education uniformly, not simply in the classroom, but throughout the administrative chain also. This may be a product of the contradictory situation within which schools find themselves. They must respond to both the ubiquity of social media which does not filter information, whilst at the same time attempting to protect their staff and students from unfiltered information: they
are expected to simultaneously engage with, and prevent, convergence in the classroom.

1.6 Responding through digital civics

While traditional educational philosophies seem to emphasize the importance of teacher led control over the classroom environment, and isolation from the “outside world” (a place inherently full of unarticulated, yet heavily implied dangers seen in technologically determinist arguments such as in Postman, [1993], or through concerns for child online safety as discussed in Sharples et al. [2009]) the convergence inherent to digital technologies, and particularly social networking services, forcibly permeates the sequestered classroom and insists upon broader interaction. This is because the nature of these digitally convergent technologies is interconnectedness (Muller, 1999: 11; Floridi, 2009c): as long as students have a device to access it, information access does not stop at the door of the classroom. This information ubiquity can only increase given the growing production activity focused on “The Internet of Things” (Gubbi et al., 2013), in which physical objects (such as buildings, cars, or clothing) become part of the network of information sharing.

This sequestered education method is also at odds with an established and respected approach to education espoused by John Dewey that suggests “experiential education” involving the “real world”: “…if I were asked to name the most needed of all reforms in the spirit of education, I should say: 'Cease conceiving of education as mere preparation for later life, and make it the full meaning of the present life’”
(Dewey, 1893). Yet the policies suggested by educational administrations do not seem to provide consistent guidance, nor do they strongly encourage open digital convergence with the outside world. Consequently, preparing the classroom to handle such interactions has become a widely discussed topic in educational scholarship.¹³

This research promotes a model of digital civics education as an educational response to cope with the inevitable permeation of the classroom by digitally convergent technologies, and recognises that digital civics must incorporate both civics and ethics education to be successful. This is because the question of teaching students to utilise digitally convergent technologies responsibly (which act as a conduit for social media), (or with deference to themselves and their fellow human beings) entails both ethics and civics education. That is, questions of behaviour, specifically questions of the impact of one’s behaviour on others, fall into a category of ethical enquiry due to their engagement with codes of conduct, ideas about personal responsibility, and even reliance on moral principles. They also belong in a category of civics because of their implications on the education of future citizens. The ethical behaviours students will enact, both in the classroom, and later as citizens, has raised numerous questions (Silverstone, 2004; Borba, 2016; Turkle, 1997). These include (though by no means are restricted to) concerns over how young people treat one another, such as cyber-bullying (Bannink et al., 2014; Bonanno & Hymel, 2013; Smith et al., 2008); their exposure to graphic materials of a sexual or violent nature, and the subsequent behavioural impacts of this (Livingstone and Smith, 2014; Ringrose et al., 2012, DeLisi et al, 2013); and their ability to regulate

¹³ There are endless discussions in this area, from considering the direction we should take, such as in Greenhow et al. (2009); or designing for the internet of things as in Zhu (2016); to speculation about the use of gaming technologies in Prensky (2006) and blended learning approaches in Yang (2015); to concern about coping with cyberbullying and unwanted negative behaviours (Festl & Quandt, 2014).
their own behaviour effectively (van Deursen at al., 2015; Byron, 2008). The widespread appeal of the subject of the ethical behaviour of young people and its societal impact in the popular media also demonstrates its interest to the wider public (such as Tapscott’s populist work “Growing up Digital” (1998), and Dr. Phil’s feature of the Rehtaeh Parson’s case in 2013 on his talk show). Meanwhile, in academic and educational circles, robust discussions can be noted in research from the MacArthur Foundation (Jenkins et al. 2006), Turkle (1997), and boyd (2008). The ethical challenges documented in the digital educational environment suggest the necessity of incorporating ethics into digital civics education. The form of ethics that should be utilised in digital civics education, however, is another broad question that requires addressing. Of the systems of ethics that might be addressed, I will suggest a form of virtue ethics, due to its suitability for the information environment, particularly its ability to coincide with the self-regulatory properties preferred in the infosphere, a point I explore below.

Citizenship and how the citizen is understood and expected to behave is crucial to the development of any society (Janoski, 1998; Banks, 1997). Civics education ideally serves to educate and prepare citizens to take their place in the world and exercise their individual power (such as can be seen in numerous educational curricula; the Atlantic Canada Social Studies curriculum for example, states its aim to “develop as responsible citizens” [Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2006: 6]). But it is a politically charged discipline, with little agreement about what citizenship includes, or how it might develop in the future. For example, numerous scholars and theorists (as well as members of the unschooling movement14)

14 Unschooling rejects compulsory state education as the primary means of learning. The movement includes notable persons such as John Holt, John Taylor Gatto, and Ken Robinson.
have identified the political conflicts of interest of civics education as a means of continuing or furthering a specific establishment (Chomsky, 2003; Gatto, 1992). This complicates any discussion of civics education, as a decision must be made as to whether citizenship education is to function as an aid to self-actualising the potential of the individual to contribute to the well-being of society, or whether it functions as a guarantor of compliance with government objectives (Gatto, 1992). The difference between these systems can be viewed in terms of whether behaviours spring from internal (the individual) or external (a governing body) authority, and becomes a question of who or what regulates a citizen’s behaviour. Indeed, the contentious role of civics education is acknowledged by Osler and Starkey: “Since citizenship is a contested concept, education for citizenship is potentially a site of debate and controversy.” (Osler and Starkey, 2003: 244).

A further complication for policy makers and educators alike, is the speed of technological change which makes anticipating the education landscape extremely difficult. Consequently, a complex series of questions face teachers as they attempt to develop responses to citizenship education in the digital age because there is no clear understanding of what the society inhabited by future citizens will look like. As Danielle Allen observes "habits of citizenship begin with how citizens imagine their political world” (Allen, 2004:4). But while this suggests that these pre-imagined ideas are free to be shaped as desired in the present (becoming the structure informing the development of civic habits), this can prove equally constraining if these imagined ideas are adhered to too rigidly in the presentation of new or contradictory information, as the digitally convergent world develops. The dissonance between expectation and reality in such circumstances can prove injurious to both person and
political process: to person, if their potential to cope with the crisis of realising this contradiction is limited; and to political process, if unable to take account of this difference and change course with the necessary alacrity. Because the future is, as yet, unknowable, a malleable framework is required; one that provides civic participants with the tools to function in their political world, and the basis to formulate healthy habits, in a way that is not restrictively structured. Reducing concepts of citizenship to their most fundamental level means engaging with the foundational concepts of civics in the western tradition. Such concepts are to be found in the works of Plato, who develops the roots of political philosophy, and upon whom, the basis of civic discourse underpinned by ethics in the western tradition is established (Lane, 2014). As will be argued in chapter 3, the work of Plato provides philosophical resources invaluable to formulate ethical responses in the infosphere.

Digital convergence already seems to be changing the national landscape and reshaping the bounds of what is defined as our society,\(^{15}\) blurring the distinction between what we consider public and private information, and presenting dissonance between formerly accepted civic boundaries, and the citizenship of the future. Is citizenship a national or international concept, and could new concepts of citizenship threaten traditional allegiances to the nation state?\(^{16}\) And how should the education of civics in a digital world be approached? Should educators be preparing students to exist not only as citizens of a country, but citizens of a continental, or even a global society?\(^{17}\) If so, then we must be prepared that “it is to be expected that the nature of

\(^{15}\) For an in-depth discussion of this see Floridi, 2009a.

\(^{16}\) The 2016 UK referendum on EU membership highlights this, as many young people identified themselves as ‘citizens of the world’, insinuating that their loyalty to the UK was secondary to their allegiance to Europe or the wider globe.

\(^{17}\) Given NASA’s plan to launch a colonization mission to Mars (and numerous other international organizations\(^{17}\)) do we become Universal citizens? For at least 2 generation raised on Gene Roddenberry’s televised vision of a society across the cosmos, it is at least conceivable
global citizenship… is going to be almost inevitably complex and controversial” (Davies & Pike, 2009: 62). Indeed, the issue of developing models for democratic education and intercultural dialogue that reduce conflict and foster greater understanding between those of differing faiths and ethnicities is a complex challenge explored by the European Council (CM/Rec[2010]7), an approach Charles Ess suggests can be approached through a global information ethics, for which virtue ethics is a “strong candidate” (Ess, 2010b:115).

With so many questions and complexities surrounding citizenship and digital technologies, educating about civic or behavioural conduct in regards to digital media in the digital age lacks conceptual clarity (a problem I explore in chapters 2 and 3); with inconsistent policies, and incompatible ideas inside and outside of the classroom. Digital civics education that addresses civic and ethical behaviour would be assisted by a consistent philosophical approach, and a model for instruction demonstrating that approach: one which is grounded solidly in an understanding of the nature of the digital age environment; and could provide a useful guide as to how such education might take place. This work will address this issue, providing conceptual clarity by elaborating a conceptual framework for digital civics pedagogy followed by a practical pedagogical model for digital civics, grounded in insights into the ethical and behavioural philosophies of developing citizens as illustrated in a digital ethnography, and thus providing examples that might be further applied in digital civics educational contexts.18

18 The area of digital ethnography and young people has enjoyed widespread appeal. The work of danah boyd specifically has received widespread attention (See: http://digitalyouth.ischool.berkeley.edu/report). However, the ethnographic framework utilised in this research has been supported by the use of innovative live performance initiatives, and the employment of recursive abstraction as an analytical tool; a methodology with roots in psychological behavioural study, but new to digital behavioural education study.
1.7 Adopting a philosophical underpinning

Previous work has approached the problem of civic and digital education issues from a number of perspectives: from de Sola Pool’s concerns to preserve freedom (1983), to critical literacy skills as a means of enhancing societal participation (Livingstone, 2004), to Jenkins’ discussion of participatory democracy (Jenkins, 2006a, Jenkins et al., 2009) to dystopian concerns of the societal consequences of technology (Tenner, 1997). Many of these philosophies hold differing, and sometimes diametrically opposing views, such as Negroponte and Papert’s constructivist approach (Negroponte, 2006; Papert, 2006) (discussed below in 1.10) of leaving children with technology, as opposed to Neil Postman’s (1993) pessimistic technological determinism communicated by the Ontario College of Teachers (2011), making it difficult for educators and administrators to arrive at a consensus regarding which policies to implement. The continually changing landscape of digital technologies has also meant that philosophies and practises which are useful in one scenario (such as banning the use of social media sites), are no longer of use when new technological developments occur (such as shrinking technologies which allow the presence of these sites via mobile phones). And while attempts are often made to implement practical strategies at the tertiary level of education (Saklofske et al., 2012; Provençal, 2002) or at the primary level of education (Lirenman, 2013), implementation at secondary level seems, while present, considerably less frequent (perhaps due to the concerns over student autonomy and lack of control when dealing with teenagers and the aforementioned litigious fears). For while studies into the habits of teenagers online in open social networks take place (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Ito et al., 2010; Byron, 2008; boyd, 2007;
Turkle, 1997), educational practises on the ground in secondary schools shy away from using open social networks (for fear of litigation or exploitation issues).

Deciding upon which philosophical approach to take should ideally incorporate a number of factors: such as compatibility with a classroom environment (something that can be readily implemented, appreciating that there are legitimate safety and litigation concerns in schools); understanding of the changes occurring due to technology and the nature of convergence, particularly over a long historical period which allows current changes in human self-understanding to be contextualised; and given the requirement in digital civics education to incorporate aspects of ethics education, it would be useful to see a philosophical approach discussed in the context of ethics education (something that naturally lends itself to the investigation of ethics and civics).

An emergent body of academic work on this subject, which addresses these points specifically, is the work of Charles Ess on “Digital Media Ethics” (2009), which grounds itself within the work of Luciano Floridi’s philosophy of information to address digital ethics issues. It is also worth noting that the work of Jason Ohler on “Digital Community, Digital Citizen” (2010) also makes reference to Floridi’s infosphere and seeks to discuss practical pre-tertiary classroom issues. Certainly then, these works share some important characteristics with this research and provide further support for the use of Floridi’s Philosophy of Information. These works are of specific interest given their: use of Philosophy of Information and infosphere as a means of describing and understanding the digital age environment (as I shall explore in chapter 2); historical context to formulate an educational understanding for digital civics or digital ethics education (as I shall discuss in chapter 3); and development of
pedagogical responses to ethical and behavioural issues arising in digital citizenship (as I describe in chapter 4). This research further seeks to contribute to this field by: (1) presenting a new model for digital civics pedagogy encompassing social media and live performance for secondary aged students; (2) incorporating social networking in school for the specific purpose of developing greater convergence with the community in education; (3) and observing a set of organically occurring ethics with similarity to virtue ethics, in the digital environment which I will refer to as “virtuel ethics” (in chapter 6).

The use of the philosophy of information and the work of Luciano Floridi as a philosophical underpinning in approaching issues of digital media ethics and digital citizenship has proven a useful tool for both Ess (2009) and Ohler (2010), who both focus on the practical applications of this philosophical work in formal education settings. It allows discussions of civic education to take place within a context that makes sense of the digital age transitions occurring in the global community. Consequently, this dissertation explores digital civics education through a lens of the philosophy of information.

Both Ess and Ohler also seek to contextualise the environment in which civic interaction takes place, appreciating the over-arching historical as well as philosophical contexts of the infosphere, giving an extremely targeted insight into the issues of ethical behaviour occurring in civic relationships in the digital age. This approach is not seen in all educational materials, philosophies, or methods of instruction pertaining to the management of digital technologies and behaviour in the classroom. While a myriad of conflicting ideas seems to abound in policy regarding digital civic and ethical education philosophy, the opposite problem exists in
formulating historical context for digital civics instruction. Interestingly, only a handful of contemporary scholars in media and digital media education (such as Ess) look back further than that 1900s to create a context for understanding the great societal challenges. Instead, many scholars focus on the unfolding events of the late 20th century which they view as impacting on the world’s entry into the digital age: Buckingham points to 1930s America, before considering the later events of the coming decades; Heins and Cho (2003), Carey (1998), and Barry Duncan (in Heins & Cho, 2003), consider the work of Anderson and Ploghoft, or Culkin and McLuhan in the 1960s and 1970s. But the work of those individuals from the period of the 1960s and 70s, such as McLuhan, consider far older materials, such as the ancient world, to build context for their work. In fact, history played an important role in understanding the human’s relationship to technology for a group of scholars who became known as media ecologists. Growing out of the New York and Toronto schools, and highlighting a Canadian and American connection in research on media literacy with a view to understanding its implication on society, media ecology arose as a movement to more fully contextualise media; to be able to comprehend the complexity of the environment which surrounded it and with which it interacted, exploring media as environments (Strate, 2006; Ross, 2009). It functioned in growing recognition of the presence and consumption of media, its impact on society and a concern that media had an increasing role in constructing people’s worldview in a time of increasing technological prevalence. (Such aspects of media were even outlined by the Ontario Government [Duncan, 1989]). Although largely a 20th century movement, such questions remain prevalent in new media and thus the

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19 Such connections can also be noted through the shared work of Canadian, McLuhan and the American, Culkin.

20 For more on media ecology please see: http://www.media-ecology.org/
development of ideas surrounding morality and ethics in the realm of digital media can be seen within media ecology (and will be discussed in chapter 3 in reference to an historical underpinning for digital civics).

This leaves a need for a contemporary historical re-examination of the impact of ancient and classical historical societies on the digital age; a point I will broach is chapter 3. (Such a discussion has begun, with scholars such as Floridi (2009a) and Ess (2009), and also ideas presented by Coyne (1999) and Davis (2004) who consider the legacy of the classical world, but because the digital age is often considered unique, due to the novel nature of the digital technologies involved, much previous history is not often incorporated.)

When applying this philosophical and historical context to issues in citizenship and ethical behaviour, Ess demonstrates appreciation of global systems of regulation. In considering citizenship in a global metropolis where communication will cross cultural boundaries, he suggests the use of ethical pluralism. “And so, ethical pluralism provides the possibility of a global ethics made up of shared norms and values while preserving the essential differences that define cultural identities” (Ess, 2009: 54). Interestingly, this view of pluralism is one he shares with the Classical Scholar David Ulansey (2006) and, more historically, with the Ancient Historian, Herodotus, in “The Histories”, demonstrating the longstanding usefulness of cultural pluralism in dealing with civic issues, and also the further potential for ancient source material to provide helpful approaches to modern problems, which will be explored in chapter 3. As Bynum observes:

As Wiener could argue, given his understanding of human nature and the purpose of a human life, we can embrace and welcome a rich variety of cultures and practices while still advocating
adherence to “the great principles of justice”. Those principles offer a cross-cultural foundation for ethics, even though they leave room for immense cultural diversity (Bynum, 2016).

Further, in discussing ‘pros hen’ (Aristotle’s “towards one”) pluralism where Ess strikes a balance between these “shared norms” while “preserving… irreducible difference” (Ess, 2006: 215), he further uses Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy to formulate connections between ethics in the West, and Confucian thought in the East, suggesting the potential success of ethical pluralism for a global information ethics (Ess, 2006). Through ethical pluralism, Ess suggests the acquisition and application of moral virtues, namely: humility, understanding, compassion and forgiveness (Ess, 2009) as a means of regulating and educating in the digital age environment.

Reflecting on my personal experiences as a schoolteacher, employing this notion of virtue in education was not unknown to me. As a former educator, I had also noticed that broaching behavioural and ethical issues with my own students, raised by their use of digital technologies and digital social networking in the classroom, had frequently led to discussions of the intrinsic goodness or badness of behaviours as opposed to behaviours enacted based on school rules. I would often find students texting during class, only to discover they were communicating with a parent. In their opinion, rules prohibiting connection to their parents were simply ‘bad’ rules, and deserved to be ignored. In another interesting incident, two ‘straight A’ students informed me outright they had ‘backdoored’ into a private administrative communications channel housed on an education board server. They suggested they had done no harm, citing educational purposes, using the weekend (when there would be lower server demand anyway), and merely breaking a rule that was inherently unfair. However, they were angered at that intrinsic wrongness of the board: that
technology intended for educational purposes was being withheld from students and restricted to use by board members, who wasted it because they didn’t know how to operate it so never used it. Further, because they felt the board had failed in its educational duties to provide adequate facilities for students, the students had been forced, in what had been an urgent situation (communicating internationally to another group of students with whom they were working) to break school rules. To the students, rules only seemed to be good rules if they were intrinsically right: if they were virtuous. Perhaps, this is unsurprising, given the insights of Ess:

Virtue ethics is enjoying an important renaissance in (what was once called) “the West.” This renaissance is both significant in its own right and in light of the potential role virtue ethics might play in a shared and global information ethics… virtue ethics thus promises to serve as a critical ethical resource for our developing a shared but pluralistic global information and computing ethics (Ess, 2010a: 296).

Ess’s ideas provide a strong and logical foundation for the employment of virtue ethics in response to issues of digital convergence in educational settings. His argument not only identifies the resurgence of interest in virtue ethics (Athanassoulis, 2004) of which I will make further note in chapter 3, but further advocates its significance at this historical time. Interestingly, the manner in which ethical questions were addressed seemed compatible with virtue ethics, for the participants who took part in the research project I outline in chapter 4. Ess further observes the potential of virtue ethics as a critical ethical resource. The ethnographic data presented in chapters 5 and 6 will suggest not only support for Ess’s work, but additionally discuss an underlying ethical structure, presented as ‘virtuel ethics’ in which behaviour steeped in notions of virtue and virtue ethics specific to the infosphere occurred in the participant’s interactions. It is of value then to explore this
self-regulatory system and its potential in teaching ethical behaviour. Certainly, the use of virtue ethics in exploring ethics, specifically within the capacity of an environment concerning play is an emerging area. Recognition must be given to the work of Sicart (2009), who draws from Floridi’s information philosophy to consider ethics, but does so in the application of research on video gaming. Sicart also appreciates, like Ess, the value of virtue ethics, in ethical research in the infosphere. Despite his focus on video games, as opposed to the social networking and pedagogy central to this study, Sicart’s work certainly demonstrates that there is precedent for employing virtue ethics together with play in such research.

1.8 Teaching ethics in a self-regulatory framework

The question of effective education for ethical civic behaviour and interaction then, should engage with the use of ethics as a regulatory system, as opposed to solely traditional methods of rules and legal frameworks. This is a system of self-regulation that places responsibility on the user (or individual) to take accountability for themselves and their own actions. Self-regulation in this work is by no means synonymous with no regulation or doing away with the laws and policies that assist in policing or monitoring the digital environment. Rather, it is concerned with managing one’s own behaviours through a process of critical self-reflection and response. The social psychologist Baumeister described four aspects of this process which include: setting standards of desirable behaviour; motivating oneself to meet those standards; monitoring of one’s own behaviour; and the willpower necessary to do so (Baumeister et al., 2007). That is, it involves a process of appreciating what
appropriate behaviours are, and enacting those behaviours through a process of sustained self-evaluation.

These self-regulatory behaviours (or lack of them) can have legal consequences, but in this work, self-regulation is not intended to refer to a legal approach (as described in the work of Hardy [1994], or Pridgen [1997]). Rather, the litigious consequences of failing to self-regulate behaviour is one reason that teaching self-regulation for life online is advantageous. The regulatory means for digital interactions are currently transitioning and there is a growing focus on placing responsibility into the hands of the user in the online environment (Penman & Turnbull, 2007). In such circumstances, individual citizens may find themselves culpable for actions they may have felt were morally “wrong”, but from which they expected to be legally protected. (For instance, in the cases of the prosecution of ordinary citizens for illegally downloading copyright protected material; or the inability to prevent the broader circulation of personal photographs not intended for a public audience). For some time, the weaknesses and problems of established law and policy as the sole means of regulation in the online environment has been shown as inadequate (Wadwha, 2014; Reding, 2009; Nahikian, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Post, 1996) suggesting that citizens of the infosphere cannot rely on legal processes alone to protect them. The acknowledgement that citizens may be culpable, or fail to appreciate their own legal vulnerability suggests that life in the infosphere requires self-regulation from its citizens: that it is a self-regulatory environment (in the behavioural sense).

There are other concerns regarding the inability of legislation to fully take account of changing societal norms and beliefs that self-regulation in the digital
world may help to address. One widely distributed argument suggests that current processes of regulation are insufficient to ensure the preservation of culture, and indeed, humanity (Trewavas, 2008; Keen, 2007; Silverstone, 2004; Lessig, 2000; Postman, 1993). The inability of codified systems of law to move as swiftly, or function as flexibly, as necessary to address these concerns suggests the need for systems of self-regulation to support or enhance the effectiveness of governmental regulation. In encouraging citizens to take greater responsibility for their actions and to formulate greater awareness of their actions on the community, self-regulation may prove useful in assisting this endeavour.

Certainly, there is an ethical argument too: that self-regulation instils personal and civic responsibility, and this is, intrinsically “good” (a positive civic aim) and relies on the development of moral virtues. That, through its emphasis on self-awareness and responsibility, it encourages not merely rule following as a means of avoiding punishment, but genuine engagement with the meaning of one’s own actions and their consequences. This process may allow it to move across traditional country boarders and bridge cultural differences. The media scholar, Silverstone argued that “an understanding of what it is to be human is, or certainly should be, the central question underlying, and in the final analysis regulating, the development of the mediated world…” (Silverstone, 2004). His words are evocative of Ess’s work on ethical pluralism, presenting notions of global interactions regulated by commonly held human beliefs and the application of moral virtues (Ess, 2010a; 2010b).

Requiring citizens to become increasingly ethically responsible for their own digital interactions means they must be educated to understand the ethical considerations and moral concerns inherent in their digital power; they must develop
their own ethical philosophy about the digital world. As the former commissioner for Information Society and Media for the European Commission, Vivienne Reding observed: “Everyone (old and young) needs to get to grips with the new digital world in which we live. For this, continuous information and education is more important than regulation.”

Educational initiatives then should take into account the necessity for self-regulation to prepare citizens for the behaviours expected in the digital world. As the division between the online and offline worlds deteriorates, the world becomes increasingly interactive and informationally connected (Floridi, 2009c). Eventually interconnectivity will be ever-present (Floridi, 2007). It will not be possible to draw a distinction between the school environment and the rest of society. The bubble of protective environment provided by a classroom isolated from the rest of the community and teachers who regulate the flow of information in their own classrooms may no longer be possible, nor even desirable. Currently, much of the formal citizenship training in school curricula focuses on following rules (Wong, 2012; Chomsky, 1989), policed within the closed school setting. However, a self-regulatory environment would require skills in independent decision-making, critical thinking, and an ability to actively apply a personal ethical philosophy to the world.

It appears then, the most effective means of teaching self-regulation is to place students into a supported self-regulatory environment, where their interactions can be monitored in a general way (not as a means of interference, but to provide

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opportunity for self-motivated reflexivity), and where they have the opportunity to assess their own behaviour through a series of interactions that mimic the interactions of their own life online. Indeed, such a constructivist approach to self-regulated learning is espoused by Rieber, who, in discussing the use of microworlds in education (discussed further below), describes three fundamental principles for such self-regulated learning: intrinsic motivation, metacognitive activity, and behavioural activity (Rieber, 1996). The model presented in chapters 4 through 6 introduces and demonstrates such a project; it is intended as a potential for inclusion into the formal education environment. However, this would necessitate a full integration of technologies in the classroom, specifically those that engage with the world outside the classroom, such as social networking.

1.9 The groundwork for introducing digital technologies

There are contrasting ideologies and philosophies of education when it comes to ICTs. While the preceding discussion of challenges to digital citizenship education presents difficulties and challenges toward integrating digital media, such as social networking, into the classroom environment, there is also ample precedent and research to recommend robust engagement with digitally convergent and social technologies in the formal educational environment – even if particular models and examples are absent – which I shall now present. The international community, pioneering educators, and numerous scholars have argued vocally for the inclusion of digital technologies in the educational environment, as well as for the increasing requirement of educational preparation for life as citizens in a world mediated by
digital communications. This can be seen in the media literacy research prevalent in the 1980s, and also later work on digital literacy.

The global intention to engage with and teach about new mediums of communication for the purpose of active citizenship was presented in the early 1980s. The Grunwald Declaration, which Buckingham calls “a succinct and powerful rationale that is of enduring relevance” (Buckingham, 2001: 2), recognised the need and called for action in creating understanding and developing media literacy, and invoked notions of active citizenship. “Rooted in a response to a media-rich environment and where social processes of communication are increasingly mediated,” (O’Neill & Barnes, 2008: 20) the Declaration stated: “The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizen’s active participation in society” (Grunwald Declaration, 1982). Media literacy and digital literacy share some intersecting history and similarities (O’Neill, 2008), and it is here in the media literacy debate that issues of civics as they pertain to new media and education are raised on the international platform, and accepted as critical to societal success. Such international emphasis on media and information literacy as they pertain to democratic principles persists, and can be noted in the more recent Paris Declaration which recognises that “continuous innovation in research and practice for media and information literacy” is required (Paris Declaration, 2014).

In further exploring the impact of the Grunwald Declaration, Buckingham suggests concurrent media literacy discourse in the UK began to concern itself with such notions of media education (Buckingham, 2001), noting that media literacy entered the UK agenda in the late 1980s, but that only more recently have educators
realised the importance of teaching using a variety of types of media (Buckingham, 2003). During this time, the work of Len Masterman (Masterman, 1980, 1985) developed discussion regarding the potential uses of media literacy as a tool of empowerment for individuals both politically and as a means of understanding media messages (Buckingham, 1990, 1998).

The integration of new media into education to enhance civics was also seen in the media literacy movement in North America. “Robert Kubey has argued strongly for the linking of media studies in schools with civics and social studies” (Kubey 2004 in O’Neill, 2008: 26) stating that “in a representative democracy, people must be educated in all forms of contemporary mediated expression and well beyond the print media” (Kubey 2004: 69). The trend could be seen in both Canada (Anderson, 1980), and the United States (Blachard & Christ, 1993). By 1985, media literacy advocate John Pungente had insisted that Canadian authorities mandate the teaching of media studies (Kubey, 1998). The widespread adoption of media studies into classrooms is one indication of the ways in which education took account of the changing media landscape, and the prevalence of new media in contemporary culture.

By the 1990s, however, the protectionist attitudes previously discussed as having a detrimental effect on the opportunity to integrate digitally convergent media into the educational environment had already taken hold of the educational establishment22. More recently, there has been a wealth of literature pertaining to the digital in the classroom environment, including for example: the presence of and difficulties with technology in schools (Judge, 2004); strategies presented by teachers to anticipate and work with technological change (Warlick, 2004, 2007); the

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22 Evidenced through the discussions of inoculation in Christ & Potter (1998) and the popularity of scholars supporting protectionism, such as Neil Postman.
uniqueness of technologies such as digital video to assist in learning (Andrews, 2000; Yerrick et al. 2001); and the design of a digital classroom (Wheeler & John, 2008).

All of these materials assist in the approach to digital technology and provide diverse responses to the challenges raised in the classroom environment, many of them even provide insights from “on the ground”. But predominantly, they focus on the traditional barriers of a closed classroom environment—suggesting that digital technologies continue to remain outside the formal classroom environment. As Jenkins notes: “Many of the best ways kids are learning are locked out of schools” (Jenkins, 2006b: 00:21). This is perhaps the most crucial (and detrimental) point affecting digital technologies in the classroom—that engagement with them is prohibited due to the previously discussed fears surrounding their use. As such, developing, or practising digital civics education in a practical way that incorporates the realities of the digital environment has not been plausible, and a dearth of literature, particularly regarding social networking in schools, was not present at the implementation of this research project, and indeed this lack of models for social networking as a means civic and ethical education prompted this work.

1.10 Introducing Social Networking into the classroom

More recently however, projects encouraging cooperative learning and the use of social networking have made strides forward, though still not necessarily in classrooms.

For this research, I use danah boyd and Nicole Ellison’s useful definition of ‘social networking’:
We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (boyd & Ellison, 2007: 211).

The work of McGonigal (2011) for example – who creates cooperative games that require the social networking environment – provides a model for learning and enacting civic behaviours, but that work was not aimed at formal education. Some of what is contestably the most interesting work in this field has come from teachers ‘on the ground’ enacting changes, sometimes controversially, such as the two Facebook projects in schools implemented in Saskatchewan in 2010.\(^{23}\) Comments from graduate students on blogs and newspaper articles seem to indicate that while Facebook is frowned upon by many administrators, in Canada at least, it was organically making its way into classrooms\(^{24}\), although still with great difficulty. In June 2013, a primary school teacher made headlines when she utilised Twitter as part of a global math lesson (Learnitin, 2013), the newsworthiness demonstrating the novelty of social networking in the classroom. Since that time, there have been relevant communications on social media and learning in secondary classrooms (Marciano, 2015; Fewkes & McCabe, 2012), though no large-scale uptake of social media practises in school environments. In chapter 4, I will discuss some of the practical learning projects which inspired the formation of my own model for digital

\(^{23}\) Reports of these projects were made by the CBC in 2010. The capability of the medium as a tool of pedagogy lost focus as it was over-run by concerns and fears about the effect of the technology on students and the legal vulnerability of educators. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/story/2010/09/02/sk-schools-facebook-1008.html

\(^{24}\) For example see teacher and grad student Danielle Stinson’s blog: http://daniteachtech.wordpress.com/2010/09/29/cbc-news-saskatchewan-sask-schools-grapple-with-facebook/
civics in pedagogy (including the Acadia Advantage project (discussed by Provencal [2002], and module based learning at Morinville Community High School)\(^\text{25}\)).

There are, as discussed, reasons that social networking has taken time to filter through the formal educational environment. Fears around the privacy of teachers, or their litigious vulnerability given deteriorating boundaries with students online (Seo, 2013), have unfortunately led to discussions regarding the need to prevent social networking between educators and pupils and the implementation of strict policy preventing student-teacher interaction (one example is Ontario's ban on student-teacher Facebook interaction in 2011 [Ontario College of Teachers, 2011] though similar bans exist in other countries, such as the UK). If social networking is banned in the educational environment, or between teachers and students, then it is obviously not being integrated into the curricula, nor is it being addressed as a civic educational issue. Social media have vast liberating potential as an educational vehicle, but only if they can be allowed to exist in the formal education environment.

Online, in the digital realm, organisations such as cultural groups, educational groups, and even corporations all converge creating an environment in which students interact to access and process information. For example, a corporate body like iTunesU or YouTube can be used to post educational lectures from a Cambridge professor- such as Alan MacFarlane has done.\(^\text{26}\) Blocking YouTube not only prevents students from accessing a corporate interested site, but also the wealth of educational materials it possesses: including the numerous educational projects occurring in the

\(^{25}\) These initiatives both provided the type of digital interaction required for this research, utilising social networking, digital media, and creative teaching. The Acadia Advantage program has received widespread recognition, the work at MCHS has not received the same coverage. As a student who took part in both of these initiatives and experienced their success first hand, I have drawn from their convergent educational nature. Both initiatives are explored later in chapter 4.

\(^{26}\) For Alan MacFarlane’s Youtube site see: [http://www.youtube.com/user/ayabaya](http://www.youtube.com/user/ayabaya)
informal educational environment which take account of new technologies and forms of communication. More recently, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) began offering university courses free online making knowledge available to anyone who was interested, but aimed at the university sector. Similar initiatives exist from smaller organizations, such as Udacity, and while the courses are open to anyone who is interested, there is no acknowledgement from the formal pre-tertiary education system for this learning, if anything it distracts from the study time necessary to finish homework or prepare for school examinations. Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs), also utilise social networking to develop communities of learners, and initiatives addressing the use of Facebook as a means of preparing students for lecture based learning have also been undertaken (Dyson et al., 2015), but again, these initiatives are aimed at tertiary level. Even the research into utilising the virtual reality platform “Second Life” is aimed predominantly toward usage in the university sector (Foster, 2007), and while its usefulness as a tool in secondary education has been proposed (Dalsgaard, 2016), and discussed (Clay Shirkey, Beth Coleman, and Henry Jenkins, held open blog discussions on their personal blogs on the topic in 2007), there have yet to be many adoptions of the tool formally acknowledged by the educational administrative community. Indeed, “findings, based on an analysis of PISA data, tell us that, despite the pervasiveness of information and communication technologies (ICT) in our daily lives, these technologies have not yet been as widely adopted in formal education” (OECD, 2015:15).

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27 See http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm
28 See https://www.udacity.com/
29 See http://www.mooc-list.com/
Other less formal initiatives include the use of Skype to learn languages, such as the project hosted at The Mixxer\(^{30}\) where users can find partners internationally to learn and practise new language skills. This provides an opportunity that could revolutionise linguistic instruction in secondary, or even primary education, if it was allowed into the classroom. In January of 2012, two years after the research project discussed in this thesis, a paper titled, “Online Social Networks as Formal Learning Environments: Learner Experiences and Activities” (Veletsianos & Navarrete, 2012) highlighted the usefulness of social networks in providing support in formal distance education, but this was still within a graduate level course. Arguably, one of the most provocative examples of effective education and ethics via social networking comes from the hacking community. A community of digital interaction which exchanges all sorts of information digitally, assisting those learning with free user-support, and guided by a set of contemporary liberalist principles (Coleman, 2012):

> to embrace historical as well as present- day moral and political commitments and sensibilities that should be familiar to most readers: protecting property and civil liberties, promoting individual autonomy and tolerance, securing a free press, ruling through limited government and universal law, and preserving a commitment to equal opportunity and meritocracy… The principles… are also at play on the Internet and with computer hackers, such as those who develop free software. (Coleman, 2012:2).

A civic discourse is at play within these digital social communities, which not only promotes learning and access to knowledge, but also engages in a robust civic discourse adhering to a set of clearly defined ethical principles. The potential seems to exist then, for digital social networks to foster civic and ethic development through learning processes. The question remains, how this might be accomplished more formally and whether we currently understand how to support this sort of

development. In a 2010 interview, cultural anthropologist Mimi Ito observed that one of the missing aspects in education was how to support young people in the digital spaces they are using, which could have a potential impact on civic education:

I think the piece that we don’t currently have a real awareness that is shared or broad based about, is how we support kids engagement in the more messing around and geeking out space and this is the space that really has the opportunity to foster kids intellectual development, their civic engagement, their personal development, in really important ways and yet we haven’t really worked as educators or parents to proactively engage kids. (Ito, 2011: 03:33).

This research provides one potential solution to utilising the ‘messing around’ or ‘geeking out’ space and engages with the issue of social networking and new media, not only as educational tools for civics and ethics, but also in exploring the space ethnographically to provide further knowledge of the space to contribute to the broad-based awareness Ito identifies as a missing piece. Exploration of the fun space as a digital learning space has been explored by Rieber who suggests “the design of hybrid interactive learning environments” (Rieber, 1996: 43). Certainly, this research project, which utilises role playing interaction in a social networking environment as a learning space, seems to categorise as a “microworld” (Papert, 1981; Rieber, 1992) which utilises “simulation” (Alessi, 1988) as Rieber distinguishes. The use of the social networking environment (intended to engage students and allow them to explore situations for educational purposes) also shares ideas with Papert’s “knowledge machine” and “children’s machine” (Papert, 1994), and with the constructionist learning espoused by Papert (Papert & Harel, 1991) building on the foundation of Piaget’s constructivist theory of knowing (Glaserfeld, 1990). It also shares an educational ideology with Papert and Negroponte’s work on one laptop per child (Papert, 2006; Negroponte, 2006), in which students are expected to teach
themselves—a notion which supports the sort of self-regulatory behaviour expected in the digital age (as noted in 1.8). While sharing this constructivist approach however, this research differs from Negroponte and Papert’s work through its recognition of the importance of educational infrastructure, such as well trained teachers, and trained members of the public acting as educators, providing support (scaffolding) for learners: important factors for success in digital learning observed by Warscheur and Ames (Warscheur & Ames, 2010). This is further supported by Charles Ess, who, building on the work of Dreyfus (2001), expands on the notion of ‘embodiment’ to argue that students “will require teachers who incarnate the skills and wisdom that mark the highest levels of human accomplishment” (Ess, 2003:131). That is, as students develop toward higher levels of proficiency, they require the guidance and interaction with their teachers that allows for more subtle and intuitive lessons to be observed and absorbed, first hand (Dreyfus, 2001: 45). This is where education delivered solely online and without reference to an embodied professional falls short in supporting students, and why teachers who ‘incarnate’ skills are critical to successful education.

1.11 Responding to Context

Taking into account then, the challenges faced by media education in attempting to prepare students for ethically responsible participation as citizens of a digitally convergent society which I have discussed above, I consider the potential for the integration of social media into the classroom, I have just presented, as a solution to my research question.
In approaching the research, I have begun by contextualising the digital age educational environment. Commenting on the dissonance between 21st century digital convergence, and the industrial revolution model of education that prevails in traditional formal education settings, I have noted the inevitability of digital convergence to saturate the classroom environment despite attempts to prevent it. I have observed the challenges arising from digital convergence in schools including safeguarding fears or litigious consequences, and the complex role of teachers functioning in a landscape of inconsistent policy, and a blurring of boundaries that leaves them personally vulnerable. I have presented the value of employing virtue ethics and self-regulation as a means of meeting these challenges as part of a robust framework of digital civics and ethics education, appreciated within a philosophical underpinning of the philosophy of information. Finally, I have discussed the precedent for introducing digital technologies into the classroom, arguing the need for a model for digital civics pedagogy that can be actualised through the use of digital social networking sites.

To begin to create such a project which would present a model for pedagogy however, I needed to further understand the informational environment of interaction and the educational potential that existed within it. The following chapter will present my use and exploration of the work of philosopher Luciano Floridi, to explore the educational potential of interaction in an informational environment.
Chapter 2: A conceptual framework informed by the Philosophy of Information

“The information revolution is not about extending ourselves, but about re-interpreting who we are” (Floridi, 2008a: 6)

2.1 Floridi’s Philosophy of Information

Digital civics pedagogy requires a theoretically-informed ethical framework cognisant of the informational environment in which ethical interactions occur, in order to successfully establish itself. Reviewing the literature that will underpin this framework, this thesis adopts as its starting point a digital ethics perspective informed by the work of Charles Ess and Luciano Floridi, who ground notions of digital media ethics in the philosophy of information. This chapter will outline Luciano Floridi’s Philosophy of Information as a fundamental starting point for understanding the greater environment of the digital age, and the interactions that occur within it. While relating Floridi’s philosophical ideas, I will identify areas of digital or civic education that are impacted or influenced by this environment, in order to tailor this theoretical framework to the needs of this study.

A philosophical investigation is necessary because digital convergence and the digital age have produced such major transformation: the ‘information turn’ and its implications on human self-understanding, particularly of an ontological nature, raise important questions as to how behaviour, and specific to this work, ethical behaviour, will be affected. As Floridi states: “The information revolution is not about extending ourselves, but about re-interpreting who we are” (Floridi, 2008a: 6). As I stated in the beginning of chapter 1, the convergence present in the digital age produces philosophical implications that should be taken account of in forming educational methods. As Floridi puts it: “we will be in serious trouble, if we do not
take seriously the fact that we are constructing the new environment that will be inhabited by future generations” (Floridi, 2007: 8).

In order to underpin the ethical framework employed in this research comprehensively, it is necessary to explore its conceptual foundation. Consequently I explore three key themes in Floridi’s thought on information philosophy to understand the ways in which digital civic behaviour must be conducted responsibly and ethically for the good of the individual and society:

1. The nature of the digital environment in which behaviour takes place (The “infosphere”, or the nature of the abstract de-physicalized environment and the relationship between ethics and ontology);

2. How behaviour in the digital environment is understood as an integrated part of the human (Floridi’s “inforgs” and their interconnectivity);

3. The ways in which the digital mediates our civic behaviours resulting in unique forms of civic expression not previously possible (concepts of agency, both organic and artificial).

I begin by exploring the Philosophy of Information itself, which provides the grounding for the description of the “infosphere” (explained below in section 2.4) foundational to the research project in which young people’s civic and ethical behaviours in online contexts will be explored.

2.2 The Philosophy of Information

“And PI [philosophy of information] is the sort of approach we need to develop if we wish to tackle the challenges posed by such profound transformations” (Floridi, 2009a: 11)
The field of research in which computational and information-theoretic research in philosophy are undertaken has had several labels, such as cyberphilosophy, digital philosophy, computational philosophy, computers and philosophy, and so forth (see Floridi, 2002: 123). Floridi asserts that the best title for investigation in such research is the Philosophy of Information (See Floridi, 2002).

According to Floridi, the Philosophy of Information (hereafter PI) can be defined as

“the philosophical field concerned with:

a) the critical investigation of the conceptual nature and basic principles of information, including its dynamics, utilisation and sciences; and

b) the elaboration and application of information-theoretic and computational methodologies to philosophical problems” (Floridi 2002: 137).

The use of computers and the philosophical issues which arise from them are concerns dealt with in PI. Thus PI offers a useful theoretical and philosophical framework as it is concerned with many of the same problems raised by this research. The philosophy has had some limited criticism, for example, Harnad (2011) does not provide a favourable review of the theory, and Capurro (2008) disagrees with Floridi’s ontological definitions. Berkeley Philosopher, John Searle, in reviewing Floridi’s “The 4th Revolution” (Floridi, 2014a), in conjunction with Nick Bostrom’s “Superintelligence” (Bostrom, 2014) further states that both author’s work is “mistaken about the relations between consciousness, computation, information, cognition, and lots of other phenomena” (Searle, 2014). Writing for the Hedgehog Review, Communications professor, Ned O’Gorman noted that Searle argues “persuasively” but does not seem entirely convinced by his argument (O’Gorman, 2014). And in his own response to Searle’s review, Floridi corrects a number of factual errors made by Searle, foremost of which are Searle’s misattribution of the
fourth revolution to Floridi instead of Turing, and the suggestion that smart technologies are unrealistic AI (Floridi, 2014b).

But Searle’s views seem, at any rate, to be in the minority. Floridi’s work is already employed by digital education ethicists (such as Charles Ess), which, as previously stated, also makes it a useful approach from which to draw. Where Floridi differs from Charles Ess (and indeed, many other scholars in this area of ethics) is in his criticism of virtue ethics.31 While Floridi observes, “the essentially constructionist lesson taught by virtue ethics…is more important than ever before”. He also argues that the emphasis on the individual agent in virtue ethics renders it “intrinsically egopoietic” (Floridi, 2013: 164): that its focus on the individual agent leaves “only incidental regard to the enveloping community” (Floridi, 2010a: 15). That is, Floridi suggests virtue ethics does not adequately address the responsibilities of the individual agent to the surrounding community or environment and that this can lead to relativism and moral escapism.

This need not necessarily be the case. For example, virtues such as empathy, discussed in the ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982) (a feminist theory which incorporated virtues more commonly associated with archetypically female traits, such as care and benevolence, into the process of ethical decision-making and acting), affirm such a responsibility to others. And indeed, numerous scholars observe the usefulness of virtue ethics to respond to the challenges of contemporary society (such as: Ainley, 2017; Vallor, 2016; Peters & Roberts, 2015; Plaisance, 2013; Ess, 2010a; 2010b; Volkman, 2010; Sicart, 2009; Baker, 2008; Couldry, 2008; Foot, 2001; Nussbaum, 2000).

31 A criticism which became more pronounced several years after the pedagogical project undertaken in this research was enacted.
While this project takes the constructivist approach offered by virtue ethics, it does not discount the importance of the community, or surrounding environment. Rather, it supports the notion that virtue theories particularly those which incorporate ethics of care, provide a valuable tool in formulating a virtue ethics which is precisely not egopoetic. As will be discussed in chapter 3, the work of Shannon Vallor (2016) provides such insight into the exercise of virtues such as empathy, in the digital age.

It is further important to note that, Floridi’s work on the Philosophy of Information has formed an important part of policy initiatives regarding ICTs. His work chairing the Onlife Initiative\textsuperscript{32} for the European Commission for instance, further denotes his distinction within the field and relevance to an important and developing aspect of public policy.

Described by Floridi as a “mature discipline” with “unique topics”, “original methodologies” and “new theories” (Floridi, 2002: 124), PI privileges “information” over “computation” as computation is only one of the processes in which information is involved (Floridi, 2009a: 6). Its purpose is to:

\begin{quote}
    develop an integrated family of theories that analyse, evaluate and explain the various principles and concepts of information, their dynamics and utilization, giving special attention to systemic issues arising from different contexts of application and the interconnections with other key concepts in philosophy, such as knowledge, truth, meaning, reality and ethical values (Floridi, 2009a: 6).
\end{quote}

PI arose out of the tradition of the philosophy of Artificial Intelligence (hereafter AI). Research in the field of AI from the mid-1950s and Alan Turing’s paper “Computer Machinery and Intelligence” (1950) motivated computer scientists and philosophers to consider the effects of computation on humanity and

\textsuperscript{32} Floridi’s contribution to the Onlife Initiative on Hyperhistory and the Philosophy of Information Policies https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/luciano-floridi-0
philosophical debate (Torrence, 1984:11 in Floridi, 2002: 125). Such enquiry has led to an informational ontology and consequently “Philosophers have begun to address the new intellectual challenges arising from the world of information and the information society” (Floridi, 2002: 139). Further challenges arising from the world of information in educational environments have been outlined in chapter 1; the ubiquity of information, and the inefficacy of banning information technologies, for instance. The potential impact on educational philosophy should lead to a new educational model that demonstrates the convergence inherent to the infosphere, a contribution this work will present.

The computer revolution, or, as Floridi puts it, the “information turn”, has caused a transition in the way humanity views itself and its environment (Floridi, 2002: 140; Floridi, 2009a). The civic environment for which students were once prepared to participate has now altered so vastly that innovative approaches are necessary to prepare students for the world in which they will one day live, and indeed in which they already live. PI provides a theoretical framework within which questions can be posed; considering the relationship between our digital/informational world, our selves, and our interactions; speculating on the potential challenges of these interactions; and proposing potential outcomes and resolutions. These outcomes and resolutions can later be addressed in a practical sense of pedagogical implementation, however that will be evidenced in the methodology presented in chapter 4. For now, I will explore within the field of PI Floridi’s work on the fourth revolution, as it provides an opportunity to assess the extent of change and impact of communications technology and computerisation on society and human behaviour.
2.3 Floridi and the fourth revolution

“We are experiencing what may be described as a fourth revolution, in the process of dislocation and reassessment of humanity’s fundamental nature and role in the universe” (Floridi, 2012: 10).

The fourth revolution is the term applied by Floridi to the philosophical transition in self-understanding currently being experienced by humanity as a result of ICTs. (As noted in the previous chapter, such questions are also raised by media ecologists and as such, Floridi is well suited as a philosophical foundation in this sphere.) Such changes in self-understanding emerge when a philosophical dissonance provokes the need for a new perception of reality. This can occur when scientific discovery presents data contrary to that which challenges an accepted belief. There is something Derridean in this philosophy that helps Floridi’s Philosophy of Information consolidate well with media scholarship. Derrida’s notion of ‘free play’, in which the centric position of the human is philosophically displaced through the exploration of meaning (Derrida, 1966), complements Floridi’s philosophy, and makes Derrida’s philosophy a useful bridge between Floridi’s ideas on the ‘fourth revolution’ and the media scholarship of foundational authors such as McLuhan, whom Derrida also explores with reference to philosophical meaning making (even if predominantly with disdain) (Poster, 2010).

According to Floridi, there have been three such revolutions in self-understanding in recent history which have transformed our view of the world (extrovert) and of ourselves (introvert) and we are now undergoing a fourth.

33 Media ecologists (a media movement concerned with exploring the greater ecology of the media environment, have also noted trends in the ways information society has developed and how this has affected human development, for example, Mumford and his examination of man and technology through a humanist lens (Mumford, 1966). Postman’s interest with morality in media ecology, (Postman, 2000) and even the work of McLuhan (1967) and Innis (1950) who are interested with the development of society and their communication and technology.
The first revolution Floridi identifies occurs with Copernicus, whose work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (*On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*) (Copernicus, 1543; trans. Rosen, 1992), showed that the earth was not at the centre of the universe. Humanity was displaced from its perception of centrality in the cosmos (Floridi, 2009a: 9). Darwin causes the second revolution by subsequently displacing humanity from the centre of the animal kingdom (Floridi, 2009a: 9). Eventually views of humanity’s rationality and psychological transparency were challenged by Freud, who showed that the unconscious mind exercises power over the conscious mind (through such mechanisms as repression) (Floridi, 2009a: 10). Now, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are changing the ways in which humans interact with reality, causing a shift in self-understanding. (Floridi, 2007). The more humans interact in the digital environment where reality can be easily understood as informational, the more they consider themselves informational beings. This change in view is what Floridi terms “The Fourth Revolution” (Floridi, 2009a: 9). Floridi’s term is an addition to the first three revolutions initially observed by Freud as part of a single process in reassessing human nature (Weinert, 2009, in Floridi, 2009a: 10).

Floridi states that humanity has been living in various kinds of information societies since at least the Bronze Age (with the advent of written recording systems) and communication technologies have evolved from simple recording systems (such as writing in Mesopotamia), to communications systems (especially since Gutenberg), to processing systems (particularly after Turing) (Floridi 2009a: 3). Thus, in contrast to suggestions that the current information age is a new development, by scholars such as Castells (1996, 1997, 1998), Floridi argues it has taken approximately 6000 years for information society to unfold (Floridi, 2009a: 3;
To further support Floridi, other existent arguments discuss this philosophical process of the dislocation and reassessment of humanity’s fundamental role in the universe and the subsequent changes it causes to self-understanding. Correlations between the late Hellenistic period and the fourth revolution will prove assistive in formulating an understanding of how such changes in society may be managed and, consequently, will be investigated through parallels between the digital age and ancient Greece, in chapter 3. Importantly, the presence of such observations throughout other disciplines such as Classical History, seems to support Floridi’s argument.

The fourth revolution can be understood through examination of its various aspects (which also correspond to the three key research questions indicated earlier): the entire environment in which humans exist and interact (the infosphere); humanity’s identity and role within this environment (as inforgs); and other types of agency within the infosphere (artificial agents); finally, this can raise questions as to the effect of these aspects on the exercising of civic powers. By so doing, I seek to construct a lens through which to explore the issues raised by digital technologies on civics, and to consider how these challenges might be addressed in pedagogy, and specifically pedagogy pertaining to civics and ethics.

The focus, on what are clearly ontological elements in the discussion of the infosphere and even the inforg, are a necessary basis for ethical discourse. There is a strong relationship between ethics and ontology. The philosopher Levinas goes so far as to argue that ‘ethics precedes ontology’ (Levinas, 1969): a transcendental statement which places questions of personal power into the realm of ethical interaction and suggests ethics holds a primacy over notions of being. This is in opposition to Heidegger’s notion that ontology precedes ethics (Taminiaux, 2009), in
which being and the self hold primary position. Whichever holds *a priori* status, it is fair to suggest that, ethics and ontology have a relationship in which one cannot be explored without a conception of the other. As Long observes in exploring this relationship

…at its core, ontology is grounded in the actual encounter with an Other. Prior to all claims of knowledge, to all systems of totality according to which the world is set in order, to all appeals to some neutral term that comprehends being, ontology finds itself faced with the Other. This is where ontology begins; this is its arche and the telos toward which it must always be directed. This is what renders ontology ethical, and ethics ontological (Long, 2004: 8).

Long’s observation provides insight on the inextricable link between ethics and ontology. This question of which comes first, the notion of being and the self (as queried by Hiedegger), or the notion of other that shapes the being (as suggested by Levinas) is unlikely to be settled here. Rather, this work will take the pedagogical approach in developing the research project to come, that both views have something to offer digital civics, and students will be expected to develop their own ideas about themselves, and the environment in which they live. This does, however, highlight the tension between notions of individuality, the modern concept from which liberalist principles can be asserted, and more ancient concepts of a relational self, more aligned with the concepts of civic republicanism. In the online world both of these concepts can be observed (and indeed, both are deployed in this exploration of digital civics pedagogy, as stated in chapter 1). Thus, this thesis aligns itself with research that explores notions of ‘hybrid selves’, in which both aspects of the relational self, and notions of modern individualism can operate conjointly (Ess & Fossheim, 2013; Ess, 2011; Ess, 2010b).

Ethical questions require an ontological consideration, one which can be taken account of, usefully, through Floridi’s work on the infosphere. Thus, when Floridi
and Sanders observe the reontologising, and the ‘ontological friction’ that is occurring as a result of ICTs, the consequences he lists are ethical in nature:

… ICTs are well-known for being among the most influential factors that affect the ontological friction in the infosphere… significant consequences are… we shall witness a steady increase in agents’ responsibilities. ICTs are making humanity increasingly accountable morally speaking, for the way the world is, will and should be (Floridi and Sanders, 2001: 5).

The fourth revolution gives rise to an ontological and subsequently ethical crisis. As a result of new scientific discoveries and new scientific technologies (such as ICTs) developing in the digital age, humanity is philosophically de-centralised and (as I shall discuss below) increasingly de-physicalised. These changes in ontology spur numerous questions regarding the nature of humanity’s responsibilities in the world, his potential for agency and the subsequent ethical consequences. (In chapter 3, I will provide a symbolic representation of these questions to further contextualise the role of digital civics.) Effectively, ethics, and the nature of responsibility take on new dimensions. This philosophical presentation is not isolated to the digital age. In chapter 3, I will further explore the historicisation of change, in reference to Floridi’s work. In the immediate however, it is important to keep in mind that the strong relationship between ontology and ethics has considerable bearing on the formation of philosophies in the digital age. Consequently, the development of educational responses to the digital age, such as digital civics, must take this relationship into account.
2.4 The infosphere

“We have strong evidence, especially in contexts where the internet is very pervasive… where individuals spend much more time and they find a life online much more real than anything else” (Floridi, 2009b: 7:43).

The digital environment is no longer restricted to the world behind the screen of a computer or the interactions that occur via digital devices, but instead fully encompasses the world around us as it mediates our interactions. According to Floridi reality can be viewed as informational; he joins the words “information” and “biosphere” to create the “infosphere”. The infosphere is an umbrella term, representing the complete environment in which we live (Floridi, 1999). This includes information entities (such as humans), and their interactions and processes within the digital and analogue worlds as ecosystems within this greater environment. Floridi observes that the digital environment is helping humans to create a more informational ontology. That is not to say there is no distinction between an informational ontology and a digital one (Floridi, 2009c). It is important to recognise and clarify from the outset that for Floridi, a digital ontology, in which the nature of reality is digital rather than analogue, differs from an informational ontology, in which the nature of reality is informational and the digital and analogue exist as a means of access. While Capurro has discussed that the digital ontology described by Floridi, is actually a digital metaphysics and does not necessarily imply identifying the digital with ultimate reality (Capurro, 2008), there is much of value in specifically separating the digital as a means of reality from a system of perception or access. Viewing analogue and digital perceptions as equal, in that they are both means to understanding the world and greater reality, is of greater use than suggesting a hierarchical view of digital superiority because it is reality. Appreciating such a
distinction allows for later discussion on the integration of digital tools into the educational environment without suggesting that they are the only means of education, or that they inherently provide a lesson by virtue of being digital. Thus, in recognition of Floridi’s philosophical work on Informational Structural Realism, I have used the phrases “access reality” and “perception of reality” instead of simply “reality” to highlight that the analogue and digital are simply differing levels of abstraction (LoA) through which we access and interpret reality rather than ontologies themselves (see Floridi, 2008b, 2009c). Rather, I agree with Floridi:

A significant consequence of ISR is that, as far as we can tell, the ultimate nature of reality is informational, that is, it makes sense to adopt LoAs that commit our theories to a view of reality as mind-independent and constituted by structured objects that are neither substantial nor material…but cohering clusters of data (Floridi, 2009c: 35).

I have made this distinction to avoid any confusion arising from an emphasis on discussions of the digital within this paper as it is focussed on the consequences of the digital environment on the infosphere, and so by no means are these two concepts intended to be synonymous. Again, Floridi makes this point succinctly: “That a system might be modelled and simulated digitally… does not imply that the intrinsic nature of that system is digital” (Floridi, 2009c: 9). Rather, the digital is seen as both being part of and impacting the infosphere.

The division between the online (digital) and offline (analogue) environments is swiftly blurring: “The digital is spilling over into the analogue and merging with it.” (Floridi, 2007:6). Our perception of the world in which we live is increasingly accessed through the online, non-physical digital environment as opposed to the offline, physical analogue environment (which Floridi sometimes refers to as the Umwelt). For educators, a struggle is immediately apparent in that while the
perception of reality held by many students is increasingly accessed via digital channels, the classroom environment expects students to access reality through physical means (or the Umwelt); this offline method of accessing reality in the formal classroom is increasingly foreign to students in the digital age (Jenkins, 2006b). The model of instruction that will be demonstrated in Chapter 5 consolidated both offline and online experiences, creating a convergence of environment that allowed students to move between both levels of abstraction, merging information from both to form their learning experience. Support for such an approach can be garnered from social networking researcher, danah boyd, whose work also recognises the importance of considering both the offline and online interactions contributing to an overall conception of behaviour within digital ethnographic research (Boyd, 2009) This approach is also present in the work of Livingstone and Sefton-Green who consider the educational experience of teenagers through consideration of both the online and offline experience (Linvingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

Finally, inhabiting Floridi’s infosphere are informational entities, both organic and artificial, whose existences are influencing and being influenced by each other digitally. To understand the changing landscape caused by the digital and examine the ways this may affect citizenship and consequently the pedagogy of civics, I will briefly define the organic (Floridi’s “inforgs”) and artificial (i.e. digital tools) informational entities within the infosphere and then discuss Floridi’s view of such existence.
2.5 Inforgs in the infosphere

According to Floridi, within the infosphere, where existence is understood as informational, humans exist as connected informational organisms, or inforgs (Floridi, 2007: 9). This occurs not through a bodily transformation but rather through a re-ontologisation of the environment and ourselves (Floridi, 2010b). This reassessment is being caused by the focus on information and communication technologies within the digital environment. That is, that as the infosphere has become increasingly accessed through the digital, it has highlighted “the intrinsically informational nature of human agents” (Floridi, 2007:10). As humans ‘migrate’ to the digital environment and their perception changes to one of informational organism, the ability to access and manage digital information, digital literacy skills become vital. Such a view has been shared broadly by digital educational theorists such as: van Dijk & van Deursen, (2014), Greene et al. (2014), Aviram (2006), Buckingham et al. (2005), Eshet-Alkalai (2004), Andrews (2000), and, Gilster (1997). But the essential need for digital literacies espoused by Floridi is not simply to embolden participatory democracy, or to improve basic communication, but rather it is because the management of information in a digital environment will become the means through which people navigate their very existence. “One day, being an inforg will be so natural that any disruption in our normal flow of information will make us sick. Even literally” (Floridi, 2007: 11). The notion of digital literacies as a set of “survival skills” espoused by Eshet-Alkalai takes on a greater imperative in this view, helping the human survive not only “a variety of obstacles and stumbling blocks” (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004:103) but also basic human requirements for life.
2.6 Other agents in the Infosphere

The remaining group of agents to be defined inhabiting the infosphere are artificial agents. Digital tools (digital cameras, ipods, wireless networks, and so forth) interact with humans and impact the infosphere, exercising their own agency. As Floridi stated in a 2009 interview: “we are not the only agents in the universe because some of the things we are now working with or interacting with are equally endowed with tiny bits of, intelligence is too strong a word, but they are smart enough to, for example, predict our wishes.” (Floridi, 2009b: 11:25). In Floridi’s philosophy, the ways in which humans interact with digital objects seem to have returned to the approach followed before the time of Newton (much akin to Latour’s actor-network theory where non human actors can play an equal role in the network [Latour, 2005]). To highlight this, Floridi discusses how current human interaction with objects is similar to the ways in which interactions took place in the ancient world (Floridi, 2007: 7; 2009b), exemplifying this involvement through the relationship to weaponry and instruments of warfare: “In the ancient world, Achilles talks to his weapons and this is accepted practice, more recently, talking to objects would have been considered “madness” (Floridi, 2009b: 10:55 ). Now, soldiers are again interacting with their weapons which are in a sense, artificially alive (Floridi, 2009b; for further see 2008b). In this example, the interactive effect of a non-human agent interacting with a human agent (or inforg) in the infosphere is highlighted. But this example is also of particular interest in that it highlights a small but growing voice in digital media research that parallels between the ancient world and digital age can be noted and perhaps used to develop approaches to interactions in the digital age (that will be explored in chapter 3). Floridi further explores the association between human and
artificial agents illustrated through the example of human interaction with iPod devices and Nike shoes (Floridi, 2007: 7). A Nike shoe can feed information to an iPod about distance run and pace. The iPod can choose, download, and play music to suit the pace of user accordingly, or to encourage the user to increase or decrease pace. The inforg interacts with (both acts upon, and is acted upon by) artificial agents within the infosphere. Later generations of artificial companions are expected to become “more autonomous, and hence behave in self-initiated, self-regulated, goal-oriented ways and to be able to learn from their users in the machine learning sense of the expression” (Wilks, 2007, in Floridi, 2008a: 3). Imagine a gym class in which the instructor employs such a technology, helping each student to attain a personal best; or one in which the technology itself is the instructor? (Much like the educational feedback systems utilised in digital video gaming, or language education software such as Rosetta Stone.) The activity of non-human agency in the infosphere raises issues of moral obligation and responsibility, placing even greater responsibility on the human, and upon educators and educational administrators. (Floridi, 2007). Again, as argued in Chapter 1, it is clear that successful civic participation in the infosphere will require robust ethical discourse and self-regulation on behalf of citizens (Ohler et al., 2015). Thus the education of citizens requires engagement with these technologies (Jenkins, 2006b).

2.7 The online and offline in the infosphere

Part of understanding the infosphere is concerned with understanding the dynamic relationship between the online and offline. Initially, those using digital

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34 For example, there are orientation modules when new skills are introduced in a game that provide educational feedback to assist the player develop the necessary skills to proceed in the game.
technologies for approximately the past twenty years viewed the online world as that which took place on a computer: it was a space confined to the world behind the screen and to access the online world was a lengthy and arduous process (switching on computers, entering codes, suffering dial-up connections, waiting for information to be processed and communicated, etc.). Interfacing with the online environment initially meant the expenditure of a great deal of time and effort that yielded a unique environment for communication. While the complications of accessing this environment sometimes deterred educators from using the technology, there were also advantages. Great distances could be traversed and new contacts made outside of the local interactions. For teaching purposes, this could enable “connecting with classrooms in other communities and countries” (OCT, 2011). In this scenario the offline world was the “real” world – or rather, reality was perceived through the offline analogue environment. It was the setting in which people physically existed and “real” change was enacted. The offline environment was the true home while the online one offered a sort of novel and emerging set of unexplored potentials. Eventually however, as technologies advanced to allow for a speedier and more direct transfer of information, the difficulties associated with accessing the digital world evaporated. As Floridi observed, once we achieved digital convergence the previous difficulties hindering information transfer dissolved. Information transfer became frictionless (Floridi, 2007: 5). This circumstance has given rise to the issues in education explored in Chapter 1: the sudden and expansive influence of information connectivity in the educational environment led to numerous educational challenges (the “distracting” presence of mobile phones, or the pervasive presence of digital advertising, for example).
Within the digital environment information can be seamlessly transferred, unlike the offline analogue world in which time, distance, and product are all factors. Sending a letter to a friend in Japan, for example requires time because of the vastness of distance, and the amount and type of information sent is restricted based on space availability and cost. In the digital world, these aspects have little if any bearing on information transfer.

The increasing ease of communications in the online, digital environment seems to have created a shift in focus from the importance of the offline analogue environment as the “real” world (or the favoured environment through which to access one’s perception of reality) to that of the digital environment. The ability to effortlessly consume, process, create, and transfer information has resulted in an increased interest in and even need for continual connection with the flow of information. As humanity’s practise of information access changes from analogue to digital, highlighting the need for information connectivity, the realisation of the informational nature of humans and their environment becomes apparent. Realizing our informational nature, we can view ourselves as infogs, and begin to understand an informational ontology.

The consequence of this informational ontology is that the need to engage with the “real” informational world through the digital requires continual connectivity to the stream of data. Devices to interface with the digital flow of information have become increasingly portable and convergent in order to cope with the demands of mobility and informational requirements. Mobile phones for example now mean that people can be connected to one another at all times so that even while we interact with the world of the analogue physical environment; we still exist in the online digital world by remaining connected to it. The digital environment becomes the
dominant means of accessing our perception of reality, encompassing everything around it (including the analogue environment). In this manner the division between the online and offline world disintegrates. A boundary can no longer be placed between the two states as we begin to realise that we spend most of our time connected to the flow of digital information – by having a mobile phone switched on, we are capable of sending and receiving information at any time and so we are existing in a digital environment. This inability to segregate the two environments leads to the sort of difficulties experienced in the traditional classroom, from mobile phone intrusions, to a desire for greater communication with the outside world.

More time is spent experiencing reality through the digital environment than through the analogue one, in the infosphere. And as we fully enter the digital environment, it subsumes the analogue one. Floridi argues that we are probably the last generation to experience a clear difference between the online and offline worlds; that eventually we shall come to understand our informational existence so fully through the digital environment that we will require constant connection to it to survive; and even that eventually wireless connection to the digital environment of the infosphere will be so natural that we may one day be unable to imagine what life was like before it (Floridi, 2007: 9). “As digital immigrants like us are replaced by digital natives like our children, the latter will come to appreciate that there is no ontological difference between infosphere and Umwelt, only a difference in levels of abstraction” (Floridi and Sanders, 2004, cited in Floridi, 2007: 11). Digitally maintaining continuous contact with the infosphere may one day be as vital as breathing. It will become an aspect of how people live and perceive their existence.

The implications of such reliance on connection to the infosphere on the current formal school environment and teaching of civics are obvious. In the first
instance, schools which operate in a disconnected fashion (for example by prohibiting the use of digital devices by students) are removing students from the information connectivity through which they access what is their perceived reality. Such a move will one day be tantamount to removing a fish from water: it cannot survive outside its environment (Floridi, 2007: 11). Thus the banning of technologies and digital convergence in schools can only serve as a temporary measure. To remove the means to interface with the reality in which humans exist will not be possible; it is likely that one day, even the prohibition on social networking will prove no longer viable. Schools will need to find other ways of dealing with the pervasiveness of information connectivity such as teaching responsible and appropriate use of digital devices, prioritising information consumption, and good ethical behaviour- with the responsibility falling increasingly on the user. During lessons students will need to intrinsically value their education and structured personal development over unstructured social interactions, which can take place at alternative times, and pay attention for their own benefit rather than because they are forced. Alternatively, students may rank a lesson on a topic they have heard repeatedly as no longer relevant and choose to answer a text that they may value as having greater priority. They may also come to view lessons in which teachers fail to communicate the relevance of a subject area as unnecessary and spend their time instead engaged in personal research via their own digital devices. Certainly it is not outrageous to suggest that some students already do this. Thus, while the ability to assess information and think critically for themselves is important for student success (skills required from traditional media literacy), skills to regulate their own behaviour and discern the best use of their time in the educational environment are also vital. With the classroom no longer able to insulate itself from the outside world, students require
greater amounts of self-discipline and personal responsibility. Such skills are not gained without practise, and an environment which removes opportunity to develop such skills (such as one in which the potential temptations of digital devices are banned, alleviating responsibility from the student) does not prepare one for civic life in the infosphere.

2.8 The non-physical abstract and interactibility in the infosphere

Another aspect of the digital environment is its non-physical nature. In a non-physical environment, not only does information travel outside the confines imposed by the physical environment (such as space), but it is also possible to transfer ideas which are increasingly abstract, making it possible to interact with the environment in new ways. The frictionless infosphere in the digital accessing of reality means that information is less affected by physical limits. The letter to Japan for instance, which is restricted to the analogue requirements of time and space to traverse the distance, could almost instantaneously arrive at its destination in a digital setting provided that destination itself is connected to the digital environment. Such a letter in the digital environment could also contain different types of information, such as video and audio, expressing concepts in a more abstract way (such as a dynamic blueprint), and both the sender and receiver may interact with it simultaneously.

The ability to adapt (or change) the world itself is another aspect unique to the digital environment. While the physical, analogue world requires people to interact with their environment as it is, an increasingly digital environment means that humans can interact with worlds of their own device. For example, a person lost on a
street may consult a map or road-sign in the analogue world. In the digital world, one may consult a smartphone to check Google Maps. In a fully digital environment, we may be able to call up a digital map before us like a transparency over the physical environment, no matter where we are, and find directions, create a new signpost for ourselves, access and utilise someone else’s map, make changes to that map and so forth.

In consequence, the “real” world becomes interactive, personalised and increasingly abstract; concepts are not manifested into a physical existence as they can be exchanged without doing so. If humanity’s perception of reality is increasingly understood and accessed digitally then physical notions such as distance no longer apply. As we develop more numerous and improved methods of transferring information through a variety of digital media, we will become increasingly detached from the physical world. “The physical world…undergoes a process of virtualisation and distancing in which even the most essential tools, the most dramatic experiences, or the most touching feelings … can be framed within virtual mediation” (Floridi, 2002, 130). This is a complicated concept and I will illustrate by way of an example: currently I can have an online conversation with someone in Cambridge, England, from Dublin, Ireland. I can see and converse with them with video and audio technologies. Eventually, as information transfer improves, that picture and audio will sharpen. The image of myself projected there and the images of them projected to me will become increasingly lifelike, perhaps eventually they will be fully consuming like holographic projection. I may be able to hear all the audio information occurring there as clearly as if I was there. Eventually, I may be able to smell the place and even experience tactile sensations from that location through information transfer. With mobile technologies, I may be able to have that
conversation while my friend walks down the street, myself experiencing fully all the sensations of walking down the street with the friend as though I too were in Cambridge. I would be fully present there, my conscious mind interacting with theirs as we talk, a projection of my body there and information transfers causing me to feel the sensation of a sunny day while hearing the sounds and smelling the air.\textsuperscript{35} I am fully experiencing Cambridge. So, am I in Dublin, or am I in Cambridge? Or am I simply existing within the informational as I access my perception of reality digitally?\textsuperscript{36}

This is one difficulty in understanding the non-physical interactions made possible by digital information transfer. In the digital realm we begin to understand the world more abstractly as information because our perception of reality is not focussed on the physical but rather, the experiential; we understand our perception of reality through a different level of abstraction. Providing experiential learning then, should provide a basis for an experiment in digital educational philosophy.

In summation, a non-physical environment means that increasingly abstract ideas can be portrayed and developed, in interactive ways. Consequently as we access our perception of reality through the digital environment we come to apply this knowledge in our lives by understanding our world as an informational one which trades in abstract ideas and is interactive. Floridi notes that the industrial revolution was the point which “really marked the passage from the nominalist world of unique objects to the Platonist world of types of objects, all perfectly reproducible as

\textsuperscript{35} An idea Google parodied in its 2013 April Fool’s Day joke, with the “Google Nose” BETA. See: \url{https://www.google.co.uk/landing/nose/}

\textsuperscript{36} Such increasingly life-like interaction, and the digital simulacra of ourselves presents questions about the circumventing of the ‘uncanny valley’; a psychological theory originating in Jentsch’s 1906 work, “On the Psychology of the Uncanny”, described by Freud in 1919’s “Das Unheimliche”, and finally coined by Masario Mori, as ‘不気味の谷現象’ (the uncanny valley), to take into consideration the discomfort experienced when seeing human likenesses that are not quite natural human beings’.
identical” (Floridi, 2009a: 11). One could view the Victorian aesthetic movement as the contemporary counter-movement against such indiscernibility. Certainly, Oscar Wilde’s “The Picture of Dorian Gray” (Wilde, 1891) which becomes a central work of exploration in the digital project to come in chapter 4, explores both morality and aestheticism (the tone set by Wilde’s enjoyable preface to the work).

The problem this raises for Floridi is that in a dephysicalized world, personal identity is eroded as well, because people begin to feel they are typified individuals, mass produced and anonymous among other mass produced and anonymous abstract entities online (Floridi, 2009a). It is precisely the world Oscar Wilde and the Aestheticists feared and railed against\(^\text{37}\): the world of mass produced ugliness which destroyed beauty and individuality, represented by the Industrial Revolution (McCormack, 2010). And perhaps the Aesthetes too would have reacted to the de-personalised world of ‘types’ and ‘things’ as people in this day have- by self-branding ourselves in cyberspace through blogs, Facebook, Myspace, YouTube or any number of information sites that allow the expression of personality (Floridi, 2009a: 11). “We use and expose information about ourselves to become less informationally indiscernible. We wish to maintain a high level of informational privacy almost as if that were the only way of saving a precious capital that can be then publicly invested by us in order to construct ourselves as individuals discernible by others” (Floridi, 2009a: 11). The shared philosophical questions of the digital age and the Victorian’s (and indeed the aforementioned ‘Dorian Gray’) provides a later basis for the element of research to come in the chapter 4, because it provides an

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\(^{37}\) That such views were existent during the Victorian age (contemporary to Freud) shows that such philosophical changes in the ontology regarding the human and aspects of thinking one might consider digital- such as de-physicalization- have a much longer history than the use of modern computers.
opportunity for students to explore their contemporary ontological challenges through studying Victorian history (although this will be discussed more readily in chapter 4).

The dephysicalization and consequent typification of objects and individuals in the digital environment raises issues of personal identity, identity construction, and privacy and it is necessary to explore the implications of these on citizenship and education. Most notably, Floridi identifies the loss of personal identity and the subsequent use of the digital environment to generate branding opportunities to make humans more informationally discernible (Floridi, 2009a: 11). Yet how people brand and what they choose to embrace as part of this quest for expression of individuality is a matter open to citizens. It seems that several observations can be made.

First, issues of privacy can arise because personal information is viewed as an extension of the self (Floridi and Tavani, 2008 in Ess, 2009: 59). A strong emphasis is placed on protecting personal information, while at the same time there is a need to display it to distinguish individuality. Thus, citizens are caught between the need for informational secrecy to protect themselves from having their information stolen or used against them, while simultaneously they are required to make their information public in order to present themselves as unique. A Facebook page may present a user’s name and pictures, possibly where they live and messages quoted between themselves and friends. Without knowing that individual, sufficient data is displayed for a criminal to commit identity fraud, though should the Facebook profile be removed to protect from such invasion, the user’s digital existence is compromised in that they lose an informational link. The issue of responsible access and use of information is raised.

Secondly, if the erosion of personal identity makes “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) seeking means of individual expression malleable to branding as Floridi
suggests, then issues of corporate interests in schools should be broached. The intrusion of corporate interests in the school environment (as mentioned in chapter 1) with their capacity to shape school infrastructure, and the insights of Kenway and Bullen (2001), that “the commodity form has increasingly become central to the life of the young of the West, constructing their identities and relationships, their emotional and social worlds…” (Kenway and Bullen 2001: 187) could mean that students, and thus future citizens, identify their individuality through products (like Facebook, and products marketed on its platform) rather than through knowledge of self and philosophical enquiry: a consumerism accelerated by personalised marketing. Advertising and branding in education is not unique to the digital age as schools have long engaged with issues of corporatization in the classroom and the purchasing of identity through product (demonstrated in the brand clothing displayed by students, or their other personal belongings in the classroom, and as mentioned in chapter 1 in regards to normalised corporate presence in schools). However, in a world where personal identity is under threat and where the pervasiveness of information (including advertising) is continual, and where the educational norm presented to developing citizens equates consumerist information or branding with identity and social development it seems there is potential that citizens fervently seeking to exhibit their distinctiveness may align themselves with easily available streams of information (such as advertising) as opposed to those which seem more arduous to obtain (such as self-knowledge and philosophical enquiry). Making clear that brands, such as Facebook, might be used as pedagogical tools for identity development, but should not be confused with identity itself, would be an important distinction for educators to impart to students: either through discussing the identified brand or through incorporating other forms of identity development (such as live interaction.
activities) into the learning environment. (Both of these ideas were used in the Facebook project to be explained in chapters 4 and 5).

Finally, trading information through non-physical means without manifesting ideas in the physical world is leading to an entirely different form of communication, one which may for example, render written language a clumsy and inarticulate form of expression. The ability to communicate graphics, sounds, and, potentially one day, entire moments of experience digitally (such as a walk through Cambridge) will obviously impact modes of communication (either for reasons of efficiency, or clarity). Further, if such information can be shared easily with others, and they have the opportunity to experience it first-hand (as though they were me living the moment walking through Cambridge) then certainly we must also consider questions of perception and perspective in digital media education. If this is the coming world then the way in which communications are taught (such as through English Language Arts) will be required to change dramatically in order to create citizens capable of effectively understanding, communicating, and participating democratically in the infosphere. And indeed such educational change has been underway in schools for some time through media literacy instruction, and is further being shaped through the implementation of digital literacy strategies. Certainly, the budding potential for virtual reality, and indeed augmented reality, to provide such experiential learning in the classroom is already being explored (Merchant et al., 2014; Bujak et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2013). Perhaps more importantly, citizens recognising themselves as inforgs in an infosphere will require the skills to access and process digital information, not only for democratic purposes, but simply to manage their own existence. In the digital environment, how we access information is how we access reality. In the application of digital civics to pedagogy, digital literacy will need to
embrace philosophical enquiry if it is to provide its citizens with the basic skills they require to survive. Schools which block out informational connectivity are placing students at a serious disadvantage and are in no way preparing them to take their place as citizens in the digital age.

2.9 The Future According to Floridi’s Philosophy: A Personal Reflection

In this chapter I have identified the philosophical rationale for digital civics and why it is necessary, responding to Floridi’s concepts of infosphere and informational philosophy. I noted that the informational environment in which we exist and enact behaviours had specific characteristics, namely: the blurring of boundaries (convergence of the analogue and digital worlds), perpetual connectivity, and interactivity. Consequently I explored three key themes in Floridi’s thought on information philosophy to understand the ways in which digital civic behaviour must be conducted responsibly and ethically for the good of the individual and society:

1. The nature of the digital environment in which behaviour takes place (The “infosphere”, or the nature of the abstract de-physicalized environment and the relationship between ethics and ontology);

2. How behaviour in the digital environment is understood as an integrated part of the human (Floridi’s “inforgs” and their interconnectivity);

3. The ways in which the digital mediates our civic behaviours resulting in unique forms of civic expression not previously possible (concepts of agency, both organic and artificial, and interactivity).

Bold claims regarding the nature of the infosphere and the means of navigating this world have been made, particularly in regards to the way in which
things “might” unfold. It can be useful to engage in hypothesising about the future as a form of thought experiment; taking into account potential outcomes forms an important part of forward planning. The European Commission’s Onlife Initiative\(^\text{38}\), for example, explores the ways in which ICTs transform our experience of reality and states its intention to “re-envision the future with greater confidence” (The Onlife Manifesto, 2016) and the Commission’s report on “Digital Futures” (European Commission, 2016), which explores policy challenges, forecasting to 2050 demonstrates this forward planning in policy making. And while it is not possible to forecast the future, in this case, Floridi’s philosophy is not futuristic speculation. The ideas presented can be viewed in the light of previous interactions in digital environments for over 20 years and consequently can be proven through empirical experience. For example, in 1995, Morinville Community High School (also later referred to as MCHS), initiated an experimental program of education designed to take into account the changes brought about by digital technology (Evans, 2016). The school was networked, and computers were used to communicate with teachers, send homework, and even instant message with other students. Students took computer-based subjects with digital manuals. Teachers became a source of experience and insight - they focused on knowing their subject and providing scaffolding to students who were literally forced to teach themselves (self-regulating their own learning). Teacher time went into finding new and innovative ways of creating materials for students, mentoring students, and finding ways to make student materials relevant and presentable to the world outside school (blurring the boundaries of the traditionally divided classroom and the ‘real world’ outside). For example, the use of

\(^{38}\) The Onlife Initiative can be found at its EU website here: https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/onlife-initiative
digital technology meant that a school television show- digitally created- could be produced and presented on public television, and that students could use their digital skills to take part in their greater community (Evans, 2016; Ma, 2015). Teachers were experts in their field of knowledge, sharing their experiences with students, and “incarnating” the skills they required from their students (Ess, 2003).

Similarly, in 1997, Acadia University, launched its Acadia Advantage program. Here, students were issued with laptop computers, the entire campus was networked, and digital projects (such as webpages, videos, and even online chat) were part of the curriculum. The program received widespread media attention (Sommers, 1997; Murphy, 1998; Tausz, 1996) and academic interest (Pearsall, 1998; Joy, 1998; Bauer et al., 2004) and was eventually recognised by the Smithsonian Institute.

In these instances, many of Floridi’s ideas about the world of the infosphere could be witnessed. Blended learning approaches were undertaken which incorporated the online and offline resources and which made clear an increased need for new skills, not only in technology use, but in behavioural self-regulation as well (Provencal, 2002: 173). In response to student complaints that they felt “cut off” from the technological connection their digital devices provided, Acadia even changed its policy in 1999, to allow students to take university owned laptop computers home for the summers.

In Morinville, the school’s television show stretched its potential viewing audience in the local community broadcasting through cable. It reached out to organizations, and students made content such as commercials for local businesses or satirical parodies of popular culture, eventually shifting to cover more current events and news (Ma, 2015), there was no cutting students off from the outside world, rather
student were encouraged to take a role in their community through such digital
endeavours.

Such instances highlight the nature of connectivity and behaviour while
demonstrating the validity of Floridi’s philosophy. The fourth revolution is not a
distant notion of what might manifest in the world of information connectivity, but
rather a grounded observation with which educators must seriously engage if they are
to construct meaningful educational experiences relevant and appropriate for life. By
examining PI for observations on the nature of reality, and human and computer
interaction, I do not seek to present a plan of future action, or to speculate upon what
might eventually be useful. Rather, I mean to present that the nature of the
infosphere, and the fourth revolution, are current: already existent. Educational
measures to engage with these philosophies should not be regarded as an eventual
possibility for which to prepare, but rather as a present necessity critical to success
and survival as a human race.

In order to further contextualise the nature of the infosphere, and with a view
to constructing the most meaningful pedagogical applications possible, it is necessary
next, to examine the historical context of the infosphere, and the human within it. The
value of history in formulating ethical resources will now be explored, taking into
account the similarities between the Hellenistic and digital ages, which prove useful
to contextualising cosmological and ontological change and ethical responses.
Chapter 3: Platonic resources to formulate ethical responses in the infosphere

“Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand” (Heidegger, 1927, trans. 1962; 43).

3.1 An historical context for the digital age

In chapters 1 and 2, I observed the necessity of formulating an historical context from which to create an appropriate and meaningful foundation for digital civics pedagogy. When contextualising the challenges of digital media education, only a handful of contemporary media scholars seem to consider ancient or Classical history to create a context for understanding the challenges humanity now faces. But while a robust history of this area would be an extremely useful volume (or series of volumes!) and provide new insight for media education from re-examination of theory based on new historical findings, there is insufficient time in this work to provide such in-depth data. While under-researched, a useful perspective can be gleaned by examining the foundations of philosophical thought on cosmology, metaphysics, and ethics as a precursor to the profound changes currently being experienced in the fourth revolution.

To restrict the scope of this enquiry, I present a number of historical parallels between the Classical age Greeks and the current digital age which may prove useful in providing new insights not available by focussing on the immediate context.

By so doing I meet four objectives: (1) identifying the usefulness of integrating history into digital civics pedagogy as will occur in chapter 4 of the research project; (2) considering the Platonic philosophical ideas that can be noted
playing out in the digital age with deference to the Platonic notions and behaviours of virtue ethics, memory, and theory of the “forms”, which presented themselves in the research data to be discussed in chapter 6; (3) appreciating the impact of the human’s currently changing cosmology and ontology on their day to day life and the responses to this transition in which digital civics can play a role (a point raised in chapter 2, further supported in this chapter, and giving rise to the necessity of the research project outlined in chapter 4); and (4) situating digital civics within a framework of the exercise of agency, specifically in regards to ethics derived from free agency. In chapter 2 I discussed the ways in which changes in ontology spur numerous questions regarding the nature of the human’s responsibilities in the world, his potential for agency, and the subsequent ethical consequences. I will complete this chapter by providing a symbolic representation of these questions to contextualise the role of digital civics and its area of contribution.

In lieu of the lack of more recent scholarship in digital media education specifically appropriate for this effort, I have borrowed largely from other subject areas to create an inter-disciplinary approach. The work of media ecologists such as McLuhan or Innis demonstrate a strong link between media scholarship and history, and the importance of historical context, perhaps so competently that more recent media history seems to have relied on this foundational work, with new research

39 In other disciplines the concepts of current transitions in beliefs about civics and technology are explored with a view to understanding the vastness of current historical experience, so an inter-disciplinary approach is useful. The study of computer and information ethics yields titles such as “If Aristotle were a computing professional” (Moor, 1998). Bynum also published extensively on Information ethics as well as discussions of Aristotle. As discussed, Philosophy produces scholars such as Floridi, investigating the ethics of information and discussing this in relation to Freud and other historical figures. And Classical history offers its own insights providing titles like “Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace” (Ulansey, 2000). Indeed, the wealth of material about various technological issues in modern human lives reaches across a broad range of disciplines; from raising issues in ‘neuroprivacy’ to engineering scientists in magnetics discussing the environmental realities of Moore’s law. And that is before one engages with literature regarding the impact of technology in medical ethics or the educational debates surrounding mobile phones in schools.
focussing instead on the last 100, or even 50 years. In other fields, however, thinkers in culture studies, such as Davis (2004), or classicists such as Ulansey (2000), or computer scientists such as O’Hara (2002) have more recently discussed the vitality of understanding the current digital age through an historical lens, offering historical insights from their own areas of expertise. In pursuing this interdisciplinary method, Ancient texts are presented in their original Greek, rather than in translation (though basic translations are provided in footnotes) given their specific vulnerability to mistranslation as “dead” languages.

To deal with this material with sensitivity to its context, I employ an attitude of new historicism (Greenblatt 1983) in order to create a meaningful discourse sensitive to the range of cultural and temporal distance of the author; an approach useful in understanding intellectual history (Greenblatt, 1983). New historicism can be understood as a school of theory in which History is explored through anecdotes and objects with a view to transcending ethno or temporal-centric authorial perspectives, while still appreciating their influence. This approach is useful in examining literary documents and other texts from which notions of the exercising of power, or agency, in history can be gleaned (without necessitating a conscious declaration from the author, but more as a representation of the social circumstance of the author [Taine, 1864]). This is particularly relevant given the focus on participatory democracy and the exercise of power and personal agency that is inherent to a discussion of digital civic engagement. Indeed, the influence of Foucault’s work on power and surveillance (Foucault, 1975) on New Historicism (Wang, 2017: 186), makes it particularly appropriate in the context of the digital

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40 Hens-Piazza (2002), suggests new historicism is more useful as a mindset than a methodology.
41 For example, in section 3.4 I will utilise the proem of Herodotus to draw attention to the growing recognition of personal agency in the mind of the 5th Century Athenian.
world’s ubiquity of information gathering technologies. That is, in an age where communications are increasingly mediated by technologies that are open to surveillance, Foucault’s discussion of surveillance and its potential applications in the harnessing of power, as mechanisms to control and oppress, are topics as pertinent to the discussion of digital civics, as they are fundamental to the study of New Historicism. These shared concerns regarding the exercise of power, particularly in the context of how a citizen’s information might be used, make it a useful and worthwhile approach from which to draw.

I will begin with a brief contextualisation of the previous use of the discipline of history in media scholarship to provide precedence for the inclusion of history as crucial to the creation of successful pedagogy, and consequently its importance to formulate a model for digital civics in pedagogy before examining the aforementioned parallels for consideration:

1. The various parallels that might be observed between the Hellenistic or late Classical period as illustrated through the work of Classical scholar David Ulansey
2. The Platonic parallels to the digital age including the importance of memory, levels of abstraction, and virtue ethics
3. The notions of virtue and shame in the culture of Hellenic Greece and the implications of this for ethics in a digital age

The application of these Platonic philosophical resources (such as memory, the theory of the forms, virtue ethics, and shame) impact such concepts as identity construction, and ethical conduct, and lay the groundwork for an ethics for the digital age.
3.2 The precedent for history in digital civics education

As mentioned in chapter 2, Floridi identifies the current infosphere as a process of at least 6000 years of history in the making (Floridi, 2009a). This argument in favour of a broader historical context to understand the digital age has also been popular with foundational media scholars, who required a broad historical base upon which to create new cosmologies describing the human’s changing interaction with time and space (that is, the aspects with which the human understands their environment). It is certainly logical to follow on in this tradition which appreciates the role of ‘cultural heritage’ (Mumford, 1934), and the potential for new ideas and solutions that can be found by examining history.

In chapter 1, I discussed the media ecology movement, and its work to fully contextualise media, particularly in regards to its environment, a research aim in common with this study. Media ecologists such as McLuhan, Mumford, Neil Postman, and Innis, contributing to the groundwork for modern media scholarship (and certainly the canon of the media ecology movement) all considered the ancient world in their understanding of the impact of media on society and civic interaction (and the education thereof). Mumford uses his historical links to examine concepts of civilization, drawing broad narratives, and also giving insight into humanity’s interaction with tools, (an important point given the human’s current reliance, utilisation, and integration with digital tools and technologies) (Mumford, 1934). Neil Postman also utilised examples from Classical source material in his work. Though sometimes failing to properly note the cultural context of ancient civilization\(^{42}\), he still understood the importance of including Classical history to create an overall

\(^{42}\) Such as his mis-ascribing of modern beliefs about the child to ancient Greeks, as opposed to noting the cultural context of “the fates” to the Hellenic Greeks in his relating of the Lycurgus myth in the disappearance of childhood (Postman, 1982).
picture of how humankind has formulated its ideas. Innis uses Classical history to create an overall picture of society (Innis, 1947) as well as to explore how a civilization’s bias toward specific types of media communication determine the nature of a civilization, again adopting an approach that included broad narratives (Innis, 1950). In introducing his intentions, he states:

I shall attempt rather to focus attention on other empires in the history of the west...in order to isolate factors which seem important for purposes of comparison. Immediately one is daunted by the vastness of the subject and immediately it becomes evident that we must select factors which will appear significant to the problem (Innis, 1950: 3).

Thus, there is certainly ample precedent for the inclusion and consideration of historical inheritance, the use of historical parallels, and the employment of broad historical narratives in digital civics, particularly in regards to civic or ethics pedagogy. The digital age may seem vastly removed from the monolithic structures, papyrus scrolls, or infamous togas of old. But, as mentioned, in chapter 1, Ohler (2010), Ess (2009) and Floridi (2009a) all make use of the ancient world in understanding the digital one. And numerous other scholars consider the ancient world to be highly relevant in formulating an understanding of the digital age (not just Ulansey, 2000, but also: Coyne, 1999; Davis, 2004; Leary, 2010; O’Hara, 2002; Cobb, 1998; Clynes, 2011; and Heim, 1993, to name just a few). Examination of historical materials can present useful parallels between the present digital age and the world of Classical history; parallels which can be useful to the development of new pedagogy. And while the Classical world itself is likely philosophically indebted to its more ancient forebears, the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods provide useful and immediate insights into the digital age and ethical behaviour that can be applied to formulate innovative educational strategy.
3.3 David Ulansey and the parallels from Alexander the Great to Cyberspace

The work of classical scholar David Ulansey, contributes a useful perspective when contextualising the digital age, particularly when considering the ethical implications of cosmological crisis. Ulansey’s paper “Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace” (Ulansey, 2000) raises many of the same questions as the aforementioned media ecologists, dealing with the digital world and its philosophical and cultural underpinnings (Ulansey, 2002; 2000; 1991). An expert in Mithraism and cults contemporary to the early Christian period, Ulansey observes that there are parallels between the Hellenistic period and our own present day period that make the Hellenistic period worthy of particular study and valuable in understanding current trends and attitudes around self-perception, society, and cyberspace in the western world (Ulansey, 2000). Ulansey quotes Classicists Tarn (1951) and Green (1990) to support his observation, that the Hellenistic period and its subsequent changes in philosophy are vastly relevant to our modern age, to great effect. He postulates, for example, theories regarding communication technologies resulting in a “planetary cultural unification” in a manner reminiscent of McLuhan’s global village (1962). He further cites this cultural unification as a parallel resembling the one set in motion by Alexander’s conquests, noting that the effect of this in Hellenistic times was:

A decisive shift in the locus of human identity from the collective to the individual, with the subsequent emergence of new symbolic systems that offered responses of various kinds to this shift. Likewise, in our own time a change in the structure of human identity seems to be accompanying the process of planetary cultural unification (at least in the industrial cultures of the West that are at the forefront of this process) (Ulansey, 2000: 225).
Not unlike Floridi’s fourth revolution, Ulansey notes the shift in self-understanding and human identity, and its global impact, but paralleled in the Classical world. Like those who lived in the Hellenistic period, we are currently experiencing the emergence of a new “cosmological vision” because our discovery of the universe is also being challenged and expanded much in the same way scientific discoveries altered the understanding of the universe for ancient peoples (Ulansey, 2002; 2000). Plato’s vision of a round globe presented a quite literally earth-shattering view of the world quite apart from the disc-like cosmology of ancient belief (ibid.). By comparison, Ulansey cites the discoveries of Edwin Hubble in the 1920s: “About 80 years ago the universe as we know it expanded overnight by a factor of 100 billion” (Ulansey, 2000: 226.) to explain how current views of the universe have become a “reality without a center or boundaries… leading to a doubly reinforced sense of a loss of contact with the grounding forces of reality” and consequently resulting in “apocalyptic ideation” (ibid: 226). This argument prompts one to consider afresh the reasons for the apocalyptic Y2K scares of 1999, the Mayan 2012 prophesy, and perhaps even warnings precipitated by technological determinist arguments that seem to offer ominous warnings of the world to come. For example, Neil Postman’s warnings for moral behaviour and the threat of destruction (1993), like his ancient forebears, could be viewed as a philosophical response to cosmological change. They are a natural result of the sensation of losing one’s entire identity of being, and of recognising an ideological change or transition in which previously held ideas about the world are destroyed, or die away. The digital world has also grown massively. Floridi observes that “this exponential escalation has been relentless: between 2006 and 2010 [...] the digital universe will increase more than
six-fold from 161 exabytes\(^{43}\) to 988 exabytes” (Floridi, 2009a: 4). Our exploration online makes our world ever larger, further impacting our cosmology.

Perhaps further parallels with media scholars, and indeed with the themes raised in this research, can be seen in the classical age, as demonstrated by Ulansey’s work. His concept of a “reality without a centre” or “border” evokes notions of a de-physicalised environment, but more importantly it also supports Floridi’s fourth revolution views, that the current change in human self-perception and previous revolutions in self-perception result from scientific realisations which de-centralise human beliefs (such as with Darwin, or Freud), and there is certainly something Heideggerian about it (in the separation of being from beings [Heidegger, 1927; Nicholson, 1996]).

Ulansey proposes that the reason for many of the philosophical changes that take place during the Hellenistic period have to do with the development of new scientific knowledge beginning in the Pre-Socratic period, which had previously been unavailable (Ulansey, 2000). At the centre of this, he places the discovery that the world was round instead of flat and the publicising of this worldview in the work of Plato (ibid). This is a parallel of further interest to modern ideas if one considers that the boundaries of the current world are also changing now as humanity moves into the digital landscape. The lessons of Plato in the digital age should be appreciated and integrated into digital education. The research findings noted from the interactions of this study’s research participants (to be discussed in chapter 6) certainly makes clear that a Platonic legacy is present. This evidence, in conjunction with the insights of scholars such as Ulansey (2000), who consider that Platonic ideas deeply impact the development of cosmological, ontological, and ethical responses (such as Heim,

\(^{43}\) One exabyte corresponds to 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes or 10 to the 18th power.
1993; Clynes, 2011; Stenger, 1991) suggests this Platonic legacy should be considered and included in pedagogical construction due to its impact on ethics development and civic discourse.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the “fourth revolution”, in which Floridi notes how new scientific knowledge has created a dissonance in human understanding and displaced previously held ideas about how humans understand themselves. I also discussed the subsequent re-ontologisation that can necessitate new ethical responses given the close relationship between ethics and ontology. Such issues are not isolated to the digital world. As observed by Ulansey, breakthroughs in scientific knowledge in the pre-Socratic period generated a new cosmological vision and an ontological shift that created the same dissonance which Platonic discourse and later Hellenistic philosophy attempt to respond; new ideas are generated about community (such as civic responsibilities to one another) and ethical behaviour (as to our responsibilities with this new found individual power).

As illustrated by Ulansey’s work, the Hellenistic past provides potential insight into the problems now faced in the digital age, and the types of responses that one might expect given human history. As with media ecology, his work also suggests that, in regards to questions of how to teach ethical behaviour and digital civics, there is value in exploring the Platonic legacy and ideas inherent in western thought.

3.4 Plato’s conception of memory and its application to the digital age

The recognition of Platonic ideas in the digital age is not restricted to scholars like Floridi or Ulansey. A growing body of literature considers the impact of Platonic philosophy (such as the Forms, the oral tradition, or the soul), to observe that
contemporary ways of thinking about the current digital age are deeply indebted to Classical philosophy, possibly even Platonic philosophy specifically. For example, there is the work of O’Hara (2002), writing on epistemology, who considers the “Platonic position that still holds sway today” (O’Hara, 2002: 6). Musician Chris Leary discusses the role of Plato in modern music composition (Leary, 2010). Computing and Astronomy scholar, Frances Clynes (2011) explores questions of the sacred in Greek traditions, including Plato, and examines these views in the context of cyberspace. Writer Erik Davis includes Plato in his discussion of the intersection of technology and religious imagination (Davis, 2004). And writer Michael Heim (1993) also incorporates Plato in his views of philosophy and cyberspace. These scholars seem to reach similar conclusions despite the different discipline areas and the different questions from which their research originates: that there are similarities between digital phenomena and Platonic philosophy, and that there is value in exploring what these ideas may have to offer our understanding of the digital age.

In exploring themes relevant for the later analysis of the ethical behaviours observed in the research project data (chapter 6), I will consider first the concept of memory in the fifth century before addressing the specific legacy of Platonic philosophy on memory, levels of abstraction, and virtue ethics, in the digital age.

3.4.1 Platonic notions of Memory

There is a current insistence in this digital age upon the increased capacity for memory year on year (Keeton, 2017; McCalpin, 1995). Memory is the ability “to encode, store, and retrieve information” (Tulving, 2000). This might occur in a human sense (as the brain is able to encode, store, and retrieve memories), in terms of
mechanical, or computerised memory. ROM and RAM are considered crucial to the very essence of computing (Turing, 1937). One might suggest that memory is vital for the digital age; it is certainly crucial to its survival. Such a focus on memory can be seen, not only through the focus on computer parts or the human’s ever expanding megabyte requirements, but through deference to issues of memory in the online world, such as: recording and honouring memory, where the deeds or legacy of a person or group are shared and remembered, as with Facebook memorial pages (or Herodotus’ quest to preserve history); or the EU’s new regulation on ‘the right to be forgotten’ (the Hellenic concept of Amnesty) which demonstrates the power of memory on society.

Memory is an essential part of the ancient and Classical worlds as it is the online world. Numerous scholars have explored this theme of memory in the ancient and Classical world and its importance in society.\(^{44}\) Plato presents (either his own, or Socrates’) beliefs regarding the necessity or appropriateness of memory in considering orality (in the Phaedrus). Homer provides evidence of its importance, presenting Achilles’ quest for Timeh as motivated by a quest for longevity through record of his deeds. And Herodotus also opens his histories proclaiming his desire to preserve memory: “preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done” (Herodotus, The Histories).

3.4.2 Memory and context

In “The Phaedrus,” Socrates relates the myth of Theuth (a mix of the Egyptian Thoth, and Greek Hermes [Leary, 2010:101]), and Thamas (the Egyptian King), and

\(^{44}\) For example, there is an entire Classical journal, “Mnemosyne” which releases numerous supplements on the topic, see http://www.brill.com/orality-literacy-memory-ancient-greek-and-roman-world.
presents questions regarding memory and the impact of the written word – or ability to record ideas – on human memory through this anecdote. In the story, the god Theuth bequeaths the gift of writing to the King, (writing is characterised as ‘pharmakon’, a word that could mean both, medicine or poison [Derrida, 1981]) as an aid to memory. King Thamas, however, feels strongly that writing will have a negative impact, suggesting that man will suffer loss of his own ability for memory as a result of the introduction of written characters.

τούτο γὰρ τῶν μαθόντων λήθην μὲν ἐν ψυχαῖς παρέξει μνήμης ἁμέλητην, ἀπὸ δὲ πίστιν γραφῆς ἔξωθεν ψῆφον ἀλλοτρίων τύπων, οὐκ ἔνθεθεν αὐτοῦς ψῆφον ἀναμμηνησκομένους: οὐκομνήμημα ἀλλὰ ὑπομνήσεως φάρμακον ἡπέρε. σοφίας δὲ τοῖς μαθηταῖς δόξαι, οὐκ ἀλήθειαν πορίζεισ: πολυγόναι γὰρ σοι γενόμεναι ἄνευ ἰδιαξῆς πολυγόνωμος εἶναι δοξοσοφοῖ. ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλήθος ὄντες, καὶ χαλεποὶ συνελθὰτ, δοξόσοφοι γεγονότες ἀντὶ σοφῶν.

(Plato, Phaedrus 275a/b).

This argument, which Socrates uses to discuss the roles of memory and writing, highlights the concern of Platonic philosophy with the preservation of orality and the apprehension of potential loss (both in wisdom and memory) ensuing from the establishment of the written word (Leary, 2010: 102). Perhaps it is in response to this particular issue that modern communications have developed, for, in writing on the epistemology of technology in his work ‘Plato and the Internet’, O’Hara observes:

much written language today has speech-like features that Plato would have welcomed. E-mails and text messages allow a certain immediacy of interaction, while dynamically constructed Webpages present information to readers that is customised to their requirements and won’t be circulated further (O’Hara, 2002: 18).

45 ‘this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners’ souls because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember because the characters are not part of themselves. That which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to remembering, and you give your learners not truth, but only the appearance of truth’

46 It can be argued that Plato himself merely undertook this discussion as part of a playful instruction aimed at Phaedrus (Rabbas, 2010), although he seems to have placed great importance on oral instruction to the extent that ‘unwritten’ teachings to supplement his instruction are said to have existed (Nikulin, 2012). There is no consensus on this issue.
Indeed, such attributes, that harken back to the dynamic and fluid features of an oral culture (such as Plato’s) which develop in a literary culture are what the media ecologist Walter Ong describes in observing ‘second orality’ (Ong, 1982): a feature of which is the presence of aspects of oral cultures (such as its communal sense) within the context of a literate society (in which modern concepts of the individual function) (Ong, 1982: 133). Again, such concepts, given their integration of both communal and individual, suggest the usefulness of exploring ‘hybrid selves’ (Ess, 2010b) (as described in chapter 1) when approaching digital civics pedagogy. They also suggest the usefulness of acknowledging Platonic influence on western thought when exploring our digital world.

But Socrates' argument is not merely that words are only useful to those who already know the meanings of what is written; he also suggests that they have an inherently dangerous quality (evidenced both in the Theuth story, and his own subsequent discussion with Phaedrus), allowing their meaning to be misinterpreted and eventually lost because they are unable to ‘protect themselves’ from misinterpretation.

γραφῇ, κυλινδεῖται μὲν πανταχοῦ πᾶς λόγος ὁμοίως παρὰ τοῖς ἐπαΐσχον, ὥς δ’ αὐτῶς παρ’ οἷς οὐδὲν προσήκει, καὶ οὐκ ἐπίσταται λέγειν οἷς δέ ἐς καὶ μή. πλημμελούμενος δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἐν δική λοιδορηθεῖς τοῦ πατρὸς έαὶ δεῖται βοηθῆσαι: αὐτός γὰρ οὗτ’ ἀμύνασθαι οὕτε βοηθῆσαι δυνατὸς αὐτῷ 47 (Phaedrus, 275 E).

For Socrates (and his character Thamus), the preservation of memory is of vital importance, and the introduction by Theuth of a ‘drug’ (pharmakon) capable of enhancing the gift of memory is a danger and not a boon, to the ancients. For the drug

47 Roughly: “and every word, once it is written is bandied about …for it has no power to protect or help itself”
promotes reliance on false memory, causing atrophy to both memory and wisdom through their declining use; it is a ‘Faustian bargain’ as Postman might put it 2500 years later (Postman, 1995: 02:05). What is perhaps most interesting is the dual potential of the drug ‘pharmakon’ discussed in the passages. It could be a dangerous poison injurious to humanity’s well-being, or it could be understood as a remedy that is taken into and becomes part of the body to promote strength and healing (Derrida, 1981), meaning that even the Thamus story itself could suffer dual interpretations. In “Dissemination”, Derrida discusses Socrates' argument that meaning is lost on a reader who lacks pre-existent knowledge of that which is being written (Derrida, 1981). Similarly, the psychology professor and linguist, Steven Pinker, makes this same argument in discussing how modern peoples communicate through innuendo; in which pre-existent knowledge of a word’s meaning is required by both parties in order for that meaning to be fully communicated (Pinker, 2007). This argument is demonstrated neatly in Socrates’ use of the word ‘Pharmakon’. The difficulty in deciding which way to interpret ‘Phamakon’ as either a beneficial remedy, or a poison, is implicit in the word itself: ‘pharmakon’ can be translated as either, but it is for the reader to decide which, and if the reader lacks the requisite knowledge, then they will translate however they prefer, and of course, miss the wisdom of Plato entirely, thinking they know what is being communicated, but likely falling into the exact trap of misunderstanding that Socrates is outlining’ (Derrida, 1981: 100).

This same concept is explored by Heidegger, who observes the manner in which the human is vulnerable to misinterpreting or misunderstanding tradition when failing to appreciate the origins of that tradition:

Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite
genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand. (Heidegger, 1927, trans. 1962; 43)

Without its context, the tradition or knowledge, is open to misinterpretation, and there is a potential to take on the dangerous quality suggested by Plato, in which de-contextualised information cannot protect itself, and its meaning can become potentially destructive to the reader’s understanding: in the processes of encoding, storage, and retrieval, information vital to understanding is lost, leading to incorrect interpretations. The problem is further qualified by both Plato and Heidegger in explaining the inability of the human to appreciate the potential for misunderstanding: to engage in a belief that it is unnecessary to go back to the primordial sources, to consider the original context of the information, and by so doing, to overlook the possibility that the interpretation taken, could be a mistake. As Plato observes, the difficulty is that the reader accesses only “an aid to memory, but not to remembering… not truth, but only the appearance of truth” (Plato, Phaedrus 275b) and this gives rise to false views, and damaging misinformation, which the reader accepts without question. It is a concern that can be seen in the digital age, where “fake news” arises, and is circulated, unconstrained by the grounding forces of context (or factual evidence) (Peters, 2017; Berkowitz & Swartz, 2015). It is also particularly relevant given the suggestion that some young people prefer opinionated journalism over objective news (Marchi, 2012).

Although Plato does not appear to present a positive connotation for ‘pharmakon’ (though his character Theuth certainly does), there is something to be said for this idea that Socrates’ character Theuth presents: that writing is taken in as a sort of medicine, and thus becomes part of the human; that media can become part of
the human, and that this integration might qualify as a sort of extension of the human, in the McLuhan sense. The argument between whether media and external memory are good for humans, or whether they are bad for humans, or whether they become inescapably part of us is argued by Theuth and Thamas in supposedly ancient times, and by Socrates and Phaedrus 2500 years ago, just as forcefully as it is argued by digital age scholars. Questioning the role of our media, and whether or not it presents a danger to our society is certainly not restricted to the digital age. The roots of this argument can be seen in Platonic philosophy.

Rinella (2012), in his own discussion of the pharmakon of Plato, also mentions concerns raised by Foucault regarding the dangers of pharmakon on social cohesion and order, highlighting again the negative beliefs Socrates espouses toward writing, and proclaiming his concerns that writing could prove injurious to the social order. By identifying writing as a drug, he presents writing as possessing the negative qualities that pharmakon visits on a society:

The difficulties of the pharmakon, in all its multifaceted ambiguity and complexity, constituted what Foucault called a “domain of action” that ancient Greek thought, especially Plato, perceived as a danger to social cohesion and political order (Rinella 2012: 257).

3.4.3 Memory as technology and power in the digital age

Whether discussing the “new” technology of writing, the printing press, or the internet, the ability of the human to gain access to knowledge which might prove socially democratising and destabilise the societal norms has some history (from Eisenstein, 1980; to Postman 1992; to Keen, 2007). Concerns around the ability of the citizen to fully comprehend the material they engage with, and to potentially act in a way that might prove threatening to the social order, are longstanding questions;
questions that persist in the digital age.

Another persistent problem is that of failing to contextualise information, as identified by Plato, and discussed by Heidegger. This can be applied in understanding European policy making. Arguments in favour of a person’s right to be forgotten online, for example, were presented by Viktor Mayer-Schönberger (Mayer-Schönberger, 2011), elevated by policy makers (Reding, 2012), and demonstrated in a European Court of Justice ruling in 2014 (ECJ C-131/12). It has also been codified in the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) and has received much academic interest (Brock, 2016; Floridi, 2016; Ghezzi & Pereria, 2014).

Mayer-Schönberger notes that memory is creating issues for those whose data is being presented out of context and subsequently misinterpreted in potentially damaging ways; a notion with which Plato (and Thamas) could certainly identify, and one in which individuals suffer powerlessness when attempting to restore their reputation. This issue is also reflected in the 5th century Athenian concept of “mnesikakein”:

which implies that one can use memory of the past as a weapon against others. Hence, the Athenian reconciliation literally translates as follows: ‘It is not permitted for any one to recall wrongs against another;…To remember a wrong is therefore to punish the guilty party (Wolpert, 2002).

One wonders if it would prove reassuring, or perhaps even more threatening, to these ancient technological determinists, to consider Bernard Stiegler’s idea, building on Heidegger, that technology (such as Theuth’s worrisome gift of writing) is indeed itself a form of memory (Stiegler, 1994). Yielding its own truths, and not merely the ‘appearance of truth’ as a ‘false aid’ to memory. And therefore technology, with all its capacity for misunderstanding and misrepresentation, has now
become inextricable from human experience, and is potentially likewise destined to upset the social order. As the author Michael Heim observes, “What Heidegger called "the essence of technology" infiltrates human existence… transforming the way we know and think and will. Technology is, in essence, a mode of human existence” (Heim, 1992: 309). Thus, digital civics should cultivate awareness of the ways in which power, particularly individual civic power, is impacted through digital technologies.

3.5 Plato and the Digital Realm; Accessing the Forms through the internet

Platonic philosophy may also be applied to digital social networking, and has been identified by Floridi (2003, 2010b). In Chapter 2, I observed Floridi’s remark that the Industrial Revolution was the point which “really marked the passage from the nominalist world of unique objects to the Platonist world of types of objects, all perfectly reproducible as identical” (Floridi, 2009a: 11). When discussing these Platonic ideas Floridi further observes that:

This has led, by way of compensation, to a prioritization of branding – a process compared by Klein [2000] to the creation of “cultural accessories and personal philosophies” – and of reappropriation: the person who puts a sticker on the window of her car, which is otherwise perfectly identical to thousands of others, is fighting an anti-Platonic battle. The information revolution has further exacerbated this process. Once our window-shopping becomes Windows-shopping and no longer means walking down the street but browsing through the web, the problem caused by the dephysicalization and typification of individuals as unique and irreplaceable entities starts eroding our sense of personal identity as well (Floridi. 2010b: 10).

and also:
IE represents the most recent development in this ecumenical trend, a Platonist environmentalism without a biocentric bias, as it were (Floridi, 2003).

The theory of the forms described by Socrates in Plato’s “Republic”, also describes many characteristics that are applicable to a digital context, almost to the point of sounding like a reflection of the digital world itself, and his notion of the soul certainly possesses the non-physical characteristics familiar to those accessing life through the digital level of abstraction. The two levels of abstraction I have considered in Floridi’s work discussed in Chapter 2 are the physical and the digital. Both can be used to access an informational reality. The digital level of abstraction presents similarities with Plato’s theory of the forms, in that both trade easily in abstract ideas and are less restricted by physical constraints (such physical constraints are described in chapter 2 through the example comparing the time it takes to move a letter through physical space, as opposed to sending an email). They also both assist in formulating a greater understanding of reality beyond an ontology that is purely physical, or purely non-physical.

In the theory of the forms, an object, thing, or characteristic begins as a sort of idea, an all-encompassing and perfect universal concept, which may manifest in any infinite number of ways (Cornford, 1935; Dancy, 2004). For example, the form of a chair: many people may have an idea regarding what a chair might look like, and what its function may be, and yet the physical manifestation of one chair may be vastly different to the next (ie.an arm chair, wooden chair, throne, and so forth). There is an implicit notion in Plato then, that the abstract idea is preferable to its various manifestations; And this preference can similarly be seen in the digital age, where humans show a preference for accessing reality through the digital level of
abstraction, which facilitates easier interaction, and where they can trade in abstract ideas more easily. Thus the usefulness of the digital realm as a means of accessing a greater understanding of reality, demonstrates a parallel with Platonic ideas of using a non-physical level of abstraction, to access a greater understanding of reality. As observed by Cobb:

Plato’s call was for us to emerge from the cave and live fully within the world of ideal forms, the life of the mind. Cyberspace can be interpreted as the Platonic realm incarnate (Cobb, 1998: 30).

Negroponte’s definition of digital convergence, and description of the nature of media, can also be viewed in terms of its forms based depiction, in the Platonic sense. Negroponte identifies the way in which information is fundamentally represented through bits (ones and zeros) and that, consequently, this information can manifest in various ways (Negroponte, 1995: 19). For example, information, such as a news broadcast, could be transmitted from the point of origin, through bits, and physically manifest in various ways preferable to the receiver- either through television, webpages, or other media (Negroponte, 1995). In other words, Negroponte’s description suggests that, akin to Plato, in the digital age too, the form or originating idea can manifest itself in various ways.

3.5.1 Re-ontologising, the Soul, and the Resulting Ethical Challenges

In the ancient world, mortal death resulted in the end of the physical being and life, leaving behind only a pale reflection or “shade”. Though this belief was still largely held by many of Plato’s contemporary thinkers, the possibility of a non-

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48 A notion that Heidegger might appreciate, given the potential flexibility of a forms-based, de-physicalised ontology present in a digital media-rich environment, as opposed to the oppression of an ossified tradition represented by less mutable forms of interaction.
physical component to the life of a human – their essence of being – was encapsulated in the notion of “the soul” which Socrates discussed. Certainly this division of spirit and physical body is not new to all western peoples. Elements of the spirit being able to leave the body can be seen in aspects of shamanism and also Egyptian belief, but the way that this duality was understood is certainly different when it encounters and becomes generalised in Greek ideas (Ulansey, 2006).

For the purposes of this argument, I am interested in the Greek presentation of the soul for two reasons. It shows the emerging belief that the physical being of a human was not the only, or even most important, portion of life, that there was an emergent view that a different level of abstraction existed and could be accessed. And, secondly, if each human had a soul, then the potential existed that each human may have had individual or unique selves possessing some form of agency, and therefore individual power to make choices or exercise participation in their society. In a culture where only a few hundred years before, the Homeric odes illustrate the powerlessness of mortal man unless he submits to the authority of the gods (as Odysseus was required to do to Poseidon on his way home to Ithaca; as Sarpedon's death in “The Iliad” demonstrates; or shown through the hopeless underworld inhabited by “shades” like Teiresias), the move toward a notion of soul discussed by Socrates provides key insight into the changes in philosophical thought developing in Hellenic Greece. The recognition of these changing roles of physicality and agency are important for understanding and identifying the origins of ideological transition. The ability to view the self as able to constitute or present itself in some de-physicalised manner, as Postman considers in a CBC interview, to ask “where one’s consciousness is” (Postman, 1995: 00:49) has important implications for self-understanding in the digital age; and for the preparatory education of life accessed
through the de-physicalised realm.

The response to viewing the physical world as not the primary, but perhaps even the secondary (subordinate) means of accessing reality is a struggle for the ancient mind, more accustomed to viewing existence as a physical entity. This ontological crisis (as well as the shifting cosmological vision and other variables presented by new scientific discovery [Ulansey, 2000]) caused a change in the way that human agency was appreciated. Shifting the belief from one of power residing in the hands of the gods, with humans acting as agents living out and following divine instructions, to one in which the deeds of humans could be appreciated for their own importance: a staggering leap toward individualism which manifests in Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic age, effectively dividing ancient and new world thinking (Nilsson, 1969, 1972; West, 1997; Tarn, 1974). This recognition of one’s own agency manifested in new theories of behaviour and philosophical beliefs to help cope with the ethical challenges raised by this new appreciation of one’s own power and the consequences of one’s actions in the world: an ontological and cosmological dissonance spurring questions of ethics.

It is perhaps no surprise then, that having broached questions of self-understanding spurred by philosophical change (specifically new cosmological and ontological ideas) that Plato’s work should also provide discussions on civic education in exploring the consequences of that change: an approach also necessary to digital civics, in addressing the consequences of the fourth revolution.

This new appreciation of the self – recognising agency, and the worth of mortal actions – and an exploration its consequences from an ethical standpoint – particularly from a behavioural and ethical standpoint– can be seen in other fifth
century works, such as Herodotus’ Histories.

3.5.2 Deeds Worthy of Documentation and Cultural Pluralism

The proem of Herodotus’ Histories, which sets out his motivations for documenting the achievements of humans (Provençal, 2015: 43) (an important aspect of memory and legacy), and his subsequent discussion of the mechanisms for coping with this change in self-understanding through Nomos: culture (particularly inferring a moral context [Vlastos, 1996: 98]), provides a key insight into the fifth century shift in knowledge resulting in the philosophical changes about the ‘self’ and changes in ethical approaches to others:

Ἡροδότου Ἀλκαρνησσέως ἱστορίης ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ώς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τὸ χρόνος ἐξίστηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θομαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἐλλησι τὰ δὲ βαρβάρους ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεὰ γένηται, τὰ τὲ ἄλλα καὶ δι’ ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἄλληλοις ἑαυτοῖς 49 (Herodotus, Histories: Hdt 1.1.0).

Herodotus’ intentions, to record the deeds of men, (as aside from deeds of the gods for example), imbues human accomplishments with a quality of power thereby elevating them to a level of agency previously unrecognised to the ancient mind. It is in this passage that the evidence of a move toward the human recognizing their own agency can be found. In recording and glorifying the “deeds of men” specifically (as opposed to the powerful divine entities such as the gods or fate), Herodotus credits humans with the ability to take actions and do deeds for themselves (as opposed to merely being tools of the gods), and grants value to these actions by considering them worthy of documentation and glorification. Notably, he confers value to both Greek

49 “These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, that he publishes, in the hope of preserving from time the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of both Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due measure of glory; and to put on record what were the causes of their feuds.” For more on Herodotus see: R. Thomas, Herodotus in Context, Cambridge, 2000.
and Barbarian alike and his ethnography attests to this. In the subsequent chapters, Herodotus explores the concepts of cultural convergence, and the challenges that subsequently arise from such interactions, reporting the multiple belief systems he encounters and cataloguing their various outcomes. An overarching theme of his ethnography is ‘Nomos Basileus’: ‘custom is the king of all’. Customs must be respected without fail, for the consequence of disrespecting customs, of over-turning Nomos, and the social order, is ruin and death. Herodotus shows a pluralist leaning (Apfel, 2011: 126, 132). He accepts cultural differences, and explores ethical and cultural questions by demonstrating the pluralist principle of incommensurability (Apfel, 2011: 175).

In a world where the boundaries between nations were becoming increasingly permeable, and where peoples were forced to find ways to co-exist with broadly differing views and cultures such an attempt at appreciating the other, while invoking a tentative and exploratory sense of personal agency, provides insight into modern struggles with agency, pluralism and the progression of beliefs about the exercise of personal power in the digitally converging environment. As the Hellenes became Hellenistic, the concept of ‘nomos basileus’ held significant clues as to the convergence of cultures occurring in the then ‘known world’. Further, it potentially provides insight into modern challenges in a world of information permeability and cultural collision; an insight into ethical pluralism seen in the work of Charles Ess (2009) as discussed in chapter 1.

Interestingly, nomos is the root of the word anonymous. “Best understood in sociological terms as “anomic” (taken from the Greek anomos). A-nomis, a-nomous, a-nonymous: all point to what is beyond the normative frame” (Seligman & Weller, 50 Roughly, ‘Custom is the king of all’
it literally refers to those things that occur outside of our cultural understanding. The use of anonymity in the digital age to explore what can happen when free of public censure, has its roots in the classical tradition, and has potential value in ethical questioning construction if applied in this context- as a means of exploring what is beyond the normative (or culturally moral) frame.

3.5.3 From Agency and Cultural Pluralism, to Ethical Norms and Community Building

This changing conception of self-understanding in the Hellenic period spurs the numerous religious cults (including the Mythraic and Christian traditions) which spring up in the Hellenistic period seeking means to understand this new concept of the self, and how to navigate human interactions and community with it (Ulansey, 1991). In responding to intense changes, new social identities are required to take the place of the previous systems of collective identity, causing new forms of citizenship, and new forms of community building to occur. Ulansey identifies the “Christ cult” as a highly successful response to changes in cosmological vision and self-understanding for a number of reasons, but arguably the most relevant to this research is:

…along with giving its members citizenship in a symbolic homeland [substitute for the lost sense of collective identity that had died with the dissolution of the old local groups], the Christ cult offered to its adherents an almost infinitely intricate symbolic personal genealogy: upon joining this group, one immediately became an heir to the extraordinarily complex and elaborate universe of history, myth, and symbol embodied in the texts of the cult-- what we now call the Bible. Here was provided-- now on a symbolic level-- the same rich sense of embeddedness that used to be furnished by one's growing up within the traditions of a local society. In other words, the Christ cult offered a convincing sense of identity to people for whom the old structure of local group identity was no longer available… (Ulansey, 2000: 229).
A parallel may be drawn here between the work of Ulansey, and the insights of media scholar Henry Jenkins, who identifies the same phenomena occurring in society today, and suggests that the educational establishment sits in direct opposition to students’ views of developing cultural identity:

That sense of old categories or racial and national identities breaking down in a multi-cultural society over generations leaves one hungry for that sense of affiliation or cultural connection, of rootedness, but the search becomes for a self-selecting cultural community… they become very very powerful parts of who they [students] are and how they see themselves and school’s attempts to suppress those views...become direct threats to their views of developing cultural identity. (Jenkins, 2008: 08:09).

So, while Ulansey identifies the success experienced by the early Christian church, in their capacity to understand and work with the cosmological and cultural changes occurring in their world, perhaps it is this failure to understand and take account of these same changes described by Jenkins, which leads to difficulty in contemporary culture: the ability to, as Ulansey puts it “provide a convincing sense of identity to people for whom the old structure of local group identity was no longer available” (Ulansey, 2000: 229). Thus, digital civics should take account of the need to formulate a sense of cultural identity, and particularly self-selecting cultural community, if it is to be successful in meeting the needs of students in the infosphere. In the Hellenistic period this formulation of new community interactions occurred by outlining how Christians should behave in their new community – through texts which would become the bible – providing instruction to those more accustomed to living in tribal units or genetic groups (such as the 12 tribes of Israel) as opposed to peoples united by common ideas, a phenomenon seen more widely across the modern
internet. (It is also interesting to note that the Bible is digital is a hypertext\textsuperscript{51}, making it the first text embodying digital civics.\textsuperscript{52}) The approaches of the Hellenistic period in regards to community building and the dissemination of knowledge in the formulation of community interaction, may be useful to generate coping strategies for the changes in our 21\textsuperscript{st} century cosmological vision. They also give way to behavioural strategies based on self-directed and self-regulatory approaches.

3.5.4 Plato, Self-Regulation, and Self-Direction

There are numerous other questions relevant to the digital age in the pages of Plato. Book 4 of “The Republic” questions the control of knowledge, asking whether the ‘masses’ have the ability (skills) to discriminate between what is good for them and what is bad for them, and as it appears that they do not (and lacking in opportunities for education), an argument for censorship is made. Such protectionist attitudes are reminiscent of those presented in media literacy arguments in the 1980s (discussed in chapter 1) and raise important questions in digital civics, on coping with informational intrusion in the school space. In the converging world of digital technologies, there is also concern that technology is advancing with more rapidity than legal, educational or political authorities can support (Wadhwa, 2014; Nahikian, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Post, 1996). Further, digitally convergent

\textsuperscript{51} The New Testament was constructed with reference to the Old Testament in mind (Ulansey, 2000). So as passages are read in the New Testament, one can refer back to the original prophesy in the Old Testament to which they pertain. Thus the term coined by Nelson in the 1960s for a collection of documents for non-sequential cross-referencing is applicable (Nelson, 1981).

\textsuperscript{52} Though it can certainly be argued that Plato’s Republic is the first work of digital civics, given that it contains non-physical philosophies in its abstract discussion of “the forms”, it is not a hypertext, and for this reason I note it as a work of central importance to digital civics, but not the first text fully embodying digital civics.
technologies bring with them their own set of issues in policing due to the vastness of space they occupy and the ease with which they allow communication transfer— they have become virtually impossible to police or control, and, as mentioned in chapter 1, self-regulation is an increasing phenomenon in the digital age, and an important prospect for digital civics. In book 2 of the Republic, the account of Gyges ring (a ring which provided Gyges with invisibility) begs basic questions regarding ethical development: considering whether humans are capable of self-directing their behaviour in ethical ways; acting solely from virtue. This is also specific to a situation in which the human possesses anonymity and the ability to do whatever they wish without the threat of external consequence (the sort of environment potentially presented by the infosphere). Such an exploration of motivation, as provided by Platonic virtue ethics, is vital to the success of developing ethical theories because, as Stocker observes, many modern ethical theories fail as ethical theories because they fail to “examine motives and the motivational structures and constraints of ethical life” (Stocker, 1976: 453).

Perhaps most interestingly, Charles Ess observes, “what is apparently forgotten or unacknowledged, at least in more recent literature is that "cybernetics" is derived from Plato's use of the cybernetes” (Ess, 2007: 3), presenting yet another example of Plato’s concern with self-directed ethical judgement, which has direct correlations to the digital age and reaffirms the importance of virtue ethics to digital civics. Ess states:

Plato uses the cybernetes as a primary model of ethical judgment – specifically, our ability to discern and aim towards the ethically-justified path in the face of a wide range of possible choices…”Cybernetics," then, means more originally the capability of making ethical judgments in the face of specific and diverse contexts, complete with the ability to self-correct in the face of error and/or new information. This is to
say, the cybernetes, as a model of ethical self-direction, thereby embodies and exemplifies the sort of ethical judgment that Aristotle subsequently identifies in terms of phronesis – i.e., precisely the ability to discern what general principles may apply in a particular context – and how they are to be interpreted to apply within that context as defined by a near-infinite range of fine-grained, ethically relevant details. (Ess, 2007: 15).

3.6 Plato and Virtue Ethics

These Platonic questions of self-directed, self-regulatory ethics formulate part of Plato’s philosophy of virtue ethics. Plato’s philosophical discourses, and those of his student Aristotle, provide the foundation for virtue ethics: a system of ethics which they espouse as a means of behavioural self-regulation for the good of the self and the state. Virtue ethics in the Ancient sense incorporates three main ideas: Arete, Phronesis, and Eudamonia (Hursthouse, 2013). Arete, are actions which are virtuous or excellent because they are truthful (that is largely pure in intention) in regards to attaining one’s highest potential. A “virtue” is a character trait that is part of its possessor (Hursthouse, 2013), such as honesty, or courage. An individual with a virtue, acts in a virtuous way because it is the virtuous thing to do, not for other reasons (such as what other people might think, or because they fear consequences for not acting virtuously): to have a virtue, the intention of your actions must be simply that they are virtuous (Sreenivasan, 2002).

One of the virtues critical for success in virtue ethics, is Phronesis, this is the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012: 2). Practical wisdom is the knowledge or understanding (generally accrued with life experience) that allows one to act beneficially, or virtuously in a situation (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016). It serves to guide a practitioner to enact or apply virtues in the
most advantageous way to bring about the best outcome (this would be *Eudamonia*, described below). It can even function in situations that are new to an individual: that is, this wisdom accrued by a range of life experiences can be applied to new situations with which the practitioner of this virtue may not have specific previous experience. If this seems complicated it is because Phronesis is a “slippery concept… It involves deliberation that is based on values, concerned with practical judgement and informed by reflection. It is pragmatic, variable, context-dependent, and oriented toward action.” (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012: 2). It ascribes a wisdom to the practitioner that they truly understand what is important and will be able to live well (Hurthouse & Pettigrove, 2016).

The acquisition and proper exercise of virtues should, ideally, lead to *Eudamonia*. This is perhaps best described as a subsequent state of happiness, flourishing, well-being, or good life (depending on the translation) brought about through the practise of virtues. *Eudamonia* is often translated in different ways by various scholars, given the complexity of its meaning (Hurthouse, 1999: 188-189). It is not simply happiness, but a “value-laden” concept of happiness, a state of well being that is “true”, or “real” (Hurthouse & Pettigrove, 2016), in the sense of reaching for a high moral goodness, and is the aim of virtue ethics.

Though not always one of the most prominent areas of normative ethics, it has become somewhat more widely cited since Ancombe’s 1958 work “Modern Moral Philosophy” (Athanassoulis, 2004). As observed in chapter 1, Charles Ess identifies this resurgence of interest in virtue ethics, as “both significant in its own right and in light of the potential role virtue ethics might play in a shared and global information ethics” (Ess, 2010a: 296). As the ethicist Shannon Vallor states in her work “Technology and the Virtues” (Vallor, 2016), virtue ethics is “ideally suited for
adaptation to the open-ended and varied encounters with particular technologies that will shape the human condition in this and coming centuries” (Vallor, 2016: 33). That is, that virtue ethics can offer guidance to cope with the novelty of emergent problems that are faced in the digital age. This is for a number of reasons, but one of the most useful applicable concepts is the aforementioned Phronesis (the practical wisdom) that might guide our encounters. As Vallor elaborates, “this virtue directs, modulates, and integrates the enactments of a person’s individual moral virtues, adjusting their habitual expression to the unique demands of each situation” (Vallor, 2016: 19).

Virtue Ethics is based in the Platonic philosophical tradition, making Virtue Ethics further relevant, given, not only the preceding discussion of similarities between the infosphere and Platonic ideas, but also the eventual research outcomes that will be discussed in chapter 6. Thus, while a number of other forms of virtue ethics have since been developed by thinkers such as Hume and Nietzsche, (Slote 2001; Swanton, 2011), and certainly these various forms demonstrate the broad spectrum of virtue ethics and its diverse offering (Nussbaum, 1999), this work focuses on the classical tradition (the virtue ethics of Plato and Aristotle) given the aforementioned discussion of Platonic influence. It is, however, open to multiple formulations of these ethics, such as the inclusion of the ethics of care (that can serve as a preventative measure against over-emphasis on the individual or an abandonment of responsibility to the environment and community: a concern noted by Floridi in chapter 2). Specific formulations of virtue ethics for global practice in the digital age have been offered by scholars. Notably in this area, Shannon Vallor’s work proposes technomoral virtues: an exploration of virtues in light of the relationship between ethics and technology, particularly given the ubiquity of digital technologies in daily life (Vallor, 2016: 2), that might function in a global context. Her work includes
notions of the ethics of care, identifying virtues such as empathy, and care (Vallor, 2016: 120). (Like Ess, she too invokes “pros hen pluralism” as a step toward achieving this global ethics [Vallor, 2016: 54].) Unfortunately, this specific formulation was not available at the time of the pedagogical project undertaken in this work, but will have much to offer future projects in the area of digital civics pedagogy (such as the development of empathy, as will be discussed in chapter 6).

3.6.1 Virtue Ethics suitability for ethics education

Virtue Ethics seems particularly appropriate as a system of moral education and interaction in the infosphere given its self-regulatory nature. While deontology and consequentialism both require regulatory means and enforcement for their continued success, virtue ethics relies on the individual to internally motivate appropriate or virtuous behaviour beneficial for their lives. Plato emphasises the intrinsic value of virtuous behaviours, not the external enforcement of rules.

To contextualise this idea in a manner more familiar to the digital age, with particular regard to young people: numerous studies illustrate the readiness with which young people befriend unknown persons and share potentially damaging personal information (RCMP, 2011; U.S Dept. Justice, 2010; UNICEF, 2012). It is not a lack of knowledge that is dangerous to young people- if asked, any student could likely recite the dangers of engaging with strangers online. The differences between what they know and what they understand however are perhaps widely removed.\(^5\) (I can know that touching a hot stove is a bad idea, but I may not understand until I do so and am burned that there are unpleasant consequences.) To

\(^5\)This is somewhat akin to Plato’s argument in the Phaedrus on the difference between Memory, and remembrance
develop the requisite skills and build the competencies required for a good life (in the Platonic sense) in the online world requires an opportunity to hone skills to drive the metaphorical “Platonic Chariot”. The concepts presented in the allegory of the Platonic charioteer represent a notion of a tripartite (three part) soul. There are multiple interpretations of this allegory, which explore the relationship between these parts. But, simply put, a charioteer contends with two winged horses to pull his chariot. One horse (a white horse) is noble (and well behaved), the other (a black horse) characteristically opposite (rebellious). Unsurprisingly, this causes the driver difficulty in steering his chariot to enlightenment. (Lebeck, 1972). The two horses represent (depending on your exact translation) “Desire”, and “Drive”, the sort of passions or motivations, good (white horse) and bad (black horse) that can move us to action in life. The charioteer that attempts to discipline and steer them is the mind or true self (Friedlander, 2015: 193): that is, he represents “Reason”. When the charioteer attempts to steer these winged horses “either the mind brindles the two into balance, or they drag it with the charioteer into the abyss (Friedlander, 2015: 193). However, the relationships between these entities can be considered as more complex than good horse, bad horse, and struggling charioteer. As the classical scholar Ferrari argues, “The essential point of contrast between the charioteer and rebellious horse is … between that in us which aims at how best the life of the whole person should go and that which looks only to as immediate a satisfaction as possible.” (Ferrari, 1987: 201). That is, as both horses supply movement to the chariot, one horse looks at the more long term benefits, while the other is primarily

54 In a modern context it can be helpful to think of these agents in terms of the more familiar Freudian concepts of ‘id’ (as the dark horse), ‘ego’ (charioteer), and ‘superego’ (as the white horse). Although there are quite vast differences between these two tripartite models (Koenane, 2014), they at least serve to provide an idea of how a relationship between a three part entity might function.
interested in short term gains and thus requires more disciplining from the charioteer (Hall, 2013: 59).

Thus, the relationship between charioteer and horses is complex: the reckless and desirous aspects of the self, tamed over time by the charioteer of reason, become the wisdom which eventually presides over decision-making in life. The sometimes reckless or undisciplined behaviour of young people (and often adults as well) in the infosphere, speaks to a deficiency in this Platonic wisdom, an inability to judge what is appropriate, or to moderate behaviours appropriately, understanding when it is most reasonable to risk take and in what manner risks might be taken. It further highlights a misunderstanding of the consequences of actions (another Platonic idea), which young people might face should they fail to behave in a virtuous (or even safe) manner.

This is the aforementioned principle of Phronesis- or “practical wisdom”. Students won't always be familiar with experiences they encounter; they may not have the opportunity to play trial and error with their lives. A developed sense of Phronesis potentially allows young people to approach the infosphere with the correct balance of scepticism and risk taking.

The vulnerability of children who post too much information about themselves must be carefully considered. They may be located by potential abusers or placed in compromising situations: they may fall prey to cyber-bullying, harassment, or extortion. But should such transparency in human interactions always be viewed negatively, as a lack of Phronesis? Does self-regulation online require concealing one’s actions behind a veil of anonymity, providing only the appearance of virtuous behaviour, or should it not engage with the truth of one’s own failings and seek to accept, from a position of empathy, that all humans are capable of mistakes? Could
this transparency demonstrate a desire to be honest and accepting of the actuality of life and behaviour as opposed to covering or hiding behaviour deemed shameful? Could such honesty actually be virtuous, or an act of Arete?

This honesty forces society to deal with the inadequacies of its legal, educational, and social policies. Society becomes uncomfortable with itself and its own systems when forced, by situation, to contemplate its legal, educational, or political limitations. The online world literally makes one face social hypocrisies. And, as a result, the fears, frustrations, and anger become displaced and directed at the one revealing the inadequacy- for example, Twitter, where unguarded thoughts might be posted, or Facebook, where compromising images may be discomforting; it is a case of shooting the “instant” messenger.

To deal positively with such challenges however, honestly assessing short-comings and aspiring to develop to the most excellent potential (Arete) could eventually culminate in a state of well-being for the citizen, and for society (Eudamonia).

3.7 Plato and Shame in the Ancient Context

While the world Plato constructs is certainly reflected in the construction of the internet, the methods he suggests to remedy the situation and ensure the longevity of the state are full of the socio-cultural structure of ancient Greek (Hellenic) thought. It has been convincingly argued that the world of Plato (5th century Athens) is one in which the central societal theme is one of shame (aidos) (Cairns, 1993; Fisher, 1992). A theme also addressed by Plato in “The Apology” (Shane, 1980).

Shame can be understood as: “A painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behaviour” (New Oxford English
A definition the English researcher Wolfgang Teubert notes is “highly unsatisfactory” as it lacks “reference to (real or imagined) onlookers” (Teubert, 2004). This is because “shame in all its forms is relational” (DeYoung, 2015: 18). It requires an audience, an other, as it is a response to the way we are perceived by others (Galligan, 2014:57). For the purposes of this work then, shame can be more specifically classified as a feeling of humiliation (or distress) resultant from a social failing (real or perceived) that gives rise to a desire to conceal the social offence (whether or not that concealment actually occurs). This desire to conceal arises from the social role of shame: because public knowledge is a central aspect of shame. The activity, or conditions, of which one might be ashamed, involves the public sphere, although the only public involvement actually necessary, is fear of public discovery. Thus, a person can feel shame without the public or society being aware that the person has anything of which to be ashamed (Cairns, 1993).

For the ancient Greeks, shame includes the conditions that are experienced after committing socially unacceptable acts, such as incest and impiety (Dodds, 1951; Nussbaum, 2001). In the context of ancient Greece, the concept of shame pervaded every avenue of life, and played a major role in the overall structure of their society. While early work on ancient Greece categorized it as a “shame culture” (VonEffra, 1937; Benedict, 1946; Dodds, 1951) a careful distinction is now made by scholars that rather, ancient Greek society emphasized shame over guilt. (Cairns, 1993; Fisher, 1992). (This is to clarify that while the primary emphasis of this culture is on shame, fear and guilt also play roles in ancient Greek society.)

Importantly, in this context, shame is identified as having a potentially educational role. Aristotle suggests “shame is a semi-virtue essential in the habituation of moral norms” (Sokolon, 2013: 447). (It cannot be an actual virtue, as
Aristotle raises no less than four objections to this in his Nicomachean ethics [Fussi, 2015: 115]. Aristotle supports the position that shame can be “an important emotional support for socially beneficial behaviours” (Sokolon, 2013: 447). (Indeed, as I explain directly below, similar observations on the educational potential of shame in modern contexts are made by Hooge [2014] and Hall et al. [2016].)

Socrates too, identifies the role of shame on society, and is clearly aware of its impact on education (Shane, 1980). Socrates own focus on questions (the so called “Socratic method”) is designed to mitigate the negative aspects of shame in education (that negative aspect, as psychologist, Paul Shane, observes, is the shame at having one’s own ignorance exposed [Shane, 1980: 352]). Socrates’ method circumvents this shame, by allowing students to pursue their questioning by viewing the teacher as simultaneously a learner, and therefore in a similar situation of vulnerability to themselves (Moore, 1998). Thus there is a long tradition of exploring the role of shame in, and on, educational practises.

3.7.1 Shame in the modern context

Shame’s role is not limited to the ancient world. It is an integral part of our present daily lives also, and has long reaching repercussions. As Gilbert observes, “it is “one of the most painful, and potentially destructive experiences known to humans” (Gilbert, 1997: 113). It has also been said that, “Shame, more than sex or aggression, is responsible for controlling our psychic course.” (Lewis, 1992: 2). It also still functions as a societal aspect of social control and conformity: Erikson notes it as the second stage in his list of crisis in human development (Erikson, 1965), and Benedict discusses its central role in some modern cultural practises (Benedict, 1946). In this regard, shame can be viewed as having both a positive and negative
role in society. While its negative aspects are frequently discussed, including its damage to physical as well as psychological health (Dickerson et al., 2004; Tracy et al., 2007), shame can also play a positive role in society (Hooge, 2014). It can function to make us aware when our place in a community is at risk, and can assist in motivating positive goals such as cooperation and pro-social behaviour (Hooge, 2014: 102). This is similar to Aristotle’s aforementioned observation on the educational value of shame as essential in managing social norms (Sokolon, 2013). Shame’s dual nature can be demonstrated through its role in bullying. For example, the bullied victim will feel shame at the hands of their bully, experiencing the bully’s aggressive intention to visit pain and harm on the victim as an emotional component of the bullying, in which public respect and power are undermined along with any physical injury. But shame is also often used as a means of controlling the bully’s behaviour to prevent them enacting that behaviour further through social reactions: the mocking of a reporter with a muscular condition by Donald Trump, during the 2016 American presidential election, resulted in a “highly negative public response to Trump’s enactment” (Hall et al., 2016: 87), prompting Trump to deny and re-characterise his comments, alleging they were not intended to target the disabled (Hall et al., 2016). In this scenario, both instances of shame are demonstrated, its ability to cause shame to others when used as a weapon of bullying, and its ability to moderate citizen’s behaviours through a public response that identifies the bully’s behaviour as shameful and encourages that behaviour to be stopped or retracted.

In the digital world, shame plays a complex and significant role: from fat-shaming, to doxing55, to revenge porn, to negative reviewing, it is ever-present in

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55 The broadcasting of personal information identifiers to the general public, with the intention that the individual whose information is shared will be caused harm and suffer social censure
online contexts. It “arises mainly after moral transgressions or incompetence, and gives rise to feelings of worthlessness, inferiority and damaged self-image”\textsuperscript{56} (Hooge et al., 2011: 940).

3.7.2 Shame, visibility and self-representation

That shame is connected to image, and how one is viewed or visibly presented by others, is no surprise to the student of Ancient Greek. The Greek word for shame, ‘\textit{aidos}’ is about ‘covering over’ and things ‘hidden’, and thus by contrast holds an innate connection to notions of visibility. It is also semantically linked to Hades (the difference is a small breathing mark at the start of the word which indicates the presence of the “H” sound). Hades, being the land of the dead, was also a place that was dark and hidden beneath the earth.\textsuperscript{57} (Clements, 2007). There is a further semantic link to ‘\textit{eidos}’, (knowledge, essence, or Plato’s “Forms”) creating a link between notions of visibility and knowledge\textsuperscript{58} (not unexpected for a culture who attributed prophesy, knowledge, light, and the sun to the same deity: Apollo). Therefore, one would expect to see a focus on issues of visibility and shame, should the Platonic tradition be playing out in Western digital society. As the research on participants' behaviours will demonstrate in chapters 5 and 6, both visibility and aspects of shame played a key role in interactions and even directed the ethical development of the participants, with shame proving pivotal to the motivation of events and communications. Approaching shame however (as opposed to avoiding it)

\textsuperscript{56} Hooge et al. use the work of Ausubel (1955) and also Tangney (1999) to arrive at this formulation.
\textsuperscript{57} Meanwhile aspects considered to be “good” were linked with the ability to “see”; the god Apollo represented prophesy (the ability to “see”), and the means to see and uncover the truth- light or the sun. Of particular interest here is: E. Parisinou, The Light of the Gods: The Role of Light in Archaic and Classical Greek Cult, London, 2000.
seems to have an educational value in developing resilience to its impact, particularly in digital contexts (Rooney 2015). An experiment by Hooge, Zeelenberg, and Breugelmans in 2011, revealed that “shame mainly motivates approach behaviour to restore the damaged self, but that this restore motive decreases when situational factors make it too risky or difficult to restore” (Hooge et al., 2011: 939). Such instances can be seen in the digital world through the use of social media. For example, when U.K. plus-sized model Iskra Lawrence was fat shamed on social media by users referring to her as a fat cow who ate ‘too many bags of crisps’, she responded with an approach behaviour to this shame by posting photos and videos of herself with, and eating, bags of crisps. In this instance, Lawrence was able to regain control over how her image was being represented, and restore any damage caused by the shaming. However, by contrast, in the aforementioned case of Rehtaeah Parsons, who was also being shamed online, motive to restore the self from the damage of shame was inhibited because the sustained bullying she received made approach behaviours too risky and dangerous to undertake. Having lost control over how she was represented to others – through the inability to prevent the circulation of photographs of herself in a vulnerable situation – she lacked the opportunity to regain control of, and restore, her image. Considering the presence of such examples of shame in a social media context, in chapter 6, I am able to consider the practice of shame in the research data, and the educational role that it plays in formulating personal ethics.

59 The viral story was reported on the popular site Buzzfeed: https://www.buzzfeed.com/krishrach/this-plus-size-models-response-to-her-body-shaming-critics-i?utm_term=.feZ7VW5Y#.hbpe0aml
3.7 Symbola Basileus: Symbol is the King of All

“For Descartes... Contemplation does not take you out of the material world, but draws attention to objects, things that are situated in geometrical space in the world. On the other hand, for Platonic and Neoplatonic idealism, t’he real resided in the supradivine realm beyond human experience, in which one participated through study, meditative exercise, or the workings of the symbol” (Coyne, 1999: 56).

Given the history outlined here, and the observations of Floridi in the previous chapter (2), work reviewed to date points to a shift in human perceptions of the self. To further help express the ways in which the human views their relationship to physicality, and agency (and perhaps allude to their relationship with technology), I present a table (Table 3.1) which offers representative symbols of the concepts involved. I consider the distinction between the ancient world, new world, and digital world (separated by roughly 2000 years). The development of digital civics is placed within the realm of how society perceives its understanding to exercise agency in the digital age. This makes digital civics an ethics that is purposefully derived from free agency.

In the ancient world, one might consider a useful symbolic representation of man's perception of his own agency to be a capital T (Or perhaps, a Tau, to invoke a more ancient symbol for life [Carrié, 1993: 128], although the function of this letter here is simply to demarcate a barrier, as will be shown in table 3.1, below). The barrier between the sacred and the profane – understood as the dichotomy between the extraordinary and ordinary (Durkheim, 1995)– cannot be breached. Immortals are immortal and mortals cannot attain immortality (rather they become ‘shades’). Deeds, or actions (for those recognizing their capability to perform them) are the only way to be remembered (as with Homer’s Achilles), so it is not surprising that memory was
highly valued. In this model, the Creator alone possesses agency and immortality (or living eternal continuance). There can be a familiar relationship between man and god (or mortal and immortal) but not familial, not true reconciliation. Man's lot is to serve these gods, external symbols of power that live on mountain tops (Ulansey, 2000), such as Zion, or Olympus.

However, the continuing efforts of scientific enquiry present information (the world is discovered to be round, not flat) and spur the development of new cosmologies altering our views of self. Humans adopt a new means of accessing reality, able to view themselves and their world in a de-physicalised way through the soul and the forms (Plato) and develop a sense of personal agency and individuality (Herodotus, Alexander the Great), the mixing of cultures also spurs discussion of cultural relativism and pluralism (Nomos Basileus). The belief between the human mortal and the divine immortal was breached, as numerous cults present views of a saviour capable of bridging the gap between the mortal and divine (Mithras, Christ). The gods are not the only active force in the world, and the mountain tops are no longer far enough away to house them, they must move to the sky, to the farthest reaches of “heaven”. The breaking through of this boundary from the physical to the spiritual, between the mortal and immortal, or the sacred and profane can be shown through the symbol of a lower case t, or “the cross”. An ancient symbol to relay the notion of the consolidation of heaven with earth.

But now, on the cusp of the next 2000 years, can a similar shift be seen? Certainly, there is similarity to the current changes of self-perception experienced by the human (Ulansey, 2000; Clynes, 2011). The human has moved from notions of a spiritual and physical world, to one in which the physical is mutable, and inter-related with the spirit or consciousness. And our consciousness is not hemmed in by space,
rather it can be anywhere in the world that we choose to send it. As we are learning from quantum mechanics, we can view ourselves as largely empty space and information, but not necessarily as entirely solid matter.

Indeed, we have even moved from being focussed in ancient times on the Creator (as the possessor of all agency), to focus on ourselves as the created (capable of agency), and now we contemplate what we ourselves can create (and what agency such man made creations are capable of through Artificial Intelligence). Certainly, in quantum physics we see many of these ideas reflected: from questions of what causes agency and how human agency occurs, to the search for a creative life-giving force in the smallest possible parts of life, to an increasingly de-physicalised understanding of the world around us. Within the realm of how society perceives its understanding to exercise agency is where I have placed the development of digital civics.

And how might this appear on the symbolic representation of the next 2000 years? This would move the point of the cross even lower, or eventually, to the bottom of the Tao. An inverted T, which neatly symbolizes not only our movement beyond a value of pure physicality and toward a fuller understanding of multiple levels of abstraction, encompassing our belief that we are not cut off from having full agency in any way, but rather that we have full and complete agency through liberty. Additionally, and perhaps most interestingly, an inverted T could be both a 1 and a place holder __, that is, a representation of binary- showing not the digital nature of the world in which we are moving, but rather how our perception of the world around us is moving to an informational one.

I have drafted the following table (Table 3.1) to represent these ideas:
Table 3.1: A symbolic visualization of cosmological change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epoch</th>
<th>Ancient world</th>
<th>New World</th>
<th>Digital World</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic representation</td>
<td>Sacred barrier Profane</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Barrier?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived societal understanding to exercise agency</td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Currently Developing (Area for Digital Civics Contribution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Matter</td>
<td>Physical as Important</td>
<td>Physical &amp; Spirit as equally important</td>
<td>Spirit as more important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency perceived to be controlled by</td>
<td>God (Creator/ Ultimate Catalyst)</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Machine/Artificial Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of the location of the divine/agency</td>
<td>Mountain top</td>
<td>The Heavens</td>
<td>Invisible (quantum mechanics/ non-physical)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7.1 The Personal Digital Philosophy

If, by this evidence, we can establish that digital characteristics exist in early history, then we can make two potential conclusions of relevance to digital civics education. Firstly, that the digital age is in no way divorced from the rest of history but rather, appears to be building upon a historical tradition making it, as Floridi suggests, a product of at least 6000 years of history. Secondly, it is possible that answers regarding how to deal with various challenges in the digital age might be found through historical enquiry. Clearly, students must develop a form of philosophy relevant to accessing the world through digital means (a sort of response to the changing cosmology of their world), yet personal to the individual, in which they are
cognizant of the cultural heritage and over-arching principles within which their ideas are rooted, particularly in regards to their activation of free agency in enacting ethical behaviours. This can be characterised as a personal digital philosophy, here defined as: Attitudes and ideas regarding online conduct that serve as guiding principles for ethical behaviour in the infosphere.

This should engage students in a sustained process of philosophical questioning where they identify and develop their personal ideas and beliefs regarding ethic and civic behaviour including the social norms, values, ideals, and ideologies that contribute to ethical behaviours online, and the critical self-awareness of these required in today’s informational reality with deference to the influences of changing self-identity as humans (Floridi’s fourth revolution) and a mediated world. This encompasses how one engages with the world of the digital and takes into consideration how one both consciously and unconsciously interacts with the world as mediated through digital technologies, and how citizens strive to become aware of their unconscious decisions. It also leads one to consider the systems of belief that a citizen develops and maintains due to their mediation of the world through digital technologies.

3.7.2 Applying Classical concepts for digital civics

The questions of media and memory are not novel to modern digital life, nor are the questions of new media and social order, convergence and cultural pluralism, or even self-directed ethics as a response to change. Indeed, there are a number of Platonic philosophical resources that prove useful in addressing questions of the digital age. Memory, the theory of the forms, concepts of agency, cultural pluralism,
the formation of communities through common interest, self-regulation, virtue ethics, and shame, all have something to offer an understanding of modern digital life.

There is a long tradition of arguments perceiving new forms of media (be they a stylus or an iPad) as a potential threat to civic order; of the dangers of decontextualised information; or of intense cosmological and ontological change causing apocalyptic ideation. These concerns have persisted for 2500 years at least. New and emerging media also present a perceived threat to social order that some may find intimidating, or ominous. These concerns must be appreciated and dealt with carefully, for their longevity suggests, they cannot be ignored.

Digital civics education addresses these concerns. Functioning to ensure that young people possess the skills and pre-existent knowledge to fully understand a ‘text’ they are reading (or where to safely and reliably obtain that knowledge); to be able to fully contextualise and understand the ‘wisdom’ or actual meaning that is being transmitted. It can also provide students an opportunity to explore their own reaction to the changing cosmology brought about by the digital world, if not fully conscious of the vast shift occurring in their lifetime, then at least through considering the ways in which they exercise power and cope with challenges in the digital environment as opposed to the offline physical world.

In order for people to interact in an increasingly digital world, individuals need to understand the nature of their own relationship with technology and how it affects them so they can act as informed citizens making responsible choices which best empower themselves and their society. Such elements of critical thinking are existent in Media Literacy curricula as noted in chapter 1, and consequently media literacy may have much to offer digital civics education. The distinction between these two however is the indebtedness to information philosophy (explored in chapter
2), and the focus on virtue ethics and Platonic philosophy (discussed in chapter 3) that characterizes digital civics in this research.

I have discussed in chapter 1, the difficulties faced by educators in taking account of digital technologies in formal education, and the lack of consensus regarding appropriate philosophical frameworks for digital pedagogy. In chapter 2, I explored the greater environment of the infosphere, and considered the necessity of developing attitudes and philosophies to live successfully in the infosphere as equally, if not more, important to acquiring technical skills to function in the digital world. Finally, as a broad historical context exists for digital civics, drawing from Platonic philosophical resources, as discussed in chapter 3, it is necessary to incorporate an understanding of historical and cultural inheritance to any program of digital civics. There is also the recognition that changing cosmology and ontology give rise to new ethical responses, a phenomenon noted in both the Hellenistic age by Ulansey (2000), and in the digital age by Floridi and Sanders (2001).

Given this, how do we educate citizens to deal with the multi-faceted, ever-changing and seemingly unlimited world of the digital? Immense changes are necessary in educational policy, philosophy, and practise, to meet the requirements of educating for life in the infosphere. There is no current pedagogical model which takes into consideration the numerous issues raised by digital civics. There is a need to construct new ways of learning which take account of the infosphere, and that appreciate changes in philosophical thinking are equally, if not more important, than changes in technology. The behavioural changes that are apparent in the infosphere - that is, the recognition of one’s agency, and the need to self-regulate - must be engaged, and the very idea of convergence must be examined and integrated into classrooms. To safely immerse students as ethical agents in the online environment,
allowing them to develop their own personal approach to address philosophical and ethical questions about the digital world. In drawing this conclusion, I offered as a pathway to achieving these outcomes the development of personal digital philosophies. In the absence of an accepted approach to digital civics education, I present in chapter 4 the design of an enquiry that draws on these ideas and prepares for a consideration of digital civics pedagogy which takes into account the requirements and issues raised in chapters 1, 2 and 3.
Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology for the Facebook Laboratory

“I cannot help fearing that men may reach a point where they look on every new theory as a danger, every innovation as a toilsome trouble, every social advance as a first step toward revolution, and that they may absolutely refuse to move at all.”

4.1 Formulating a Methodology

In this chapter, I present the methodological approach and research design of an action-based education project designed to examine practice for fostering digital civic experience, through interaction in both the virtual and physical levels of abstraction. It outlines an ethnographic study, featuring the interactions of participants in a learning environment that has been constructed for digital civics pedagogy, with the aim of meeting the challenge of preparing students for ethically responsible participation as citizens of a digitally convergent society.

The design of this project is directly influenced by Floridi’s Philosophy of Information, specifically his explanation of the infosphere as ontologically continuous (encompassing both the online and offline) (Floridi, 2007), as well as his description of the Fourth Revolution, in which ontological crisis leads to ethical crisis (Floridi, 2012; Floridi and Sanders, 2001). As such, the project incorporates both online and offline environments, and explores the participants behaviours in developing ethical ideas. The learning environment considers the development of a pedagogical approach to cultivate ‘ethically responsible participation’ in the infosphere, through provision for the development of personal digital philosophies. The learning environment (characterised below as the ‘Facebook Laboratory’) employs a community informatics approach to create an international multi-platform learning space for civic interaction using social networking media, whilst
concurrently launching related spectacle and promenade theatre events to highlight the convergent environment.

The project samples the experiences of a small group of 16 and 17-year-old students from two high schools in Dublin, Ireland. The experiences of volunteer participants who assist in teaching and supporting students in this environment are also noted. Monitored by an embedded researcher, an ethnography is developed using data derived from: social media interactions, interviews, and ‘live action’ participant involvement. ‘Recursive Abstraction’ and ‘Recursive Frame Analysis’ (explained below) are later employed as a means of further analysis. The role of the embedded researcher themselves, and their experiences as a director and educator will also be contextualised, in order to highlight any relevant matters informing the design and methods used. Research data is collected in multiple forms using all possible channels of communication, i.e.: Facebook transcripts of interactions, Facebook messages, Facebook profiles, interviews with student participants, interviews with character participants, observations of student and character participants at live events, feedback that appeared on the internet through other media (i.e YouTube, Twitter), emails or other communications made to me by members of the public, and so forth). The organization of this research design is discussed immediately below and is represented in figure 4.1.

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the educational approaches, philosophical underpinning, and historical contextualisation for addressing challenges in digital media education arising from digital convergence through digital civics in pedagogy. I discussed the incorporation of a number of points to inform this enquiry: an ethnographic social media environment (boyd, 2007; Turkle, 1997); an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge (McLuhan, 1967); the raising of ethical
questions through role play and simulation (Papert, 1981; Rieber, 1992; Alessi, 1988); an understanding of the infosphere through the embodiment of participants on and offline (Ess, 2003); the philosophy of information (Floridi, 2002); the use of history to address questions of technology (Mumford, 1934); and the development of a personal philosophical approach focused on the development of the ethical agent (as discussed in chapter 3).

While this chapter focuses on the methods and design utilised, I also provide any necessary information on the logistical management required to ensure the project’s success (a more in-depth set of logistics and planning can be found in the attached additional materials). These dual (and at times duelling) roles as researcher and program director (logistical manager and host) have been divided into separate sections to demonstrate that participant activity was not manipulated for the researcher by the director. (The director did not force the actions of participants in a direction the researcher might have wanted.) In discussing the project’s methods, I will provide my intentions as a researcher, and the academic models from which I drew structure, such as community informatics (Gurstein, 2007), and Rieber’s notion of “hybrid interactive learning environments” (Rieber, 1996: 43). In outlining the project’s logistics, I will discuss the various influences, such as the pioneering work of the Ballet Russes,\(^6\) which shaped much of my decision-making as a project director.

The following then, outlines how the design of the research took shape, the questions considered in formulating and building the research, the opportunities and

\(^6\) A travelling Parisian ballet company, they were known for their ground-breaking collaborations; perhaps most notably their performance of Stravinsky’s ‘the rite of spring’ during which the audience were so affected by the avant-garde material, they rioted and threw shoes at the performers.
challenges that arose, and the eventual construction and implementation of the initial project. Taking account of these numerous factors:

1. I begin this methodology chapter by discussing the structure of the research design, before contextualising the “Facebook Laboratory”. I characterise this space that is to become the environment for the learning project and in which the ethnographic study will take place. I also reflect on my own experiences as a student and educator, subsequently providing previously implemented examples of experimental initiatives.

2. I then theorise the Facebook Laboratory, providing the basic requirements that seemed apparent for a successful pedagogical endeavour in digital civics based upon the previous discussions of digital media in chapters 1-3. I present the immediate context from which the concept arose, before describing what the environment’s construction entailed.

3. Finally, I present how the exploration of digital civics that was conducted in the Facebook Laboratory took place. Dividing the roles of researcher and project director, I consider the ethnographic approach, sampling, and analysis of this piece of action research.

4.2 Structure of the Research

Given the complexity of the work as mixed methods research formulating a multi-stranded project with the researcher playing numerous roles, it is useful to begin by presenting a general overview of the research design as a means of clarifying the various parts of the work, at the outset (See Fig 4.1, Overleaf).
As an action based research project bringing together theory with real-world situations (Berg, 2004), progress hinged upon the successful interaction of the
researcher with the participants and stakeholders, as well as the physical and intellectual contributions of participants (Berg, 2004). As will be discussed, numerous factors assisted in this endeavour, including the researcher’s previous experience participating in digital education environments, and the strong relationship with local practitioners and stakeholders that had already been established through previous work together.

Specifically exploring civic and ethics behaviour in educational contexts, the project’s intentions were to have both political and practical repercussions (Grundy, 1987), situating it firmly within an “emancipating” (Grundy, 1988), or “critical science” (McKernan, 1991) mode of action research. This “emancipating” mode of action research, as described by Grundy (Grundy, 1987), “aims to develop a critical consciousness, underpinned by a commitment to the ideas of freedom, equality, and justice” (Walker, 1993: 97). This is in keeping with the new knowledge that was to be generated regarding civics and ethics in the infosphere and its application to educational practise, a consequence of which was to be the development and strengthening of participant’s individual philosophies, leading to beneficial civic outcomes (such as enhanced civic participation, improved ethical behaviours, and increased awareness of personal and social responsibilities). It further encourages the other active participants helping to teach the students (the character participants and project facilitator) to reconsider their own stance and views about the digital world, whilst considering the need to move out of the Industrial aged (or Victorian) paradigm of education toward a new pedagogical approach: all key aspects of emancipatory action research (Kemmis, 2001). Indeed, as the action researcher Kemmis observes, “this kind of action research aims at intervening in the cultural, social and historical processes of everyday life… helping practitioners to develop a
critical and self-critical understanding of their situation” (Kemmis, 2001: 92).

The knowledge of civics and ethics in the infosphere is formulated through an ethnographic study of the Facebook Laboratory. An approach of dialogical anthropology (as described in the work of anthropologist Kevin Dwyer [Dwyer, 1982]) is used, as it is well suited to the conversational nature of interactions in the learning environment (given the environment’s use of narrative and social media). This dialogical approach is also favourable as it retains focus on the civic empowerment of participants (Tedlock, 1987), an aspect useful to exploring questions of civics in the infosphere. To assist in this endeavour, data from the Facebook Laboratory is further analysed through other iterative analytical techniques appropriate for use in role-play environments (Keeney & Keeney, 2012).

The development of the Facebook Laboratory, a play-based simulation-as-microworld (Rieber, 1996) for the infosphere (encompassing both the online and offline elements [Floridi, 2007]) as a pedagogical research environment, necessitated an approach that utilised ICTs to facilitate community processes and shared civic learning goals. This enmeshed with community informatics, which “is the application of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to enable community processes and the achievement of community objectives” (Gurstein, 2007). Whilst concerns have been raised that Community Informatics has “a ‘thin’ conception of its technological agenda” as it “lacks ontology for its technical endeavours” (Stillman & Linger, 2009: 2, 6) these concerns are addressed through the underlying foundation of information philosophy taken in this research. The informational ontology, as described in the work of Luciano Floridi, outlined in chapter 2, provides a robust conceptual framework for addressing work in the area of IT and computing, supplementing the lacking conceptual framework of community informatics.
Another potential issue to address in community informatics research is raised by Loader and Keeble, in their review of community informations initatives (Loader & Keeble, 2004), in which they observe:

The literature suggests that many projects are technologically led, and that they flounder because of a mismatch between the communication needs and social structures of community networks and the technological enthusiasts' perspective. In many instances, the two parties simply do not even speak the same language let alone share a common vision (Loader & Keeble, 2004: 39).

Fortunately, in designing the Facebook Laboratory, the two parties were represented by the same individual, and so a vision was shared between the researcher (formulating the underpinning to address the needs of the community network), and the programme director (who designed and contemplated the actual technological environment).

The Facebook Laboratory required an individual to “host”, or facilitate, interaction and provide basic structure and direction (Wishart et al., 2007), particularly at the early stages of the project, as well as in regards to the theatrical events that were to take place in the offline world. This became the role of the program director, who oversaw the daily running of the environment once the project had been launched, and who also artistically directed character participants in preparation for the numerous events to be undertaken. The program director’s role was similar to that which might be undertaken by a teacher, and consequently the output of the program director is a pedagogical program intended to demonstrate the implementation of digital civics pedagogy.

Thus, whilst the entire project categorises under the broader umbrella of action research (Berg, 2004) overseen by the researcher, the design was divided into two distinct arenas. This included: the overall research design and strategy, devised
by the researcher, that sought to develop ethnographic study of the Facebook Laboratory (and environment they had theorised), employing analysis techniques to formulate new knowledge about civics and ethics in the infosphere; and the construction of the Facebook Laboratory itself, a microworld (Rieber, 1996) formulated through an approach of community informatics (Gurstein, 2007) in which a teacher-like program director created live action events and ‘hosted’ this play based environment (Wishart et al., 2007) to yield a pedagogical program.

4.3 Contextualising the Facebook Laboratory

The purpose of this work is to develop an action-based project incorporating a model for digital civics in pedagogy using digital technology, in particular exploring civic and ethics interaction using the social networking site Facebook. The Facebook Laboratory is a learning environment that combines digital and live action presentations mediated using the Facebook platform to foster civic and ethical development in the infosphere. This space (including both the online and offline interactions of participants) functioned as the environment within which this research study could be conducted. Indeed, by 2012, shortly after the project’s run, reports of projects that utilised social media as a means of sociological study discussed the growing prevalence of such an approach. (Giglietto et al., 2012). This included not only the use of Facebook as a means of community building (Schroeder & Greenhowe, 2009) or to examine social structure (Traud & Mucha, 2011), but also the value of other social networks, like YouTube, and Twitter, in exploring political and democratic engagement (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Burgess & Green, 2009).

The Laboratory encouraged digital interaction and motivated public
engagement with a community learning initiative run by Dublin City Council called “One City, One Book” (a program discussed later)\textsuperscript{61}. The book for this particular initiative was Oscar Wilde’s “The Picture of Dorian Gray”. I developed and trained a multi-disciplinary team of 30 specialists to interact with the public via social media, posing as well-known Victorian personas, including Oscar Wilde and his circle of literary associates. These digital interactions encouraged the public to visit and take part in events around the city, where they would also meet live actors portraying some of the same roles as their digital counterparts. For example, in one event, theatrical players appeared in a promenade theatre performance at a gallery lecture, while online, digital characters presented digital galleries of their artwork. This highlighted one of the primary conceptual ideas in Floridi’s philosophy of information upon which the project was predicated: the blurring of boundaries between the online and offline in the infosphere (Floridi, 2007). The Facebook Laboratory’s design can be described as a “microworld” employing “simulation”. Akin to a microworld (Papert, 1981; Rieber, 1992), participants in this research project had the opportunity to shape the learning environment, and required little training in order to participate (Rieber, 1996).\textsuperscript{62} However, they were also required to stay within the parameters of the project, as with a simulation (Alessi, 1988). In a microworld, learners are expected to self-regulate (Rieber, 1996), another principle which made the microworld a relevant choice for implementation in this study.

Importantly, for a study that deals with philosophical concepts, simulations-as-

\textsuperscript{61} One City, One Book is an internationally practised literacy project in which one specific book is chosen and promoted throughout a city area to encourage active reading and community participation. Usually run by a library or local organization, city-wide public events are often developed in conjunction with the book to encourage participation. For in-depth information on producing a One City, One Book programme and specific details about it’s a delivery, please see the America Library Association’s guidebook at: http://www.ala.org/programming/sites/ala.org.programming/files/content/onebook/files/onebookguide.pdf

\textsuperscript{62} Or, as Rieber describes, the microworld was the "simplest case" of a domain and matched the user.
microworlds complements the research and theory of mental models (Rieber, 1996). “Mental models are dynamic cognitive constructs in that they are ever-changing and evolving, similar to the Piagetian process of equilibration in which mental schemes are created and refined” (Rieber, 1996:51): a learning process helpful to formulating and theorising the philosophical concepts aimed for in the development of digital civics.

When I first began organising my research methods for the project, a colleague observed, ‘by the time you finish, you realise your Facebook research will probably be obsolete?’ ‘Perhaps,’ I replied, ‘but so will Facebook’. The decision to use Facebook was based not upon the belief that Facebook itself was some sort of eternal phenomenon, but rather on the basis that social networking was here to stay (boyd, 2009b), and Facebook was the platform of the moment. The intention was to create an action based project that utilised Facebook as an exemplar of social networking in education to demonstrate the innovative ways in which digital interaction might be utilised by mainstream (formal) and informal educational environments with deference to digital civics. Whatever methods, evidence, or strategies I constructed, I expected to be able to apply to other forms of social networking: Facebook was just my example, although research into its educational use has continued (Dalsgaard, 2016; Dyson et al., 2015) as indeed, has research encouraging its educational value (Menzies et al., 2017).

In chapter 3, I placed the development of digital civics within the realm of how society perceives its understanding to exercise agency. Building from chapter 3, I sought to enact this within a digital context, developing digital civics education through the cultivation of ethical agency. I intended to create an active project that assisted the participants to develop their own personal approach to address
philosophical and ethical questions about the digital world, what I referred to in chapter 3 as a personal digital philosophy: the attitudes and ideas regarding online conduct that serve as guiding principles for ethical behaviour in the infosphere. The object of study in the project outlined below deals with the personal digital philosophies developed by young people in the course of their online interactions.

The project was designed with reference to the aspects of convergence that were briefly described in chapter 1 that should play a role in developing these personal digital philosophies. The participants needed to: develop awareness of living in the infosphere (the converging levels of abstraction); to interact with various forms of educators, such as parents, professors, field specialists, businesses, organisations, and ordinary citizens (the converging education community); to explore various subject disciplines (the converging of learning content); and to have as much freedom (as could be safely provided them) allowing and encouraging them to self-regulate their behaviours. In short, they needed to develop the skills and understanding that would help them deal with some of the educational consequences of the fourth revolution and life in the infosphere, as described by Floridi (discussed in chapter 2). This required considerable advance preparation in regards to readying participants and remedying technical issues to ensure the project ran as planned (Wishart et al., 2007). As the microworld incorporated both the digital and analogue worlds, the construction of a complex bubble around participants that immersed them totally within the project, incorporating not only Facebook, but the offline world as well, was necessary. It was anticipated that the use of this multi-platform (or “transmedia”) space would provide an opportunity for students to explore identity. This practice is described by religion scholar J. Sage Elwell as a “transmediated self” and refers to:
the identity experience emerging from the feedback loop between the digital and the analog whereby one domain informs the other in an ongoing dialectic of existential equivalence. Thus, the transmedia model serves as a helpful paradigm for understanding the nature of self-identity and self formation in this new liminal space by offering the conceptual architecture necessary for exploring and articulating its integrated, dispersed, episodic, and interactive narrative character (Elwell, 2014: 243).

While Elwell described this theoretical space several years after the Facebook Laboratory project had completed, his theoretical depiction accurately describes the Facebook Laboratory’s underlying approaches: Elwell describes the same process of movement and impact between levels of abstraction that Floridi notes in his discussion of the infosphere, and considers its educational uses for identity and selfhood. Thus, the transmedia (Jenkins, 2006a), model which I discuss below as an aspect of theorising, provides a useful context in the development of this microworld, understanding it in terms of integrating the online and offline aspects of the infosphere, for the purposes of identity formation within this educational environment, out of which arises, a personal digital philosophy.

The theatrical nature of the project, encompassing promenade theatre, spectacle production, and actor characterisations formulated around a piece of famous literature and its Victorian world, required a grounding in theatrical processes such as: production (Farber, 2006), method (Boleslavsky, 1933; Mamet, 1999), and shared processes with computers, such as their dynamic and interactive natures (Laurel, 2013). Theatre uses narrative to explore identity and inform its audience; it has civic impact. “Citizenship and identities are performative, which means that they are enacted in the habitual and domestic spaces of everyday life” (Nicholson, 2014: 28). The Facebook Laboratory focused largely on the narratives that would be constructed by participants. This was imperative for the exploration of identity development. The
“idea that a narrative (conscious or otherwise) is one of the principle modes of personal and civic identity formation has been foundational in theorizing around the idea of the self” (Elwell, 2014). In this respect, there is recognition of the inter-relationship of both the civic community and the individual, in the development of individual identity through such narrative work. The usefulness of such narrative work in identity construction has been supported by scholars such as: Goffman (1959), MacIntyre (1984), Taylor (1989), Nussbaum (1990), Gubrium & Holstein (2008), and Nelson (2001). This can provide a useful starting point for exploring how individuals, as they develop awareness of their own identity, and their power in relationships (or perceived lack of power in relationships) might choose to exercise their agency. Before discussing the construction of the microworld however, and the relationship in which it functioned in conjunction with the Dublin One City, One Book project, the context and theory used in developing the Facebook Laboratory are explored.

4.3.1 Contextualising the Researcher, Reflexive Awareness

I was fortunate to have found myself in a unique position, and I think it necessary to expound on the relevancies to contextualise my personal approach to creating a digital civics model for pedagogy. As the qualitative researchers Altheide and Johnson observe “all knowledge is perspectival ... the perspectival nature of knowledge is an obdurate fact of ethnography” (Altheide & Johnson, 1994: 490). Consequently, an ethnographic researcher’s work is shaped by this perspective. For this reason, it is important to appreciate how a researchers background and biography impact on research, as ethnographers (Williams & Treadwell, 2008: 56).
Additionally, the presentation of such biographical material, which provides personal backdrop and background may provide “more accurate representation of ethnographic research findings” (Williams & Treadwell, 2008: 56). Thus, in this section I will briefly provide some biographical information here, as a means of identifying my own subjectivity, and to serve as context for the development of the project that follows.

When I began planning the project I felt myself in a good position to provide digital civics instruction. I had degrees in Education and Classical history- I had also spent a couple of years as a high school teacher. I had taught media courses such as film and video and ICT, both in Canada and the United Kingdom respectively: so at least I had a general understanding of the logistics of the classroom environment. I also held a Theatre degree which I felt assisted my communications ability and knowledge of creating spectacle events. As for assessing the impact of science and technology on society, I had a Masters in the History of Medicine, where the history, sociology, and philosophy of technological advances in science had been a key topic. But of more value to me, I considered myself a “digital elder”- someone who’d been living in the world of ubiquitous computer use for most of their lives, both personally and as part of digital societies. I would hazard a guess there are few people with my experiences; certainly, I regard them as unique.

I grew up in a home with an electrical engineer father who could see the potential of computers and purchased one almost as soon as they were readily available. My uncle also designed computers for a living. Thus, I was brought up to understand the implications, and the speed with which technology outpaced itself. By the time I was 16, we were moving to Edmonton, Alberta where a pioneering school, MCHS, had created a fully networked environment- this was 1995. The project
provided students with email accounts (for emailing personally and for work and contact with teachers) and also a school-run online instant chat program. Whilst government initiatives at the time sought to include technology where possible (the P3 schools discussed in Chapter 1 were on the verge of launching), the Alberta government’s unique relationship with the Catholic School Board in the St. Albert Regional Division meant that available monies could be utilised in conjunction with the provincial body to create a novel approach to burgeoning educational issues in technology. The potential existed for unusual educational projects, such as a digital television program, to be broadcast from the school. As a teenager, I was already living in a technologically ubiquitous and pervasive computing society. Nor was this experience short lived: upon leaving high school graduation I arrived promptly at Acadia University for the first year of its “Acadia Advantage” program (experience which allowed me insight into the ways information passed both overtly and covertly by students). I spent seven years at Acadia earning three degrees so that by the age of 25, I had spent nearly a decade living full-time in digital societies. That is what makes my experience so unique; while many people of my generation may have grown up in homes with a great deal of technology, they did not belong to digital societies (where digital communications mediated the majority of their communications). In effect, I grew up in a world that did not yet exist, but was about to; in a world where nothing had yet caught up to the open road of the information super highway; law enforcement hadn’t yet built any form of digital police cruiser. At that time, Canada had a progressive approach in this regard, promoting the formation of the information highway (Winseck, 1998) “encouraged by government policies directed at telelearning technologies” (Lewis et al., 1999: 319).

In addition to these formative experiences, I also spent time producing theatre
productions. What appeared to me to be subtle changes in the ways audiences consumed theatre and circulated it, highlighted for me some key ideas about online media consumption and the crossover between the digital and analogue worlds, as well as the world of everyday life and the theatrical world of “make believe”. I used this successfully to my advantage in producing a particular show in Dublin, in which characters and audience amalgamated completely, but while allowing the integration of modern communications technology on the part of the audience. These were the key instances from my own experiences from which I drew insight to develop the project. I shall subsequently expand some of these experiences, programs, and projects to explain the relevant pedagogical approaches and examples below.

Examples: Personal Context for the Facebook Lab

It is interesting to note that many innovative social networking projects in schools are occurring in Western Canada possibly due to its pioneering stance in ICT education for at least the past 20 years (including 2 Facebook based projects that ran concurrent with the Facebook Laboratory in Saskatchewan, and a Twitter based kindergarten project in Calgary as reported by the CBC in 201063). The MCHS project, which I had experienced, for example, had its own instant messaging platform in 1995, making its school system contemporary, even, ‘ahead of the game’ with technological advancements in communication.

The Acadia University Advantage Program also conducted its own digital learning environment. Some of the more challenging aspects were finding ways to motivate student interest in the subject area as opposed to game playing and online

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instant messaging (Provencal, 2002). Dr. Vernon Provencal, a classical scholar and professor at the University, wrote about the difficulties of such an environment:

…I was ready for an exciting year in teacher-student collaboration. They (students) would come to class fully prepared, knowledgeable about the subject, and brimming with questions and comments for discussion. That is what the literature promised. Of course, that is not what happened. (Provencal, 2002: 173).

He also provided insight into the kinds of learning experiences that could and did take place:

At one point in our discussions I made a declaration that marked a point of clarity for me and proved pivotal for the development of the course…”it is not a question anymore of what they are supposed to learn; it is really only a question of what they are able to do" (Provencal, 2002: 177).

Provencal's insights were implemented in his own classroom, which drew on various types of digital activity to motivate learning (I know, because at the time I was one of his students). Classes experimented with new forms of instruction designed to promote unique and improved ways of teaching, such as encouraging the use of webpages, or the creation of digital video projects, allowing students to explore and communicate knowledge of the discipline for themselves. He booked students classes to learn video editing or webpage construction, and presented sites like the Perseus Project in class. The amount of time he dedicated to teaching about the mediated environment, perhaps demonstrated the lack of skills (what students were ‘able to do’) that had been provided at secondary level. Students were clearly unprepared for the self-regulatory nature of tertiary education, nor were they in possession of the communications and technical skills they required.

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64 A digital library project at Tufts University, accessible here: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/
4.4 Theorising to build the Facebook Laboratory

Drawing from the previous discussions contextualising digital media and the critical requirement of digital civics to meet the needs of human life in the infosphere, and in conjunction with contributions from previous experience with education and theatre production, I integrated this knowledge to create a list of requirements that seemed critical to a successful digital civics project (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Requirements for building the digital civics project

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<td>Floridi, 2007, 2009a, 2009c; Kenway &amp; Bullen 2001; and the free agency discussed in chapter 3</td>
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i. *An understanding of Convergence*

A basic understanding of the infosphere (Floridi, 1999), the nature of the overall environment in the digital age, is necessary for digital civics education.
Moreover, not only digital convergence (Strasser, 2013) but also convergence as a broad means of understanding the coming together of information and environment. This includes (1) the converging of the educational community (in which all aspects of society from corporate enterprise, to family unit, to broader community for example, all play a role as noted by Byron [2008] for example), (2) the converging of learning content, (where subject matters are not defined by borders, but rather fall into general useful categories that allow the student to explore and draw correlations between many aspects of the human experience, an interdisciplinary approach to learning discussed by Gatto [1992]), and (3) the converging of levels of abstraction (in which the digital and analogue worlds combine and students can learn in both spaces as considered by Floridi [2007]) are but a few of the changing aspects to be considered. They are the sort of consequences brought about by the “frictionless information transfer” that occurs with digital convergence, described by Floridi (Floridi, 2007: 11). Other areas of convergence may be identified and addressed in the educational process. I chose to focus on these three aspects of convergence specifically, based on a review of the literature that indicated their prominence as issues in education, and the necessity of dealing with these aspects of convergence when constructing the project.

\[ \textit{ii. The inclusion of the greater community in learning} \]

Ideally, contact and communication with the outside world, broadening student perspective and experience, should be addressed. All community stakeholders have responsibilities and play a role in regards to media consumption and young people (Byron, 2008) and Floridi notes how it will not always be possible to maintain approaches offline, or disconnected from the digital flow of information (Floridi,
2007). While current policy and procedural restrictions complicate this, a means of engagement with the larger community is required to civically prepare students for the digital world. The proverb “it takes a village to raise a child” is a relevant adage to modern digital pedagogical discourse as it speaks to the universal human nature fundamental to life in the infosphere. Where intentions are in alignment with educational outcomes (the shared mission of public organisations such as schools, museums, or charitable organizations), the benefits of providing students (particularly more mature students) with access to increased resources and relationships fosters a greater sense of community inclusion and the ability of school to introduce safe learning partners and collaborators. Further, for schools to introduce students to corporate learning partners (large scale organizations and businesses with whom they may collaborate) in a supervised way, offers an opportunity to instruct students in the many pitfalls and boundary requirements of such interaction, thus allowing an opportunity to scaffold student development, whilst providing some protection from relationships in which young people are vulnerable (Boninger, & Molnar, 2016). An important aspect, given Floridi’s discussion of the vulnerability of citizens to corporate branding in their search for identity in the infosphere (Floridi, 2009a, 2010b).

### iii. Teachers who incarnate skills

In chapter 1, I stated that this research recognised the need for well trained teachers to support learning (Warscheur & Ames, 2010) and support for Charles Ess’ work on embodiment which argues that students “will require teachers who incarnate the skills and wisdom that mark the highest levels of human accomplishment” (Ess, 2003:131). Teachers can enhance the classroom experience in new ways that allow
for more inclusive instruction. They can also facilitate learning, acting as a model, in the role of ‘host’ in learning environment (Wishart et al., 2007). As discussed by Wishart, Oades, and Morris, in their evaluation of creative role play for learning, “the role of the ‘hosts’ in preparing participants and in moderating their communication is key to the success of the online role play” (Wishart et al., 2007). To a degree, such initiatives are already occurring organically in the formal education environment. In 2010, Saskatchewan history teacher Brad Gibault utilised Facebook to teach History; asking students to live the lives of historical figures by creating accounts on Facebook. Though popular, national news reported that they met with resistance from parents and other officials (as discussed by the CBC65). In their favour, pioneering efforts from teachers break down the barriers of what is considered possible or even appropriate in the classroom; lead to further development of programs; and force policy and procedure to catch up. They also encourage students, through modelling behaviours such as personal courage (standing up for student learning), calculated risk taking, and innovation. Alternatively, however, teachers can create projects that meet with immense difficulties and may fail to fully come to fruition. As they are blocked by upper administration, lessons can be passed on to students that show a conflicted mentality toward the digital and manifest in feelings of confusion and frustration. Further, and perhaps most importantly, the absence of an over-arching philosophy to which educators can subscribe means they miss the opportunity to fully capitalise on the true nature of digital education, nor can they make conscious decisions about the implementation of technology and civic education as part of their subject or multiple subject areas. Thus, appropriate support for teachers to be able to incarnate the skills and wisdom necessary should assist in success.

iv. An Interdisciplinary Approach

Media literacy often takes place in other subject areas (such as English) (O’Neill & Barnes, 2008). In conjunction with the concerns about teaching media – or digital media – literacy skills as a separate subject, financial concerns further prevent implementation of programs. The time necessary to devote to digital instruction in an already packed curriculum often prevents the creation and delivery of additional programs. Furthermore, isolating digital civics instruction to one class contradicts the message that digital civics exists in a convergent environment (the idea identified by McLuhan that information is fragmented in the 19th century classroom environment [McLuhan, 1967: 18]). Ideally, the nature of the digital itself requires instruction that transcends the bounds of a subject area to provide a genuine depiction of life in the convergent environment of the infosphere (converging of learning content). It should also be observed that other subject areas have a great deal to offer the study of digital civics (as noted in chapter 3). An inter-disciplinary approach allows students to draw from a myriad of ideas to construct the richest philosophy, and given the impact of cultural inheritance, which can be observed through other subject areas (historical or literary study), the integration of these subjects is paramount.

v. Multi-Platform/transmedia Approach

In recognition of the varying ways in which students access information (Jenkins, 2006a), and the means by which they respond to it, provision must be made for inclusive strategies of education. The Facebook Laboratory recognises the use of transmedia (Jenkins, 2003; 2006a), or specifically transmedia intertextuality (Kinder,
1991), as a useful tool for identity construction (Elwell, 2014), formulating a story world for exploration by participants, with particular use of “the liminal space between the virtual and the real” (Elwell, 2014: 233). In transmedia, (also known as multi-platform or enhanced storytelling) networked stories are told, and made popular, across different media (Jenkins, 2003). It becomes useful for civic engagement through its participatory nature:

Transmedia storytelling is also interactive. It invites the audience to participate in the process of the story’s unfolding by encouraging them to search out the depth and details of integrated, dispersed, and episodic story-worlds. This creates an immersive environment that fans can live inside and explore, and in some cases, co-create (Elwell, 2014: 241).

The Facebook Laboratory must be implemented across a multi-media platform allowing various forms of feedback in various ways of learning, taking into account Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1991). (For instance, the opportunity for audio, and visual materials, written materials, and even kinaesthetic learning.) It must also be available across platforms to ensure that students familiar with specific operating systems (e.g. iOS, Windows, etc.) are accommodated, and are equally comfortable in accessing material. This allows students a variety of feedback options about their learning, while providing teachers numerous methods of assessment (such as videos or oral feedback, design or construction projects, or even simple written comments and posts). Further, students are not barred from accessing information, but find themselves encouraged to seek out new forms of knowledge and develop practical skills in critical thinking that they can apply to the “real world” (Dewey, 1893).

vi. Self-regulatory and Student-centric Approach

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In an environment in which self-regulation is expected (Helberger, 2007), students will require the ability to identify aims and goals for themselves and their behaviour; they will need to actively learn how to set and achieve targets. This cannot occur as long as an external body is taking responsibility for their learning and achievements. A student centric approach provides a useful paradigm to approach innovation that encourages students to love the process of learning (Christensen at al., 2008). This is an approach that also aligns well with Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (Christensen at al., 2008). Certainly, learning should be scaffolded (Wood et al., 1976), but it should not necessarily be prescribed beyond broad outcomes that can be developed and manipulated by teachers to meet the requirements of students. Thus, an approach which is student-centric seems most appropriate.

vii. Digital Philosophies and Digital Identities

School programs teaching responsible digital behaviour can currently be enforced by controls within the class environment- through the banning of website or mobile phone activity and by the policing of such actions, for instance anti-bullying policy. Effective as these measures may or may not prove now, they are an unrealistic approach to pursue for the future of digital literacy because, as demonstrated by information philosophy, eventually it will not be possible to block out information connectivity from everyday life (Floridi, 2007; 2009c), let alone the school environment. Further, given the intrusion of commercial interests in schools (Boninger, & Molnar, 2016; Richards et al., 1998) there is a need to distinguish between the concept of identity itself, and brands which might be used as pedagogical tools for identity development (such as Facebook) (Floridi, 2009a, Kenway & Bullen
As discussed, there is a need for students to develop their own personal digital philosophy to help them understand their own position in an information society mediated by digital interactions. This approach is developed in response to chapter 3, in which digital civics is based on an activation of free agency in enacting ethical behaviours. One such example of a model in which students can build a personal digital philosophy which will help them understand for themselves the digital world and their role within it is outlined as the Facebook Laboratory. Whereby, through a process of critical reflection about and interaction in the digital environment, young people, as represented by the participants in this study, are led to consider their own ethical behaviours. First, by articulating their own philosophies through an open and informal discussion with the researcher, they are able to identify some of their opinions and thoughts. Subsequently, by engaging with other participants with various philosophies they may better identify their own beliefs. Further, they may sharpen these philosophies through discussion with others, and then put them into practice in an online environment.

**Putting it into Practice**

On identifying these factors, I sought to incorporate them into a method for digital civics instruction that could be studied. In the following section, I outline the principal elements of an action-based research study undertaken with a group of participants recruited for a community learning initiative, sponsored by Dublin City Libraries, but undertaken for the purpose of developing innovative practice in digital civics pedagogy. The study objective is to ensure that participants learn not only transferable skills in media, through the types of tools in the digital environment that
they may utilise, but also about digital civics and their own personal digital philosophy while becoming more engaged with specific subject matter. Through their discussions of society and of ethics and morality from the time of Oscar Wilde, students develop (or re-develop) their own sense of ‘who they are’ digitally (that is their digital identity as explored critically through their experiences in the digital learning environment) and how they put their personal digital philosophy into practice when they interact. The creation and execution of such a model is intended to demonstrate the potential for eventual integration of such a method into the formal education environment.

Another Example, The Bram Stoker Project:

As mentioned previously, this research project needed to incorporate more than the enclosed learning environment of a school classroom. In recognition of the blurring boundaries in the infosphere, a successful digital civics program requires a community education environment with the ability to make use of digital technology. While a school could provide a closed community (of value when educating younger, more vulnerable pupils), it would be necessary to create a broader community with aspects of the “real world” (or the environment outside of school) which would still be a safe place for secondary students to interact (the concept of converging education community). Thus, I sought contact with community organisations interested in public education and considered my own experiences with such organisations as a means of developing the project in an attempt to build the sort of “learning communities” based in cooperative and democratic principles for “social

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66 In this case an English Literature and History general focus, but the project could work for any subject provided parallels to the digital world could be drawn.
and cultural renewal” (Miller, 2000: 6).

The year previous to implementing the research project, Dublin City Libraries initiated an event centred around Bram Stoker’s “Dracula” in their One City One Book program (a community-wide literacy program explained below), which demonstrated to me that a digital community was already developing within their organisation. Although a print media and radio campaign advertised events for their festival, the success of the flagship production I had created for them hinged on the immense quantity of follow-up that occurred on ‘the web’. I had staged an experimental historical re-enactment of the ‘Wedding of Bram Stoker’. It was a spectacle theatre production, in the Victorian sense, in which scenery, lighting, and other visual and physical cues created a “sensual feast for the eye” (Booth, 2015: 1). The project aim was to involve the community fully by immersing them in the historical environment through a sort of play based learning approach (Rieber, 1996). I had access to the historical venue in which Bram Stoker’s wedding actually occurred, and it was possible, with historical costuming and scripting, to fully recreate an environment in which the audience could be immersed and interact as part of the production. With actors seated in the audience and the audience acting themselves as wedding guests, there was no division between show and real life, and between 1878 (the date of the original wedding) and 2009. The unanticipated presence of so many photographers (particularly within the performance space), mobile phones, and wedding guests accessing their twitter accounts could have shattered the illusion, and yet the interactive nature of the show meant that both possibilities could exist at once- a digital world, and an analogue one. The show

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67 Interestingly the increased focus on visual stimuli in the Victorian theatre was in part “a product of new technology directed toward public and private entertainment” (Booth, 2015:4) not unlike the digital age push toward digital convergence in the entertainment sector prompting increased focus on improved visuals and interactive programming.
launched the festivities for a month of events for ‘One City One Book’, and reviews appeared in newspapers not only in Ireland\(^68\), (see Fig. 4.2) but also in digital publications in the UK\(^69\), and Canada.

Fig. 4.2 Bram Stoker's Wedding as print screened from the Irish Times

The result was evocative of Rieber’s notions of designing interactive learning environments, in which play and multimedia can integrate to formulate a learning space (Rieber, 1996). Links to these traditional media (such as newspapers) were posted via Facebook to spread notice; postings about the production by spectators seated in the audience appeared on Twitter; a video taken on a mobile phone and edited by an audience member was posted to YouTube\(^70\); and masses of pictures were taken and posted to sites such as Flickr.\(^71\) None of this was done with the knowledge of the project’s director and producer. This extended the audience involvement in the

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\(^68\) See for example: \text{http://www.irishtimes.com/indepth/slideshows/stoker/}
\(^69\) See: \text{http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/7976938.stm}
\(^70\) See: \text{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTXExCQZ0Q}
\(^71\) See also: \text{http://pix.ie/niamhesmith/album/339794}
project beyond interactive theatre in a closed environment (the church site of the wedding) to a wider international audience and a younger age group interested in popularising, sharing, and creating experiences online thereby extending and proliferating the event and community interaction across both the physical and digital levels of abstraction (converging the levels of abstraction).

It was clear from this project that the use of visual spectacle and the inclusion of mobile technologies and social media in the event were a major part of the success of such projects. Successful first in that they widened audience awareness of literacy, history, and the over-arching educational aims of the library services in regards to encouraging participatory democracy in the City of Dublin (through positive community feedback and wide press coverage, for instance); and also in the enjoyment that they brought players and audience alike. But additionally the project succeeded in exploring areas of theatre performance (or participation) and technology integration without shattering the illusion of the theatrical world. The ability to cross between the analogue and digital environments was not akin to crossing between fact and fantasy; that is, even the presence of mass quantities of digital devices documenting the event did not spoil the historical nature of the project. Using this as a basis, it was clear that it would be possible to create a second project, more digitally geared, more multi-platform (or transmedia) and with the benefit of experience, it might avoid some of the pitfalls of a first attempt.

4.5 Building the Facebook Laboratory

Using the existent program ‘One City One Book’ as an established community learning initiative encouraging social and cultural education and citizenship building,
I created a program to encourage positive involvement in the digital community and motivate discussion about digital civics to help build and examine philosophical development within secondary school-aged students. Thus, the project focused on the changes and developments in philosophy prompted by the digital age and digital interaction currently being experienced in the infosphere as described by Luciano Floridi (Floridi, 2002; 2007; 2012). I established the content for the project would be a digital civics agenda, using the life of Oscar Wilde, and his book, “The Picture of Dorian Gray”.

To this extent, (given that I was utilising a library based initiative for an ICTs education based project in a social media context, and drawing from inter-disciplinary sources) I noted that I had employed a community informatics (Gurstein, 2007) approach based on the philosophy of the infosphere and relevant historical context, incorporating multi-platform social media and live theatre to develop the learning space. A group of approximately 30 participants created Facebook profiles of Oscar Wilde and his immediate circle; each participant being assigned (or choosing) a persona from Wilde’s life, researching the persona, and their various connections with Wilde’s other friends, and presenting the persona online. Six [6] secondary-aged students (who will be discussed in terms of sampling and recruitment later below) subsequently crafted their own Victorian online personas of entirely ‘made up’ characters, which they could use to interact with the Wilde circle.

The 6 students were studied to see how they experienced the environment. As the project was fully open to the community, the environment was not subject to school regulation but was monitored by the researcher. Students learned practically

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72 Defines Community Infomatics as: the application of information and communications technology (ICT) to enable and empower community processes (Gurstein, 2007:11).
by taking part in their larger community with all the realistic challenges that involved.
The fully convergent environment used Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to create a
digital version of Oscar Wilde’s inner circle in London, 1891. A central website on
Facebook allowed users a centre to touch base and acted as a hub for the many events
going on to provide a point of entry into this convergent world.

4.5.1 One City One Book

I confirmed my intention to work in conjunction with Dublin City Library’s
event ‘One City, One Book’; a cultural initiative designed to build community
through encouraging participation in city-wide events. The scheme spotlights one
particular literary composition by an Irish author and motivates the public to read the
work as a collective. The annual event runs for the month of April and features
activities designed to highlight various aspects of the work and author’s life. A
number of community organisations such as universities, libraries and museums
volunteer, taking part in creating educational events. All of these are cultural venues
interested in contributing to public education and civic involvement and had
achieved, over time, a comfortable and successful working relationship. Thus,
building on the success of previous years, a desire had been expressed to broaden the
scope of the project by reaching out to young people through the digital environment.

I hoped that through the international connections provided, students would be able to
understand their community interactions not only in the local, but the global
dimensions as well, also better understand the interaction between the two. Young
people, through digital means, are encouraged to take part in their community, form
stronger connections with various community organisations (such as universities,
libraries, museums and other community institutions), and improve their literacy
skills, both written analogue and digital. The book chosen for 2010 was Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. I had approached the Library the year before to extol the virtues of Oscar Wilde's work, specifically *Dorian Gray*, as a focal point for the 2010 project.

4.5.2 The choice of Oscar Wilde’s Dorian Gray

In designing the Facebook Laboratory – in which Facebook profiles might interact with one another as a means of understanding a topic – it was clear that potential existed for implementation in any subject area. To understand the cell in biology, perhaps the mitochondria and the nucleus might Facebook post to the nuclear membrane’s cell “wall”. For the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, well used to displaying pictograms on walls, Facebook lent itself to ancient history. The Royal Shakespeare Company also used social networking to have characters post each other from Romeo and Juliet on Twitter shortly after this research Facebook Laboratory completed (BBC, 2010; Itzkoff, 2010). The ability to teach content via social networking is apparent, but to provide a useful springboard for digital civics while still teaching traditional subjects also required a book with relevance both to English and History curricula, that was enjoyable to read. Considering the links between the Victorians and current life (McCormack, 2010), and the enduring popularity of Wilde, *Dorian Gray* was an excellent choice. It also seemed poetically just, if current pedagogical approaches could not leave behind the Victorian era (Gatto, 1992; Little, 2014; Harrison, 2014) then perhaps the Victorian era could leave behind current pedagogical approaches. As the action researchers Senge and Scharmer observe, such research is predicated on the “core premise: that Industrial Age institutions face extraordinary challenges to evolve…” (Senge & Scharmer, 2006). Employing the
Industrial Age helped to ground the work in the foundation where many of the ideas people have about the modern world were formulated (McCormack, 2010), providing opportunity to challenge those assumptions at their “primordial source” (as Hiedegger might put it).

Already studied in the formal educational curriculum, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* held numerous parallels to digital civics, making it specifically relevant for use in the research study. In addition to the book’s salient plot points, the world surrounding the work also had useful parallels with the digital age, including the challenges in the author’s own life, the book’s reception, and the Victorian world in which it was published.

Dorian Gray tells the story of a man who keeps his true self locked in his attic while an Avatar that looks nothing like him roams the world preying on young people. Circulating media (a yellow book) of a morally questionable nature, he deletes compromising physical evidence from existence.

Fully escaping physical reality, Dorian portrays to the world an avatar of self-representation depicting the best of his attributes while covertly managing shortcomings away from public view (in his attic). He is able to manipulate his own appearance beyond the bounds of physical expectation, like a digital character. He is also capable of using that ability to manipulate others, highlighting the potential of online users (particularly anonymous ones) to “do harm”. Eventually, however, Dorian must cope with his true self, presenting ideas about personal conduct and self-regulation. The “yellow book”73 Dorian acquires shows the extent to which humans are affected by the information with which they come into contact. The sources of media one consumes and how they might be valued are relevant lessons here. More

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73 In the Victorian Era, books could be wrapped in yellow paper to warn of their immodest content
so, when one considers the censorship made possible through the exertion of social
and legal pressures in the Victorian era. When Dorian later commits murder, he
annihilates the evidence, dissolving the body in chemicals. That a person can
somehow be deleted by removing all physical evidence raises interesting questions
about physicality and reality in the digital world. Given the falseness of Dorian’s own
physical form, and the pre-occupation of the book with discerning the difference
between what is real and what is illusion, notions of physicality are raised for
discussion. Additionally, digitally pertinent notions of responsibility, morality and
ethical behaviour are themes in the book: from Dorian’s debauchery; to his murder of
another character (in which he tries to project his guilt on the technology – his knife –
he uses); to his decision to destroy the painting that shows his true form.

The division of Oscar’s own personality, like that of Gray’s, provides further
parallels for study. Oscar was at once the loving father to his children, a family man,
and yet also a ‘sexual deviant’ preying on ‘rent boys’ leaving his peers to ask who the
real Wilde was, and if both could exist simultaneously. His name has become
synonymous with identity politics. An aesthete who railed against mass-production
(raising ontological questions in a mass produced world of deteriorating individuality,
not unlike digital culture [Floridi, 2010b]), he was keen to establish and maintain
control of his public identity and individuality. Pushing the boundaries of accepted
social behaviour, he helped shape the modern world through his notion of celebrity
and manipulating the media, and his advocacy for the breaking down of shame and
privacy barriers (McCormack, 2010).

It has been argued that Wilde’s time in prison was not the result of his breaking
sodomy laws through dubious liaisons with numerous rent boys, or his affair with Sir
Alfred Douglas (against whose father his first trial was mounted) (Holland, 2010;
Rather, Wilde’s prison term seems a direct consequence of the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, because the book revealed the hypocritical behaviour and cover-ups that went on in most “respectable” Victorian households (Holland, 2010). Oscar’s crime was his shattering of the social contract that maintained a veil of respectability over the shameful transgressions enacted as commonplace in Victorian society: the desire to conceal shame led to the jailing of Wilde. The length of prison term he was given was expected to kill a man of his social delicacy. It destroyed him socially: he ended his days in penury, in exile, in France. This fate evokes the classical age philosophical resources to which Wilde himself was sympathetic: the severe consequence of overturning accepted social norms (Herodotean “Nomos”) that lead to ruin and death. Overturning the bounds of social acceptability, forcing people to examine the truth of their lives and actions, to face, contemplate, accept and cope with their shame is also an aspect of the interaction enabled by digital social networking evidenced by many young people online, who openly admit their behaviour by posting pictures of their antics, illegal or otherwise, to Facebook. (These themes, evocative of shame approach behaviours (Hooge et al., 2011) would later be raised by the student participants in the Facebook Laboratory.) This demonstrated the consolidation of the chosen book, classical philosophy, and the digital age.

The Victorian period in which the work was penned has additional relevance to ethics in the digital age. Many cultural “norms”, as we now perceive them, gained foothold during the Victorian era (McCormack, 2010), science fiction writers, including H.G. Wells and Jules Verne, posed questions we are still exploring, and the foundations of current technological communications find their roots in the Victorian experience. The work of James Clerk Maxwell on Thermodynamics (necessary to
wireless technologies) is described by his fellow physicist J.J. Thomson as:

instrumental in providing the methods which may bring all inhabitants of the world within hearing distance of each other and has potentialities social, educational and political which we are only beginning to realize (Thomson, 1931:44).

The swiftness of this technological development proved unsettling to the Victorian mind, as the industrial revolution impacted technological prowess, and changed social structures. Three years after Alexander Graham Bell's success with the telephone in 1876, Muybridge presents the video, in 1879. Within this three years, Edison had invented the phonograph and the light bulb. By 1895 the Kinetophone had arrived. The claim that digital age technology is advancing more rapidly than ever before, diminishes by comparison to the Victorians, who within a period of a few years, went from letter writing to movie going.

Representative of the fears surrounding technological development, writer and politician Ignatius Donnelly, published *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*, in 1882; changing the moral of the widely circulated Platonic myth to place blame for civilizations’ downfall on the inability to balance technology with ethics. This re-imagining persists in popular culture, usurping Plato’s original warnings of the dangers of empire.

The foundational importance of the Victorian period, and the ethical issues its technological development prompt, in conjunction with the relevance of Wilde’s own life, and the pertinence of plot points in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* provide a useful support for raising and discussing questions of digital civics.

4.6 The Learning Environment
The Laboratory included the Facebook environment, and a number of live events organised specifically to correlate to the Facebook environment. This created an environment that incorporated both the on and offline elements of the infosphere as discussed by Floridi (Floridi, 1999). One City One Book also offered a full schedule of events, and marketing materials all around the city (including banners and posters featuring Dorian Gray).

Initially, the project also included a webquest, an effective means of integrating technology and learning which encourages collaboration (Gülbaşar et al., 2010). This anticipated any lack of direction I expected the students to face, providing a task to help reorient them back to the project. It seemed an appropriate choice as “a WebQuest, as a constructivist, inquiry-oriented strategy, requires learners to use higher levels of thinking as a means to analyze and apply complex information, providing an exciting online teaching and learning strategy.” (Sanford et al., 2010: 473). However, as the students became increasingly focused on the learning they were already undertaking in the environment, and the plethora of events available to them, the webquest was available, but not formally integrated.

The annual “One City, One Book” programme of events features community organizations such as Trinity College Dublin, the National Gallery, the National Symphony Orchestra, and Dublin City Libraries and Archives. Web space was set aside and it was initially hoped that a number of local celebrities would encourage further community participation. (Oscar Wilde’s grandson was a confirmed guest for the events early on, and gave a speech about Wilde at the beginning of the programme.) Here again, the permeation of boundaries in which the outside world took a role in fostering education, and in which the online and offline worlds functioned together were drawn from Floridi’s philosophy of information.
Utilising the digital environment of 1891 created by all the participants, events in the analogue (or everyday physical world) were also suggested, created, and attended. This allowed for “crossover” between the online and offline worlds. Crossover events, which were deliberately staged to create activity between the physical life and digital role-play, acknowledging the inter-relationship of these two environments as part of Floridi’s infosphere (Floridi, 1999), occurred at least once a week. These included costumed walks around the city, in which tea rooms, lectures, or concerts were attended. (This was in addition to the other events organised by Dublin City Libraries as part of their project and in which the participants may have taken part.) Two key crossover events to bridge the gap between analogue and digital were planned from the initial stages of the project and had precise theatrical requirements of their own; a Waltz Ball, in the second week of the project, and a meeting of the illustrious “Rhymer’s Club” at the Chester Beatty Library, in the final week.

The Ball was intended to showcase a slice of life in the circle of Oscar Wilde in 1891, to promote notions of the crossover between the analogue and digital environments (presenting the inter-relatedness of these environments as a first step to seeing them both as part of the infosphere), and to acquire a broader public interest and public awareness of digital civics. A spectacle event in which music and costumes would feature with period dancing, the public had the opportunity to interact with characters, dance with them, and make themselves at home in the 1891 environment. After the arrival of Oscar and his friends, the characters took to the bandstand in St Stephen's Green, where they were to perform two waltzes. After this, there were to be three more waltzes that invited public participation. This event was preluded by a promenade in downtown Dublin, in which characters visited
bookshops, took tea in Bewleys, and went shopping on Grafton Street.

An event at the Chester Beatty Library dedicated to the poetry and music of the 1890s and the folk set of modern Dublin was modelled on the original “Rhymer's Club” of the nineteenth century. Presided over by Yeats and birthing talents such as Aubrey Beardsley and John Gray, the modern event was to be hosted by Princess Zetella and Ada Leverson (Yeats was out of town). The presence of a computer, linked to an overhead screen during the meeting, on which posts could be made to Facebook, created an opportunity to highlight the crossover nature of the infosphere. The event was organised by the undergraduate student playing Princess Zetella, who was interested in using the event to learn more about Wilde, and about event production and co-ordination, highlighting Berg’s insight that successful action research required the contributions of participants (Berg, 2004). Participant Zetella’s decision to undertake the project had come as a direct result of learning about Floridi’s philosophical ideas. After a waltz rehearsal early on in the project, she had asked about the underlying philosophical ideas that had led to the integration of the online and offline events. When she realised the conceptual connection between Floridi’s infosphere and the use of both of these environments as a greater whole to create a learning space, she decided to undertake her own project, that would further integrate the digital environment with a live action event (hence her inclusion of an overhead screen during the Rhymer’s Club event). This meant that my role was more of an executive producer for this event, providing assistance and scaffolding where necessary and attending meetings to assist in supporting the project. Set to feature talent from around Dublin (such as notable spoken word poet Stephen James Smith and musician Enda Reilly) and appearances from Sarah Bernhardt, John Gray, and Lord Alfred Douglas (the infamous Bosie), the date for the event was set for the last
weekend in April.

In addition to the presence of costumed actors, the crossover nature of Facebook Laboratory was further reinforced with “One City One Book” banners and posters throughout the city of Dublin. Only the characters whose performing actors were present in Dublin could take part in the analogue arena, with photographs stressing the locality of the project. But the photographs were also intended to transfer information between the analogue and digital and encouraged interactions online.

The various aspects of the online environment called for each area to be carefully planned and presented in a user-friendly manner. I acquired the assistance of a professional web expert (who provided his services on a voluntary basis) to assist with the project. Consequently, the organisational issue became not acquiring the assistance, but being able to organise structure and coordinate volunteers as required. Given the international nature of participant involvement, the administration aspect of this called for the type of open communication required in social networking, which advantageously already served as the project base.

Despite this, contact with the researcher was minimal for all participants. Any instruction was sent via email (with social networks used for informal follow up only if necessary). Throughout the project, emails were usually only a few sentences in length. Participants rarely responded to emails (but that they read them could be ascertained through their online postings which were on-topic and thoughtful). Topics were historically introduced based on a day-by-day system of events contemporary to the characters and also based on One City One Book projects. Participants were given one main idea or event to explore daily. They were also given a few topics which they could fall back on over the month if the particular day’s topic (or even several days’
topics) failed to appeal to them. The idea was to create a skeletal structure around which all participants could flesh out their own ideas and help the project grow. (In some areas the skeleton would prove weak while in other areas it proved stronger than expected; suffragetism spurred a number of discussions that lasted throughout the project's run. In some cases participants would graft on their own skeleton or even create another, such as a story created by the student participants regarding their family situation and love affairs.)

4.7 Division of Roles

The planning and administration of the research project were divided into two distinct sections: one focussing on the role of researcher and the other following the role of the program director. The two roles highlight the boundary between researcher and the active agent developing the program to facilitate education in the environment. As such, these roles produce different outputs. The researcher’s role explores new knowledge about ethics and digital civics, while the program director formulates a pedagogical programme.

Project direction is included because this would be the role a teacher, educator, or official would take on and experience in the project, and it is useful to record for the purposes of understanding the practical side of pedagogy. (If this model is to be useful in practise then it should be able to discuss some of the organizational challenges.) Additionally, given the multi-platform approach and the broad scope of involved parties, I have referred to my experience in the field of theatrical and media production. There are times in which the role and ethical requirements of researcher are at odds with the role of a program director. As I needed to be clear about my
motivations and outcomes (particularly as regarded the outcome of data), I found the use of a distinct boundary between researcher and program director extremely useful.

As a program director, I examined the logistical complications of providing an online multi-platform production while considering the various ways I could encourage the public to “buy into” the project (investing time, energy, and belief). As a researcher, I used the same data to contemplate the ways in which students (and the greater public) could be made to reflect on their interactions with the digital community and how I might best harvest and analyse the manner of interaction that took place.

One role fed into the other, for while the “program director” strategised, they required the key insights from the analysis of the “researcher” to make logistical decisions. Further, to find ways of harvesting data for analysis, the “researcher” needed to be informed by the “program director's” vision for the types of data that might be created, and occasionally acquiesce to the “program director's” artistic vision. Both roles called for flexibility and good cooperation, yet both also had to be clear and distinct. Additionally, an awareness of the potential ethical consequences for participants meant that a distinction was required- for while the project insisted upon education of the students and proper protection of student anonymity and psyche, the role of the “director” was clearly to draw those students out and manipulate them into taking part as much as possible. It had to be clear that the students’ anonymity be protected first and foremost. The director had to respect the boundaries for the students’ educational needs and protection, and the researcher needed to allow the director to encourage the students to be free to interact without interference. As a Project Director, the most important aspect was success of the project in terms of encouraging participation and uptake, the generated data could be
harvested more accurately from what occurred organically as opposed to what the researcher prescribed. Thus the logistical management of the project were at the discretion of the Director, and therefore the Director was granted the executive power to adjust the project framework as necessary.

Had the project been centred around the observation of an already present project, my role as a director may not have been necessary, but the unique scenario of online education encompassing notions of the infosphere in the social networking environment was not already in practise when I put the project in motion, and thus I had to create and develop a site for field research. Creating educational materials, however, is not a role unfamiliar to many educators, and so this particular scenario accomplished a number of positive consequences:

1. The opportunity to present the project director's process - a pragmatic element for teachers or other educators who may wish to launch a similar project-presents a potential model for instruction of implementation.

2. The division gave me, in my role as "director", the ability to ‘tweak’, alter, or manipulate the project while it progressed in order to gain the best reaction from my “audience”, but without damaging my research data as a “researcher”. For while I made the types of alterations that a director would be expected to in order to ensure a successful project outcome, my decisions were based on my logistical considerations as a director and not on altering the progress of the project to ensure a differing outcome of data. For instance, if I wished to make any alterations, such as changing the daily topic for discussion, this would have to be a change deemed necessary by the director. Whether or not it was necessary to the researcher was irrelevant. The researcher was to take the data that had been created, but not to shape it.

3. I realised that in the online world, to hold several roles (particularly of a
potentially conflicting nature) highlighted the requirement of good boundary setting within the self. As I was forced to set clear boundaries between the two roles, and hold a sort of co-operative practise with myself regarding intentions, logistical management, and outcomes, I could appreciate and present the various dilemmas and challenges that might occur on both sides of the implementation of such a project in practise. (It also brought to my attention the nature and necessity of boundary development in the online environment early in the project. An idea that was to remain with me and develop with the project as I noted the various roles that participants undertook).

4.8 Organization as a Researcher

Based on the digital interactions, interviews, and theatrical events, an ethnography was constructed with reference to student notions of digital civics in practice and to consider personal digital philosophies. I utilised recursive abstraction to analyse the data and draw further conclusions. Consequently, I outline (i) the research participants, (ii) the ethical considerations, and (iii) the ethnography and analysis technique utilized.

4.8.1 Sampling

Below considers the sampling for the project, classifying the participants, and discussing participant recruitment. Three categories of participants were recruited for

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74 I have placed the full plan and subsequently necessary material in the additional attached materials in its developed form as a logistics plan, thereby available to interested practitioners and adaptable as a model for future digital civics planning and implementation.
the study; the character participants (some of whom were actors and undertook live appearances), the student participants, and the wider public (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Participants</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Created fictional Victorian personas to play online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Participants</td>
<td>20-60s</td>
<td>Played Victorian personas online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Crossover characters also made live appearances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider Public</td>
<td>Any age</td>
<td>Members of the public could interact with participants, many as themselves, some had their own historical personas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The character participants were divided into characters and crossover characters. The crossover characters would make appearances both on and offline. Character participants ranged in age from 20 to mid-60s and were located in various countries around the world (including England, Ireland, Canada, Korea, and the USA). Crossover characters were located in Dublin (to allow them access to the environment, although 2 crossover characters travelled from the UK to take part in Dublin). All character participants were each assigned a character from the life of Oscar Wilde, for whom they created a profile page and interacted with one another, with student participants, and the wider public. (Fig. 4.3- Bram Stoker was played by an English 19 year old, 1st year music student studying at university in Birmingham, England.)

Fig. 4.3 Bram Stoker’s Facebook
Student participants, of which there were 6, were 16-17 years of age, located in Dublin, Ireland and agreed to take part as research participants. The subjects arrived as two groups (which I refer to as Alpha and Beta) of three pupils from two different schools.

It is important to acknowledge that there is a gendered experience to the research in two respects. First, in the student participant group, there was only one male student, and five female students. While this did not seem to prevent this participant from offering candid feedback and making robust contributions, it must be acknowledged that the distribution of opinion is biased toward the female participants. Secondly, the participants had been asked to emulate a highly paternalistic society, in which the majority of notable historical figures were men, and many of the female characters were lesser-known individuals, suggesting a covert belief that men held more importance and power. The participants playing these characters were of almost equal gender distribution (which meant that a number of women played male roles online- though gender reversal is not unheard of in the Victorian theatre). For the crossover characters, there were an equal number of women to men.
Table 4.3  Student Participants as identified by the researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>SP A</td>
<td>16 year old male student interested in theatre. Though extremely bright, this was not reflected in his academic achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP B</td>
<td>17 year old female, extremely well spoken and confident with clear political interests, also interested in theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP C</td>
<td>16 year old female interested in music and art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>SP D</td>
<td>16 year old female, initially withdrawn, but well spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP E</td>
<td>16 year old female, initially quite shy, but willing to share ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SP F</td>
<td>16 year old female, extremely bubbly and excited about the project, a natural optimist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student participants also created their own character profiles on Facebook, identifying themselves through a shared last name – Monetta (humorously after the make of biscuits I had brought to their first meeting). Their characters were “ordinary Victorian citizens” – that is to say that they were complete fabrications created to live and interact with the Victorian world created by the character participants and wider public. The wider public were any persons with Facebook accounts who wished to contact characters. They ‘Facebook Friended’ student and character participants alike, visited picture and event pages, and left messages and other feedback.

The recruitment of participants for the project occurred in a number of ways. Crossover characters, who would make both online and offline appearances, were recruited primarily from a pool of actors with whom the researcher had previously worked. This was done to ensure that actors would be familiar with the sort of work they were expected to undertake. Two actors were new to the project work: one was recruited through an actor already on the project whose interest and motivation were somehow contagious. The other new actor was located via email contact, after an
email, seeking participants, was forwarded. (The online posting at an actor site also resulted in several interviews but no other successful candidates.) Crossover participants needed to be available to rehearse in two ways: learning about and developing their knowledge of their character and its surrounding society, and learning Victorian Dance.

From the beginning, the crossover characters were beset with difficulties. A number of personal issues arose of an unavoidable nature. Participants suffered the deaths of close relatives, unexpected new work challenges, and, as always occurs in volunteer projects, calls to audition for paying jobs on the spur of the moment. One cast role (John Gray) actually began as Ernest Leverson and was replaced three times until finally the actor playing Gray in the Chester Beatty production stepped in to take the role, and the storyline was re-created around the presence of John Gray instead.

In all, 8 characters were selected as crossover characters: Oscar Wilde, “Bosie” Lord Douglas, Robert Ross, John Gray, Princess Zetella of Persia, Ada Leverson, Sarah Bernhardt, and Lady Gregory. Two other characters elected to become crossover characters. The participants playing Maude Gonne and William Butler Yeats made a trip to Dublin from England, and – as costumes were available-elected to dress as their characters and make an outing into the “real world”.

Crossover characters had the most time to rehearse and structure their characters, as historical personalities were discussed from the Autumn of the preceding year (roughly seven months in advance) and dance rehearsals began over three months before the project's launch. The continual intrusion of personal issues, the requirements of flexibility and- in some cases- the difficult behaviour of certain actors made the project akin to the average classroom; where absences complicated group work, and participants could fall behind schedule.
The character participants to make up the online world (not merely the crossover characters) were recruited through numerous digital means. I utilised my own Facebook site and messenger status that I was undertaking a fun project. This allowed interested parties to self-elect participation. Facebook friends and contacts familiar with my previous work messaged queries and requests for further information. The reasoning for this approach being that such individuals who self-identified their interest would have the time and prove self-motivated if they were the ones to take the initiative to become involved. At least 5 participants were located this way. Other participants were recruited because they were familiar with the research and expressed an interest in becoming involved (again, they had self-elected). 10 other participants were sought out specifically to play a role due to their passion in certain interests or because they were known personally by the researcher as “ideal candidates”. (That is they covered a spectrum of age, location, personal background, and belief, and could all be considered “trustworthy”75.)

Participants were given the opportunity to choose their own character (as opposed to the audition process where the crossover participants were assigned characters). Many participants located character information through the use of Wikipedia to gain an overall general sense of the character and to acquire basic information for further study, and then identified books to provide more in-depth and precise information. Participants sometimes chose to purchase books over borrowing them from the library, perhaps indicating a commitment to the character and a wish for their information to always be at hand. It proved to be a time consuming process, discerning their own characters' place in the social hierarchy and the ways -- and

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75 Many of these candidates had worked or were working as teachers or for the care of the young or vulnerable and were already in possession of qualifications and clean record checks.
people with whom -- their character would interact.

The six student participants who took part in the project were all loosely connected to the project in some way. This was because I wished to ensure that parental consent was beyond what was usually expected. To take the “risk” of placing students into a self-regulating environment on an experimental project, where communication with unknown individuals would likely occur, I required a supportive team who I could be certain understood the risks and trusted my ability to implement unusual projects. SP A was a direct relation to one of the actors taking part in the waltz; he was also familiar with the previous year’s show. The other two members of the group Alpha participated because of their friendship with him. Alpha group participants came from a school in the city centre of Dublin, a relatively good school, but, as they pointed out repeatedly, lacking in resources. The Beta group were three friends who attended because SP E was a direct relation to one of the city project organisers working on the project. They came from a high achieving school just outside of the city in what was considered a wealthy area. The argument could be raised that the involvement of these students was in large part due to their personal stake in the project - that they took part because of their relationships and proximity to the community. I argue that that is precisely the point. The personal connection to the project and the direct relevance of the project to the community is precisely the type of open and convergent environment I sought to create.

4.8.2 Research Ethics and ethical approval

Taking into account the vulnerability of children in society (Morrow & Richards, 1996) and that “child subjects are at risk for harm, even when intentions are
good” (Kodish, 2005:5), it is important to consider the ethical implications of working with a group of students as research subjects. The need for empathy with the vulnerable position of child research subjects is fiercely communicated by Eva Mozes-Kor, who survived one of the most well known (and notorious) instances of child experimentation in Nazi Germany. Her plea that researchers must “put themselves in the place of subject and see how they would feel” (Mozes-Kor, 1992:58), is a sobering reminder of the responsibility, and potential for serious harm, that exists in research with young subjects when their well-being is considered secondary to research outcomes.

Whilst the subjects of this research were in their mid to late teens, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) acknowledges that developmental age and chronological age do not always match, and that independence seeking, in persons over the age of 14, can lead to risk-taking behaviour (ISO/IEC 50, 2014 E: 5.3/ 5.4). In dealing with a product (like Facebook) “their lack of judgment to understand dangers and their unpredictable behaviour can place them in hazardous situations that adults do not anticipate” (ISO/IEC 50, 2014 E: 4.5.1). It is not surprising that research with children is considered a “risky enterprise” (Farrell, 2006; Hood et al., 1996). In this circumstance, it is helpful to have not only the informed consent, but also the involvement of parents, where possible. Fortunately, in each group of three students, a pre-existent relationship existed between a parent and the researcher, making each party somewhat more accessible to the other. Parents were also able to view the student participant’s interaction (as they were public facing) which meant they could see what students were posting if they wished. Indeed, all participants were aware of the public facing nature of the project, and that their interaction was “performative” (Ess, 2002:34).
The small number of students also allowed for more attention to be paid to the interactions of each. It is much easier to keep track of 6 students than 30: it is the presence of an additional child that heightens the risks of harm occurring (ISO/IEC 50, 2014 E: 6.1).

Students were active participants in the consent process (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998), provided with their own form for consent in addition to the one provided to their parents, which was to be signed and returned. Everyone was provided with a brief project specification and a risk assessment, which included a contact telephone number. There was no pressure placed on students to take part (indeed, quite the opposite, given the intended outcome of self-regulation) and an explanation of what the research broadly entailed was a part of the student participant’s first discussion. This fulfilled the two core principles for valid consent in the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics, in that consent was both informed, and freely given (ESRC, 2017).

The question of setting up Facebook accounts that were clearly not genuine to each individual may raise questions as to the legitimacy owed to corporate interests on such sites. To a degree, participants needed to disregard Facebook’s user policy in order to formulate an account that did not contain accurate personal information. (The formation of fake user accounts, and the refusal of users to provide personal and private data to the corporate entity has been a growing problem for Facebook, given that one of its chief money-generating features is its ability to sell personal information and provide a useful marketing environment based on the profiles of its members.) It was clear that all the personas we were using were long dead and unlikely to be mistaken as cases of stolen identity, particularly given their constant

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76 Under section 14, subsection 2 of Facebook’s Statement of Rights and Responsibilities: https://www.facebook.com/legal/terms
references to the 1890s. Indeed, the use of social media accounts for entertainment purposes is so commonplace that Twitter had already instituted policy to verify accounts, ensuring that such fake accounts could be accommodated. Further, links to information regarding the project’s nature and intentions were posted online to ensure that any member of the public would have access to what was happening, should they have questions. Perhaps more importantly though, anonymising the students’ identities was an important aspect of child protection as well as successful role-play (Bell, 2001). It freed the students to interact in a way that protected their personal information (maintaining confidentiality), and their opinions (from hurtful social censure). Another measure taken was to house all the login details for the Facebook accounts with the researcher. This meant that accounts could be checked if necessary, providing a potential layer of surveillance, if required. Additionally, all the live action actors (crossover characters) received work-shopping with the researcher explaining expectations for the project and outlining appropriate behaviour. The expectations for online characters were set out in private conversations with character participants, although the majority of these individuals had strong backgrounds working with children or vulnerable persons, adhering them to a code of professional conduct.

In addition to these measures, the appropriate clearance was sought and received from the Dublin Institute of Technology research ethics committee. This included an application detailing the research to be undertaken, in addition to a risk assessment.

77 In legal terms, the suggestion in their terms that Facebook allows only one ‘personal’ account (likely to accommodate additional business profiles on the site) suggests that we had some leeway, as ours were technically ‘educational’ accounts.

78 For more on the DIT’s research ethics committee, please see: http://www.dit.ie/researchenterprise/researchsupport/integrityethics/
4.8.3 The Ethnography and Analysis Utilized.

To describe the complex strands impacting the ethnographic research I present a project pathway that outlines the division of roles and steps taken in the research (fig 4.4). It demonstrates the divided roles of researcher (discussed here) and program director, (discussed below in section 4.9) and the ways in which these roles contribute in formulating the ethnography and subsequent analysis.

I undertook ethnography of the digital civics learning space to formulate an understanding of the interactions in the infosphere that would include both the environment and participants. This data is reported in the first person, as ethnography is conventionally written (Gullion, 2016). Ethnography was an appropriate choice given the use of simulation-as-microworld employed in the project and Rieber’s insight that “People do not merely study a domain in a microworld, they "live" the domain, similar to the idea that the best way to learn Spanish is to go and live in Spain.” (Rieber, 1996) Such immersion required a methodological approach befitting a lived immersive experience, and was in keeping with Malinowski’s description of ethnographic research which “stated that a researcher should be engrossed with the work for long periods in the field and conduct participant observation by living with the informants and experiencing their way of life” (Esteban-Guitart, 2016: 56).

Fig 4.4 Digital Ethnography Research and Project Pathway (overleaf)
Identify Crossover and Character Participants

Train and Organise Crossover and Character Participants

Create Online World and Begin Digital Interactive Rehearsal

Identify Student Participants

Semi-structured Interview and Explanatory Meeting

Email Student Participants in Preparation to Begin

Run Project

Interview Student Participants and Record

Record Data and Make Observations: Notes, Screen Shots, Webpages, Posts, FB Chats, Photos

Informal Discussions with Crossover/Character Participants

Semi-Structured Exit Interviews with Student Participants (Recorded)

Organise Data into Ethnographic Narrative

Summarise Data

Further Summarise (Iterative Process/Recursive Abstraction)

Pose Follow Up Questions (Integrate new data as necessary)

Identify patterns and emergent trends according to guiding conceptual/philosophical and ethical frameworks

Describe Ethical Process Identified
It is also worth noting that ethnography has strong ties to 5th century Greece, having been employed by the historian Herodotus (Oikonomopoulou, 2013), making it a significant choice, being itself, a knowledge-seeking resource from the time of Plato, the relevance of which was observed in chapter 3.

In engaging with participants, use of face-to-face interviews, as well as observations in the social media environment was to provide a rounded approach in formulating the ethnography. This feature Murthy identifies as useful, while critically reviewing digital ethnography, as a “balanced combination of physical and digital ethnography” (Murthy, 2008): an appreciation of levels of abstraction that also takes into account the convergent nature of the infosphere.

In search of an anthropological model that would appreciate the conversational nature of social networking interaction, support research focused on direct discussion with participants, and allow for a researcher to be embedded within the research environment, I took an approach of dialogical anthropology, highlighting the dialogue of participants interacting in the environment and placing the focus on their views and interactions (Tedlock, 1987). Taking into account ethical and social development, I relied on elements of Dwyer’s *Morroccan Dialogues* (Dwyer, 1982) in which Dwyer argues the benefits of dialogical anthropology as an alternative to scientific detachment or narrow subjectivity (Dwyer, 1982). Dwyer’s method was, at its time of publication, an experiment in approach to ethnographic research, much as this Facebook Laboratory was. Given the informal tone and conversational nature of the Facebook interactions and the necessity of a casual interview style with the student participants, I adopted this approach as a basis for the construction of my ethnography early on. Even Dwyer’s reference to food as an important talking point is demonstrated through the interactions of the Facebook study participants (who...
chose the brand of biscuits from interview as their shared familial name online). Additionally, as active involvement within the environment could not be avoided, the role of an embedded researcher, unable to escape interaction by virtue of the close proximity (in this case, digital) to the research subjects, was necessary. Finally, Dwyer’s work also took into consideration questions of human rights, and social development, which enmeshed neatly with my own focus on civic and ethical behaviour.

One of the challenges of such ethnographic research is its weakness to confirmation bias. This is described in the work of Karl Popper, who observes

> The discovery of instances which confirm a theory means very little if we have not tried, and failed, to discover refutations… it is only too easy to obtain what appears to be overwhelming evidence in favour of a theory which, if approached critically, would have been refuted. (Popper, 1957: 134).

In such instances, alternate explanations for the outcome of data that apparently confirms a hypothesis may exist, however, this may be inadvertently ignored or discarded if it does not fit with the outcomes that are anticipated by the researcher. It is incumbent on the researcher to “adopt a highly critical attitude” in exploring their theory (Popper, 2002 [1959]: 90). For example, disconfirmations in this research data might present as activities in the project that did not achieve the intended participation, thereby failing to meet the expectations of the researcher regarding the effectiveness of the educational environment. Other possible examples could manifest as behaviours and feedback from the participants that did not meet the expected outcomes of the project, or that did not meet the expected views and philosophies that the project intended to encourage.

While I have focussed on reporting the confirmations for my hypothesis in the
data, it should be noted that examples that disprove this hypothesis were also present in the participant's behaviours. In presenting the ethnographic data in Chapters 5 & 6, I will present two specific examples of such disconfirmation. In chapter 5 I will observe how the Webquest, specifically designed to interest participants in the topic of digital civics was not utilised. Later, in chapter 6, I will remark on how the students depiction of the educational environment denotes disconfirmation: between the anticipated outcome of participant appreciation for ontological continuity between online and offline (given they are levels of abstraction), and the dualistic language employed by the student participants as they describe the digital and physical worlds.

Over-faced by tens of Facebook pages, hundreds of Facebook messages, as well as interviews, before contemplating the integration of photographic and video evidence on Flickr and YouTube, various email correspondence, and formal and informal public feedback and interaction, I was concerned that traditional methods of coding analysis would fail to appreciate the integrated nature of the project data in the convergent environment, and eventually employed recursive abstraction. In this iterative method of analysis, I would summarise the data, and then further summarise the summaries to provide a concise overview, I could then consider the themes that emerged (Polkinghorne & Arnold, 2014). The practise of recursive abstraction provided the sort of integrated and holistic approach required of the data: I needed to view the data holistically, not fragmented into sections, in order to maintain focus on the overall impact of the learning environment whilst considering the participants’ interactions and behaviours in relation to one another.

I wanted the focus of the analysis to support the richness of the data. In early observation of the data, I noted that while the students shared common feelings, situations, or ideas, the wording they used to describe them differed with each
individual, and I was concerned some of their ideas and philosophies (that is their notions of the aforementioned social norms, values, ideals, and ideologies that contributed to their ethical behaviours) wouldn’t present in coding. Isolating their interviews or interactions, I would code random words or scenarios which were not an accurate reflection of the project data. Through summarizing, however, I was able to gather a broad sense of the participant’s intentions, and then further examine the data within a rich context. Thus, recursive abstraction seemed a useful method of analysis for social networking research in ethics, allowing the integration of media, respecting the convergent environment, and focusing on the behaviours of research subjects as complete manifestations of ideas and philosophies as opposed to fragmented behaviours and statements that might later be reconstructed to create a perception of what had occurred.

The Keeney & Keeney work in 2012 (Keeney & Keeney, 2012; 515) provided a ‘break through’ for me in understanding why I had employed recursive abstraction: a decision which at the time had seemed intuitive and supported predominantly by my desire to approach data in a holistic manner. The Keeney & Keeney work examined Recursive Frame Analysis, a qualitative research method that was developed to assist clinicians in psychoanalysis. It dealt with considering new ways of studying communication and behaviour in therapy, viewing the experience as a whole and took into consideration a theatrical environment. I needed to view the data as an entire set, rather than fragmented sections, while incorporating numerous types of media and keeping in focus the theatrical performance aspects of the work.  

79 For example, I could take the participants personal communications with me, their interviews, their online postings, their performance in the offline world, and any supporting multimedia they posted, and put this together to create one narrative, rather than being forced to divorce each thread of behaviour and analyse it separately. The phrase ‘the sum is greater than its parts’ seemed apt to describe my Gestalt-like perception of the situation.
seemed a perfect match.

For Keeney & Keeney, part of the difficulty that clinicians faced when trying to communicate about their casework is that: “clinicians habitually lean more upon theoretical explanation rather than action description when discussing casework… The result is a glut of explanatory metaphors and maps with little attention given to the performance itself” (Keeney & Keeney, 2012; 515). This was the same outcome I was anxious to avoid in considering the student participant’s digital actions.

The Keeney’s work also discussed the use of theatre and approached analysing human behaviour from a performance process: utilising techniques such as performance, storyboarding, and scriptwriting for example (Keeney et al, 2012). These were all aspects that had occurred in the digital civics project. It also focussed on the very active nature of this material. My project was also action based, and I was keen to examine the actual behaviours and interactions that participants undertook without fragmenting their experiences. Keeney & Keeney argued that “an emphasis upon “narrative” would miss capturing the richness of the live performance of therapy as theatre – performed dramatic action rather than dissociated narrative commentary and editorializing” (Keeney & Keeney, 2012; 517).

Certainly, there were numerous characteristics that the Keeney work shared with this research project, but my interest was not in employing Recursive Frame Analysis as a specific methodology for the digital civics project. Rather, recursive frame analysis identified for me the recursive nature of human thought (Chenail, 2013) and that this process of ideas development could be assisted through interactions with ‘the other’ (in this case, informal educators in the guise of character participants, the project manager, and even fellow student participants). This sat
neatly with my interest in ethics, ontology, and personal digital philosophies. As I observed in chapter 2, for Levinas, ontology was grounded in the encounter with the ‘other’, and ethics (from which this experience was derived) were implicit. Thus, acknowledging the recursive nature of thought, in which the development of ideas could be assisted through interactions with “the other” – in this case, ethical ideas – aligned with Levinas’ view, discussed in chapter 2, that interactions with the other were a necessary (and indeed critical) part of ethical development. From understanding this, the iterative process of recursive abstraction became less an apparently intuitive decision, and more an important tool in analysing the development of new or different ideas that could occur through discussion with informal educators (perhaps a sort of informal “change-oriented discourse” {Keeney, Keeney, Chenail, 2012}). I further considered that as “Ethnography is a recursive, iterative and abductive reasoning process” (Green et al., 2012: 309) recursive abstraction seemed a logical choice of analysis technique to practise together with my ethnographical approach. Conclusions arising from this method could be verified through references back to the original source materials and early summaries (to ensure that the summaries had not become too removed from the underlying data). I also maintained contact with participants after the study concluded, which allowed me to ask further questions to participants if necessary. Fortunately, the Alpha group of students provided me access to their personal Facebook accounts, long after the study concluded, which allowed me to view and verify further, the long term impact of the project on their personal development.

With the intention of keeping the focus on developing the ethnography, and considering the employment of recursive abstraction and a supportive and supplementary technique, I began with a chronological summary of the project,
considering the month-long project and mapping out the various topics for discussion as they unfolded. I then summarized week by week, and then noting specific incidents within each week, summarizing and distilling, incorporated all data around a specific incident or observation to provide as fully convergent a picture as possible. Thus the early ethnographic materials provided a basis for the use of recursive abstraction. This data is presented as the ethnographic and observational findings in chapter 5.

I had a general idea of some of the concepts with which I hoped to see students actively engage in their approach to developing or displaying their personal digital philosophy in digital civics education. Would they raise ethical questions? Would they self-regulate and self-motivate? Would they cooperate as a group? But I wanted more specific evidence of civic education behaviours occurring in the digital environment as a means of assessing whether that project was meeting its aims. I considered the aspects converging in the educational environment (content, community, and levels of abstraction), the project ownership (sustainability and self-regulation), and the potential for identity exploration:

1. I wanted to see if the students would take ownership of the project, displaying the sort of independence (or self-regulation) in learning postulated by Gatto (1992), or even espoused by Negroponte (2006). Would there be enough person investment to make the student’s behaviours and learning opportunities self-sufficient or self-sustaining?

2. I was further curious to note the effects of the project on raising questions of identity as postulated in the work of Sherry Turkle (1997) or danah boyd (2007). Particularly given the insights of Ulansey (2000) and Floridi and Sanders (2001): which stated the connection between one’s changing views of self and changes in ethical response and the development of new ethical ideas. (While I was concerned that such shifts in identity exploration or ethical development may not be demonstrable in the data, I would be fortunate in the strength of indications
that ideas about the self occurred in the project.)

3. I was also interested to see how the group would cooperate, and whether they would undertake the sort of community approach to education where stakeholders might all work together, that I considered in chapter 1 as noted by Byron (2008). The converging of stakeholders in the educational community, or the converging of the educational community. Could such community integration in learning be possible for digital civics education?

4. Would there be a crossover of interaction between the online and offline environments, and would the participants foster such opportunities themselves? That is to say, would there be a converging of levels of abstraction?

5. And finally, would there be a converging of learning content? An organic opportunity for interdisciplinary learning, whether apparent to the participants or not, where learning in a number of traditional subject areas and skill developments could be discerned? For this, I drafted Table 4.4 for completion, listing the various subjects that might be accommodated (See Overleaf).

4.9 Organization as a Program Director

With the research intentions clear, I reflect on my other role as a program director. Direction logistics aside (and these have been provided in the additional attached materials), I needed a form of scripting for the month-long run of the project; to facilitate the participants in learning their characters; to teach the crossover characters dance; and to ensure I had a method of presentation that did not alienate the audience given the novelty of the material.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4 Converging Learning Content (Curricular Outcomes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPHD (Social, Personal, Health, Development)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate enquiry into issues of emotional health and well-being; Demonstrate team-working ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etiquette</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact respectfully with colleagues; Communicate speak in the appropriate language for a set of circumstance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop sophisticated command of History as a discipline, including an understanding of historical figures as people and not merely characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lit)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop understanding of the context surrounding literature and its themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lang)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broaden vocabulary, ability to employ phrases and new words; Develop and structure narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore themes of social relevance; Demonstrate an interest in the motivations of civil society</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop awareness of the Arts scene contemporary to Oscar Wilde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact with relevant works of music to the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tech/ICT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the history of communications technology; Demonstrate appropriate use of social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulate an idea for digital interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate an ability to contextualise material and mastery over a period of history that allows appropriate project interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Discipline</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate Personal mastery to accomplish set tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Motivation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate desire to take part without prompting</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore questions about existence; Question attitudes or reasons for behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPHD (Social, Personal, Health, Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate enquiry into issues of emotional health and well-being; Demonstrate team-working ability</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Etiquette</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interact respectfully with colleagues; Communicate speak in the appropriate language for a set of circumstance</td>
<td>Maintain illusion of time period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop sophisticated command of History as a discipline, including an understanding of historical figures as people and not merely characters</td>
<td>Become familiar with historical personas</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English (Lit)</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop understanding of the context surrounding literature and its themes</td>
<td>Post about Dorian Gray authorship</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English (Lang)</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broaden vocabulary, ability to employ phrases and new words; Develop and structure narratives</td>
<td>Use Victorian language</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civics</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore themes of social relevance; Demonstrate an interest in the motivations of civil society</td>
<td>Read about public events</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop awareness of the Arts scene contemporary to Oscar Wilde</td>
<td>View Victorian Art</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interact with relevant works of music to the project</td>
<td>Hear music from the waltz</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tech/ICT</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider the history of communications technology; Demonstrate appropriate use of social media</td>
<td>Read posts comparing victorian and modern IT</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization skills</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formulate an idea for digital interaction</td>
<td>Attend events</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Skills</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate an ability to contextualise material and mastery over a period of history that allows appropriate project interaction</td>
<td>Read posts specific to an area of Victorian research</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Discipline</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate Personal mastery to accomplish set tasks</td>
<td>Read posts weekly</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Motivation</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate desire to take part without prompting</td>
<td>Take part without personal contact from facilitator</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Teacher/Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore questions about existence; Question attitudes or reasons for behaviour</td>
<td>Participate in events that spur philosophy inquiry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I roughly scripted the basic unfolding of events over the month as I saw it. I kept this flexible, generating a list of events contemporary to 1891 upon which characters might comment, but also which I felt provided an opportunity to post insights about the online world. This included such incidents as the opening of the London Paris telephone exchange, the censorship of Dorian Gray, and the concerns about growing anti-Semitism in Europe.

To assist in informing the storyline, and providing material for characters to draw from in their interactions, I consulted and distributed as many sources as possible to character participants including: websites with general written content (i.e. Wikipedia), audio and film information (ie Youtube lectures on Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde), academic organizations (ie. The Oscholars, a scholastic group who produce a peer reviewed journal on the subject of Oscar Wilde), books (Richard Ellmann's Biography of Oscar's life (1989), as well as attending lectures and speaking to other Wilde Scholars (i.e. Merlin Holland, Jerusha McCormack, and Miranda Al-Raad). This information could easily be circulated to actors and allowed for discussions about characters. Though not personally a supporter of Stanislavski's approach (1936), its ability to engage with the avant-garde nevertheless proved useful. Consequently, I adapted the ideas of Boleslavsky's interpretation in Six Lessons in Acting (1933) that allowed me to assist actors in developing a character that could be supplemented with the participants' imagination (particularly where historical documentation left gaps) as a means of developing the online playing space the student participants would later inhabit. This was relevant because it was part of my process to create the environment within which the student participants would interact. It's important to acknowledge that it was impossible to be completely
historically accurate (perhaps obvious given the differences in technology between 2010 and Victorian England) but rather to provide opportunity to inspire research and deeper interest in history.

For the crossover characters, the ball was a daunting project. It required the actors to maintain public character continuity in person, and the acquisition of various new skills sets in dance. Their knowledge of, and comfort with, their character had to carry them through the potential catastrophes that might arise in public interaction; they needed familiarity with the posture and manner of speech of the Victorians and they required lessons in the waltz and various other Victorian dances.

Teaching a physical subject like dance, without continual student contact was challenging. Practically, dance training must be undertaken with serious intent, ideally daily for the type of production I anticipated. During the Bram Stoker production, the previous year, I had had some success circulating animated power points which provided blocking (acting movement instruction) for actors to study independently. It meant that, despite absences, everyone could maintain the requisite level of knowledge for a successful group project. It also allowed me to spend the short amount of time group members had together, on team building activities and emotional interactions: interactions were targeted to make the most out of the time available from participants. However, the dance moves proved too complicated for a simple animation. Instead, videos were taken of the various dance sequences and hosted privately on YouTube to allow individuals to work on their pieces independently, or in pairings. Hosting the classroom through digital, as well as physical means, provided more time for nuanced instruction in person, but relied heavily on the self-regulation of the actors to practise in their own time. It worked. And not only did the increased responsibility on the part of participants result in
additional rehearsal time, but allowed for more in-depth discussions in the “in-person” working time. With clearly outlined responsibilities, actors read their own books on the subject, and researched their own materials to support the project, which they could then additionally contribute to the project’s success. Akin to the classroom, students of theatrical dance were taking increasing ownership of their own project, moving it out of the hands of a teacher-like director, and into a more collaborative working space. This technique was also later extended to help the public learn waltz steps to take part in the project; a number of videos from actors being created and placed on YouTube to further assist in educating the public as to how they could take part and extending the classroom environment into the general public. I later discovered from theatre colleagues that such tactics were being employed by flashmob organisers to ensure that participants in large-scale projects could understand their choreography without requiring large-scale rehearsals.

Further flexibility occurred through working around schedules by dividing the work load to allow each person to make the contribution they were able. The character of Wilde, for example, was split into 2 separate people. One, the actor who agreed to play Oscar in person only, attending only one event; and the other, a female participant who played him on the internet. This choice was both logistical in that it allowed the labour involved with a popular character to be shared, but it also allowed the director to bring in an actor with the “look” of Wilde to play the character while allowing the online persona to be portrayed by someone invested with the online project who had a greater understanding of, and care for, the project outcomes (the woman who played Oscar online had been a student at Acadia years before, understood the various pitfalls of the online environment, and we had had a previous
history of working together\(^80\)). It also meant that Wilde could be played by a female, without physical appearance or gender even being an issue, allowing a freedom of character exploration in the digital learning environment not generally available in the traditional classroom.

The most substantial issue was marketing a project that lacked a substantial definition and field of its own. How can one market what digital civics in pedagogy is, when the intention of the project was to discover what the actual definition and parameters of the subject were. It differed from the rest of my previous work in that it was almost impossible to communicate the idea behind the project without a lengthy discussion, making marketing extremely challenging.

The Oscar Wilde Waltz was designed to capitalise on visual cues (bright costumes, aspects of movement) that would require photographic evidence to translate online, a spectacle that could draw attention. In effect, it served to draw in spectators in the analogue environment and lure them into the digital elements of the project. I sought to acquire the costumes at the earliest convenience to allow the photographs and, consequently crossover, to appear from the beginning of the project. Aside from the waltz, I relied on creating opportunities for participants to act, rather than directing their activities. In the absence of models of theatre that integrated digital and analogue, I considered some of the more historically recent theatrical events that took new approaches to theatrical production and contemplated the sorts

\(^{80}\) Many of my contacts who had volunteered for the project, or whom I had recruited were academic colleagues who had experienced the “Acadia Advantage” program at Acadia University. Having already experienced life in the Digital Society and being well aware of the possibilities of the online, or of bending software and programs to their own will and intentions, many of the Acadia graduates looked on the project as an obvious course of action and- as much as they could see the project’s novelty- also viewed it as a natural use of Facebook. As such, the Acadia graduates required almost no explanation of how the project would work, and where they may have been unsure of details, they had absolutely no trepidation about stepping straight in and simply experiencing what transpired. Such comfort with the ideas behind the project meant that they could support one another, and some of the less confident participants- scaffolding their learning with ease.
of challenges they encountered. Reflecting retrospectively, I realised that I invested a great deal of time considering the issues raised by the ‘Ballets Russe’ for their debut of Stravinsky’s “Rite of Spring” (1913). I was keen to avoid a footwear assault on the performers and opted to develop ways of educating the audience to understand the aims and merits of the project as opposed to simply presenting it. I wanted the audience to work for their conclusions (this was, after all, an educational endeavour); but I wanted to provide them the necessary context to realise their own place within the infosphere and provoke meaningful contemplation of the infosphere ‘after the fact’.

To ensure audience participation and generate understanding about the project, I created covert ways of communicating with the “audience” that would provide them with the information they required to participate without shattering the illusion of the narrative. For example, to provide information regarding the Ball, I generated tickets, which provided all the requisite information in the form of an invitation (Fig. 4.5, overleaf) and used the back (Fig 4.6, overleaf) to provide information about the nature of the project and digital civics.

4.10 Enacting the Facebook Laboratory

In this chapter I have outlined the methodological approach taken in this work. This emancipating action research (Grundy, 1987) formulates a Rieberian microworld designed to explore practise for fostering digital civic experience through

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81 In acknowledgement of personal affinity for the work of Stravinsky, his work had become quite popular in our household growing up, owing to an amusing family anecdote about the time my father had been befriended by him while they worked at the Banff school in Alberta, and how my father had subsequently tried to throw him off his piano one afternoon.
play based learning, using a framework of community informatics. Using Facebook as a framework to develop a theatrical narrative Jenkins describes as transmedia (Jenkins, 2003) based on the work and world of Oscar Wilde. This space fosters ethical development through a process of identity exploration in the infosphere drawing together the online and offline levels of abstraction, in a paradigm described by Elwell as the “transmediated self” (Elwell, 2014).

Discussing the context, theory, and construction of this Facebook Laboratory, the roles of laboratory host (and program director) and researcher have been divided to clarify specific responsibilities, and represent the work that might be undertaken by a school teacher. The pedagogical program that is developed by the program director demonstrates an example of the implementation of digital civics in pedagogy. The learning environment is explored through ethnographic study, from which is derived new knowledge about digital civics and ethics. Moving into the empirical phase of this project, this work will next, in chapter 5, report the findings that have been generated from the Facebook Laboratory’s implementation, presenting the ethnographic materials and relevant observations in preparation for later analysis in chapter 6.
Fig 4.5 Wilde Waltz Ticket (Front). Fig 4.6 (Below) Wilde Waltz Ticket (Back)

Join Oscar Wilde and his friends for a Victorian Waltz as they celebrate the publication of “The Picture of Dorian Gray”. Come for a Waltz, congratulate Oscar, and take in the spectacle. Catch characters at locations all over the city from noon.

Location: Bandstand, St Stephen’s Green
Time: 4 PM
Date: April 10, 1891
(April 10, 2010)

http://members.npc.ie/estelle.clements/
http://www.dublinonecityonebook.ie/

Digital Civics
the study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens who inhabit the infosphere and access the world digitally.

The purpose of this project is to use the digital world to encourage civic participation and show the crossover between the Online and Offline worlds. Find us on Facebook by joining the group “Oscar and His Circle” or “Digital Civics”. Learn to waltz with us on YouTube and give us your thoughts on the digital world through our webquest. Cast a vote online or just drop us an email: digitalcivics@yahoo.com

Program
Kaiser Waltz
Faust Waltz
Please join us for proceeding waltzes
Sleeping Beauty Waltz
Vienna Woods Waltz
The Blue Danube Waltz
The music you hear is current to 1891

Attend the Rhymers Club April 25th, 21st at the Chester Beatty Library
Chapter 5: A Digital Ethnography of the Facebook Laboratory

5.1 Enacting Digital Civics Education

This chapter reports the findings generated from the Facebook Laboratory’s implementation, presenting the results of the empirical phase of the project through ethnographic and observational materials. Whilst the early chapters of this work have provided the theoretical, philosophical, and historical underpinnings upon which is developed the research design and plan for implementation, this chapter provides information on the enacting of the Facebook Laboratory. With deference to the dialogical ethnographic approach (Dwyer, 1982), I have provided numerous conversations, or portions of conversations, presented by the research participants via their Facebook profiles. This has been accomplished in the form of ‘print screens’ taken from the Facebook website, and I have retained the post authors, dates, and photos within these print-screens for easy referencing. As the part of the ethnographic work, recursive processes provide useful observations of notable themes in the Facebook Laboratory, preparing the data for further analysis in the proceeding chapter. The findings are presented as follows:

1. The ethnography, presented in chronological terms, and culminating in a case study of one of the student run events, with some initial observations regarding the overall findings of the Facebook Laboratory.
2. Convergence in the educational space, is then observed through the Facebook Laboratory, noting the converging of: educational community, levels of abstraction (online and offline), and educational content.

3. And finally, the behavioural themes in the Facebook Laboratory, observing the actions performed by the participants, are reported, divided into the behaviour of the individuals and behaviour of the overall community.

The findings are presented in these three divisions with a view to addressing key research questions. Young people’s digital philosophies are explored in situ, as they are enacted within the environment, in the ethnographic materials. The discussion of convergence in the educational space explores how a converged environment lends itself to development of digital civics pedagogy. And finally, the behavioural themes and observed actions address the question of what elements of digital civics are portrayed in the environment that can assist in the development of a pedagogical model.

5.2 Ethnography

The Facebook Laboratory launched at the beginning of April, 2010. It used the digital world to encourage civic participation and show the crossover between online and offline worlds. It also created a space for students to further develop or refine their own personal digital philosophies whilst learning across an array of subject areas (as outlined in table 4.4). The behavioural actions of participants (as individuals and a community) are also explored, with each observation investigated in its own section, as outlined in table 5.1.
Table 5.1 Agents and their ethical behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agents</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Behavioural Theme Observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Behaviours</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>These might include demonstrating the ability to understand the environment as both digital and physical or to represent the participant’s identity in ways that result in personal happiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Behaviours</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>These might include demonstrating the ability to collaborate effectively or to work with different types of people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first action was to launch the online environment, preparing a rehearsal, and then giving the go ahead for all the participants to make their secretly prepared Victorian Facebook profiles available for public view and interaction in the fabricated world of a ‘digital 1891’. Revived from the dead and unleashed into the online realm, the Victorian characters were free to interact and contemplate the world of digital 1891 that they now inhabited. They posted pictures, offered Facebook feedback to one another, created fan pages, and formed Facebook groups. They gossiped about their lives, commented on “current” events (current to April, 1891), and discussed the connectivity of their world, and, using the Facebook functions, one could quite literally be ‘poked’ by Oscar Wilde. 82

In order to show the development of the project I have divided the month into 4 week long segments during which I can report the relevant highlights and incidents as they occurred. I begin by providing a list of student and character participants (Table 5.1). 83 Given the necessity of keeping the project flexible, I only provided

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82 An action which, though intended as innocently humourous, in itself raises ethical questions regarding the place of humour in the educational environment. While Oscar’s notorious behaviour with ‘rent boys’ was considered a crime of homosexuality in the 1890s, by modern standards, it constitutes paedophilia and the sexual abuse of children. Yet this aspect of enquiry was never discussed by any of the participants. Possibly because of: the short project run time; a choice not to engage with the topic; or a lack of knowledge about this topic, as Wilde is generally described as gay, and not a paedophile.

83 An in-depth account of the structure can be found in the additional attached materials.
conversation topics 1-3 days in advance (thereby allowing for changes on an almost daily basis if interest in one particular topic peaked, capitalising on participant interests). After outlining the four weeks’ events, I will provide initial observations on the project and its effects on participants before observing the convergent properties and noting the presence of specific behaviours. To aid in contextualising the project run, immediately below, I provide information to clarify the participating characters (Table 5.2), and a calendar of events (Table 5.3).

Table 5.2 List of Participating Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Characters:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SP A (Scott Monetta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP B (Maisy Monetta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP C (Prudence Monetta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP D (Camille Monetta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP E (Lily Monetta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP F (Poppy Monetta)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Participants (Online and Offline Presence):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oscar Wilde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Douglas (Bosie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Gray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ada Leverson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Butler Yeats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maude Gonne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princess Zetella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Bernhardt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Ross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augusta Gregory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Participants (Online Only):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constance Wilde*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bram Stoker*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence Stoker (Balcombe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Terry*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest Leverson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Bernard Shaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily Langtree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Irving*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Holman Hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Clemens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Louis Stevenson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ruskin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Whistler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest C Dowson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred Housman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Gaugin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stewart Parnell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It should be noted that while these characters were considered online only, they had...
been played in the physical realm the previous year’s One City, One Book Dublin event at the Bram Stoker Wedding. Photographs of these characters were available online and were used as part of the project, representing some small element of crossover.

Table 5.3 Month at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Daily Chat Topic</th>
<th>Concurrent Offline Events*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>London Paris Phone Exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Invading Sherlock Holmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suffragettes</td>
<td>Costumed Promenade in Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1891 Census</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chide Oscar About Dorian Gray</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Advertise Waltz</td>
<td>1 City 1 Book Official Launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8 Hour Work Day in Nebraska</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Censorship in Dorian Gray?</td>
<td>Costumed Promenade and Waltz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pictures from Ball</td>
<td>Camden Street Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Corset Burning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Parallels between Dorian Gray and Online World</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Would anyone notice a deleted person?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Jack the Ripper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Digital Content Bill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Monetta Funeral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Create a Poem</td>
<td>National Library Costumed appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Anti-semitism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Jews Expelled from Russia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Holmes:The Final Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Rhymer's Club</td>
<td>Rhymer's Club at the Chester Beatty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Celebrity Culture with Dr. McCormack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Scandals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Celebrity Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>The Wedding</td>
<td>Student Run Online Wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Facebook Suicide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Events in which the project was directly involved, Dublin City Libraries ran a large number of other events in addition to a major advertising campaign around the city.
5.3 Researcher preparation: interaction with participants

I met the student participants for the first time in March 2010, a few weeks in advance of the project launch date. I wanted them to have some opportunity to think about their characters, and to create their Facebook accounts. The task was arduous. I needed to explain the project, build rapport, establish a safe learning environment, provide them with historical and philosophical context for the project without losing their attention, and glean from them a sense of their own philosophies and ideas. Somehow, I had to earn their trust enough so they’d feel comfortable letting me record them. I had shown them the digital audio recorder I would be using to tape our conversations. My method would have to be based around “a chat” rather than a formal interview which might prove too intimidating. I considered the conversational nature of Dwyer’s Morroccan Dialogues (1982) as a useful approach to accommodate the students. Further, it allowed me to drop anecdotes into the exchange useful to augmenting their understanding of the project. Once I could access their prior-knowledge of digital education, I could formulate context to assist them. I hoped that sharing honestly with them would assist in their willingness to share with me. The interviews were also to become a time where I could raise further questions and push them to think just that little bit harder- much as a teacher would- drawing attention to things they might have missed, demonstrating the importance of the role of an educator in such learning as noted in chapter one.

It was clear from the beginning that there was a great deal of hesitation on the part of the students to engage with the project, and while several adults were keen to see what happened and eager to give consent, students arrived for their first meeting
apprehensive about how the project could function and not exactly clear about why they were there. This is likely due to the unusual and somewhat de-familiarising nature of the project. It was like casting actors for a play that didn’t exist, and asking them to create their characters without any hint of super-objective (in the Stanislavskian sense). Moreover, because the supporting cast of Victorian characters had not yet begun to interact, there wasn’t even a playing area (stage) or ‘set’ present. With no stage, no script, and no apparent thematic design (at least, none beyond ‘Victorian’) students were thrown into an unfamiliar and unbounded space.

On my first meeting, I purposefully attempted to project an air somewhere between casual student and authority figure. I wanted them to feel they could trust me and confide things they wouldn't necessarily tell their teachers or parents, but still appreciate the professional boundary, cognisant that I was a researcher. I wore jeans to be casual, but always appeared in dark colours (usually black) to establish authority- a trick student teachers were sometimes taught in Nova Scotia to assist in acquiring classroom discipline. In consideration that I didn't know any of the SPs myself, I was sensitive that I needed to assert some authority while not being overwhelming. To break the ice, I brought chocolate biscuits so that our session seemed more like an informal chat than an intimidating interview.

I went over a set of rules for online behaviour in Canada supplied by a provincial government body, to start. I explained that this was the set of guidelines that generally prevailed in the country from which I hailed, allowing them some leverage against judgement if they incriminated themselves with their own honesty. I also sought to prevent patronising them on legal establishments with which they were

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84 Page 5 of the Province of Nova Scotia’s rules for employees provides a useful list of example inappropriate behaviours: http://novascotia.ca/treasuryboard/manuals/PDF/300/30403-01.pdf
likely already familiar by choosing the governing system of another country.) I
admitted to them that they were probably already aware of how to behave
appropriately online, but I wished to establish a baseline to gauge their online
interactions: that is, I wanted to establish what students knew and whether this
differed from their practical behaviour. I tried to facilitate a general discussion of how
rules impacting digital interactions impacted their lives. Did they follow the
traditional legal rules, such as refraining from illegal downloading of media, only
using licensed software, or keeping their passwords secret? (I knew myself from a
cursory read of the Canadian guidelines I had decided to use that I had broken a
number of them myself). When I admitted this to the group of SPs, they became
amenable to sharing their own experiences. What began as a very tepid conversation,
in which SPs rattled off societal expectations about online interactions by rote, altered
dramatically into an impassioned discussion about how the “rules” were wrong, how
some media belonged in the public domain, how sharing was important, how rules
needed to be altered. They highlighted the hypocrisy of expecting the public to adhere
to a set of prescribed behaviours that surely no one followed in actuality. They
illustrated a philosophy in which the online world was an open source for cooperation
with concepts of ownership proving loose and expectations flexible.

I must confess to having begun the project with the arrogant notion that I
would help the SPs develop a personal digital philosophy, a structured reflexive
account of their behaviours and interactions, specifically ethical, in the digital
environment- that, after all was one of my chief intended outcomes. What I
discovered was that students already possessed a rich philosophy about life online
and the way the digital world should work. When I eventually turned on the tape to
record, I captured the way in which they articulated their views:
SP F: you do have to be careful but I do like the idea that she said that I do know people in America and it was impossible made possible…

SP B: I’m going to say balance… but I reckon things like Facebook are very good for um how do I say this? Kind of creating your own identity? Like, realising who you are… I think it makes us feel a lot safer. Like, I know myself when I’m feeling a bit crazy, its nice to go on to Facebook where I have all these things I like, and my friends, and my name, and my photograph, and I know its clear, this is who I am, this is who ___ is, this is who ___ is.

SP B: I don’t like the way its [Facebook] set, by itself, so I try and change it so that I don’t feel like it has the same amount of power! Every week, you know what I mean?

E: Um ok, so if I move onto another question. Is school preparing you for the online world, or like the digital world?
SP B: Is that like?...
*Laughter*
SP A: you’re better off missing computer classes
SP B: oh god, they’re ridiculous.
SP C: The teacher has no idea how to work the machine, we could teach her far better.
SP B: I know
...
E: would it not make more sense if they got you guys to show them how to use-
SP C: They refuse, they’re too proud.

From their discussion, I noted that the students had a strong philosophy about the digital world- what they lacked was someone they felt they could express this to; someone who gave them leave to express their ideas and a sense of their own power. Given the insights of chapter 3, and the intention of the project to cultivate ethical agency in a digital context through a personal digital philosophy, described in chapter 4, the student’s comments seemed to confirm this was an appropriate method.

Several of their insights from these few moments of discussion were of direct and immediate interest to me:
1) They had considered balancing the offline and online worlds already, weighing up the benefits of being able to speak to people abroad or in person, however, the digital world held a sort of excitement in that it was ‘the impossible made possible’ suggesting that they were also keen on the potentials it presented

2) Discussion of Facebook as an identity maintenance device spoke directly to Floridi’s own discussions of branding and discernibility (in both 2.8, and 3.5) but they also showed an awareness of trying not to give it too much ‘power’. (This was useful to the research project itself in that a discussion regarding the use of Facebook should take place in advance of introducing it as a pedagogical tool.)

3) The student’s immediate reaction to the question of whether school prepared them for the online or digital world was met with a round of laughter. Laughter that clearly indicated that school in no way met their basic needs in this regard. The students identified pride as a learning barrier in this regard, in that the teachers were ‘too proud’ to allow students to assist or instruct where technology was concerned. This particular reasoning later became of interest when I noted the continual presence of shame as a theme in the student participants’ interactions (to be discussed in chapter 6). Shame in this context (due to the loss of timeh or pride, through the usurpation of power from a superior) was not only obstructive in the formal learning space regarding new technology, but also in regards to the prevention of student self-regulation: it prevented students from being able to exercise their own authority.

4) Some aspects of critical awareness (particularly in regards to media literacy) were also present in their discussion. The identification of exposure to American influence, television, as well as what they listened to made it clear that in some way there were consciously aware of the stimuli around them and the continual
bombardment of media affecting their lives.

The students' possession of a rich and considered philosophy which they protected (they would not share their views until some common ground had already been established with the researcher and they had ascertained it would be “safe” to share with me) showed a maturity in their ideas (For example, they assessed an individual to discern whether or not they might be trusted before sharing any of their ideas). If my intention was to shape the formation of digital philosophy, the project was already far too late. These students provided considered opinions, and at once the idea of teaching or helping these students discover their own personal digital philosophy seemed redundant. I had experienced similar situations in the classroom before. In situations where lessons are often set down by a head of department (who may not know the students or class dynamic involved) instead of by the teacher conducting the lesson, curriculum can be inflexible—leaving no opportunity to “actively listen” to student progress and leading to disenchantment with the learning process from students and teachers alike. It was not a mistake I was particularly keen to make.

What I could not ascertain was how they applied these ideas in practice. Would they behave as they espoused? Were they truly consciously aware of their personal digital philosophy? Were certain areas lacking finesse? And how might their ideas change or develop throughout the project? In response to their insights, I changed my intents immediately but remained allegiant to my process. I decided against using traditional methods of directing their development, opting instead for a “hands-off” approach appropriate to preserving the participant’s freedom to communicate unreservedly within the research. This self-direction from participants was, after all, more in keeping with the self-regulatory nature of the infosphere.
Whilst I hoped to keep the research as objective as possible, I appreciated concern surrounding naïve realism (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983: 12), and Fielding’s opinion that ‘objective’ observation is impossible (Fielding, 1993:163). I provided information to keep discussion active. Emails were rarely more than a few lines (just sufficient to provide context and content). I didn't ask anyone to read or research anything, let alone encourage. I didn’t articulate the focus on creation of a personal digital philosophy and didn’t emphasise the webquest, allowing them to place their efforts as they wished instead. My reasoning was two-fold. First, either they would do it or they wouldn't. If I shaped and coerced them, I would fail to identify genuine self-regulating behaviour (both in their participation and their interactions). I wanted a clear idea just how well this project might function as a tool of motivation in and of itself. Secondly, in responding to the students' philosophies and interests, I had an opportunity to make the learning student-centric. Such individual instruction appealed to me, not only because it allowed each student the opportunity to learn at a variety of paces in a variety of ways (the success of which I had witnessed at MCHS), but also given the self-regulatory skills it demanded.

I made the casual suggestion to the SPs that they might consider logging into the project once a week and left it with them to decide. Our meeting ended with the agreement that students would return me their permission slips (if outstanding) signed before the project began on the first of April, that we would meet again during the project at least once, and a final time after the project had concluded. I had left them without any firm directive to take part, and no penalty if they failed to engage.

The three students in the Alpha group stayed to set up their accounts after the first meeting ended (the others were due at an appointment). This gave rise to the chance for creating and “playing” with their identities in the modern world before the
project began. The other three students took time to create their profiles, leaving it until shortly before the project start date. Two participants from the Beta group set up to take part in the rehearsal (a few days before the launch).

I had the distinct impression that SP D had taken against the project; though I recognised that I may have been incorrect, as her personality seemed naturally reserved around strangers. I doubted her involvement in the project and worried that success could be hampered by a mortality rate. If she left, and another student followed her, I would have very little data and nothing usable to discuss group interactions at formal schooling age.

Though I was unaware, the students from Alpha group were using their accounts immediately from the time they were created, experimenting with the notions of personality and covert online activity.

Meanwhile, rehearsals were to take place with the character participants, who were setting up their own character profiles. The online world of historical Facebook accounts was already more advanced than I had anticipated. Large numbers of fictitious and historical characters were already at play in the social networking environment. Some of these fictitious and historical online players tried to befriend us the moment we registered, others found us almost right away and attempted to start conversations (one woman from the United States insisted that we befriend her at once as we were her favourite historical figures). It was difficult to maintain anonymity, and almost immediately I sent an email insisting that characters place their accounts on invisible until the project launched the following week. This allowed us at least a small amount of time to rehearse. Initially intended to provide the opportunity to make a few tentative posts, I was surprised by the bulk of interaction that suddenly began to appear. Below (Fig 5.1) is an example of the
rehearsal interaction. Once I (and certainly the character participants), were satisfied that they understood how the project would operate, we were ready to await the launch of the project, and follow it however it might unfold.

Fig 5.1 Lady with a Monkey
5.3.1 Week 1 Project Commences, Promenade with Yeats and Gonne

After their successful trial run of the project the week before, the expectations were clear and opportunities for incorporating humour and personal interests seemed to motivate character participation. Everyone did as they had been instructed: created their profile; found one another on Facebook; and posted on topic as requested by email in the matter and style of their historical character. My only contact with participants was the brief daily email that provided the topic of discussion. The first email topic was that they parallel the Victorian age to the world of new media via discussion of the Paris-London telephone line that had opened in April 1891. Evidence of their compliance can be seen in Figure 5.2. Some characters even posted a day early if they knew the topic in advance (Figure 5.2-5.4).

Fig. 5.2 Henry Irving Telephones

![Henry Irving]

Now that it is simple to speak with someone in Paris from the comfort of England, the world is more connected than ever before. There seems to be little excuse to avoid hearing my voice now!

Like · Comment · April 1, 2010 at 3:10pm · 

![Robert Louis Stevenson]

Thankfully, the world's supply of telephones is not inversely related to the world's supply of earplugs.

April 2, 2010 at 3:26am · Like

Fig. 5.3 Holman Hunt Hermits Himself

![William Holman Hunt]

With this new found sense of connectivity in the world, why does it make me want to find the farthest flung, lonely place, and make a hermit of myself?

Like · Comment · Share · April 1, 2010 at 4:19pm · 

Robert Louis Stevenson likes this.
Above: Figs. 5.2-5.4
Demonstrating the project at work; Henry Irving and Ellen Terry post about the opening of the telephone exchange between Paris and London whilst making parallels to the modern (their future) world. They also demonstrate the use of role playing in character as a means of teaching history, Henry Irving makes reference to his forceful voice, Ellen Terry refers to her famous epistolary exchanges, and William Holman Hunt draws attention to his trips to the “Holy Land”.

CP William Holman Hunt made some interesting choices straight from the beginning of the project, providing learning opportunities for everyone. Drawing attention to their new digital life thanks to “Father Time”, they went on to articulate what can only be described as a Turklesque85 statement on technology and isolation; keeping in line with Hunt’s historic behaviours whilst providing new insight on his potential motivations (see fig 5.3) before going on to employ a novel means of educating about the character as an artist. They constructed a ‘Gallery’ using the Photo menu on Facebook (Fig. 5.5). Filled with many of Hunt’s finest works, the clever use of image allowed users to absorb Hunt’s painting style and subject matter, and formulate an affiliation between painting and Hunt, without requiring any formal instruction “these paintings are the work of Holman Hunt”. No more than three days into the project, CP William Holman Hunt was demonstrating creative potential for integrating social networking for learning purposes, both philosophically and

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85 Given Sherry Turkle’s more recent work on being “Alone Together” (Turkle, 2011).
historically, as well as for a cross-discipline learning tool. This approach was employed the following day by character participant, John Gray, who posted a picture by the impressionist Pissaro (Fig. 5.6). In a comment, he identifies the painter, develops a knowledge of the artist’s background, and establishes a relationship between himself and the artist. The relationship is further acknowledged by character participant Zetella.86

Fig 5.5 Holman Hunt’s Gallery

86 Interestingly, Zetella’s own profile picture has her standing next to reknowned academic Jerusha McCormack, leading Wilde scholar and expert on John Gray.
Meanwhile, the student participants were quietly setting up their own profiles and gradually moving them into the 1890s chronology, formulating relationships with one another and character participants. They chose to identify as one family unit naming themselves “The Monetta's” (Fig. 5.7) which set them up to explore the family unit- an outcome hoped for in the intended learning outcome for Civics (Table 4.1). Although the complete Monetta family is shown here, Camille Monetta did not arrive until week 2 of the project.
The first sign of opportunities outside the two crossover events planned (the waltz and the Rhymer’s Club) also became apparent this first week. The costumes for the crossover events had been acquired in advance, and when the characters playing William Butler Yeats and Maude Gonne arrived in Dublin (visiting from England), a group of us took the opportunity to dress and improvise our own promenade around the city centre, stopping for tea in a local restaurant (Fig. 5.8-5.10). It was an unplanned and unexpected event, but it yielded photographs for marketing and profile purposes, as well as the time to circulate information about the event to passers-by
curious about our costumes. It also set a sort of model for behaviour to other participants involved, showing how the crossover could work, and that spontaneity within the project was allowed and encouraged.

Fig 5.8 (Left) Maude Gonne and William Butler Yeats at Dublin Castle, establishing their physical presence in Dublin.

Fig 5.9 (Right) Yeats, John Gray and Princess Zetella take tea in the local café (assisting the project) with the One City One Book production material. The café was extremely supportive, high-lighting the positive relationships that could occur between arts, education, and the business community.

Fig. 5.10

Maud Gonne and Ada Leverson on Haypenny Bridge, Dublin City Center.

Several bystanders and visitors passing by the bridge requested photographs with the characters and asked about the project.
5.3.2 Week 2: One City One Book Launch, Wilde Waltz, Corset Burning

The last student participant to finally begin ‘playing’ (SP D) didn’t make an appearance until a week into the project - but then cast herself firmly in an authority role (as parent) and made familial links with the Alpha group (see fig. 5.11), naming one of the Alpha group children as her son (the other two Beta group children were her “daughters”). Until this point, student groups had identified themselves as family equals in two separate groups; they were all of the same age group and distinctly grouped as two sets of cousins (each set corresponding to their school).

Fig. 5.11 (Below)- Camille Monetta’s Facebook Information
Note her widowed status, and her interest in both Men and Women. This point was never explored in the narratives- likely due to time restrictions- fittingly however, as a character she came to represent a number of repressed secrets and feelings.
The introduction of a mother figure altered the power dynamics of the group. It also created opportunities for students to explore the differing ideas about family and community (leading to a digital family event in week 3). That the SPs chose to work with their original characters and not to fabricate and play new additional ones (such as their missing father) is interesting, although SP A once casually mentioned to me that he had considered creating an additional historic profile for Arthur Sullivan that he might also play. They did in this week however, begin to explore their characters' vices and move outside the family group, making firm connections with other Victorian character participants (Fig. 5.12). This seemed to evidence that the participants' confidence in their characters and in their ability to construct digital narrative cooperatively, seemed to be developing, a good indication they were meeting the English Language Arts outcome on structuring narrative (Table 4.4).

Fig. 5.12 Prudence Monetta’s Whiskey

On the 7th of April, One City One Book officially launched its programme of events. The characters had been invited to attend, but no one was available (the launch was during daytime working hours). Doubtless, had costumed characters made an appearance, it would have tipped the media as to the presence of the Facebook
profiles online. Still, the launch drew the public toward the upcoming program of events, and the waltz was scheduled for that weekend.

The waltz had undergone several incarnations throughout the rehearsal process. Having lost one character central to the original storyline, the venue, and the difficulties with actors' schedules, it had morphed into a free and open event, relying more on public participation and contained structured choreography for only half of the program. The waltz was our featured crossover event, designed to demonstrate how the online characters could step (or boxstep) into analogue existence and highlight the digital analogue consolidation of the infosphere. At the outset of the project no one had anticipated making so many costumed appearances around the city, but the waltz provided an even larger spectacle that attracted families and small children and allowed the broader circulation of materials about digital civics (such as the waltz tickets containing project and contact information presented in chapter 4, see Figs. 4.5 - 4.6).

On the day, the waltz attracted good crowds (assisted, in part, by good weather and the outdoor venue). A good-sized crowd had already assembled in anticipation, but people also followed music and costumed actors for some distance, arriving at the venue. When the dance floor was opened to the public, young children constituted a large portion of public involvement; however, a good number of teenagers approached the stage and attempted to waltz with one another, in addition to adults (Fig. 5.13- 5.14). We were later asked if we would dance another set, so it appeared that there was certainly interest and scope for an even larger event with more public participation. One of the student participants even arrived and took part in the waltz. (Fig 5.15). In one aspect or another, the entire family of that participant had become involved in the event; his sister acting in the events and his parents
assisting with technical aspects of the project as well. People were motivated not merely to watch, but also to take part; our make-up department agreed to spend the day supervising the sound equipment at the venue and decided that this would best be done in costume, piecing together what Victoriana they could and identifying themselves with other Victorian acquaintances of Wilde.

Fig 5.13 Lord Alfred Douglas “Bosie” Waltzes with Sarah Bernhardt. In the background John Gray dances with Princess Zetella. The close relationships between Oscar’s friends in theatre and royalty form visual associations on the dance floor. The bandstand housing actors dates to the 1890s, making it a fitting historical venue.

Fig 5.14
A number of young children receive a dancing lesson from Sarah Bernhardt.
Acquiring expert assistance was far easier than I had anticipated. While it was possible to acquire contact with the Oscholars, and numerous resources and books were available, CP Zetella made contact with *Dorian Gray* expert, Jerusha McCormack, early on. This was perhaps the most unusual scenario during pre-production; CP Zetella had been researching John Gray, the model for Dorian Gray, and acquired the leading authority’s book on the subject. When she researched the scholarly author, she discovered that the author was in Dublin on a lecture tour and made contact. A week later, CP Zetella and I attended a McCormack lecture together, at the Chester Beatty Library (later to become the Rhymer’s Club event venue). McCormack agreed to put together a lecture for the One City One Book event (which ran in week 4) - and we managed to source a venue at once, but it was the unusual relationship that she developed with characters within the project that I found particularly interesting. She maintained steady contact with CP Zetella; worked to create a lecture on Wilde that would prove helpful to educating young people attempting to contextualise Oscar Wilde from their modern perspective; and attended
events in the program. It was some time after the project, when I came across a new set of photographs (Fig. 5.16-5.17) that had been posted on a Facebook page I hadn’t seen, that I discovered what was perhaps the most interesting example of convergence. Jerusha McCormack, expert in John Gray, standing at the bandstand in St. Stephen’s Green, in conversation with the historical character she knew well from study and had helped to create through her advice to character participants. The project allowed the two people to transgress the rules of time and space, whilst setting up an interesting paradox between who created the Gray persona, the man himself, or the woman who told his story.

Fig 5.16 (Left) John Gray and Jerusha McCormack, speaking together on the Bandstand at St Stephen’s Green.

Fig 5.17 (Right) Princess Zetella and Jerusha McCormack, on the Bandstand at St. Stephen’s Green.

Within days of the waltz some characters were consequently “invited out” to a music event (Fig. 5.18). A communication from CP Zetella forwarded an invitation to a small concert in Camden Street. She and CP Ada Leverson (myself) costumed and
attended. Again, as we had walked to the event from Dublin Castle (a good kilometre and a half away), we passed many of the public on the street, capturing attention and circulating information about the project and ‘One City, One Book’. On arriving, CP Zetella experienced first-hand the Victorian fainting spell; as it turned out we had fastened her corset too tightly. She recovered quickly when allowed air.

Fig. 5.18 Invitation to Baker’s Concert

Many of the other attendees and performers at the concert were to play poets at the Rhymer's Club later in the month and sought further involvement with the project. CP Zetella acted as a hostess, introducing herself in character and making other introductions, setting the tone of believability. The public- exhibiting a strong desire to “play along”- were only too willing to continue the act, making the project enjoyable and integrating into people's personal lives (both characters and spectators).

Events were also beginning to take shape in the online realm that captured
public interest. One such incident was an event about Corset burning. An online Facebook Event, designed to garner support for women’s rights in a ‘bra burning’ sort of style transported to the 1890s (Fig. 5.19). The event was posted to Facebook and captured the interest of character participants and public persons alike.

Fig 5.19 A day of action! corset burning

In such circumstances one cannot look askance at the benefits of humour as a motivating agent- the very thought of what some long dead celebrity might say next in itself provided a reason to continue to check online, not merely on the specific event page, but on individual character participant pages also, encouraging further circulation of material and continued participation, as in these two posts from individual Character Facebook Pages. (Figs. 5.20- 5.21).
Initially it appeared that the excitement had been created by Maude Gonne's character as she was listed as the site's creator. This was a likely explanation as CP Maude had been making feminist comments and fighting with CP Ruskin (Fig. 5.22) on the matter of feminism already.

Fig 5.22 Ruskin’s Feminism Concerns
A later chance discussion with another character participant revealed a more complex and interesting motivation. Oscar Wilde's wife -Constance- was interested in ladies’ fashion and modernizing dress wear. (By the 1890s, the absence of a corset under a tea dress was becoming acceptable in certain social situations.) CP Constance advocated the need to remove corsets in Facebook posts. The idea- motivated by historical fact and a desire to play the character of Constance true to her memory- actually yielded information to the group in an organic way. (i.e. that women of the 1890s were on the verge of ending the necessity of corsets.) This information was taken up by CP Gonne, a notably fiery persona, who created a Facebook event page. In some ways, this was an accurate historical reflection - an idea raised by a more subdued personality (Constance Wilde), communicated to like-minded individuals, and made more public by rebellious personalities (Maude Gonne) who took the notions to more active levels of engagement.

CP Maude, as CP Constance would later comment, “just ran with it” (CP Constance, Personal Communication, October, 2010). CP Maude made the event physically “real” by obtaining a corset, placing it in her BBQ at home, and setting a match to it to obtain an appropriate picture, demonstrating a crossover between the digital and analogue worlds (Fig. 5.23). A co-operative effort from participants that arose organically as a result of shared work, knowledge, and communication, the event motivated spectators not involved in the project to join the group and introduced them to the world of digital civics in addition to reinforcing interest from participants. The particular focus on feminist issues in the Facebook Laboratory was interesting, given research identifying the need to bring feminist perspectives to community informatics (Peddle et al., 2008). It was also helpful given the gender imbalance in the student participants (the rations of 5 females to 1 male noted in
chapter 4), in that feminist issues could be explored and presented to the group of student participants through the Victorian lens: providing ideas from both the liberal and conservative areas of the spectrum, and presenting some of the influences on, and influencers of, digital age ideas about gender and identity. CP Gonne and CP Ruskin provided a feminist lens through which to view digital Victorian life, and, by extension, digital life in the community.

Fig 5.23 The Corset BBQ
Determined to make her point, character participant Gonne located a corset for an early morning photo shoot at her BBQ.

Modelling from character participants (or the community) for students occurred within this event: in showing how to create an event, how to create content, and how to take ownership of the project; of sharing passion and fun to bring a subject to life; and of an individual exercising their own agency in the infosphere. Not only was the event popular, but it incited debate with the legendary critic Ruskin, which was to continue to run for much of the project (fig. 5.24). This led to the students' creation of their own online event (Poppy Monetta’s Wedding) only a short
time later.

Fig. 5.24 Ruskin on Corset Burning

John Ruskin wonders if corset burnings and such do not detract from the real struggle of the workers?
April 12, 2010 at 3:09pm · Like · Comment

Maude Gonne I challenge you to wear a corset for a day and then consider the daily struggle of women
April 12, 2010 at 4:36pm · Like

John Ruskin my dear Maude I am shocked!
April 12, 2010 at 10:59pm · Like

Maude Gonne As should you be, if I must I would shock the world if it will get them to lend ear to my cause
April 13, 2010 at 8:36am · Like

John Ruskin Perhaps some day your energies will be directed to the cause of Christian socialism?
April 13, 2010 at 4:38am · Like

Ada Leverson If I were to find myself a Christian at all I should find myself a more social Christian if I were able to breath.
April 13, 2010 at 5:33pm · Like

Maude Gonne Well stated Ada!
April 13, 2010 at 5:58pm · Like

Ada Leverson I have updated my profile picture to reflect this view.
April 13, 2010 at 6:33pm · Like

John Ruskin Good Lord Ada I am an old man!
April 13, 2010 at 7:27pm · Like

Estelle Clements Then why do you spend so much time around such young women?
April 13, 2010 at 9:39pm · Like

Ada Leverson Precisely! Two words- Rose LaTouche!
April 13, 2010 at 11:13pm · Like

John Ruskin Dear Ada I am only interested in their views on art. Perhaps they would like to see my etchings?
April 13, 2010 at 11:39pm · Like

Ada Leverson Your etchings? Or Turners!
April 14, 2010 at 12:01am · Like

John Ruskin oh not this again
April 14, 2010 at 12:20am · Like
5.3.3 Week 3: Monetta Funeral, Evening Promenade for the Library, and Tea at Bewleys

Involvement from all parties in the project was strong by week three. Corset-burning did more than generate interest in the scheme; it appeared to serve as an inspirational model of potential online behaviour to the student participants. Within a few days, SP D had decided to hold a funeral for the death of her husband, the Monetta children's father, who had died under extremely suspicious circumstances many years previously. His death had been covered-up for over a decade and was only recently discovered by the Monetta children. It was subsequently theorised by the student participants, through their online interactions as the Monettas, that the children’s missing father may have been murdered by their mother for unknown reasons, instead of being ‘lost of sea’ as their mother had previously told them.

The ongoing storyline created by the SPs could rival any modern soap opera and was capturing the attention of the character participants, who found themselves following the Monetta epic. Amused by the increasingly outrageous plotlines of intrigue and scandal, the characters found themselves invested in the Monetta family and agreed to attend the funeral, leaving posts on the funeral website, as well as condolences on the Monetta children's websites (Fig. 5.25, Overleaf).

Meanwhile, crossover characters had agreed to attend a lecture at the National Library in costume, but the date, April 20th, was a busy evening for several of the crossover characters. Although CPs Ada and Zetella were prepared to don the usual corsetry, they had no male escort. We had mixed and matched costumes in order to appear in new outfits for various appearances, and now we were reaching out for additional characters also. I called in a fellow actor from the previous year’s Bram Stoker production, who agreed to take on the role of a Victorian poet for the evening.
in order to provide the necessary male escort to appease Victorian society. I managed
to costume him from the existing costume stock, and he received an extremely short
briefing on his “character”; a poet scoundrel becoming entangled with Ada during the
break-up of her marriage (again, a historically legitimate figure). Though the library
was glad of the appearance and took the opportunity to take pictures, the appearance
ended in yet another tea room after wandering a few streets and bidding a good
evening to passers-by. Keen on the involvement, Bewley's tea room accommodated
us and attempted to play along (Fig 5.26, overleaf). Now involved, the “poet” was to
appear in the Rhymer’s Club as well.

Fig 5.25 John Monetta’s Funeral
5.3.4 Week 4 Rhymer’s Club, Jerusha McCormack Lecture, The Wedding

The last week had built to a paragon of digital activity: highlighting the aspects of the infosphere and digital civics intended for portrayal and demonstrating the self-sufficiency and motivation of participants who had, by now, taken full ownership of the project out of the researcher’s hands and were busy plotting their own run of events.

The week began with a meeting where SPs communicated their desire to contribute their own event to the project (this despite the fact they had already developed a narrative, and held a digital funeral). They had picked up on the photographs from the previous year’s Bram Stoker Wedding, (re-posted on Facebook on Bram Stoker’s page) and, inspired by the nature of the project and the ongoing online events, wanted to create their own masterpiece. They arrived for our research meeting where I was to ask them questions about their interaction, not to provide feedback for me about their involvement in the project as research data, but rather, moved the topic swiftly to how they could construct an event, and desiring the benefit
of my experience as a producer and director. The dialogical nature of the methodology I’d utilised lent itself naturally to a conversational and informal tone that the students seemed to find approachable, and allowed them to glean the necessary information whilst still providing me with information I believed to be more valuable than the structured line of questioning I would have followed. Once our interview concluded, they agreed to organise the story amongst themselves—refusing to give me many details—merely seeking my assistance in helping them market the project to the other participants. I complied, and waited to see what happened.

Character Participant Zetella had also busied herself with preparations. In conjunction with members of Dublin’s artistic community, she had motivated a large group of artists to convene at the Chester-Beatty Library as part of the “Rhymer's Club” event. The event brought together the aesthetic and orientalism of the Chester-Beatty typical of Wilde's education, as well as the arts set of modern Dublin (mimicking the original Rhymer's Club), and of course used digital technology to maintain a sense of infosphere. In this instance, a screen projection behind the performers provided a real time link to the Rhymer's Club Facebook page, and messages from characters such as Oscar Wilde (Fig. 5.27).

CP Zetella had become an expert on Wilde. Her initial research had already led her to form a friendship with the field expert (which I discuss below), though she further conducted research on surrounding characters. Without CP Zetella’s knowledge of the field, readily accessible to the director in any moment of panic, the project would certainly not have experienced the ease it did. Further, CP Zetella created her own world of participants. An entire portion of participation could be attributed directly to her. She motivated and involved some of the most notable artists
in the Dublin community, including musician Enda Reilly, and spoken word poet Stephen James Smith. The event itself inter-married technology, history, and the arts seamlessly, while attracting unusual groups of people together. Members of the arts community unaccustomed to the museum and museum patrons unfamiliar with the alternative arts scene of Dublin, found themselves face-to-face and intrigued by the inter-action. The division between the modern 2010 location and the historical 1890 characters was highlighted humourously when poet Smith informed the audience he would perform ‘September 1913’ with Reilly, and Leerson quipped “My, how futuristic!”

Keen to generate interest and involvement in the project, as well as to learn skills she considered necessary to future endeavours, CP Zetella appealed for assistance in directing and organizing an event, but developed her own strategies (based from her own experience) to manifest her ideas. CP Zetella had taken all the aims of the project, considered them, and then created an event she could at once
learn from and contribute to the project. Cleverly, she had also acquired a videographer and posted clips of performances to YouTube (Fig. 5.28). Thanks to her own YouTube page, CP Zetella was able to continue circulating material after the show, and maintain interest in artistic pursuits with the community.

Fig 5.28, Enda Reilly and Stephen James Smith Perform a version of Yeats poem, September 1913. Captured and uploaded to Youtube by CP Zetella. To the right of their video, a list of related uploaded material demonstrates the catalogue of performances and informative sound bites regarding the project (Zetella, 2010).

Jerusha McCormack’s lecture took place at the Library on Pearse Street the evening of the following day (Monday April 26). It was entitled “Becoming John Gray: The beginning of celebrity culture”. Below is the abstract for the lecture, circulated via email by Dublin City Library and Archives:

*Becoming John Gray: the beginning of celebrity culture?*

John Gray was an ordinary working-class bloke who, as the alleged model for the “Dorian” of Oscar Wilde’s novel, became a household name. How did this happen?
Did Wilde in fact invent John Gray? What forces colluded to help manufacture this new kind of fame—known to us now as “celebrity culture”—and what was its price? By retelling the story of the man who became Dorian Gray, Jerusha McCormack seeks to throw new light on the power of Wilde’s novel: to create as well as to destroy those around him—and finally to conscript the very life of the author himself.

Jerusha McCormack

A leading scholar of Oscar Wilde and his circle, Jerusha McCormack has written the definitive biography of John Gray, the young working-class lad rumoured to be the model for The Picture of Dorian Gray.

After 30 years as a lecturer in the School of English at University College, Dublin, Dr. McCormack now works as a Visiting Professor at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, where she helped set up the first (and so far, the only, comprehensive Irish Studies Centre in China). Her current work is dedicated to unraveling the many ties between China and Ireland: most recently in a piece on the impact of the thinking of Zhuangzi, a Daoist sage from the 4th century BC, on Wilde’s life and writings.

On the day of the lecture, three character participants—Ada, Zetella, and John Gray—attended the lecture. Upon arrival, turnout was extremely poor; only about a half dozen community members had arrived. This was not viewed as a failure however, the lecture was planned for podcast and thus a potential audience still awaited. Roughly 10 minutes into the lecture however, a group of roughly 30-40 secondary aged students with a number of adults arrived. (It is difficult to obtain data for this group; they arrived unexpectedly, seemed to have no connection to the event, and then left at the end of questions before I could approach them, making them impossible to track. Possibly they had heard of the event online, possibly they had simply “happened” by.) With the group’s arrival, the entire lecture room was filled.

The podcast arrived online roughly a week later—it was circulated but it is not possible to say how many more listeners it has attracted (Fig.5.29).87

87 The podcast was run by Dublin City Library and Archives and hosted on their own website, under their own data regulations, separate from the Facebook Laboratory project.
The penultimate event, and climax, of the month-long action, was the student participant produced online wedding. I will present the wedding in detail as its own case study below. This may prove assistive not solely given the wedding’s not quite straightforward narrative, but largely because the wedding encapsulates the ideal outcome of the project, and provides a good example of digital civics pedagogy in action. It is fair to assert that the students thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Reflecting on the event later that evening, one student participant posted:

Fig 5.31 Prudence Reflects
Finally, as a last act to bring closure to the Oscar Wilde Facebook digital civics project, I requested that the characters ‘commit Facebook suicide’, to end their digital character’s online interactions and announce that they would be leaving the Facebook platform, offering that individuals may like to reveal their true identities. Many people revealed their true selves, granting insight into the perceived differences between themselves, and the masks they had worn. However, some participants did not kill off their characters, ignoring the instruction altogether. This was an interesting decision with reasons not fully conveyed to the researcher. There did appear in many cases to be an affinity between character and participant and perhaps this was a contributing factor. Members of the public, however, continued to interact with the ‘still living’ characters (Fig. 5.32) long after the project completed, particularly in regards to birthdays. One member of the public posted a happy birthday to Charles Stewart Parnell every year after the project finished (Fig. 5.33).

Fig 5.32 Lillie’s Birthday Wishes  Fig. 5.33 Charles Stewart Parnell Birthday
For those who did bring closure to their characters as requested, they took the opportunity to confess their true identity (Fig. 5.34- Fig. 5.35), provide words of wisdom, to pay tribute to their historical characters and convey important personal opinions, or simply to find closure (Fig. 5.39).

Fig. 5.34 Oscar Revealed

![Oscar Revealed](image)

Morality, like art, means drawing a line someplace. And here I draw my line of masquerade! Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone elses opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation. I can believe anything, provided that it is quite incredible. I suppose that I shall have to die beyond my means.

Like · Comment · Share

OscarFingal Wilde
April 30, 2010

My masquerade was in gender AND name! I am really currently residing in Canada. I am also an Acadia Alumnus and good friend of Estelle (Ada).

I had such a great time playing part in this and will be interested to see who is who is who!

So long and thanks for all the fish!
April 30, 2010 at 9:10pm · Like

Fig. 5.35 Maud Gonne Revealed

![Maud Gonne Revealed](image)

My secret is revealed, I am not Maude Gonne, but Postdoctoral fellow at the Research in Cambridge, UK. It was fun being Maude though, hope everyone enjoyed it!

Fig. 5.36 Maisy Deceives

![Maisy Monetta](image)

The secret of life is to appreciate the pleasure of being terribly, terribly deceived 😊
Fig. 5.37 Constance Revealed

Oh my! I have discovered this is not my face(book) at all. I’m really...*drumroll*...Chemistry Professor at University in Florida. And I’m dead. Um, what?

Like · Comment · Share

Fig. 5.38 Bram Revealed

How blessed are some people, whose lives have no fears, no dreads, to whom sleep is a blessing that comes nightly, and brings nothing but sweet dreams?

Like · Comment · Share

Fig. 5.39 Prudence Death

is dead.
5.4 Case Study in the data: Poppy Monetta’s Wedding

Nearing the project’s end, the students presented their online wedding, which illustrated many aspects of digital civics that had been hoped for: student ownership of the project; self-regulatory responsibility; group cooperation; the raising of ethical questions (that is, ethical reflection); the raising of questions of identity; and a community approach to education; to name a few.

The online wedding (Fig. 5.40) was the sole creation of the student participant group; as mentioned, they had approached the researcher at the beginning of week 4 for assistance. The popularity of the narrative constructed by the student participants led to a desire to create an event akin to those modelled by the character participants throughout the project. Student participants became aware of their characters' popularity through communications from the researcher (although there was feedback on their FB walls, they had no way of discerning the sincerity of such posts given their awareness that this was the character participants' job anyway).

From the researcher's perspective, planning for the online wedding was straightforward; the only responsibility was facilitating students. Students in Beta group arrived for a chat to discuss their project participation with the researcher, but preferred to steer the conversation toward logistics, the researcher's personal experience in event coordination, and the philosophical knowledge that would help to make the event successful. Student participants didn't passively listen to the researcher; they actively sought the information they felt useful from the researcher's mind. This showed the necessity of openness with students while maintaining good boundaries. It required the ability to present previous successes and failures to students while modelling healthy responses to both. It also showed the need to be
aware of the philosophy and knowledge in depth of one’s own subject area and the advantage of cultivating healthy respect between educator and student so that the students felt comfortable ‘picking the educator's brain,’ as it were, and evaluating whether or not the information they were receiving was accurate and of value. The researcher's previous experience in Dublin organising successful projects was of value here. One postulates that if teachers are open about their achievements (i.e. openness about education or relevant experiences), this is assistive.

Fig. 5.40 Poppy Monetta’s Wedding

As students from both groups could not meet 'in person,' they communicated
via Facebook private messages to ensure that their ideas were in synchronicity. Student participants organised a general idea of what would occur at the wedding, and they didn’t shy away from making the project relevant to current events. They formulated their own ideas, then asked the researcher for ideas assistance where required. Below is a clip of the conversation (Fig. 5.41), which highlights the student motivation in dealing with issues of sexuality, awareness of media (television) influence, and ownership in planning to meet independently from the researcher later.

What is perhaps of particular interest is the students’ particular push to deal with issues of sexuality and open discussion of the attractiveness of other characters of the same gender in a healthy and humourous way. At this point in the conversation, the students have already outlined most of their plan, having already decided on the wedding ‘jilting’, and are seeking some final resolution before embarking on the final planning stages themselves.

Fig. 5.41 Participant Wedding Planning on Facebook

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**Student Participant B**

My character disappeared from FB for a while and her relationship status is now listed as "single". She is also "interested" in men AND women. I was thinking of coming up with a sexuality-related scandal (link to Oscar Wilde!) that I could involve in the wedding. Hmm...

Any ideas?

---

**Estelle Clements**

Up to you. You could marry Poppy after she’s jilted by her fiance who runs off with either Camille or Lily... Won't that just set the cat amongst the pigeons.

Of course you realise you'll land bang in the centre of the same sex marriage debate?

---

**Student Participant B**

Ha! You've a brilliant sense of humour, Estelle, that's great XD

Also, yes, I noticed. It seems to fit, doesn't it?

Who to be a lesbian WITH? 😊
Subsequently, the students created the page and invited participants. Members of the public posted days in advance to send regrets (Fig. 5.42) or query time (Fig. 5.43):

Fig. 5.42 Sending Regrets

The coachman is down with a pox... I have tried to find a replacement but, alas, no luck.

Like · Comment · April 24, 2010 at 12:33pm

Fig. 5.43 Requesting Time

Question:
Email says 1800 (I assume GMT) or 1400 (NS -- Nova Scotia?) but this page says 1500. So... which is it? And where exactly?

Like · Comment · April 28, 2010 at 8:09pm

The researcher also forwarded information from the student participants to character participants via email. If character participants were confused, they emailed or Facebook messaged for further information or assistance. Student participants
maintained secrecy from the researcher after their online meeting as to the remainder of the plot they had developed for the event (showing their guarded ownership and wish to fully blossom themselves without interference or outside influences).

Participants logged on at the appointed time to take part. The script- intended to take 5 minutes- continued for an hour as participants added sub-plots, took storylines the 'wrong' direction, and added private historical jokes. Noting the time stamps from the posts, it is possible to see that, although the project was due to complete at 6:05, at 6:36 the characters are still building story and creating new avenues in the narrative.

An account of the online wedding demonstrating its storyline and postings is available in the additional attached materials.

To provide an explanation of the action useful to the case study however, the wedding followed the story of Poppy Monetta, and her matrimonial celebration with fiancé Patrick; however, events don’t quite go according to plan (Fig. 5.44).

Fig 5.44 Things don’t go according to plan

In the course of events, sister Lily steals the groom Patrick, only to discover that the wedding had been an ‘evil plan’ for Poppy to run off with Lily’s former fiancé’ Peter (who faked his own death). Ruskin, frustrated by his own level of sobriety, offers to assist any of the affianced couples with copies of Turner’s infamous etchings, while Maisy subsequently confesses her incestuous homosexual love for her cousin/half-sister Poppy, who agonises over abandoning her stolen fiancé Patrick to follow her heart and be with Maisy, leaving Scott to elope to France with his sister Prudence. Not surprisingly, mother Camille has a heart attack and faints, which isn’t
quite enough for a repressed daughter Lily, who produces a gun and shoots her mother (who survives). In the absence of any actual wedding, Yeats, rejected by Maude Gonne, attempts to marry anyone who will have him, until Prudence throws herself at him and finds he is still obsessed with Maude Gonne. With swift and happy resolutions for everyone (except Yeats, whose misery ensures Gonne’s joy) the characters all head to ‘the pub,’ meeting Oscar Wilde as they leave.

Fig. 5.45 The Drama Ends

![Image of Poppy Monetta with text: Right thats enough drama for one day, Maisy and I are off to the pub whose coming? :)](image)

The Student Participants showed creativity, planning, intelligence, and historical knowledge to a high level, as evidenced by their ability to interact with appropriate contextual knowledge of the involved historical figures. Their interactions raised themes such as family struggles, gender and identity, homosexuality, personal relationships, society, and society’s role; all with wit and humour and in an historically appropriate manner, adhering to the social beliefs of the Victorians in their reactions. The war between what was desired by the self- or the identity constructed by participants- and the requirements and regulation of social expectation was a distinct theme in their ethical reflection, as evidenced by their desires to act against societal expectation: engaging in incestuous relationships and breaking engagements at the altar for example. This was in particular reference to ‘speaking out’. Scott Monetta communicates his inability to hold in his voice any longer, Maisy Monetta stammers before eventually blurting her love for Poppy, and
even Lily’s shot at her mother is an action against feelings of repression present since learning of the death of her father (and early in the wedding Lily reiterates that she will ‘do something’ if her mother does not leave her alone (Fig. 5.46)). Though apparently consciously unaware of their preoccupation with the topic, student participants invested a vast amount of time and energy into exposing and coming to terms with issues of shame. (Fig. 5.47) They raised socially taboo subjects such as sexuality, incest, and emotional behaviour; forced their acknowledgment; and as mentioned, shot the one character (their mother) that insisted on continual suppression and secrecy- a symbolically powerful action.

Fig. 5.46 Lily Threatens

Fig. 5.47 Poppy’s Shame

Whilst the participants’ interactions contained (unsurprisingly) numerous sexual references, there was also a frequent focus on alcohol. The distinction should probably be made that alcohol discussion in the present tense was represented positively (those partaking of, or openly planning to partake of alcohol intended it as a celebratory, humourous, or social activity); while acts of alcoholism or substance abuse were condemned. Alcohol consumption is not unusual at weddings, and the pub is a cultural fixture of Irish life, so there seemed nothing unusual in the numerous references. This was appropriate within cultural contexts (had the project taken place
with a Baptist community for example, perhaps the data might suggest a different interpretation).

The students didn’t shy away from trying to integrate different media either. Maisy Monetta posted a YouTube link to Tchaikovsky’s Romeo and Juliet Theme at a particularly relevant moment in the drama (Figs. 5.48- 5.49) demonstrating a tie to the learning outcome for Music (Table 4.4). With YouTube able to play in the background, it was possible to return to the unfolding Facebook drama with a soundtrack to accompany the unfolding performance. That the use of YouTube media was first introduced by the SPs demonstrated the ways in which they were becoming increasingly confident to draw the project into their own learning world and take full ownership of it. They had begun to model ideas for me and were ‘teaching the teacher’ as it were.

Fig. 5.48 Maisy Posts Music

![Maisy Monetta](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VMCiewc7mE)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VMCiewc7mE

Like · Comment · April 29, 2010 at 6:33pm

William Yeats, William Holman Hunt and Ada LeVernon like this.

Fig 5.49 Tchaichovsky on YouTube

![YouTube Video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VMCiewc7mE)
Music was not the only fine art to grace the performance however. The poem with which the students chose to close the wedding was Yeats’ "A Drinking Song: Wine comes in at the mouth…" It was a particularly interesting and relevant piece, which in itself seemed to represent the ideas and philosophy the students lived out. It was an historical reference to Yeats (the poem is suspected to have been inspired by Gonne) with whose character the SPs had earlier planned the wedding rejection from Gonne (demonstrating their ability to contextualise in historic and in literary terms, meeting more of the intended learning outcomes from table 4.4). However, the poem also encompassed drinking and visibility. This focus on the senses communicated a crossover into the digital realm, as well as presenting the importance of visibility or sight (an aspect students placed emphasis on in their interview discussions with myself). Whether these last aspects were intentional is unclear, but they were certainly representational of the students' overall experience and behaviour throughout the project, as evidenced by their Facebook interactions and by their discussions with the researcher as I will discuss below. In reference to visibility, students articulated the choice of a profile picture as pivotal in their formation of a character.

External response from the public is difficult to gauge. Despite the profiles and pages being set to “public” to allow open viewing, posts were only made on the wedding by one member of the general public- and this was a colleague of the researcher, sharing an office, therefore aware of the project and able to ask permission of the researcher at the time. She expressed a reluctance to interfere, assuming that the entire wedding and posts were pre-planned (as noted, communicating the free and open nature of the project to the general public presented
difficulty). The lack of posts from the general public seemed to indicate that no one was watching the site, and, as Facebook does not provide information to show who is looking at a page and when, it was impossible to discern. However, a message arrived via Facebook some days later. This was from a former student I had taught some years ago, now graduated, with whom I had not had contact for several years. They wrote to indicate their enjoyment of the event, stating, “That's the coolest thing to happen on FB in years...” (A. Cole, Personal Communication via Facebook, April, 2010). His excitement led to a digital discussion, about his own experiences in education, and how he would like to see education change in the future to integrate such digital opportunities. It was a reminder that a lack of feedback (or immediate feedback) was not an indicator of project obscurity. This member of the public had tuned in, enjoyed themselves, and thought through the implications on education for themselves. The project had succeeded in spurring contemplation of education and the digital environment in at least one member of the public. Later, as I examined the data, I discovered other members of the public who had not made their presence known until after the characters ‘committed Facebook suicide’, and I wondered how many people had actually silently watched online, particularly when I noticed that there were individuals from the general public of whom I had no knowledge, listed on the event page as ‘attending’.

5.5 Initial Observations of Reception

During the project, one SP befriended a character playing ‘Jessie Bond’

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88 A famous operetta star of the Victorian Age. The individual playing Jessie Bond was not part of the project, but a random member of the public who had already been engaged with the online Victorian world for some time.
online, their mutual interest in Gilbert and Sullivan operetta bringing them together. This particular individual, independently motivated by their own fondness for operetta, had already been portraying their character’s life in the 1800s for over a year! (as posts to their Facebook profile indicated.) Clearly persons exist already in the online environment with the passion and knowledge to help educate the public. Harnessing such individuals and ensuring their competence and safety with children should provide a major source of education in the infosphere- particularly as such individuals can provide expert instruction otherwise beyond students, and excusing teachers from the impossible task of being experts on every subject or discipline in the convergent environment.

I was curious to find out whether project momentum would maintain itself if participants were left free to explore their own interests, or if this would lead to a lack of cohesion and eventual disbanding of the project. Where one levied expectations about the nature of participant involvement in a specific direction, the results may appear disappointing. For example, forms of participation, such as the webquest and online vote, had been designed to channel participant involvement. These received almost no attention. Conversely, flexibility allowed participants to create events and online content far beyond what could have been conceived of by the director or researcher. Flexibility of contribution allowed users to explore their own interests while motivating a continual influx of feedback from others, helping the project maintain self-sufficiency. The more participants encouraged one another, the more they invested in the project, consequently taking ownership of it, creating and sharing their own ideas and lessons.

In all cases, I was not merely impressed, but overwhelmed with the response of the student participants in meeting the Learning Outcomes and developing
throughout the project (I will outline their achievements in meeting these outcomes in Table 5.3, later in this chapter). Not only did they create characters and post as requested, but they went out of their way to take ownership and create their own online events; something they were never requested to do. They also fed back their ideas to the researcher demonstrating real consideration (points that are discussed in chapter 6): they continued to philosophise about the experience even after the project had completed, and evidence of putting their newfound knowledge into practise could be clearly seen in their own Facebook profiles. Their desire to be guided by feelings of what was fair and right, and to use the opportunity to explore online identity, spurred conversations with other participants, the researcher, and even the participants’ friends, about the nature of life online. Their feedback and conversations with me during our interviews impressed upon me the depth of understanding they had acquired about the world of Victorian London. They were able to contextualise the life of Oscar Wilde, not merely from what they had been told, but through their experience at a level of personal engagement, demonstrating sophisticated historical understanding and abilities to contextualise (as per the intended learning outcomes). They understood Wilde, not as a distant historical figure who wrote books and lived in London, but rather as a man; with friends like William Butler Yeats, Ellen Terry, and Bram Stoker; who had a wife and children; who held passionate views. This rudimentary venture into using social networking assisted students not only in developing a sense of themselves, but also a sense of their fellow man- be he removed by distance, culture, time, or even death.

I dunno, it takes the kind of, you know, historical elitism out of it, you know, like oh the past or whatever. They’re like real people, and I kind of almost wish they were still around. You know? (SP B, April 27, 2010)
Although I had not intended to continue monitoring participants after the project's completion, several instances caught my attention and focussed my attention upon the long-term potential and impact of such an experience. While there were no further formal interviews after the exit interviews conducted at the end of April, The Alpha group students had provided me access to their personal profiles, and kept in touch, providing me the opportunity to ask further questions. In July, three months after the project's completion, I noted one student participant was making alterations to her Facebook profile and manipulating her information to present herself differently, in a manner she felt was a more genuine expression of her true self (Fig 5.50).

Fig. 5.50 Student Participant’s True Self
There was a philosophical element to her behaviour in that she was reconsidering the nature of her existence online, and questioning and recasting the guiding principles of her own behaviour, experimenting with different ways of viewing her digital existence, considering the online’s impact on her person, and applying the lessons she learned from her alter ego Prudence. She appeared less confined by the traditional mechanisms of self-presentation (which generally include your name or photograph) and instead sought to explore her own principles for self-representation, keen to express a more accurate portrayal of self and explore the choices she might be able to make in the social media environment that would further help her explore her own sense of personhood. This seemed in keeping with further conversations on the topic that we had again in October:

You know what. The status updates on Prudence Monetta's page were quite similar to something I would have loved to post on my own but just didn't have the 'confidence' to post them as I thought people would look at them and be like 'Eh, _____, are you alright in the head?' (SP C. Via Facebook. Oct 8 2010).

Further to this, I discovered that the character participants playing Gonne and Yeats had made pilgrimages to locations relevant to their characters: for example, visiting the Cheshire Cheese pub in London, thus creating ties between the online world of their characterisations and the offline world where historical roots existed.

A year after the event, effects from the project were still manifesting themselves, illuminating its longevity and impact on participants. Several of the character participants had informed me they were still involved, reading the literature written by their characters. They were also still discussing the project and sharing it with friends. The character participant playing John Gray had actually adapted Gray as part of his own online persona (utilizing aspects of Gray on Facebook as well as on
his own music website) and as a stage name. When I asked him about this use, he messaged me to say: “It's just a semi cruel reminder to always be myself!” (CP Gray, Personal Communication, Via Facebook, 2011).

5.6 Convergence – The Nature of the infosphere

While the chronological events that occurred in the Facebook Laboratory provide insight into how the project developed, observations of how this environment functioned as a space of convergence, and the behavioural themes demonstrated by the active participants also contribute to the project findings. The Facebook Laboratory as a space of convergence, discussed immediately below is divided into three fields: the converging of the educational community, the converging of levels of abstraction, and the converging of learning content.

In studying the converging of the educational community, I examine the various bodies contributing to this infospheric environment and how they functioned. Such aspects include the administrative bodies, public organisations, businesses, schools, or other entities, that worked together to create the environment, their convergent relationships and the yields of this inter-connected interaction. In considering the converging of levels of abstraction, I address the movement between the digital and analogue environments in the infosphere and the impact of this on the Facebook Laboratory. Finally, in examining the converging of learning content, I consider the consolidation of subject matter in the project's environment, noting and discussing the unbounded movement between topic areas such as English, History and Citizenship.
5.6.1 Converging of Educational Community

The coming together of various stakeholders in the education process to support student learning, including formal learning institutes (schools, universities), informal learning organisations (such as museums or libraries), businesses (both small and large), families (such as parents, siblings, or grandparents), and individual citizens (academics with subject interest, theatrical players) was a valuable part of project success. Assistance from the business community was scattered. Facebook were extremely difficult to reach. Several emails and (ironically) Facebook messages were sent but the company did not respond.

The creation of historical personas in the Facebook environment seemed a straightforward exercise, though playing at being someone else is not an unusual practise in educational role play. Indeed, the students seemed to have little difficulty, and reported their enjoyment in undertaking the project (this despite their initial awkwardness at trying to understand what the project actually was). Given that they were playing characters living in the Victorian era, it was obvious they were fooling no one as to their identities, and had no intent to mislead the public. In the instance where the Alpha group students had initially used their profiles to befriend their actual school friends incognito, one student observed how she had felt “dirty” (SP B, 2010) having enacted such behaviour – though this seemed to be more linked to her decision to act outside the bounds of the project instructions – but that she had experienced much enjoyment from using the historical profiles as intended, and would definitely choose to take on such a project again.

Being anonymous freed the student participants to enjoy the experience of learning about online identity construction and civic interaction in a novel way,
supported by characters who- although their true identities were secret- they knew had been selected safely by the researcher. Intents were altruistic and educational, not malicious. Though the public was welcome to participate, the project was primarily concerned with promoting interaction amongst agreeing participants, not public deception. (As mentioned, a website link provided on the Facebook Project pages provided an explanation of the online experiment should the public prove interested.)

In many respects, participants didn’t view their registrations as additional accounts (as discussed by Facebook terms 4.2), but rather as presentations of their interpretations and homages to the memory of some of their favourite historical characters. Additionally, child safety required anonymity, which could only be preserved through separate accounts; so we exercised judgement. At any rate, repeated attempts to contact Facebook had failed to elicit any response; *Qui tacet consentit*, though likely “silence implies disinterest” was more accurate. And as it turned out, numerous historical Facebook accounts existed in large numbers encompassing personas from the Second World War, to Victorian operatic actresses, to Alexander the Great (Fig. 5.51):

Fig. 5.51 Alexander the Great on Game of Thrones

The alliance with Dublin City Libraries (who in turn worked with Dublin City Council), allowed access to venues and covered indemnity at the events organised
together with them. For example, the Wilde Waltz was held in St. Stephen’s Green
Park, in the middle of town, on an afternoon over the weekend. Seeking out
appropriate comrades, such as libraries, museums and charities - whose motivations
are similarly altruistic and have a background of delivering services to the public -
provides access to experience and materials otherwise unobtainable. Collegial
organisations concerned with public interest can pool resources affording universal
success; the library was able to present its event to an international audience online,
while the digital civics project acquired credibility, access to resources, and funding
to allow physical representation for the project- in our instance we could source not
only venues, but also costumes from a professional theatre company. Other events,
such as a meeting of the Rhymer’s Club in the Chester Beatty Library, garnered new
audiences to the museum while fostering new connections to the online world for
established patrons. The success of working with such organisations was rooted in a
shared vision and proficiency with successful collaboration. As community invested
parties, we all valued public education, civic participation, and a desire to extend
knowledge to people in novel ways. Additionally, we were all familiar with the team-
working requirements of clearly communicated expectation and delivery. Although
alliances with many organisations were considered, the best partners were ones which
held similar mandates and could provide a similar level of organization and
cooperation as the project itself could offer.

Finding common ground with businesses (particularly international
organizations) proves more challenging; as raised in chapter one, one party values
education at the expense of fiscal assets, and the other party is seeking financial
return on their time, energy, or funds. The project approached small businesses- to
which it could offer public attention (in their view, marketing) in return for venue
space and, in some cases, advertising space and refreshment. Larger corporations were approached in partnership with the library, which had more experience in dealing with those organisations, and communication was less frequent or forthright (on one occasion, for example the waltz’s initial venue had to be unexpectedly moved). Corporate investments in education are often tainted by concern that students are left exposed to advertising and commercial exploitation, such as with the P3 schools in Canada, discussed in chapter 1. More positively, schools such as Morinville Community High School, in Alberta, Canada (discussed in chapter 4) undertook projects in the early 90s which forged small links into the corporate world; for example, working in agreement with larger television broadcasters to support their own student newscast in exchange for news tips and footage. This demonstrates the converging of the educational community in a positive way, where stakeholders and the broader public, including corporate entities, can come together for educational purposes that prove mutually beneficial. So, while financial distress in the education sector often places schools in a position of vulnerability, there is also an opportunity for positive interaction with the business community when school communities take a pro-active approach. Communicating the project mandate clearly, and being firm about our boundaries, prevented challenges from organisations who might have attempted to take advantage of the project and students.

Communicating and maintaining professional expectations and boundaries prevents unfavourable outcomes—particularly as the physical boundaries which previously prevented corporate interference deteriorate. Equipment and services may not be free, but they need not come at the cost of betraying educational integrity. Inevitably, this cost is always higher, both civically and financially, and the hidden curriculum lesson— that it is okay to negotiate away boundaries and integrity—instils
negative attitudes in students regarding the value of academic and personal worth.\textsuperscript{89}

Similarly to dealing with public institutions, I noted during the project’s duration that business interactions functioned most fairly when both parties were on “equal footing”. If we (the participants and researcher) felt we would not be accommodated by Facebook in an appropriate manner, we could always migrate to another platform, (at the time Bebo, or Orkut might have served our purposes) or create our own site. The real burden was the consideration that this did not just serve corporate interests by providing them a venue for advertising to young people, but that Facebook is, in itself, a corporate brand. Acknowledging its presence and influence however, raised new questions for student and character participants alike to consider, thereby exposing its flaws or problems. Considering this in conjunction with my first interview with student participants, where I read some of the terms and conditions in the Facebook user agreement – “Did you know that if you die, Facebook reserves the right to keep your account active?”\textsuperscript{90} – yielded realisations about control and agency where corporate interests were in conflict with individual wishes (a circumstance not isolated to Facebook but applicable to many online platforms). The SPs’ shocked reaction to this information alone indicated that they had learned something.

It is obvious to state that those with the most passion for a subject will be most likely to become involved and motivate others. In the Facebook Laboratory, groups were approached who already showed a keen interest in the work of Oscar

\textsuperscript{89} This is exemplified by Canadian P3 schools, who attempted a public-private partnership in the early 2000s, only to discover their school environment gradually negotiated away to corporate interests in return for goods from the corporate community. (Despite the improved facilities, it was decided the program be discontinued, as it proved both expensive and demoralising to staff and students. In interview, a source who wished to remain anonymous dealing with the project commented: “Even with there [sic] vested interests the politicians realized it was too costly. There is no control over the infrastructure, any changes to it gave the “owners” the right to charge what they thought fit. It was like renting a building you had paid to build.”) Maintaining the ability to walk away – as the Nova Scotia school board did with their P3 program-helped them preserve autonomy and negotiating power. \textsuperscript{90} Privacy terms section 5, regarding memorializing. Though precise wording of the terms has apparently changed since 2010 \url{http://www.facebook.com/terms.php#!/policy.php}
Wilde. Academic experts such as the Oscholars\textsuperscript{91}, or Jerusha McCormack\textsuperscript{92} were invited to take part. As I outlined, academics I personally knew had an interest in technology, history, or theatre were approached. Additionally, the online environment allowed those with similar interests to locate the project immediately. And also, characters such as Jessie Bond existed in the online environment already. There is no shortage of interested people to volunteer their time and passion educating a willing public; some individuals already do so. Locating such groups, organisations, and individuals is as easy as entering a few words into Google and pressing enter. While an organic network of organisations, businesses, and private citizens exist who can all work together for educational benefit in the convergent environment, maintaining boundaries, examining motivations, and deciding on the most advantageous aspects of this environment were paramount to success.

5.6.2 Converging of Levels of Abstraction

In chapter 2, I discussed Floridi’s identification of levels of abstraction. Designing the project, I made conscious choices to promote convergence of these levels; blending events between the online and offline worlds through photos at the waltz and allowing live relaying and dissemination of materials via YouTube uploads at the Rhymer’s Club event. This was in keeping with the notion of transmedia as a means of facilitating identity construction that required crossover to occur. Crossover, the descriptive term I suggested in the introduction, to denote the actual act of movement between the online and offline worlds, became a useful prompt to suggest

\textsuperscript{91} See: http://www.oscholars.com/
\textsuperscript{92} A published expert on John Gray (McCormack, 1991, 2000), the model for Dorian Gray.
the successful blending of these events. Although crossover was accomplished because it was built into the project by the researcher, I want to examine and discuss specifically the character participants' contributions to crossover in order to highlight the learning environment created here. I will briefly discuss the crossover intentionally implemented in the project in order to assist in identifying and outlining the crossover accomplished by the student research participants.

Crossover initially appeared minimal; however, it gradually became clear that it was simply too pervasive to be noticed. Each time a member of the public took footage or a photograph and uploaded it to the internet, they were crossing the digital-analogue ‘barrier’. Further, the invitation of characters to participate in ‘real’ analogue world events (such as the concert in Camden during the project's second week) highlighted the ease with which transference between digital and analogue occurred. Additionally, city banners reminded students that they were part of something online. Being in the physical city space reinforced being in the digital space. Meanwhile, Facebook pictures and videos encouraged further communication in the online environment - particularly internationally. One Oscar Wilde scholar responded to a picture posted about Bram Stoker's wedding (in Bram Stoker's pictures, Fig. 5.52) by submitting a poem (Fig. 5.53). Such incidences remind, not only of the crossover between analogue and digital, but also the ability of various cultures to meld together in the infosphere: the woman was from Finland; meanwhile she posted a poem in English (by Oscar himself), in response to a photograph of a show that took place in Ireland. She also traversed time - both in that the event was historical, but also in that she viewed the photograph (a capture of an instant previously experienced by others, but novel to this public participant) and was able to interact with it as though it had only just occurred. In a sense, the picture allowed the
public participant to be “present” at the “present” moment of the wedding when the photograph had been taken, and to respond accordingly.

Fig. 5.52 Oscar crashes Bram’s Wedding

Fig. 5.53 A Wedding Poem

I made that vow,
Swore that two lives should be like one
As long as the sea-gull loved the sea,
As long as the sunflower sought the sun,-
It shall be, I said, for eternity
‘Twixt you and me!
Dear friend, those times are over and done,
Love’s web is spun……………………………
April 22, 2010 at 1:07pm · Like

Ellen Alice Terry Wonderful poem. I was at the wedding last year at St. Annes Church, in Dublin, it was amazing. The poem so aptly fits the photo.
April 22, 2010 at 4:47pm · Like

George Bernard Shaw My Dear Ellen, welcome to the site, and thank you for your apt poem. Oscar made Bram’s wedding a farce, proving he does know his farce from his elbow.
April 22, 2010 at 11:07pm · Like

Dear Ellen and G.B., how nice to finally meet you all! The lines are from one of Oscar’s much maligned poems, I like to think this one was for Florrie—I am surprised he found the strength to come to the wedding at all. Is affection the only thing that accompanies a man up the steps of the scaffold?
April 23, 2010 at 7:46am · Like
Crossover also occurred as a means of discussing modern events in foreign countries. For example, G.B. Shaw posted about an event in Canada concerned with cancer research and awareness, but tied this into the unfolding Victorian narrative. In this way, the crossover between historical and modern, British and Canadian occurred, but did not interrupt the flow of interaction. (Fig. 5.54)

Fig. 5.54 Cancer Research and Corsets

The Waltz was designed as the major crossover event, staged to create activity between the “real” physical characters and the digital world. As pictures became available, characters might choose to identify themselves from their modern costumed photograph, rather than by a Victorian photograph or likeness of the actual individual, or, more commonly, as a mix of the two (Fig. 5.55). In this instance, crossover was accomplished not only across space (digital Facebook pages and analogue live events), but again, throughout time also (Past Victorian and Present Modern).

Fig. 5.55 Maude Gonne’s Profile Pictures illustrate use of both Victorian photographs of the genuine individual and the participant as the character. The final photograph, taken next to Gonne’s Grave, shows the character’s pilgrimage to a Dublin cemetery, following Gonne’s footsteps and was posted at the project’s completion, revealing the participant’s identity.
Other crossover events, such as the promenade theatre visit to Bewleys, the evening stroll with Yeats and Gonne, or the Rhymer's Club, also promoted the idea that crossover between the online and offline levels of abstraction could occur. Perhaps most effective were the projection of updates on the Oscar Wilde Facebook page by Victorian characters during the Rhymer's Club event at the Chester Beatty (where a projection screen behind performers allowed for real-time Facebook posts to be visible to the audience). The idea to present technology in the Rhymer’s Club as an intentional demonstration of the integration between the online and offline world, came from CP Zetella, who was keen to communicate the crossover nature of the project to the public after she had become familiar with Floridi’s ideas on the Fourth Revolution. Applying his philosophical ideas in a manner intended to spur philosophical reflection in the public (particularly the inter-realted nature of the on and offline), her event provided a useful vehicle for encouraging and distributing philosophical ideas.

Obviously, such events relied on the ability of actors to maintain character, (a challenge if appearances lasted in excess of several hours) but the feedback of the public, enjoying their interaction with characters, provided positive reinforcement to assist characters in continuing to hold integrity to their character.93

Certainly, such participatory occurrences do not happen with immediacy. Groups develop organically from interested individuals and slowly create ideas and contributions of their own that allow participation in the production. (Similarly to the development Anelli (2008) discusses in the Potterverse.) This sort of creative participation, self-motivation, and inter-media collaboration is ideal in entertainment

93 Transmedia was already proving popular in mainstream media productions concurrent with the Facebook Laboratory. Fox’s Fringe, for example, a science fiction show about two colliding parallel universes, encouraged users to become involved in its community by placing its tv show characters in a variety of “real world” locations, where they could interact with the public (Abrams, 2009).
Jenkins, 2003) but also demonstrates great educational potential (Elwell, 2014). While the Facebook Laboratory only ran a short period of time (a problem common to many Community Informatics projects [Loader & Keeble, 2004]), the aspects of creative participation, self-motivation and inter-media collaboration could still be seen, and, had it run longer, it would doubtless have managed to build further (as some participants commented).

Many character participants from Ireland seemed to experience more difficulty than international counterparts in navigating the project. One may argue that this was because the Irish participants had to deal with aspects of the digital and analogue and may have found this confusing. However, one of the major figures to truly comprehend and capitalise on the project was in Ireland (though originally from the far east). In addition to this, two character participants (Gonne and Yeats) travelled to Ireland and experienced first-hand the crossover environment without it complicating or hindering their online interaction- so certainly this would not account for the apparent difficulties. There are several potential explanations that may account for this. Ireland lags behind in media literacy and digital media literacy education (O’Neill & Barnes, 2008) and Irish participants may have lacked the skills (anecdotally, several of them made confidential admissions during private rehearsals that the online portion unnerved or “frightened” them). Additionally, many of the other participants had been educated in Canada, “where media education has been a core feature of the educational system for many years” (Barnes et al., 2007: 4). The comparison is further skewed in that several of the participants from Canada had attended Acadia University and experienced prolonged life in digital societies, understood its nuances, and overall felt more comfortable with manipulating the project and online interactions given their broad experiences.
Meanwhile, creative aspects on the part of student participants also highlighted the successful crossover aspect of the project. Students were self-motivated, wanting to create their own event and using any means necessary to present their ideas; they took inspiration from live theatre (such as the Bram Stoker Wedding) and used inter-media collaboration to ensure success. They relied on group meetings, on Facebook as well as in-person, and utilised various media such as a musical clip from YouTube and a posted visual image during the wedding in order to communicate their points. After the project’s completion, at least one student was observed applying philosophical principles from the project on her own Facebook profile, exploring concepts of existence online and its impact on her person, and re-considering ideas of self-representation on Facebook. Innovation was key to creating crossover and, despite the project’s short run, definite potential could be seen in creating new and innovative ways of integrating technologies and combining aspects of analogue and digital, all of which were shown, over the course of the project, to be compelling methods for educating the young and old alike in history, philosophy, civics, and in navigating existence itself in our modern, digitally convergent world.

5.6.3 Converging of Learning Content

The cooperative nature of the project provides an opportunity for the varying interests of participants to converge, broadening the content of the project. Because of this, the project lends itself to an inter-disciplinary approach. Educators can capitalise on the motivations and interests of students to further specific subject learning in respective areas. For example, given the interest in suffragettes, I allowed the online event regarding it to become central to a day’s interaction- resulting from this,
students provided posts that reflected their knowledge of Victorian politics and fashion.

Despite the project’s potential launch in one subject area (digital civics), teachers across a school- or several schools- could contribute their knowledge, or provide students with information to further their own learning in a discipline, while practically applying that knowledge online. Within the Facebook Laboratory, a number of subject areas could be seen, as well as specific skill sets. The cooperative and emotional interactions highlight the application of the project to Social and Personal Health and Development, while additionally lessons in online etiquette could be seen. History, English, Civics, Art, Music, and ICT all contributed to project interaction, while skills in research, organisation, self-discipline, and self-motivation were honed. In assessing the potential learning outcomes in chapter 4, I provided a table to demonstrate the convergence of learning content. The textual evidence, presented here as a set of findings (Table 5.4) highlight the differing subject areas and educational opportunities that existed within the project to consolidate various subjects and ideas in the infosphere. I include the teacher/agent in the chart, given the opportunities presented for the educator themselves to learn along with students.

Interestingly, students were not necessarily aware of their knowledge and skill acquisition, at least not until informally assessed. This could be viewed beneficially in that students were able to enjoy the process of learning, equating it with fun (a point they re-iterated a number of times) and positivity rather than experiencing learning as gruelling and tiresome.

Table 5.4 (Overleaf) Meeting the Learning Outcomes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Outcomes</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPHD (Social, Personal, Health, Development)</strong></td>
<td>Emotional enquiry into shame and identity examination, further, cooperation is critical to project success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate enquiry into issues of emotional health and well-being; Demonstrate team-working ability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etiquette</strong></td>
<td>Maintaining online behaviour/ character with their Victorian language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interact respectfully with colleagues; Communicate speak in the appropriate language for a set of circumstances</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Broadened understanding of historical people and their interactions with one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop sophisticated command of History as a discipline, including an understanding of historical figures as people and not merely characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lit)</strong> Develop understanding of the context surrounding literature and its themes</td>
<td>Exposure to Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde, Yeats, the Rhymer’s Club Poet society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lang)</strong> Broaden vocabulary, ability to employ phrases and new words; Develop and structure narratives</td>
<td>Improved vocabulary in communicating with Victorian peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civics</strong></td>
<td>Posts and communications concerning social motivators and exploring how to live together as a “family”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore themes of social relevance; Demonstrate an interest in the motivations of civil society</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>Continual exposure to pre-raphaelite figures and impressionists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop awareness of the Arts scene contemporary to Oscar Wilde</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Classical music posted in the Wedding, ways of expressing music in the infosphere demonstrated, also discussed musical careers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact with relevant works of music to the project</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tech/ICT</strong></td>
<td>Developing and continual interest in methods of communications use, and examination of media representation through social networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the history of communications technology; Demonstrate appropriate use of social media</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization skills</strong></td>
<td>Meeting with “Teacher” to acquire necessary skills to run wedding event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulate an idea for digital interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
<td>The need to explore historical characters in order to follow the line of story and events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate an ability to contextualise material and mastery over a period of history that allows appropriate project interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Discipline</strong></td>
<td>The work involved in the online wedding, and follow through necessary to accomplish it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate Personal mastery to accomplish set tasks</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Motivation</strong></td>
<td>The desire and follow through to post continually (beyond what was requested by the researcher). Students went out of their way to find computer access to take part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate desire to take part without prompting</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>Students developed Personal Digital Philosophies. Alpha groups students considered the reasons for their behaviours when released from the obligations of rules. One student went on to apply questions about online existence to her own Facebook profile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore questions about existence; Question attitudes or reasons for behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong></td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPHD (Social, Personal, Health, Development)</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate enquiry into issues of emotional health and well-being; Demonstrate team-working ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etiquette</strong></td>
<td>Were conscious of their position as role models and took care in their online behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Undertook major research on their historical characters to play them effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lit)</strong></td>
<td>Characters invested in and read the works of their character’s publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lang)</strong></td>
<td>Modelled and offered phrases and new words in English vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civics</strong></td>
<td>Took part in their greater community volunteering their time and talents to educate others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>Researched, posted, and were exposed to numerous new artists and artworks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Working with Victorian music for the Ball, crossover character participants also learned Victorian Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tech/ICT</strong></td>
<td>Encouraged creation of new social networking accounts, email building, and increased confidence with technology through daily practise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization skills</strong></td>
<td>Learned new skills from undertaking event co-ordination, additionally modelling for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
<td>Used both online and offline resources, and some were adept at cross-referencing via multiple internet windows. Academics researched new areas outside their professional expertise encouraging interdisciplinary study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Discipline</strong></td>
<td>Created time in their schedule to play the part, character follow through on the project was high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Participants created their own events, and made extra time to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>Participants were trained in the relationship between online and offline, and enacted crossover. One Character Participant created an event specifically to portray and spur this philosophical concept in the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPHD (Social, Personal, Health, Development)</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate enquiry into issues of emotional health and well-being; Demonstrate team-working ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure to issues of shame and additionally family dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etiquette</strong></td>
<td>Interact respectfully with colleagues; Communicate speak in the appropriate language for a set of circumstance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engaged participants politely and showed respect toward the environment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Develop sophisticated command of History as a discipline, including an understanding of historical figures as people and not merely characters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could identify relationships between historical figures by following their “Facebook friends”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lit)</strong></td>
<td>Develop understanding of the context surrounding literature and its themes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promotion of “Dorian Gray” part of the library community mandate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lang)</strong></td>
<td>Broaden vocabulary, ability to employ phrases and new words; Develop and structure narratives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For international participants, an opportunity to see Victorian English in practise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civics</strong></td>
<td>Explore themes of social relevance; Demonstrate an interest in the motivations of civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction with a social and educational project within their greater community, and assistance in providing positive feedback to students through “Facebook Likes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>Develop awareness of the Arts scene contemporary to Oscar Wilde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure to Pre-Raphaelite art and the post impressionists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Interact with relevant works of music to the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The public were exposed to Victorian music, explained on their waltz tickets, and also received dance opportunity and instruction if desired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tech/ICT</strong></td>
<td>Consider the history of communications technology; Demonstrate appropriate use of social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The public was informed about the crossover between online and offline worlds, and provided the opportunity to take part in this through posting photographs or comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization skills</strong></td>
<td>Formulate an idea for digital interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To attend events (such as the online wedding, or ball) the public would need to organize their time to take part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate an ability to contextualise material and mastery over a period of history that allows appropriate project interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To find ways of communicating with characters, or to understand the interactions between them (particularly private jokes) meant continual research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Discipline</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate Personal mastery to accomplish set tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The public was required to self-regulate their behaviour, so as not to shatter the illusion of 1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate desire to take part without prompting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Public had to make the choice to participate, as they were independent of the project it was entirely within their own power whether to self-motivate or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>Explore questions about existence; Question attitudes or reasons for behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Public participated in events that enacted a sense of the inter-relationship between on and offline and were encouraged to explore this relationship further</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher/Agent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SPHD (Social, Personal, Health, Development)</strong></td>
<td>Students and participants force the teacher/agent to reconsider their ideas of control, flexibility, and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate enquiry into issues of emotional health and well-being; Demonstrate team-working ability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Etiquette</strong></td>
<td>The importance of the online interaction forces the teacher/agent to treat online interactions with the same degree of importance, that they transfer offline courtesy online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact respectfully with colleagues; Communicate speak in the appropriate language for a set of circumstance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Examining and checking the accuracy of statements made by participants enhances historical knowledge and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop sophisticated command of History as a discipline, including an understanding of historical figures as people and not merely characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lit)</strong> Develop understanding of the context surrounding literature and its themes</td>
<td>New views of literature can be presented to the teacher/agent from not only students, but other interested members of the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English (Lang)</strong> Broaden vocabulary, ability to employ phrases and new words; Develop and structure narratives</td>
<td>Teachers/agents have the opportunity to model language skills and examine the historical veracity of phrases utilized by participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civics</strong></td>
<td>Teachers/agents become central to facilitating civic interaction through their learning environment as opposed to blocking interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore themes of social relevance; Demonstrate an interest in the motivations of civil society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>Introducing Pre-Raphaelite and Impressionist history provides the teacher/agent another means to reach students through visual clues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop awareness of the Arts scene contemporary to Oscar Wilde</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Choosing historical music for performance engages the teacher/agent with new historical understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interact with relevant works of music to the project</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tech/ICT</strong></td>
<td>Learning about the challenges of online/offline interaction, and how they can best utilize technology for their classroom aims in a practical manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the history of communications technology; Demonstrate appropriate use of social media</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization skills</strong></td>
<td>Teachers/agents must organise student interactions and events, honing skills in facilitating public interaction and the involved public organizations, and keep track of increasingly larger numbers of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulate an idea for digital interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
<td>In order to meet the needs of students and participants requiring character information, the teacher/agent must continually hone their research skills, taking data from offline and online sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate an ability to contextualise material and mastery over a period of history that allows appropriate project interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Discipline</strong></td>
<td>Teachers/agents must stay with the project throughout its completion, and continually ensure students safe interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate Personal mastery to accomplish set tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Positive feedback from students and participants encourages the teacher/agent to continue locating new material for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate desire to take part without prompting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>The teachers/agents must become familiar with the philosophical principles they will be exploring, they will continue to learn through interacting with their students and other participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore questions about existence; Question attitudes or reasons for behaviour</td>
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</table>
Perhaps, had time permitted, a formal assessment or further discussion might have resulted in increased awareness of their learning. For instance, in discussing the project at our final interview, SP E seemed surprised to realise she knew who Ellen Terry was, but the discussion made her aware of this:

E: What about Ellen Terry? Do you know anything about her?
SP E: I don’t know anything about her
E: Oh, you don’t know anything about her
SP E: She was very interesting to talk to- She was, oh was she an actress!

One Beta group student said they used the Facebook pages to glean data as a starting off point for a school project they were doing on Wilde. The hidden curriculum message in discovering that learning could take place in a manner that was not merely amenable, but actually enjoyable, to participants encouraged further learning and self-motivated exploration of knowledge. In interview after the project, it was apparent that students felt intuitively that they had learned, but could not quantify their experience articulately. However, when questioned about the world of Oscar Wilde, they had insightful answers and could identify various historical incidents or individuals they had been unfamiliar with before the project began (such as the aforementioned discovery of Ellen Terry, or SP Bs earlier comment about removing the elitism of history). Further, the level of sophistication they articulated in their historical awareness had altered dramatically. Instead of viewing history as a series of unconnected people and events, they were able to understand the various interconnections and relationships of historical figures and take note of the impact of differing personalities and historical ways of thinking. The level of personal engagement with character participants meant that they were no longer foreign, but
rather led to an understanding of the human condition and the inter-linking of various aspects and qualities of life (such as discipline areas). For example, Maud Gonne was not merely a historical nationalist political figure, but had a personal investment in sociological and gender issues. Further, she had ties to the literary community and to theatrical personas. Hence, she was complex, inter-connected, and required mastery of a number of discipline areas to truly understand. In addition, her personal relationship with Yeats provided more aspects to consider: knowledge of Gonne led to new realisations about Yeats' poetry and motivations. Infused by living people, each breathing life into their respective historical persona, student participants experienced historical characters displaying their human side, identifying their personal and social struggles, and offering their insight and humour. This made them not only non-threatening, but inviting, and not merely to learn about, but to “know”.

5.7 Behavioural Themes

In addition to the aspects of convergence central to the infosphere, I now report on the thematic behaviour of participants; investigating the elements of digital civics that are portrayed in the Facebook Laboratory. These observed behaviours were identified through recursive abstraction, and provide insight on social interactions in digital education environments. They also highlight a number of behavioural themes pertinent to ethical interaction in the infosphere. Identification of these themes provides a behavioural foundation, which will later be analysed through a philosophical lens in chapter 6, to formulate a model for digital civics pedagogy. Table 5.5 (overleaf) provides a listing of these themes. Some of these aspects refer to
the behaviour of the individual, and some refer to community interactions.

Table 5.5 Behavioural Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Behaviours</th>
<th>5.7.1</th>
<th>The de-physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Behaviours</td>
<td>5.7.2</td>
<td>Desire to develop and hone an authentic voice true to the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Behaviours</td>
<td>5.7.3</td>
<td>A wish for practical experience to be taught to be able to make good life decisions</td>
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<td>Individual Behaviours</td>
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<td>Community Interactions</td>
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I begin with aspects of the non-physical. This is because the non-physical is both an aspect of convergence (chapter 2), has been discussed as an aspect of changing self-perception, and this project aptly demonstrates that it is behaviour with which participants appear to have readily engaged.

5.7.1 The Non-Physical

The majority of interactions took place in an online environment that was de-physicalised, and, consequently, it is an easy observation to surmise that the de-physical existed in the project. There was a distinction between understanding an environment as de-physical, and behaviour, such as interaction in the online environment, as de-physical. What constituted de-physical behaviour, was the means of action that occurred without the necessity of a body, and how this impacted participation. This can be noted in one example, through the communication between
the two student groups. The alpha and beta group students had almost no physical meetings at all during the project. (Save their introductory meeting and an instance where a couple of members crossed paths for a brief discussion about the online wedding.) Still, communication took place behind the scenes to plan and organise the online wedding, and, additionally, to orchestrate aspects of the month-long student-driven Monetta narrative. One of the most interesting non-physical aspects that arose, however, was the participation of SPs with members of the public or CPs they did not know. For instance, one student participant assumed that the participant playing Oscar Wilde online was the same as the actor playing him physically. She ascribed the idea of Oscar to his persona; it never occurred to her that online he was played by a young woman in another country. Further, another student participant interacted with a member of the public during the project. When I initiated conversation with that member of the public (following up to ensure student safety), I discovered that this person behind the online person was actually a man (and not a woman as their online persona was). Though I was astonished and felt that the students would be deeply fascinated to learn the true identities of the individuals with whom they had been interacting, student participants surprised me. They were almost completely disinterested. Student participants had not spent time speculating on the aspects of the individual that I would have considered traditionally descriptive (for example, the age, location, or even gender of the person involved). It never occurred to the SPs that the CPs were ‘different’ or ‘other’ in any way, from themselves. Rather, students were interested in the experiences of the characters, how well they played their part, and with whom they enjoyed interacting. The physical aspects of the individuals were second to the essential character of the individual with whom they were interacting. It seemed that students acted independently of every physical constraint- gender, colour,
bodily challenges and so forth and valued the consciousness (or perhaps, more specifically, contributions) of the individual: the physical manifestation of individuals was not important, only their ideas. (Although there is nothing to suggest that their ideas would not have been shaped by their physical experiences offline.)

Interactions developed between young and old, experienced and novice, expert and amateur. Teenaged students posted freely, interacting with participants old enough to be their grandparents, never considering for a moment that their behaviour should be altered or ‘hemmed in’ in deference to specific individuals. Everyone received the same treatment. From behind anonymity, all parties were free to behave as they choose and exercise interactions with anyone they wished. For example, several character participants were university professors; this did not stop students from engaging with them, as opposed to feeling too intimidated to comment or to interact.

In such an environment, there was no choice but to treat everyone as equal and to value individuals based on their unique contributions (fig. 5.56-5.57).

Fig. 5.56 Social time and alcohol, discussed by a student participant, a history professor, and a writer
The potential here for learning interactions between the elderly, or university professors, or other professional experts to take part in the learning environment with ease and success is indicated by this observation in the data; the environment levelled interaction, placing each participant on equal footing. Students could develop liberating relationships with the assumed personas in which they need not feel intimidated by the greater experiences or knowledge basis of others. In this particular instance, some of the older character participants lived 4 time zones behind the student participants. While students favoured being online late at night, character participants could easily accommodate them, given that in their own time zone, characters were online in the later afternoon or early evening as was convenient for them. “Silver surfers” are the fastest growing group on the internet (Pew, 2013), and in this case, had the time available to volunteer with students. That they may be able to provide valuable instruction and experience to students while also enjoying interactions with youth fulfils a need for both generations.

This emphasis on presenting a perception of self based on ideas as opposed to physicality could be seen played out months later in the student participant who completely overhauled her Facebook profile in order to have it present her in what
she felt was a more genuine rendering of her ‘self’. Having altered her online name to a well-known male musician, gender was entirely secondary to her wish to equate herself with that individual’s passion for music. Even photographs and personal information were manipulated in an attempt to provide a more accurate portrayal of the SP's ideas about kinship, culture, and personal beliefs.

That the interactions that occurred should be free from the restriction of age or place strongly suggests the importance of the non-physical to the nature of online interactions; all that was of value to participants was the behaviour the individual presented and how that individual chose to express themselves and contribute in the online environment. Aspects beyond the participant's control (you cannot control where you are born, who you are born to, or when you are born) were unimportant; they could not be confirmed with certainty anyway. (Many of the SPs believed that the character participants were only slightly older than they were, and had not considered the possible age range of participants involved, nor were they concerned about this.) Value of interactions had to be based solely on contributions; an equitable and democratising result.

This would seem to contradict the monist expectation of information philosophy, that the levels of abstraction in the infosphere are inextricably interwoven. But this could be an example of disconfirmation, in which data that disconfirms a hypothesis demonstrates that alternate explanations are also possible outside the potential confirmation bias of the researcher (Popper, 1957), as discussed in chapter 4. In this instance, while the students were expected to demonstrate an appreciation for the connection between the levels of abstraction in the infosphere, they instead seemed to indicate a disconnect between them: suggesting rather that they viewed these environments as separated, and not necessarily inter-related, as one
5.7.2 Desire to develop and hone an authentic voice true to the individual

In our first meeting, I was surprised by the students' self-awareness and well-articulated argument for school to provide instruction on the development of self and the ability to live in congruency with that self through the development and honing of a voice that speaks from the genuine being for the individual:

I think maybe they [schools] should um, when you first start, they should make it their main goal to find out who you are, kind of, um make you like [as in trust them] them, so you can feel safe in your decisions and that you can support anything that you want to do. They'll go out of their way to you know, tell you what path you should take, so kind of encouraging confidence I think would be you know the most important thing... I believe that you can't really change what kind of person you are. And it really doesn't matter how much the school tries, eventually it’s going to come down to that voice inside your head that wants to you know, be a rock musician or whatever, and it doesn’t matter what the school is going to do the person is still going to want to do that (SP B, First Meeting).

I was certainly struck by the students’ opinions enough to modify my initial plans for the project and let them utilise the initial framework to develop as they chose- so their arguments were, in my own opinion, quite persuasive. Whether or not they would be able to continue with this track of thought and develop their voices, using them to communicate truth and finding a true notion of self was, at the time, yet to be demonstrated.

The topics and discussion online, however, seemed to support the students' assertions. Notions of honesty were ever-present in the Monetta narrative and continually explored. One SP noted that they felt “dirty” about lying when the project first began and they were using fake Facebook accounts that could easily be mistaken
for non-fictional characters (real people). SPs also made clear their attempts to present their inner self in the most authentic manner possible once they had had time to experience the digital civics project, such as SP C’s personal Facebook page overhaul becoming “Wolfgang” (Fig. 5.50) and reflections about self-representation online:

But as strange as it sounds, I think EVERYONE on facebook should atleast [sic] have a false account. Now I don't think they should use it towards malicious acts of deceit or anything, but in my oppinion [sic] I think it would be interesting if we all had an online alter ego. It can bring a bit of a change to yourself also, I think (SP C, via Facebook message).

That student participant C articulated for herself the potential of self-development for identity building in this manner demonstrates the learning and reflexive practise discussed by Sherry Turkle, who suggested that misrepresentation of self in MUDs (multiplayer domains) could prove therapeutic (Turkle, 1995). That through “psychologically constructive” experimentation, participants were able to experience familiar situations in settings where they could examine, alter, and try out new approaches to a problem (Turkle, 1994: 160-161).

The experience led student participant C to a clearer sense of who she was, and a desire for authentic self-representation online, prompting Facebook profile changes to her own personal account, including her own name.

It is true that discussion of honesty and the showing of a true self or of hiding behind masks online were expected to materialise, given the themes present in Dorian Gray (Fig. 5. 58, Fig. 5.59). For instance, CP Constance drew attention to the facilitation of ‘false faces’ that occurs on facebook, drawing a parallel to the behaviours of Dorian Gray in hiding his own identity while putting on a mask for the world. This draws awareness to the ability of the online environment to facilitate the
concealment of the true self, if so desired. This point is further supported by Wilde’s statement confirming his intentions that Dorian be viewed as a ‘book of faces’ in which the characters true selves are hidden, with calamitous results. Meanwhile, in a manner more befitting his own character as CP Shaw, the true nature of the character participants, (as long dead, but resuscitated by the participants) is heavily intimated and a further parallel to Dorian Gray, as an example of hiding behind a face similarly to individuals online, is made.

Fig. 5.58 The False Face Facilitator

Fig. 5.59 And the lame can cyber walk

However, such issues surrounding honesty were also tackled in novel ways through the students’ online interactions. Initially, when the character of the mother confessed that she had covered up the death of the Monetta children's father, there was a moment of drama, in which truth finally arose after years of suppression, and then
eventually forgiveness from the children for its concealment (although the mother was later shot, apparently for being a character of secrets and suppression). (Fig. 5.60).

Fig. 5.60 Forgiveness for Mother

![Lily Monetta](image)

My dearest mother, I would like to tell you that I have forgiven you. For not telling me about daddy!
I am now in Ireland until tomorrow and I am moving onto Germany.....I hope all are well at home
your dearest lovely wonderful daughter lily x
April 12, 2010 at 8:07pm · Like · Comment · See Friendship

The online wedding dealt with many uncomfortable issues also, which students brought to the forefront and were determined to present to the public at large (despite humorous distraction from character participants). Issues of sexuality, incest, and emotional sincerity were placed in the centre of the metaphorical (and non-physical) digital stage: matters were forced into the open providing drama and cathartic expression for long suppressed truths. Those who stood in the way of honesty, such as the character of the mother, were “dealt with”, either because they were unable to withstand the truth and grew faint, or eventually by shooting! In the end, even the suppressed child with a gun revealed herself (allowed the entirety of her Facebook picture to be seen, whereas previously she had only shown a portion of it) and overturned the symbol of the suppression of truth (her mother).

The ways in which students took the project ownership for themselves and steered this ownership also demonstrated their desire to instigate discussions they felt were of genuine interest and value in shaping and perfecting their sense of self and communication. Rather than adhering to the chosen daily topics (which I was aware that they read because they did make occasional on-topic comments; for instance, one SP posted her opinion on the British digital reform bill after it had been listed as a
topic), they developed their own storyline that would provide them with their own opportunity for expression as they saw fit. They cooperated in the exploration of these ideas, literally ‘living out’ various trains of thought just as a philosopher might. They explored notions of the self through sharing narrative while entertaining the public (and certainly themselves), which seemed to fulfil the artistic credibility of an inner-voice seeking finessed forms of expression. Further to these storylines were also attempts to develop key personal interests. For example, the previously mentioned interactions of SP A furthering his knowledge of operetta through befriending Jessie Bond, and SP C’s changes to her own Facebook page to present herself more authentically. The SP’s intentions were clearly attempting to make available as much of the true self as possible, not to fool or mislead others. Given the statements the students had previously made regarding how their anonymity freed them from social censure, not only were their voices being honed through their role playing, but also through the opportunity to present their “true selves,” allowing their confidence to slowly grow.

5.7.3 A wish for practical experience to be able to make good life decisions

A second point that students presented during my initial interviews with them was the need for practical life experience in schools, and the ability to make good decisions that would serve them well in life.

“…so they should try and give them all the skills they need as well but also the help for what they actually want to do” (SP B).

…well like a positive attitude, a positive attitude, as hard as they try because like, they want you to develop good habits for when you leave. Like we have lectures and stuff, and they want us to
do lecture notes and things when we’re in college, and have a positive attitude about that- a good work ethic (SP F).

Without such experiences, they would be unable to formulate the necessary skills for a successful life. (I will come to their notion of “successful” below) The difference between knowing and understanding was paramount for these students. They might be able to know something because they had read it or been told it by a teacher or other trustworthy, knowledgeable figure, but this form of learning still lacked the personal engagement necessary for genuine understanding. While students communicated a desire for comprehension of life experience (with which they felt school failed to equip them) they also seemed unaware of the consequences of real ‘life experience’. This in itself proved indicative of a lack of proper life experience and the validity of their statements. That such knowledge or wisdom might come through mistakes in judgement, or that errors might have value was little noted. (In a school environment, where errors are penalised and mistakes to be avoided at the cost of poor grades (and the threat of a damaged future), finding a venue for practical life lessons seemed difficult.)

Again, the student-articulated theoretical desire that was expressed in interview was sought out in the online learning environment. No sooner had students from the Alpha group created their profiles than they were getting into trouble with them as well. Before the project launch, after the Alpha group created their profiles, they initially used them to befriend their schoolmates under false pretences. (This, despite having heard a similar story I told them at our first meeting of how such an instance ended badly for two friends I knew had engaged in such behaviour. Despite observing that the situation was ‘horrible’ they still went out and did exactly the same thing- thereby demonstrating the difference between knowing something theoretical
and understanding it, as in phronesis). Certainly, this was a mistake. Certainly, students knew this was a mistake. Until they had done it and suffered the consequences however, they did not understand that it was mistake. Once they realised the error they had made, they were able to act with wisdom, taking action (ceasing their interaction) and contemplating their infraction (they were all forthright about the infringement and had a great deal to express about the experience, particularly their motivations and remorse). Though such an action may seem quite innocent- a small covert operation to play what seemed a harmless prank on friends- yielded a great deal of insight to students. They reported to the researcher that they realised consequences, discussed experiences with each other, and contemplated the sort of circumstances in which such behaviour might be justifiable, harmless, or useful. This was an ethical learning experience that emerged in a self-regulated way, without externally imposed rules. Importantly for students, because they had undergone these experiences personally, they spoke with a certain authority of self-knowledge. Rather than dismissing the idea that they might ever act immorally or unethically, and consequently dismissing that they may have a shadow side, they engaged directly with themselves- even the parts of themselves that they did not like. They acquired genuine and legitimate knowledge of self and knew themselves in a certain situation. This experience yielded a great deal of wisdom to students, who were now equipped with the realisation that they were human, capable of mistakes, courageous enough to see who they truly were, and able to discern their own behaviours and the behaviours of which others might be capable. In effect, this assisted in their ability to “self-regulate” to a high degree. Only through their mistaken behaviour however, did they acquire this knowledge. Few interactions during the project led to errors in judgement, but the opportunity to make such an
error and the opportunity to confess that error and consider its implications and the knowledge it yielded was more assistive to student education than punishment or threat of punishment. (I had not threatened them with any form of consequence.) Rather than fearing an abstract prescribed punishment for their actions, students could realise the genuine consequences of their actions – not that they may lose computer privileges for a week, but, more seriously, that what they were doing was simply wrong, that they could not justify the behaviour to themselves and consequently not to their friends, and could therefore lead them to lose friends for life. It was the philosophical difference between ‘this is wrong because it has consequences’, and ‘this is wrong, and has consequences’. It was a move away from acting because of external motivations (that is, there were no rules to motivate them) and toward following internal motivations (their own realization that what they were doing was inherently wrong). Such a perspective was not only striking to students, but allowed them to contemplate their classroom behaviour in terms of real world application instead of merely school approval.

5.7.4 A desire to find personal happiness

The purpose of the honed voice which spoke from the core of the individual and the practical wisdom and self-knowledge necessary to be aware of this voice were motivated by what the students articulated as behaviours that would bring them personal happiness, which they sought for their characters throughout the project. The “success” of their lives was not about the wealth or fame, or a particular measure of acclaim by which they might be socially assessed; rather, they were primarily concerned with whether or not they would be personally happy. (The need for
authenticity was key: the ability to be truthful about what they wanted, to communicate as sincerely and effectively as possible, and for others to act in the same manner. This honesty in voice and action when practised in conjunction with the life skills and the practical experience and wisdom they accrued would, ideally, bring them into a happy situation in life.) These ideas were to manifest through their online interactions as the project unfolded.

That the school system focused on standardised testing, mitigating the passions, persistent drive, or latent potentials of students seemed not only frustrating, but ethically wrong to the SPs. This was because, as students expressed, not only did schools fail to assist them to follow through on who they were with personal integrity, but frequently, schools attempted to mould them into someone contrary to their personal value system. They felt forced to be another person, not congruent with their sense of true self or purpose, a state they felt could never grant them true happiness.

In examining the data from the Facebook websites, this manner of thinking was present in many of their interactions; their desire to steer the topics of conversation in their own directions, for example. For while they played along with character participants, in creating their own narrative, they were able to vicariously experience issues that they felt might impact personal happiness, and consider coping mechanisms, appropriate or otherwise. This included things that might make them unhappy (Fig. 5.61) or that might bring them joy (Fig. 5.62). For example, SP Prudence considers turning to drink to cope with the shameful illegal behaviour of a close relative (Fig. 5.6.1). Legal and social issues surrounding abortion persist in Ireland, so difficulty coping with the topic might be anticipated in the students’ own lives. Alternatively, the SPs explored more positive experiences, through their discussion of personal interests, such as travel and music (Fig. 5.6.2) – personal
aspirations that they had previously confided to the researcher that they wished to achieve.

Fig. 5.61 Scandal abounds as Prudence reveals a family shame, drawing issues of abortion into the narrative.

![Prudence Monetta](image1)

**Prudence Monetta**

Oh some Gin would come in handy at this point. Just found out Grandfather has been arrested for conducting abortions in the old attic on oak street. Dear oh dear.

April 6, 2010 at 1:22am · Like · Comment

Fig. 5.62 Maisy reveals her interest in music, while both SPs articulate their love of travel.

![Maisy Monetta](image2)

**Maisy Monetta**

Do you like my new photograph, sister? I thought something like it would be more appropriate. Perhaps Scott will follow suit.

April 5, 2010 at 6:34pm · Like · Comment · See Friendship

![Maisy Monetta](image3)

**Maisy Monetta** I am SO excited about seeing Tchaikovsky conduct in May. It’s the 5th, isn’t it? I absolutely can’t wait to visit NY again. Have you met Beatrice and Luis?

April 5, 2010 at 6:56pm · Like

![Prudence Monetta](image4)

**Prudence Monetta** Oh Maisy, you always are the photogenic one in the Monetta clan! Oh I simply can’t wait. It is going to be oh so delightful to be back in New York with my Darling sister! Oh I met them at Mothers tea party back two months ago in Yorkshire. Eccentric folk if I may say so myself. Pru.

April 6, 2010 at 1:11am · Like

Certainly, the arc of story that the Monetta clan played out reflected the student-articulated views. Each character searched for happiness in their own way, trying to express their own truth and reaching out to other characters in their attempts to live their daily lives with integrity and hoping that they could each find an ending that would bring them some real happiness; not from wealth or fame, but from
various forms of active love, be it compassion, forgiveness, or romantic attachment. The building and maintenance of positive relationships was a key factor in the outcome of happiness for the participants (both characters and students), and the manner of power struggles and shifting boundaries as characters fought to assert themselves and yet find acceptance with one another reflected with great accuracy the various struggles that constitute the human condition.

5.8 Community Interaction

Noting the relationship between personal happiness and the effects of the community interactions upon it, group and community oriented themes make up the following observations. The interrelationship between individual and community, in which each influences the other shaping the enacted ethical behaviours, is cyclical. The ethnographic observations presented, note these communal priorities, in preparation for their later analysis (in chapter 6) in exploring their implications on the participants’ behaviours in developing ethical practices.

5.8.1 Memory: recording, honouring and creating legacy through information

Memory, in the sense of recording, recalling, and respecting past information, occurred in several ways: the recording of events that occurred; the honouring of the legacy of people or events; and the desire to create new memory, that is, making unique and memorable events; and also, honouring the memory of historical characters (or history). I questioned CPs about their motivation for their character research and the interaction of their characters. A common answer from character participants who took part in the project was their desire to portray their character
accurately. The affinity that developed between character participants and the historical personas they played was enlightening. The need to honour the memory of the character and “do them justice” was a theme mentioned informally by many participants, and the research that went into historical accuracy could be evidenced in Facebook posts. See Figure. 5.63 for example, in which CP Ruskin alludes to the probable fate of the notorious erotic Turner etchings:

Fig. 5.63 The Fate of Turner’s Etchings

To provide a behavioural example, the participant playing Maude Gonne visited Gonne's grave while in Dublin and took a photograph of herself (Fig.5.64), which she later used as Maude’s Facebook profile picture at the project’s completion.

Fig. 5.64 A visit to Gonne’s grave
She had also visited the Cheshire Cheese Pub (as mentioned) with her husband (who played Yeats), as this was the historical venue for the “Rhymer's Club”. There is indication from these “pilgrimages” that the interest which developed between character participant and persona was a deep connection yielding insights into not merely the individual, but also the aspects surrounding their life, such as their friends, family, and society, the places they would visit, and so forth.

When I first approached CP Gonne to take the role, she had never heard of Gonne, but took the role based on the simplicity of interaction it would allow with her husband (who could play Yeats and thus their proximity might ensure easy cooperation and possibly character reinforcement). However, the interest she developed in Gonne led her to become an expert, not only on the character, but on the various challenges that Gonne faced, from her relationship with Yeats, to her political motivations, to the societal difficulties of being a woman in Victorian Britain. There is no doubt that by project’s end, she could have rivalled many scholastic experts with her knowledge of Gonne. She knew detailed information about Gonne’s life, experiences, and writings; had first hand experience of the places close to Gonne (having visited many of the landmarks associated with Gonne, both in Dublin and London); had experienced the restrictive corsetry and clothes that would have defined her mobility (through creative role play); and had interacted with many of the figures of Gonne’s world (researching to stay true to the interactions that would have reflected Gonne’s real-life character). She also demonstrated a sustained scholastic interest in new research on Gonne, sending me articles about new discoveries that had been made regarding her life, long after the project completed.

This is further supported by Alpha group SP B, who expressed a desire to play a historical character herself, desirous of the type of interaction with the past that
might have proved even more motivating. Meanwhile SP A noted that he had spent some time contemplating creating his own historical characterisation homage on Facebook for Arthur Sullivan. Certainly, the desire to interact with and honour historical characters and become part of their lives was present in the student interactions (Fig. 5.65).

Fig. 5.65 Prudence tries to lure Yeats from Maud Gonne

SP B’s statement in later interview after the project’s completion was further evidence of the need to honour memory through accurate historical representation:

…actually it really bothered me when I had found out that Tchaikovsky had opened what is now Carnegie hall at um a month later than I had posted it, so it didn’t make sense- but I posted it as Carnegie hall, which is wasn’t actually called back then, which really bothered me! (SP B, April 27, 2010)

This need to honour memory, by developing authentic characters and responses, provided an opportunity for learning motivating students to research a period of history, and the associated social and political events. SP B’s statement about Carnegie hall shed’s light on this self-motivated learning through honouring memory- while I had informed participants that Tchaikovsky had opened Carnegie Hall a month later than posted, I had no idea it wasn’t Carnegie Hall, back then this I learned from the student participant, who had discovered that for themselves. They’d also had to consider the speed at which they could effectively travel the distances they discussed, and what means (such as carriage or boat) would be available for
them to make their journey.

But characters did not merely wish to honour memory, they also wished to create a legacy of their own. The student participants wanted to create their own memorable event in the online wedding: something unique and interactive. The value of memory was obvious to them— they could see the photographs from the previous year's Bram Stoker wedding, as they had been placed on Facebook (themselves a memory of the previous year's performance). To be able to create and take part in an event that contributed to an enjoyable experience that all might be able to reflect on and remember with success was certainly a factor in their contribution to, and creation of, the Monetta Wedding.

5.8.2 The need for flexibility and collaboration

Flexibility, on the part of the researcher but also the participants, was a major aspect of the cooperative process. The fluidity of information transfer in the infospheric environment meant that any planned activity might change on a moment's notice. Where ownership of any project was shared, a certain amount of tolerance of the unexpected was necessary. Though, when the outcome of such tolerance could be witnessed, all parties generally felt that their ideas were improved upon by the group rather than subjugated. On Tuesday the 13th of April, I “surrendered” to the group in an email which stated I would make corset-burning the central activity of the day (Fig. 5.66). This surrendering of my will to move into alignment with the group proved extremely beneficial. It allowed the project to fulfil its objectives more than it might have been capable of if steered solely by the director. It seemed that when the group was working in a positive direction, the need for any one member to control or
manoeuvre others was negated. The unexpected event – completely unplanned by the researcher- was one of the highlights of the project, yielding numerous moments of humour and additional motivation of previously disinterested parties in the project.

Another such instance of shared project ownership and flexibility was the online wedding; where, students developed their own project, plotted their own course, and insisted on their own script. A fascinating aspect of the project was the entire group cohesion. No one but the Monetta characters (the student participants) knew what was to happen, yet, the CPs each played a role contributing to and detracting from the action. At the end of the event an enjoyable narrative had been constructed which reflected the overall novelty and uniqueness of any real-life situation. With each character providing their best lines and insights into the project, the overall result was a one hour full-fledged digital play, more than any one character might have imagined or constructed independently.

Fig. 5.66 A note of Surrender to the cast. Note the lack of awareness on my own part to view the detour from the planned topics as “serious” at the time of implementation.

The argument can (and doubtless will) be made that such flexibility provides difficulties with established methods of task completion and could be too
revolutionary to current educational modes of thinking. But, there is nothing new in this method, and such flexibility, from providing students individually based instruction and multiple types of classroom assessment (Tomlinson et al., 2003), to the provision of multiple study options (Tait & Mills, 2002), has long been used as a strategy in education. Indeed, it allows students “to bring their own ideas, knowledge, questions, and topics into the learning environment” (Saklofske et al., 2012: 321). Such flexibility may function well in group work provided that individuals are prepared to relinquish control of others to focus on controlling their own behaviours and interactions. Certainly, this appeared to be the case during the project, and the student and character participants seemed to flourish equally well in these circumstances, building new and interesting events and topics.

As an aside, the challenges of assessment in such a learning environment must be acknowledged; in formal education particularly, while allowing for flexibility one must be careful to maintain behavioural expectations. Such instances occur already in learning environments where the freedom to do so is given. For example, in the self-directed learning systems of module based education at MCHS (presented in chapter 4).^94

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^94 One of the unique features of the module based approach used at MCHS was its opportunity for innovation. When teachers had created the modules-outlining their expectations of students and showing how projects needed to be completed at a basic level, then they were free to explore alternative forms of education. I provide two examples to illustrate, one in skills-based learning and a second in traditional core subjects in the humanities:

First, the program of study in the ICT department granted students a flexible learning program. Modules allowed students to complete at their own speed-gifted students could move forward at their own pace, while struggling students could take their time. No one needed to know what a student was working on, or how quickly, except the teacher. Thereby freeing students from social censure at either end of the learning spectrum. In the skills based learning of CTS labs, 2 or 3 students worked independently or in groups with their classmates-teachers gave students roughly 15-20 minutes instruction time at the beginning of a module, then allowed them the freedom to roam and finish their work independently. Learning being self-directed, students were directly responsible for their benefits or consequences and their assessment took place not merely through their assignments (as instructed through their module booklet) but also through their cooperative interactions. In humanities, the module based approach allowed one English teacher to innovate a Critical Thinking Class. Free from the confines of a rigid curriculum, the instructor could focus on aspects of life skills, artistic
5.8.3 A wish to maintain communities based on common interest and shared experience

One of the greatest surprises of the project was the repeated point made by SPs (as well as many CPs) that the month had simply not been long enough. This pointed to two major observations: first, a desire for long term projects (which I will discuss shortly); and second, a desire to maintain communities over an extended period of time when they were based on common interest or a shared experience.

The participants actively sought out communities based on common interest. Their initial allegiances were built around a common experience or situation (for example, the Monetta children stuck mostly to themselves, and both alpha and beta groups formed an early, family-like alliance). Such connections were not always based on common interests that were in agreement, though. Notorious misogynist CP John Ruskin and rebellious feminist CP Maude Gonne played out their shared political themes from opposing points. CP Gonne and CP Ruskin faced off in several sparring matches on different sides of an issue, making for lively- and entertaining-postings.

With whom participants developed these communities was also of interest, for their traditionally used descriptors of commonality - the physicality described above, such as peer group or locality - were of apparently no necessary value to the participants. Participants instead emphasised relationships where interests, ideas, and values were foremost. (Such as SP A’s previously described befriending of Jessie expression, and the types of hard truths and philosophical discourse he was interested in pursuing. The group contributed to the whole, and the “teacher” was able to work together with students, not simply guiding them, but cooperating with them to create new learning experiences. The view toward assessment changed during the course, and students became far more interested with learning than with their final marks, and consequently, all students achieved well.
What was important, the shared interest in a particular field, led to a genuine respect and desire for interaction with that individual (the value of contribution, previously noted) one that was hoped might evolve over time. In the Facebook Laboratory, locating similarly disposed philosophical or intellectual groupings was easily accomplished; there are many tools on Facebook to assist in locating or creating groups to accommodate such interaction.

5.8.4 A desire for constancy and long-term commitment

Finally, I would like to comment on project longevity and the desire for long-term commitments expressed by participants. Once these educational interactions had successfully occurred, would participants want to continue using the Facebook Laboratory? The participants involved in the project (both student and character) expressed a desire for the project to run a much longer period of time. Indeed, they expressed a sense of loss at the project's completion. The desire to commit to a much longer term project was not something I had expected from any of the participants, particularly not the students who already had a number of demands on their time with school and other extra-curricular activities. Perhaps this has to do with the media trend toward perceiving society- and particularly children within society- as interested primarily in instant-gratification. Some suggestions were made that the project may have extended out well over the course of a year. As one student participant stated: “A month was much too short, it was over before it had chance to begin” (SP C).

Had the opportunity been available to continue over the course of a year, it is
fair to speculate that the project would have continued to grow. SPA articulated his intention to continue following the social networking group of Victorians he discovered through the Facebook Laboratory (those who were not connected to the Facebook Laboratory but who had shared Victorian interests) and indeed, many other participants casually expressed to the researcher their interest and intent to undertake a project of a similar type again, or even to reprise their roles in such a community should the opportunity present itself. Posts on CP Facebook pages from members of the public in no way affiliated with the project appeared after the project ended (Figs.5.67- 5.68), and, as knowledge of the project circulated globally, more contacts could have been expected had the CPs been available to ‘play’.

Fig. 5.67 In response to Robert Louis Stevenson’s insights on his literary progress, two members of the public comment on his works- though not until June, a full month after the project’s completion.
Members of the public are clearly willing to make the investment. Melissa Anelli’s book on the Harry Potter site, “The Leaky Cauldron”, which described the behaviours and interactions of fans of the popular series who formulated an online community, notes that digital communities, have long-range impact, and develop long
lasting friendships that continue to foster interaction (Anelli, 2008). And the persisant postings from the public (noted in section 5.3.4) to character participant profiles long after the project finished would suggest a prolonged interest. CP Constance noted that she had been following one such online community for years, following podcasts and other group publications (CP Constance, Personal Communication, October 2010), so this desire to proceed with the project was not unexpected to some of the participants familiar with the ‘geeking out’ culture of the web.

Another indication of the willingness to contribute to project longevity was the point made by several participants that they “missed” their characters and interactions after the project had completed. Though participants had not logged in to their character's accounts after the project had finished, some told me confidentially that they had not wished to jeopardise data for later tabulation of the researcher. Still, they articulated sorrow at seeing the process end, and may well have continued with their characters if they felt left free to do so. In effect, my impression was that the project only ended because I stated that it had ended and ordered everyone to commit “Facebook suicide”. Even in this however, I faced an unanswered question. Although several participants took the opportunity to reveal their true identities behind their characters by committing Facebook suicide as instructed, not all did, leaving me to wonder whether they had failed to do so because they wished to retain anonymity (indeed, they were told they did not have to reveal their identity), or because they lacked ‘the heart’ to kill off a character they had grown to enjoy. Certainly, the metaphorical death of a Facebook suicide would have provided finality and closed any future play with the character- a step too far for any participants contemplating later reviving and carrying on their fabricated persona with a more long term agenda.
(such as with CP John Gray, for example, who integrated Gray into his own musical performances). That the response for a much longer term was so overwhelming—particularly from students, who had seemed initially apprehensive and uncertain as to their level of involvement—led me to conclude that the project had not only successfully met its objective in motivating students to learn, but also identified their commitment to learning and to long-term community building.

5.9 Preparing for analysis

Reaching this insight, I conclude the presentation of the ethnography. Through this summative process, which has used an approach of recursive abstraction to make relevant observations throughout, I have noted a number of aspects of behaviour in the infosphere, as outlined in Table 5.4. I also noted the roles of shame and self-regulation in regards to the participant’s interactions in their community.

In chapter 6, I further consider this data, taking the behavioural elements observed in the participants’ interactions and analysing them in the context of the nature of the infosphere, and consequent changes (Fourth Revolution), discussed in the literature review. Developing this analysis, an understanding of how ethical interactions are occurring in the digitally convergent educational environment is formulated with specific focus on virtue ethics. Finally, incorporating these ideas, chapter 6 explores a specific formulation of virtue ethics in the infosphere, with acknowledgement to its Platonic antecedents. Concluding this analysis, chapter 6 presents this system of normative ethics, referred to as “virtuel ethics”, consolidating this work into a codified model of digital civics pedagogy.
Chapter 6: Analysis of the Facebook Laboratory

“τὸ ἄνεπιτάκτος ποιεῖν ἄ τινες διὰ τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν νόμων φόβον ποιοῦσιν.” ⁹⁵


6.1 Analysing the Ethnographic Data

Chapter 6 comprises a discussion and analysis of the findings from the process of ethnographic research presented in Chapter 5. First, the behaviours of the research participants, characterised in terms of their resemblance to Platonic philosophical resources will be discussed, before observing the incidence of virtue ethics in the infosphere. The relationship of fun and discipline (or passions and motivations, and reason, articulated as a Platonic chariot) is then considered as a perspective through which to consider student participation in developing Phronesis, or, practical wisdom. An account of developing practical wisdom arises from the role of shame, and the use of self-regulation, in the enacted behaviours of the participants. I finally bring these ideas together to present a system of normative ethics incorporating these ideas that I refer to as “virtuel ethics”.

In chapter 5, while presenting the ethnographic research, a strategy of recursive abstraction resulted in observations that were classified into behavioural themes. This chapter further elaborates on these 8 themes, identified as characteristic behavioural attributes of ethical online social interaction (Fig 6.1). These were queried by the researcher in terms of exploring the type of philosophical resources that were employed by the research participants. The first four themes referred to individual behaviours, while the remaining four themes described community

⁹⁵ “I have gained this by philosophy: that I do without being commanded what others do only from fear of the law.” Trans. (R.D. Hicks, 1972).
attributes.

Fig 6.1 Characteristic behavioural themes of ethical online social interaction

This chapter will explore this set of data through a Platonic lens, considering these themes as Platonic philosophical resources (Fig. 6.2).

Fig. 6.2 Behavioural Themes through a Platonic lens
Commenting on the individual behavioural themes noted in chapter 5, significant indicators of virtue ethics being enacted in the Facebook Laboratory are described, and subsequently framed, in terms of the working together of passions (or desires) and reason, the concepts presented in the Platonic charioteer allegory (and outlined in chapter 3).

In turning the focus to notions of community in the Facebook Laboratory, the apparently unarticulated influences impacting or mitigating participant community building and involvement are explored. To this end, the role of shame in the digital interactions of Facebook Laboratory participants is considered and expounded upon with deference to its Classical age antecedent. Further to this, the participants’ use of self-regulating behaviour is considered as evidence of the value of virtue ethics as a basis for digital civics pedagogy.

Thus, chapter 6 is organised around six key topics for discussion:

1. Affinity for Platonic philosophy in the infosphere
2. Virtue Ethics
3. The Chariot of Desire and Reason
4. Shame
5. Self-Regulation
6. Virtue Ethics and Self-Regulation in Digital Civics Education

Discussion will finally culminate in the identification of a practise of virtue ethics in the infosphere, an approach I refer to as “Virtuel Ethics”. Drawing this work together, I then present a model for digital civics pedagogy, built upon a conceptual formulation of civic, philosophical, historical and ethical underpinings.

6.2 Affinity for Platonic Philosophical Resources

Through observation and analysis of the participants’ behaviours, I identified the operation of a code of conduct in their strategy to solving modern social and
ethical problems that bore an affinity for philosophical constructs described in the works of Plato. This affinity could be described as a close similarity, with shared characteristics between philosophical ethical codes in the classical world and the infospere, and a preference for employing those shared characteristics in ethical decision-making. For instance, the Facebook Laboratory participants raised and addressed many of the same issues faced by Hellenic society, as described by Plato, and seemed to incline toward enacting philosophical approaches to problem solving that were characteristically Platonic: they explored virtue ethics incorporating *Arete, Phronesis, and Eudamonia*; demonstrated thematic preoccupations with shame, and memory; and engaged in a forms-like environment in which they reported that de-physicalised ideas (or identities) were of more interest than physical manifestations.

This is in keeping with the observations made in chapter 2 regarding Floridi’s reports of Hellenic ideas playing out in the infosphere (such as Achilles talking to his weapons, or anti-Platonic battles), and further supported in chapter 3 through the historical enquiry which demonstrates the similarity between Platonic philosophy and the Infosphere. It also seems to support Cobb’s assertion noted in chapter 3 that “Cyberspace can be interpreted as the Platonic realm incarnate” (Cobb, 1998: 30).

The evidence presented by the research participants provides a portrayal of online behaviours, regarding engagement with ethics in the digital realm, that suggests humans in the modern digital world approach similar problems identified and discussed by Plato, and attempt to implement solutions to these problems through the use of our new technologies (such as how to cope with the impact of shame on society; how to achieve the best behaviour from citizens; and how to make ideas – such as the forms – more accessible to society).

While I previously identified the modern preoccupation with increasing
quantities of memory, evidence from the project also exhibited this emphasis on memory. Participants expressed the desire to honour memory through the loyalty to the history of their character for example (as discussed in section 5.8) and to create memories of their own. There was also an emphasis away from written language toward image (the student participants told me that their characters became real to them when they acquired a profile pictures, but they also used pictures to reveal important moments in the narrative- such as the gun that was used to shoot their mother) that was discernible, if not wholly distinct, that indicated a Platonic sympathy with the inadequacies of writing as a mnemonic device.

In addition to memory, participant interaction in the converged levels of abstraction showed an awareness of a realm of ideas (section 5.6), similar to the concept of Platonic forms. The lack of importance participants relegated to the physical aspects of the project, or other participants, suggested an engagement with the Platonic ‘forms-like’ level of abstraction of the infosphere. This also suggested that participants preferred to build communities based on common interests and ideas, rather than traditional physical bonds. Melissa Anelli describes such behaviours in digital communities, and reflected that while each member developed new interests and communities outside those that originally brought a group together, they also maintained their old links with former allegiances, bringing new life to the community (Anelli, 2008). As discussed in chapter 3.5, both Ulansey, discussing Hellenistic responses to changing ontologies, and Henry Jenkins, discussing digital age behaviours, describe such phenomena, and Jenkins observes the importance of schools encouraging (as opposed to suppressing) such affiliations; a point supported by interactions in the Facebook Laboratory.

Finally, the presence of virtue ethics and the predominance of shame (both of
which I shall detail immediately below) in approaches to ethical problems, act as strong evidence for the affinity for Platonic philosophical resources in the infosphere.

6.3 Indicators of Virtue Ethics

As discussed, indicators of virtue ethics - specifically Platonic virtue ethics - are demonstrated in the philosophies and behaviours of the study participants. I shall briefly examine each aspect of virtue ethics discussed in chapter 3 (Phronesis, Arete, and Eudamonia) with reference to the Facebook Laboratory.

Just as with the aspects of virtue ethics explored in chapter 3, students indicated their wish to be educated about who they really were, what they wanted, and how to go about obtaining this appropriately. Students consciously expressed a desire to actively pursue their own individual core, and sought assistance to do so effectively (as evinced by their discussions in interview and their online interactions, chapter 5.7.4). Their behaviours in one instance of the project (when the Alpha group befriended their own schoolfriends incognito, and, with unprompted reflection, recognised and remedied this situation themselves), suggested they shifted from a reliance on external means of ethical decision-making (such as rules), to a more internal mechanism of action regarding the behaviours they enacted.

6.3.1 Phronesis

The ease of students in befriending anonymous persons online (Such as SP A’s friending of Jessie Bond) suggested that a sense of phronesis was potentially lacking in the students’ initial online behaviours. (In that they could theoretically understand
the error in deceiving their friends, but had not fully engaged with the reality of consequences that could occur in practice.) This was precisely the type of behaviour that led to the protectionist attitudes raised as a concern in chapter 1: the potential that students may interact with anonymous individuals whose motives were unknown. What student participants required, and sought out for themselves, was the practical wisdom (*phronesis*) to make discerning choices- and to be capable of doing so easily and naturally. This was an aspect of behaviour that they were able to develop through moderated practise. Monitoring their accounts for interaction, I had been able to note the interaction with Jessie Bond, and raise questions about it with the student (even messaging the Jessie Bond character, and ascertaining her offline identity). The students’ transparency in allowing the researcher access to their account information further provided opportunity for scaffolding online development if required.

Within the project, students frequently engaged with and attempted to enhance their sense of *Phronesis*. An early incident in the project where some students befriended actual school friends using their Monetta aliases (as discussed in 5.7.5) meant that students were expanding their knowledge of the world through microcosms of community, their smaller school community standing in for the wider world, and their behaviours containable before serious damage could ensue. While students discussed a desire to learn things that were useful to their lives, they also set about creating situations in which they could practise decision making in the online world (A practise that seemed to harken back to SP Bs statement in our first meeting that schools should educate “so you can feel safe in your decisions” [SP B First Meeting].) The world that the students created for themselves may have had different variables than their own lives (i.e., characters could exercise traits or talents that the participant felt they did not possess, or find themselves with a novel number of
siblings or living in a different country). Using their characters, they constructed a familial environment that allowed them to conduct experiments regarding human behaviour. In this ‘Facebook Laboratory,’ they could hypothesise the outcome of a situation, create a situation, and then observe the results of their experiment, deriving behavioural knowledge from whatever transpired. The Monetta wedding in itself provides a model for this, demonstrating numerous familial issues, though the entire Monetta epic is in itself one large experiment. There were two main ways in which the ‘Facebook Laboratory’ functioned as a domain for *Phronesis* development: firstly, by allowing the students the opportunity to learn as themselves, from implementing their own projects in the online environment; and secondly through allowing them to role play personal or ‘life’ situations in the online environment.

As an example of learning *Phronesis* from their own projects, I consider the aspects of cooperative work demonstrated by students. The planned storyline of the wedding was scripted loosely by the SPs; however, when they unleashed it into the online realm, all sorts of unexpected twists and turns occurred. As much as they battled to keep to their story intention, they were carried off by other participants in the project. Even the initial outline of a 5 minute production expanded into an hour’s interaction. It is precisely this human element that made the project so adept at teaching online interaction and *Phronesis*. The uncontrollable nature of another’s free will interacting with the student participants revealed to them the nature of genuine human interaction. While the students' initial planning indicated that they felt cooperative work could be accomplished in short time spans and would follow the path of the individual (or even a small group), their actual experience was vastly different. Sharing the power with co-contributors and becoming flexible with their targets led them to understand the delicate balance required of cooperative work.
They needed to exercise judgement as to how much distraction to allow to keep the character participants engaged, and how much to hold firmly on their story elements, to ensure that they eventually concluded their production with the narrative elements and ending in tact as they anticipated. This practical experience contributed to their overall sense of practical wisdom about the world, being able to judge interactions with others, and their impact on one’s own intended actions. It is probably for this reason, and from this experience, that students realised the necessity of increased time in cooperative projects. While the students all entered the project with some trepidation about their involvement and time commitment, they all left with the sense that the project had been too short term (a point which they articulated clearly).

As an example of the second type of Phronesis experiment, I consider the storyline of the mother. A woman who had kept a family secret for many years, the mother’s resistance to reveal any information about her spouse caused her children grief and confusion, and although forgiven for her transgression, her character ended up being shot by one of the children. Within their own storyline, and through role playing their characters, the student participants created feasible scenarios (such as family cover-ups) which they could subsequently play out, engaging with the potential situations that might ensue and the various emotions and behaviours that could be expected to result. Yet, as well as the effectiveness of role play, in which students could draw on realisations merely as individuals, the transparent record of online interactions meant that learning could occur as an entire group. Each character could witness the events, and each could choose whether or not to exercise agency and intervene or to remain silent. Being aware of the situation however, no one could be considered to be uninvolved- even passive actions such as witnessing without comment could be viewed as acts of agency- particularly given the small, familial
nature of the student group. Practical wisdom, such as knowing when and how to intervene in a situation, could develop not merely from the mistakes that one made individually, but drawn out from the entire online learning environment, examining the mistakes and achievements demonstrated by others in the group. One could speculate that the online Facebook environment in itself allows such group learning, given its openness in presenting information (such as sometimes unpleasant photographs). In these situations, it is more difficult to ignore than to engage with uncomfortable material, and the psychological mechanism of denial is penetrated by absolute proof (available for all to see), which is more difficult to subvert and ignore.

6.3.2 Arete

SPs also appeared to be playing out Arete, practising virtue (behaving with honesty to themselves to attain their highest good, and consequently, happiness) in the Facebook Laboratory. Instead of being punished, or suffering the derision of others, the characters in the Monettas' epic narrative each make bold statements about their true feelings and wishes. They confess to being themselves and to revealing the truths about which they are aware. They practise the virtue of honesty. Far from being punished, they laud themselves, and manage to live out better lives because of it. They acquire fulfilling relationships with those they truly love, go to live in exotic places with their family fortune, or continue seeking happiness (the final results of which occur during the Monetta Wedding). In fact, the only character who suffers a terrible fate is the character who has suppressed truth, the Monetta mother, (who covers over the death of the Monettas' father) who is shot by one of the children, and who’s character after this seems to fade away.
The student participants further engaged with the concept of love and attempted to further their understanding of this romantically, familially, and through friendships. They explored various facets of the emotion, such as joy, anger, and forgiveness; a considerable feat given the short period of time in which they had to compress such complex interactions. And while some interactions, such as SP Fs forgiveness of her mother, seem superficial, its repetitive presentation in the narrative (both in posts regarding the father’s funeral, and during the Monetta wedding) suggest its importance as a motif.

In the most accurate sense of Arete, (that is, excelling) the student participants practise not only the virtue of honesty (in their revelations, confessions, and public statements) or the action of love, but additionally sought to excel to the greatest potential of their own gifts (for example music or performance). As I shall discuss below in Eudamonia, students’ pursuit of happiness was based upon pursuit of their own vision of their best (or most excellent) self. The crafting of these identities allowed them to explore their greatest potential self; to understand the untapped potential they possessed, and subsequently to develop their own strategies to attain this. That is, through developing a character with potential limited only by their own imagination, they could experiment with behaviours that might develop Arete, thus providing them with a self-constructed exemplar with which they might experience and learn.

6.3.3 Eudamonia

In their initial interview, students made evident that they were not learning what was required for a fulfilling life in the digital world (one with which they would
be truly happy) in the formal school environment. (In section 4.5 I recounted the laughter that met with my initial question about preparation for the digital world.) Through their interactions, it was clear that they sought out or created experiences which would assist in the development of *Arete* and *Phronesis*. Such knowledge was to contribute to their overall development, but their purpose appeared to be the pursuit of *Eudamonia*. To flourish in their environment the students had to learn and experiment with their world, but they also needed to discover new ways in which they could thrive. By continually pushing boundaries and experimenting with possibilities (such as the creation of their own shows, narrative, and online pages), they were able to discover, and contemplate the possible states and behaviours that would lead to a ‘flourishing’ (and sustainable) happiness. The creation of characters in the project gave students an opportunity to contemplate an ideal self (to understand *Arete*); a notion which they appeared to undertake with relish. Each character built portions of their own selves into their constructed character, which they hoped to aspire to; they were successful at their chosen profession (such as the student who aspired to professional singing billing herself as an opera performer), they travelled if they so desired, they sought love, and they developed relationships as best as they could. The things they wrote were things they wanted to say but would have been too afraid or ashamed to post outside the safe anonymity of the Facebook Laboratory, as Student Participant C had confided in interview (SP C. Via Facebook. 2010). They developed excellence, to allow them to experience a ‘virtual’ flourishing (*eudemonia*) in the Facebook realm. Through actualizing portions of their life that they hoped would bring them joy (such as their career aspirations, or things they wanted to say), they were able to mentally experiment with and experience the kind of success in life for which they were desirous and temper this with behaviours they would learn from...
their interactions (desire and temperance), allowing them to develop a wisdom 
(*phronesis*) to move forward in their own lives (presumably toward the *Eudemonia* 
they expressed). Able to construct their own identities, students could envisage 
themselves as they wished, and though I was not familiar with all of their own offline 
personalities intimately, I did observe some of them play out what I knew to be their 
own dreams (either because they had told me, or because another participant or 
contact had informed me). For example, one character who was musically inclined 
billed herself as a successful opera singer, whilst other students with interests in 
travel sent their characters roving throughout Europe. The choices made by the 
students in creating their characters could provide their own psychological study, but 
it was sufficient for the purposes of this project to see how the students used their 
opportunity to engage with certain parts of themselves to learn as citizens. Often 
attempting merely to act in congruency with themselves and their feelings, the 
behaviours of the students’ characters could be said to be motivated through self-
esteeem development. Though never openly discussed, certain aspects of behaviour 
(such as demanding their right to be heard and speak from the truth of who they 
genuinely were), particularly at the story’s climax during the wedding, evidenced the 
 extreme ardency of their feelings regarding happiness. For while some of the 
characters were aware they were to be judged for divulging their truths, nonetheless 
they confessed to their own convictions- be it their feelings toward other characters, 
or their future intentions. The issue then became locating the confidence to voice 
themselves; another aspect which appeared to be explored (quite consciously) by the 
SPs (that is, they learned the virtue of speaking truth through practise). The admission 
of SP C (in 4.3.6) that she utilised her character to post the ideas she herself lacked 
the confidence to post due to her fears of social reception, for example, highlights
this. An awareness of the influence of others on her behaviour was being presented by SP C, in that she clearly articulated her inability to express herself in her ‘real’ life, given the potential censure of others. This appears to support the emphasis on individual development central to successful virtue ethics: in order for the self to behave justly, personal awareness, identifying the difference between the internal and external locuses of control, is essential. Here also, was an example of the success of the digital civics project in assisting a student participant to self-identify their own behavioural influences.

6.4 The Chariot of Desire and Reason (fun and self-discipline within the project)

In chapter 3, I referred to the Platonic chariot metaphor, used to describe the balance that must occur between reason and desires, in order for wisdom and civic justice, to result. For while these aspects can be viewed as separate entities, they must amalgamate (converge) in order to achieve the most positive (wise and just) results.

As shown in the ethnographic findings, this was demonstrated through the participants’ abilities to utilise their technological and organisational skills, personal interests, and emotional drive, and even self-seeking interests, to create and implement ideas. Through the development of their own projects (and the flexibility that allowed them to follow through on their personal interests) they were able to immerse themselves in experiences that proved at once relevant and entertaining to them- purely for personal enjoyment or pleasure-seeking- while pressing them to develop further skills. While such flexibility can find itself criticised in the classroom environment (given the difficulty of assessing results that may appear unquantifiable- such as a student’s feelings toward oneself, or the unexpected forms of feedback that
may arise such as projects like the Monetta wedding) -- if such aspects are ignored, a strong covert message is delivered to students that their personal interests and passions (that is, the very essence of their individual being) are not as important as an inflexible educational and assessment system. Such a message is not only potentially damaging to student self-esteem, but also functions contrary to the natural learning instincts of students.

The sharing, or cooperative work, seemed one of the aspects that made the project “fun”. This is apt because the glue that apparently held the community together was a disciplined list of various forms of personal passions and actions. For example, passion for a particular subject, passion for a particular character, passion for an academic discipline, passion for community interaction, passion for education, passion for philosophy, passion for enquiry and so forth; resulting in actions such as project development, risk taking, Facebook page building, communicative interaction. However, their passion could be viewed in a more negative sense also; formulating outrageous narratives as a means of attention seeking behaviour, for example, or placing one another in difficult emotional situations. Although this behaviour itself is still interesting in the context of the ethicist, Nys work, that in games “the thrill of such virtual actions is precisely that they transgress ethical boundaries”, and that this enjoyment “presupposes a moral awareness” (Nys, 2010:81). Potentially, through their interactions, students became increasingly aware of the inherent wrongness or rightness of their ethical behaviours. Similarly, the frequent use of humour by the participants, can be viewed in such terms. In considering the “emancipatory” role of humour and the comic, challenged by Freud, the semiotician Umberto Eco noted that while smaller (less important) social rules are broken in comedy, “we can share in the pleasure of the broken rule as well as its
reassertion with the wrongdoer getting his comeuppance… both the tragic and the comic register the perennial and unalterable existence of rules and obligation” (Seligman & Weller, 2012: 57): a pertinent observation, in light of the tragi-comic climax of the Monetta wedding.

Underlying the passions and actions and ensuring their success was discipline. In aspects where students paired their passions and action with discipline, they applied a sort of constancy and reaped personal benefit. For example, creating the online wedding, students envisioned their own idea (indulged a creative passion) and also developed their own project logistics, being careful to behave inclusively and take instruction (demonstrating more long term thinking and disciplined determination). This fed back to them in the form of positive reinforcement when they experienced the immense success of the project. What was to have been 5 minutes, stretched into an hour’s worth of interaction and numerous other characters came out to “play,” expressing their enjoyment of the event. Participants “geeked out” on role play and Victoriana in their spare time for educational purposes much as Ito ideally describes (Ito, 2011).

In aspects where the students had passion for something and failed to support this with discipline, they expressed feelings of regret. For example, students in the Alpha group wished they had taken part more. Further, SP A related that, although he discovered a character on Facebook with whom he had a great deal in common and had planned to contact the individual, he had not done so and felt sadness about it.

Desire, with disciplined reason was an extremely important theme in this community. Success was achieved in participant’s actions when the individual exercised passions and the discipline necessary to maintain them. A good example of such constancy was the character participant behind John Ruskin. He developed a
disciplined habit of times he could be on Facebook around his working schedule but also personally convenient to his own log-in schedule for his own Facebook account (when he checked in as himself, he would afterwards check in as John Ruskin). This allowed him the easiest method of maintaining consistent log-ins and updates for his character. His actions were consistent and useful, resultant from his enacted combination of discipline and well-reasoned planning, in combination with his ability to use fun and personal interests (like his passion for history) as a source of motivation. Ruskin was a major contributor to the project spurring several debates on feminism culminating in “Corset Burning Day”.

6.5 Shame

While the previous points discuss the nature of the individual and the exercising of that individual’s power in an ethical way, shame is examined for its role in mitigating actions or behaviours, (that while the individual may develop a sense of virtue ethics, they may be prevented from enacting those virtues due to shame). This analysis arises from the observations made in chapter 5, which observe shame’s prominent influence in the research data in participant interactions.

I refer back to the characterisation of shame given in chapter 3 as: a feeling of humiliation resultant from a social failing (real or perceived) that gives rise to a desire to conceal the social offence. This feeling has the potential to give rise to both negative and positive social consequences. Indeed, in the interactions of the student participants, they present many of the negative consequences, however, through enacting approach behaviours and drawing awareness of its impact into the public realm to help demonstrate the ways in which individual can be excluded from society,
they also demonstrated some of the more positive uses of shame.

I first discuss how shame is engaged by the SPs, in regards to their communal interactions, before commenting on its role in conjunction with anonymity, and relevance to Platonic philosophy, with a view to presenting its educational potential in the Facebook Laboratory.

Numerous enactments of shame that demonstrated its impact on social interactions, both overt and covert, appeared in the various interactions presented by the SPs from early on in their interactions in the Facebook Laboratory. This activity was sustained throughout the narrative, and included incidents in which the student participants’ personas posted that they felt shame (Figures 6.3 and 6.4), as well as behaviours and situations, described or enacted by the participants in their constructed narrative that also met the definition of being shameful (in that they could be perceived as social transgressions, or identifying people outside of conventional social ‘norms’) (Table 6.1). Their position as children raised in a single parent environment by a woman who suppressed many secrets aside, they accused one another of shaming the family name; through inappropriate liaisons, unmarried pregnancy, and even murder. Indeed, the importance attached to shame is very starkly demonstrated in figure 6.3, in which SP Scott Monetta is more concerned with the shame his sister has brought onto the family name than he is with her being guilty of murder.
Fig. 6.3 Shame on the Monetta Crown

Prudence Monetta  Scott Monetta
April 12, 2010

Dear Scott, What have you done?! You got your very own COUSIN pregnant?! How could you? You've written shame all over the 'Monetta' crown! I simply cannot stand to look at your profile much longer before I develop a plague in my brain.

Like · Comment

Scott Monetta  Oh as if I am the worst. Don't tell me your husband died of anything but POISON. Like I could have possibly brought shame upon our great family, there was none left after you had been!  April 12, 2010 at 12:16am · Like

Prudence Monetta  How dare you Scott! I am beyond expressing my emotions right now. You know I've got a problem with alcohol yet you seem to find it amusing! Frederic died of an aneurism if you MUST know! We need to meet up...I've got something else to tell you.  April 12, 2010 at 12:24am · Like

Fig. 6.4 Shame Forsaken on the Family

Poppy Monetta  Lily Monetta
April 10, 2010

Oh Lily,
What kind of shame have you forsaken on our family?:O
And a lower class older man Lily!!
As much as I am in shock about this HORRIBLE revelation I shall try my very best to not let this come between us, however it will be hard...
What will our murderous mother say?:O
Why didn't you tell me sooner?:O
As much as this is a shock I am still looking forward to your visit, and I would like very much if you kept me posted on where you are:)
Will Peter be coming as well now?
Much love,
Your sister,
Poppy 😊
xxxxx
Table 6.1 Instances of shame in the Monetta Narrative

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a single parent family, raised by their mother, their father having disappeared without explanation some years before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>children engaged in incestuous affairs with half-siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>issues of substance abuse were identified and publicly divulged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>family secrets were guarded carefully and for long periods of time by their mother (the fate of the children’s father, for example, was covered up for many years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>characters conducted liaisons with persons ‘beneath’ their social station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>characters were publicly rejected by those they articulated feelings for, or were humiliated by them.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The culmination of events in the Facebook Laboratory, the Student Participant run Monetta wedding, focused on the impact of shame in the lives of participants, and the negativity it had brought into their lives (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Key points at which shame was enacted at the Monetta Wedding

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Patrick (the bridegroom) is absent from the proceedings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Oh the Shame” says Poppy realising her groom is absent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I am so ashamed” Poppy states when the groom finally arrives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poppy learns that Lily has stolen her fiancé.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Oh the shame” is uttered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Maisy confesses her incestuous homosexual love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Peter (another character’s fiancé’) arrives (apparently he never actually died!) creating a publicly awkward situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lily produces a gun in response to what appears a long-term frustration with her mother over her concealment of family matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Scott elopes with his half sister Prudence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Maisy reveals that Scott has a substance abuse problem then promptly punches Peter for the damage he has caused the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>“You cannot judge me, sister” is stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The guests discuss drunkenness and intoxication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Maisy posts the Romeo and Juliet theme, insistent on communicating her homoerotic and incestuous love for her sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Maisy and Poppy embrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yeats proposes marriage to Maude Gonne and is publicly rejected and humiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Everyone decides to go to the pub, as Prudence attempts and fails to proposition Yeats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Student Participants articulated the word a number of times in various contexts throughout the hour-long event, but its sustained utterance at the opening of the play, spoken three times in a matter of moments as the groom both fails to arrive, and then confesses to have intentions for the bride’s sister, suggest its importance as a major motif of the production. It seemed to strike a successful chord with their audience (and with each other). The congruency of sentiment that could be universally understood by players and viewers alike seems to demonstrate shame’s societal ubiquity in the infospheric environment.

The students chose to pursue issues of shame directly, engaging with feelings of hurt and humiliation, experiences of ostracism, presenting subjects of abuse and fear of social censure, and imagining the various outcomes that might result from shame, or instances that might cause it. This occurred not only in recognizing and labelling shame in their online interactions, but also in instigating situations with which they chose to create and engage. The students staged shameful situations and behaviours, and sometimes also noted personal experiences that enhanced their self-belief (thereby acting as an antidote to shame). For instance, they drew knowledge of a potential murder in the family into the public realm for discussion, and publicly accused others of vices such as alcoholism. This suggested there are important opportunities for the educational capabilities of social networking, specifically as Rieberian styled learning environments, to facilitate approach behaviours (as suggested by Hooge et al. [2011]) to overcome the damaging personal and societal limitations brought about by feelings of shame. Learning how to enact approach behaviours in an anonymous circumstance provided experience that might embolden them to enact these behaviours in situations where they were personally identifiable.

Anonymity (which provided freedom from the public sphere or public
knowledge) allowed participants themselves the opportunity to behave as they wished, free from the constraints of being shamed. This gave participants the opportunity to, as Turkle put it: “express often unexplored aspects of the self” (Turkle, 1996: 643). SP C expressed how her anonymity allowed her to post things she wanted to say free from the censure of others: “The status updates … I would have loved to post on my own but just didn't …as I thought people would look at them and be like … are you alright in the head?” (SP C. Via Facebook. 2010). While in the Beta group SP E said: “The best thing about this project thing, that you can like, make a fool of yourself cause like on Facebook it’s like, you feel like, self-conscious about what people will say” (SP E, Beta Group Interview). In these instances, anonymity provided a shelter from the negative consequences of shame. These behaviours can be seen in the broader online environment, where anonymity has facilitated discussions on sensitive personal issues, such as the use of anonymous counselling forums. However, anonymity can also have more sinister applications. In cases of cyber stalking, or online abuse, anonymity can protect aggressors (Peebles, 2014), allowing them to commit acts in secret and evade consequences. It can also help mislead others as to an individual’s true identity, a circumstance seen in, as well as explored by the Student Participants, who initially took the opportunity to use their anonymity to mislead friends and acquaintances by speaking to them under the guise of their digital characters. The Student Participants behaviours however, stopped when the potential problems of this behaviour became clear to them. In effect, when the regulatory measures of shame (social expectation) were removed due to students' anonymity, students initially behaved in a negative way, misleading others regarding their identity. It is important to acknowledge that such errors in judgement occur in digital civic behaviour, but equally, that they can also possess educational value as a
learning step in Phronesis. For instance, when students realised that their actions could have genuinely negative consequences outside of the simple social disapproval of others— in that they may damage feelings and harm friendships—they immediately began regulating their own behaviour. This demonstrates the shift from external to internal locus of control: the move away from shame (a behaviour regulated by external (public) motivators) and toward genuine Phronesis (a behaviour based on intrinsic motivation). Participants grasped the true nature of their actions, not ‘only the appearance of truth’ that the Platonic Thamas described as the consequences of only reading about, and not experiencing, wisdom first hand. The minimal regulation in the Facebook Laboratory may have allowed negative behaviours to occur, but it also demanded a new level of personal understanding from participants; one that emphasised self-regulation above societal obligation, an important goal of digital civics.

Such instances may occur in the formal education environment also (again leading to the fears and protectionist attitudes discussed in chapter 1). Though negative behaviours initially may occur during a period of learning, this does not indicate that an individual’s behaviour will always be bad; rather this may indicate a liminal state of self-education, shifting from an external to internal locus of control.

For educational purposes, anonymity can be effectively used as an antidote to shame without the concern of abusive or bullying behaviour occurring in any sustained way— because, as in the example of the Facebook Laboratory, anonymity is only partial, with identities known to a host (or teacher) figure, while students are protected from the shame or public censure through their anonymity to others. Perhaps more fascinating, in the translational sense, referring back to its ancient Greek roots of Nomos, this demonstrates that SPs used what was outside of moral
custom (anomos/anonymous) to formulate and engender a practice of moral custom (nomos). This made anonymity an important part of the educational environment, and a component that should be addressed in the future design of the Facebook Laboratory to ensure it is present as a vehicle for learning.

Another interesting facet of shame in the context of digital education is that it can also occur for the host (or teacher) figure. In chapter 4, I document the surprise I experienced whilst attempting to “teach” students how to discern a “personal digital philosophy”. Given the realisation that students were already well versed in ideas and had a strong sense of ethical codes (which they guarded until they knew I was “safe”), I was aware that the project would need to develop differently than I had originally envisioned. Further, I was forced to be flexible, by project participants who chose to take the story, and indeed their own participation, in differing directions than I had planned. I effectively had to write an email surrendering power to the participants, broadly admitting defeat and loss of power in determining how the events would next unfold. In surrendering power to the participants, I could be perceived as having lost control of the project (and such a loss of power might be viewed as my being shamed\textsuperscript{96} much in the same manner as the students identified their teacher’s fearing in our initial interview, where teachers were ‘too proud’ to allow students to take the lead on classroom technology). However, when one engages with the reality that the collective group of participants involved in the project are in themselves each imbued with a sense of power (or agency,) and, that outside of acting as a guide, my own power in “controlling” the project (or the

\textsuperscript{96} Shame being connected in this case with a perceived loss of power in the eyes of others; a rejection of leadership which could be perceived as a rejection of the leader, and as a perceived alienation in having lost ‘ownership’ of something important to the individual. (Again, this has connotations with the ancient Greek notions of shame- particularly with notions of ‘aidos’, as well as ‘timeh’ in the Homeric sense).
behaviours of others) was entirely illusory, then issues of shame are not only irrelevant, but the participants and instructors all have the opportunity to grow from their interactions.

When I asked the student participants what aspect of a character they focussed on in the Facebook Laboratory, and how they formed an idea of character (whether it be what was written or graphically represented, for example), all the students noted that their profile photograph was of extreme importance in character development. While shame at having one’s mistakes revealed may explain the trepidation expressed by student participants regarding making public posts about themselves (as SPC relates when speaking of the influence of others on her postings), the visibility aspect of shame can also be noted, as it is only through the public knowledge, or circulation of information, that one can be shamed. As long as potentially humiliating information is kept secret, it is not shameful, although one can still feel anxiety that even its potential circulation may prove personally damning. (This is in keeping with western associations from ancient Greek myth in which visibility is associated with light, honesty and pride, while dark, hidden, and shadowed aspects contradictory to visibility and viewing are associated with shame, deceit, and even death, as mentioned in chapter 3).

Students communicated the actuality of circumstances openly in the Facebook Laboratory; for example, they posted accusations on Facebook where they could be viewed by all participants, and opened a dialogue in which characters could observe instances of hypocrisy. Each accusation of perpetrating shame could be met with an observation of equal guilt in a revelation about the accuser.

This seems to support the idea hypothesised in chapter 3, that inappropriate online postings can occur as a means of unmasking social hypocrisy. That even when
young people post materials illustrating the harsh realities of the world (such as happy slapping incidents or underage drunken antics), while the primary, and most obvious intention of these postings may be to do harm, such posting may also come from an unconscious desire to portray things as they actually are, and act as a prompt for citizens in the public to take account of society's hypocrisy. The subsequent backlash from the public may make young people realise that their recorded actions are unacceptable (or that they are outside conventional norms), but the backlash may also be directed toward “the messenger” (the social media where such revelations occur), for forcing humanity to look on its darker (or shadow) self and admit to this shadow's existence. It is, perhaps, a response of shame at the inadequacy of the community (or the individual) to cope with its own hypocrisy, and an attempt to avoid this shame.

There were indications from the students' interactions that perhaps the ethics presented online should aspire to complete transparency: nothing should be hidden any longer (perhaps indicating a deconstruction of privacy), using anonymity to end the need for anonymity. Further to this idea (or possibly because of it), is a view that no one should be destroyed by shame, because once humans are all forced to identify and examine their shadows, hypocrisy (and the shame of it) is pointless, illogical, and destructive.

A continual attempt to push forth feelings of shame into the public realm occurred throughout the project, and especially in the wedding, as can be seen in figures 6.5-6.6. That shame is the key emotion here is presented in the character’s articulated acknowledgement of this feeling in relation to her situation (being jilted at the altar). This portrayal draws shame into the public awareness, at a public event,

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97 I mean to portray “shadow” in the Jungian sense (1938).
(the wedding), which has invited the entire public to take part. The ethics of behaviour here, and the role of shame within this, become a matter of public discourse, through the student’s public invitation to witness that shame being enacted (that is, that the general public were all invited to take part and view this portrayal).

Fig. 6.5 Shame at the Altar

![Poppy Monetta](image)

My "sister" Lily has been having an affair with MY fiance for quite some time now... so I have been left at the altar alone oh the shame!

April 29, 2010 at 6:14pm · Like · Comment

Fig. 6.6 Feeling Ashamed

![Poppy Monetta](image)

Oh my goodness I am sooo ashamed!! I shall never forgive Lily EVER!

April 29, 2010 at 6:10pm · Like · Comment

As mentioned in chapter 3, research into Hellenic Greek culture identifies the pivotal societal role played by shame in the time of Plato, and the apparently unintentional focus of attention on this influence by the student participants seems to support the function of shame as a strong behavioural motivator in the online environment, also. More interestingly, students seemed to intuitively isolate and contest this influence, questioning the validity of its social impact. This is similar to Plato’s discussions of shame in the dialogues ‘Crito’ and ‘Gorgias’ in which Socrates raises the role of shame, and suggests it is less important than truthfulness (Sokolon, 2004). The continually unproductive employment of shame made it neither an acceptable, nor effective, moderator of behaviour (societal or personal) to the student participants. While it might have proven useful as a starting place for identifying behaviours as right or wrong, its drawbacks are swiftly made apparent. Just as Socrates spoke of the challenges of behaviour motivated from shame in “The
Apology” (Shane, 1980), and invites the Athenians to overcome shame for the good of themselves and their society (Moore, 1998) so too the student participants seem to mimic his argument. They enact shame approach behaviours and draw the very concept of shame out into the open for all the research participants to discuss, and by doing so, make clear its influence on their lives, and their dissatisfaction with its inadequacies.

Not only does this finding suggest an eventual move away from shame-based moderation in the digital environment (or at least, a recognition of this problem), but it also serves to assist Silverstone’s idea of effective media literacy, noted in chapter 1. While Silverstone presents the necessity of a public ethical discourse, a fully open public discourse would be vulnerable to the impact of shame: for example, discussions may not occur on socially unacceptable topics for fear of public censure, discouraging tolerance and diversity of opinion; or citizens may have difficulty engaging in authentic discussions of their experiences, as they may be reluctant to draw those experiences into the public sphere, where shame would cause conformity with public opinion. Recognition of the influence of shame on public ethical discourse should thereby supplement Silverstone’s model with an identification of the mitigating influences of shame in public discourse (Cairns, 1993), so that a public debate might develop ways to eliminate its impact. This could occur through protective measures, such as anonymity (Turkle, 1996), or through shame approach behaviours (Hooge et al., 2011).

For the student participants, explorations of shame were not in the form of traditional written educational assessments, but rather, demonstrated through meaningful cathartic experiences. They created scenarios that would allow them to experience shame vicariously through their characters, empathising with a variety of
situations, and examining the best strategies of coping; their learning was active, and apparently unconscious (in that students articulated they felt they had learned, but had difficulty quantifying in what way when asked directly by the researcher in interview). This is particularly interesting, given psychological research that reports empathy is critically important to healing chronic shame (DeYoung, 2015; Jordan, 1997). The SPs practise allowed them opportunity to: develop empathy for those in vulnerable situations; build resilience to the impact of shame by practising exposure to it; and gain experience of enacting shame approach behaviours by assessing risk and exploring potential outcomes. The potential for using technology to encourage the development of empathy as a means of improving behaviour has already been explored as both successful and cost-effective (Doane et al., 2016), and critical to a healthy society (Vallor, 2016), and while its employment in the Facebook Laboratory, particularly in regards to shame, was an unintended (though beneficial) consequences, it provides an interesting avenue for future development. Ultimately, shame, as with other behavioural stimuli, required management by the individual in a self-regulatory manner, as espoused in chapter 1.

6.6 Self regulation

The research participants' behavioural interactions appeared compatible with the practise of virtue ethics. This would seem to suggest that virtue ethics can meet the demands of self-regulation in the infosphere, as discussed in chapter 1. The behaviours enacted or discussed by participants to self-regulate behaviours required critical reflection and sustained evaluation- a process compatible with virtue ethics, and which virtue ethics addressed as one part of its processes in addressing ethical
activity.

A period of transition occurred for students while they adjusted from their experience of external regulation to the self-regulation they required. This finally allowed the student participants to cooperate and support each other, taking control of their own power of agency within the project.

If, as the research discussed in chapter 1 indicates, self-regulation (the individual autonomy based on responsible use of power as opposed to a system of reliance on external authority figures) is the direction in which social change is occurring, then students require an opportunity to develop skills in self-regulation which provide the opportunity for mitigated consequences for initial mistakes in judgement. As noted in chapter 1, self-regulation is important in addressing social and ethical issues in the infosphere, and there has been a discernible shift toward user responsibility online (Penman & Turnbull, 2007). Schools with restrictive policies prevent students attaining self-regulation, maintaining instead traditional external forms of regulation such as strict policies and censorship. The hidden curriculum lessons and conscious decisions of such administrations thereby undermine learning opportunities for self-regulation. This results in graduates who leave school unprepared for the nuances of life in a self-regulatory environment (never having been exposed to one at school).

In social circumstances where behaviour has always been regulated externally and the individual has not been required to develop a personal sense of regulation, a crisis of behaviour occurs when the regulating authority breaks down, or is no longer present. The ideological dissonance experienced from leaving one system of management (that of external authority) and entering another (that of self-regulation) causes external boundaries to be challenged. In this project data, the move toward
self-regulation seemed to occur organically; particularly highlighted in the Alpha group participants’ sudden behavioural changes in the online world (in secretly befriending their real-life acquaintances with fake accounts). This exposed their lack of experience in behavioural self-regulation. However, fairly swiftly, students self-corrected their behaviour (they did not tell the researcher what had occurred until after the fact, and then were open and honest about their interactions). While negative behaviours may have occurred initially while moving into a system of self-regulation, it was not necessarily indicative of a failure of self-regulation on the part of students, but rather may imply learning and a transition to a new philosophical approach. An approach Aristotle might summarise as: “I have gained this by philosophy: that I do without being commanded what others do only from fear of the law” (Diogenes Laërtius, Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, Book 5, 1:20).

The dispensation of power in the project was identified from the focus of energy participants placed on particular aspects of their interactions. Their interests could be established from their choices and discussions, but also, their decisions to formulate or take part in a supportive community, or to build a healthy self-image. For example, emphasis was placed upon interactions with musical theatre personalities for SP A, who wished to improve his knowledge in that sphere, but he also befriended Gilbert and Sullivan star, Jessie Bond. He took part in the community of learning that she had developed around the history of operetta, while maintaining positive participation in the events coordinated by his own Monetta family. (By positive participation, I mean that even when his behaviour was negative toward other participants, such as during the Monetta wedding, this was pre-planned, and he was fulfilling his role as required).
Further, participants were supportive of one another’s endeavours wherever a positive role was required: both in joining groups that had been created, taking part in events, and also in commenting on one another’s pages and asking questions about their persona’s lives. Such positive reinforcement assisted in project longevity. Additionally, participants set up an inter-connected web which allowed them to both support and be supported by other participants. As such, the individual lent their own power to the success of any endeavour; such as in the success of corset burning as an action of women’s liberation, or as an outpouring of emotional support during the Monetta funeral, or a character’s birthday. While conscious recognition of the participants’ own power in these scenarios is unclear, what is clear is that each participant made a decision whether or not to interact with certain individuals or groups, and to provide communal support for each other. Acts which required self-regulation, given the participants were under no obligation to behave in any manner specified by the researcher.

However, this self-regulatory method of behavioural interaction, which was closely aligned to virtue ethics (and incorporated other elements of Hellenic philosophy, such as a focus on memory) appeared to have characteristics unique to interaction in the digital environment.

6.7 Virtue Ethics and Self-Regulation in Digital Education

When left to be self-regulatory (permitting a flexible, student-motivated, and student-centric learning scenario), important lessons were learned by the SPs. These lessons were not only related to specific subject matter (such as History and English noted in chapter 5) but explored notions of civics and social education. This occurred
in the digital environment through an organically occurring form of behavioural self-regulation that possesses considerable similarities to Virtue Ethics. This would seem compatible with the assertions of Charles Ess that “virtue ethics thus promises to serve as a critical ethical resource for our developing a shared but pluralistic global information and computing ethics” (Ess, 2010a: 296).

While indicators of these Virtue Ethics include the main elements in the Platonic tradition (Arete, Phronesis, and Eudamonia, and the role of Reason, Action, and Desire) there are other ways in which these ethics might be seen to play out uniquely in the online environment, such as through the specific desire to engage openly with issues of shame (discussed in 6.5), and a notable incidence of convergence (discussed in 5.6). Ethical practice through an exploration of these themes, and with considerable resemblance to Platonic philosophy, appears to be a natural, organically occurring incidence online. Though it can be helpful and useful to direct and encourage the contemplation of ethical behaviours, and while it is necessary to avoid complacency and exercise vigilance to ensure this practice is sustained, the exploration of ethical behaviours does seem to occur naturally, and students appear to self-educate and even unconsciously problem solve ethical dilemmas when given the flexibility to reflect on their own behaviour, in their own way. They live out their experiences online and can explore within the controlled environment, largely free of consequences, the effects of their actions. This is in keeping with Dewey’s philosophy presented at the opening of chapter one, that “education is life” (Dewey, 1893), and in keeping with Turkle’s notion that such interactions could prove therapeutic (Turkle, 1994:161). The pedagogical intention of digital civics in this regard, assists the individual student in identifying their own sense of self, and subsequently scaffolds the student to recognise and sustain
engagement with their own ethical ideas in the digital age. While this required the formation of healthy habits of critical thinking, there was no need for the instructor to attempt to portray to students that they must learn how to behave, beyond modelling, or “incarnating” those behavioural skills where possible; rather, the provision of an environment with opportunities for students to construct their own digital identities and communities allowed students to recognise their own self-regulatory abilities.

For the participants in the Alpha group who learned first-hand the consequences and feelings associated with misleading friends, they did not enter the project with a firm sense of internal control. (They viewed consequences as penalties enacted by external authorities and not necessarily tied to the activity for which they were instituted.) (Specific examples are noted in “Virtuel Ethics” directly below.) However, after their experimentation, they uncovered their own motivations for behaviour; they could assess a situation and consider the legitimate damage that may be caused, or the beneficial outcomes that might arise. In turn, this allowed them to exercise Phronesis, because they could act with a greater sense of awareness and available data, as opposed to trusting in the inflexible structure of rules outlined for them.

This might suggest that students possess an innate mechanism to self-educate regarding ethical decision-making, offering support to a theory of ethical enquiry in the infosphere as an organic process. This organic development might be encouraged, and where necessary supported, through projects such as the Facebook Laboratory, and such learning experiments could be used to foster training in virtue ethics.

However, should it prove conversely, that students have developed ideas regarding their digital ethical decision making from surrounding influences they have not questioned, then the case for supporting and encouraging digital ethical
development through the process of personal digital philosophy is further strengthened and necessary.

6.8 “Virtuel Ethics”

While I have identified virtue ethics as deeply significant to digital civics education, this specific formulation of ethics as it manifested within the infospheric environment was identified as both an organic process of ethical consideration online and a precise set of ethical behaviours which might be observed, categorised, and implemented with purpose as a system of ethical enquiry useful in the implementation of digital civics in pedagogy (which I will list below). I call this specific system of ethics as practised in the infosphere “Virtuel Ethics”; a label I find useful for describing the ethical behaviours of citizens in the infosphere as they practice digital civic behaviour. (That is, within the framework of digital civics pedagogy, the educational practice for fostering ethical online behaviour as set out in chapter 1.)

I choose this term to reflect both the nature of the normative branch of ethics to which it alludes (Virtue Ethics) while making reference to the digital environment. Given its semantic recognition with early online research and living – the “virtual” world, the “virtual” environment, and “virtual” reality for example – it seems a reasonable word to reflect the digital in this particular instance.

To assist in understanding “virtuel ethics”, I provide a series of attributes of virtuel ethics, evidenced by the behavioural features demonstrated by the research participants:
1. An appreciation of the blurring between the online and offline worlds: such as through recognition of the impact of digital ICTs on offline interaction discussed by the SPs in their anonymous friending of other students, or through their ability to appreciate the consequences of photographs or other media in the offline environment.

2. The prizing of the contributions of the individual above the physical attributes in anonymous settings. Without the physical aspects of the user being known, decisions about the individual made by the participants were based on the individual's contributions, not on their gender, colour, race, or other physiological attributes. Age was certainly considered irrelevant, with student participants lacking nearly any interest in Character Participant backgrounds.

3. An affinity with Platonic or Hellenic philosophy; such as an emphasis on memory, the valuing of a forms-like, non-physical level of abstraction (as outlined in the previous point), and the presence of Platonic ethical thinking (presented in point 4, below).

4. Aspects of Platonic virtue ethics are exhibited and can be seen to develop through interactions with others in the digital environment, including: Arete, Phronesis, Eudamonia, and the Chariot of Desire, and Reason. The participants enacted ethics with similarity to virtue ethics throughout their interactions, preferring this type of interaction to externally enforced rules or codes.

5. A clear desire and motivation to identify and cope with shame is apparent; attempting to expel it from the behavioural motivations of citizens; that is, ideas of approach behaviours noted by Hooge et al. (2011), such as the participants discussing and admitting to societally shameful acts (such as incest), refusing to be shamed by the responses of others, and enacting storylines that allowed them to explore its
impact in their lives.

6. *An increased focus on individual identity construction and the experiential experimentation of the individual within a group* promoting a participatory community. Individuals develop their own power of agency (strengthening their ‘self’) and seek ways to support others to achieve cooperative endeavours. The student participants created a familial community based on kinship that allowed them to press one another into exploring different facets of their personality.

7. *Self-regulation occurs with increased competency.* The role of external authority in regulation becomes reduced as citizens actualise their own power and responsibility. The SPs began by making errors in judgement, misleading friends through their anonymous personas, however, through this experience they began to realise they had to regulate their own behaviour.

8. Thereby leading to the *taking on of increasing amounts of responsibility,* such as the creation of new projects or community events. The SPs organised their own event, in the Online Monetta Wedding.

9. *An appreciation for the flexibility necessary for cooperative projects.* In order to work cooperatively, participants needed to practice flexibility, developing ideas and themes as a group.

10. *Valuing the inter-disciplinary, convergent nature of knowledge.* Traditional subject definitions are not specifically isolated, but rather relevancies to a “subject” can be drawn from any field of knowledge to support a broadened perspective of scholarship: this convergent knowledge is valued by citizens. The participants brought together various disciplines of knowledge, the SP’s posting of a poem demonstrated the amalgamation of media, literature, and history. This exploration was noted in Table 5.1
Ideally, virtuel ethics practise might eventually incorporate the acknowledgement of the informational nature of reality, though such a level of knowledge presently seems restricted to the domain of specialist knowledge fields.

While many factors might yet be identified and presented as an integral part of virtuel ethics, these numerous points could be clearly observed in the research data. A large scale and encompassing study of the active forces at work in virtuel ethics would prove greatly assistive to the formulation of further pedagogical tools in digital civics, and indeed, the future of citizenship in the infosphere. Based on the research presented here however, Virtuel Ethics is introduced as a foundational tool for digital civics in pedagogy; a system of behaviours intended to promote ethical interactions and critical awareness for successful citizenship in the infosphere.

While structuring may prove necessary for younger students, the 16 year olds participating in the study appeared to have little difficulty self-regulating and philosophising about their world. In chapter 1, I identified the constraints that schools apparently faced – either due to policy (seeming contradictory or restrictive), corporate intrusion (such as commercial interference), or potential litigious situations (arising from risk and liability) – that impaired their ability to provide technological access to students to assist in their digital media education. Further, in recognition of the personal digital philosophies already held by the project participants in their teenage years, it is highly likely that digital philosophical discourse must begin at a far younger age to prepare young people for the infosphere.

In response to this, a helpful aspect of Virtuel Ethics in formal education practise is that that the basic ideas of Virtuel Ethics can be taught to students at a young age, without the initial use of computers or digital technologies with which school policies currently struggle to engage. While practical application of digital
ethical behaviour is necessary, recognition of an over-arching philosophy of virtue ethics, with specific deference to the infosphere – that is, virtuel ethics – should provide an initial solid grounding for the behaviours required in the self-regulatory environment of the infosphere. If a significant agent for behavioural change in the digital environment is a philosophical one (as discussed in chapter 2), then the instruction of philosophy to young students could take place in any number of ways currently deemed ‘safe’ by the educational establishment until such time as scaffolded online development could occur in later years. That is, formal educational instructors could teach the philosophical tenets of virtue ethics and practise self-regulatory behaviour in the offline world. This initial preparation would conceivably serve to assist in overcoming the educational fears surrounding the introduction of digital technologies in the formal classroom environment and thereby allow for further instruction in digital behaviour and digital literacies.

Thus, in exploring digital civics pedagogy, the educational environments to foster civic and ethical practise for virtuel ethics can be articulated by the following specifications:

 Citizens of the Virtuel World Laboratory: a play based simulation-as-microworld, this learning environment combines digital and live action presentations, mediated using social networking sites to foster civic and ethical development in the infosphere. This environment requires involvement with the greater community, and supervision to ensure that students are protected, while encouraging behaviours of self-regulation.
Citizens of the Virtuel World Primary Level Laboratory: a learning environment for primary level students that teaches the tenets of virtue ethics and self-regulatory behaviour in preparation for life in the infosphere. Such an environment may or may not include digital resources, but any use of digital resources would require isolation from the greater community, strong supervision, and clearly articulated expectations, boundaries, and consequences from teachers.

6.9 A model for digital civics in pedagogy

Drawing together the conceptual underpinning, evidence-based insights and findings from this study, I present, over the following pages, a model for digital civics pedagogy that explores the Design of digital civics pedagogy environments, and the Influences, Skills, and Proactive Engagements required, to meet the learning outcomes of developing critical ethical resources and a personal digital philosophy.
Conceptual Formulation

At its core, a strong conceptual formulation acts as the foundation for Digital Civics Pedagogy. This formulation consolidates the framework of civics, philosophy, ethics, and history that has been explored as unique to this thesis (Fig 6.7).

Fig. 6.7. A Model for digital civics pedagogy
1. Civics Underpinnings

Digital civics facilitates the investigation and construction of a digital philosophy by citizens. It takes account of digital convergence by proactively engaging citizens through educational practise. It incorporates the use of digitally convergent technologies in the learning environment, recognising the need to provide citizens with critical ethical tools. It encourages the development of self-regulation and virtue ethics.

2. Philosophical Underpinnings

Digital civics is grounded in the Philosophy of Information, and acknowledging the fourth revolution, digital civics takes account of the unique environment of the infosphere as it pertains to agents. This includes the factors of perpetual connectivity, interactivity, and the blurring of boundaries occurring between the converging analogue and digital worlds.

3. Historical Underpinnings

Digital civics requires awareness of one’s digital cultural inheritance, that is, acknowledging an historical precedent for digital issues (such as the Victorian impact on modern society later articulated in chapter 4). It recognises the relationship between ontology and ethics (even if this complicated concept is not articulated to students overtly, it should be present in the development of a learning project). It further recognises the natural affinity toward the Platonic tradition, and virtue ethics in the online world, and the usefulness of the Classical tradition in helping to formulate problem solving strategies toward social and ethical problems.
4. Focus on Ethics

Digital civics directs a focus on ethics as a means to achieving civic learning outcomes, specifically virtue ethics. This ethics may arise organically in the infosphere as a process of virtuel ethics, which should be encouraged by the educator. Opportunities must be presented for students to engage with issues of shame, the impact of which, if not explored and appreciated, might negatively impact their ethical behaviours and prove destructive to society. Opportunities must also be presented for students to integrate their Action, Desire, and Reason (balancing fun and disciplined aspects in education) while practising civic interactions. This focus on ethics facilitates the development or enhancement of personal digital philosophies from which students can draw to make further ethical decisions and enact ethical behaviours.

Design

Ideally, designing the educational environment for a digital civics pedagogy project should include the aspects explored in chapter 4 in regards to structuring the pedagogical environment for digital civics, and encapsulated in table 4.1, in addition to the recognised feature of anonymity. These aspects, and their Facebook Laboratory examples, were:

1. The application of digital convergence: enacted through use of social networking and digitally convergent technologies

2. The inclusion of the greater community in learning: enacted through a group of trained citizens working with students as well as digital contact with the general public through the social networking environment

3. Teachers who incarnate skills: enacted through discipline professionals taking part in a civic participation project modelled behaviours to students
4. A program capable of functioning in multiple subject areas: enacted through the inter-disciplinary knowledge necessary to interact in the Facebook Laboratory

5. A multi-platform or “transmediated” approach that is flexible and allows for self-regulation in a “safe” (risk-reduced) manner: enacted through use of social networking, email, offline meetings, and convergent media, while controlling and monitoring information about who students are anonymously interacting with, and continuing to ask students with whom they are interacting

6. Be student-centric, and self-regulatory: enacted through responding to student requests, and employing a hands-off approach that allows students to make mistakes

7. An approach which scaffolds student learning to build their own personal digital philosophies: enacted through practicing their behaviour through their characters every day in the Facebook Laboratory

8. Harness the power of anonymity, using the space outside moral custom to create moral custom: through their anonymity, students could post things they wanted to say for themselves, and explore what outcomes might be, they could practice approach behaviours to shame, and be protected from social censure.

Successful implementation of a digital civics project should result in “Virtuel Ethics”.

The elements observed in the research data that were identified as potential contributors to a process of Virtuel Ethics included:

1. Crossover between the online and offline worlds

2. A hierarchical relationship that privileges a digital level of abstraction over an offline level of abstraction.

3. An approach to social and ethical problem solving that employs Platonic or Hellenic philosophical resources

4. An affinity for Platonic Virtue Ethics including: Arete, Phronesis, Eudaimonia, and the Chariot of Desire, and Reason

5. An exploration of the concept of Shame, and its impact on society, including online virtual communities

6. Focus on identity construction and the experiential experimentation of the individual in community settings
7. Increased competence at Self-Regulation
8. Increased competence and flexibility for Cooperation
9. Ability to appreciate the impact of digital convergence
10. An understanding of the Informational nature of reality

Learning Outcomes

Based on the theoretical conceptual structure for digital civics in pedagogy (including its civic, philosophical, and historical underpinnings), and demonstrating the role of virtue ethics in the infosphere, the presentation of learning outcomes encapsulates the influences, skills, and proactive engagements to develop critical ethical resources and a personal digital philosophy.

The aim of digital civics pedagogy is to foster ethically and civically responsible citizens of the infosphere.

To answer the challenge of 21st century citizenship education, students will need an awareness of the influences that impact their experience as digital age citizens, the skills to cope in their environment and which encourage sustained ethical and civic development, and opportunities to practice proactively, engaging with the foundational concepts of virtue ethics.

These factors should contribute to the formation of critical ethical resources, and the development of a personal digital philosophy, as foundational for anchoring and developing core principles for ethical behaviour in the infosphere.
Virtuel Ethics education should teach students:

**Awareness of Influences**

In order to contextualise their world, students should formulate awareness of the influences shaping their experience in the digital age:

1. The Infosphere: understand the relationship between the online and offline worlds, and the process of crossing between them.

2. Informational Ontology: acknowledge the nature of reality as informational

3. Digital Convergence: recognize the impact of digital convergence on life, and in approaching scholarship, the inter-disciplinary, convergent nature of knowledge, supporting a broadened perspective of scholarship

4. Historical Inheritance: appreciate the relevance of Platonic or Hellenic philosophy to life in the digital age, and the potential of history to provide problem solving approaches to ethical and social issues

5. Shame: identify the ubiquity of shame and its impact of daily life.

**Skills for Interaction**

To promote healthy community participation, students should develop the skills to promote successful civic interactions in the digital age:
1. Self-Regulation: The use of self-regulation, particularly in regard to the increasing amounts of responsibility that citizens must individually take on. Students will regulate their own behaviour when given tasks that excuse them from external authority, such as the responsible use of anonymity in interactions with peers, they will achieve this through a process of moderated practice.

2. Cooperation/Flexibility: A willingness to cooperate, with particular regard for the flexibility necessary for successful cooperative projects. Students will formulate working relationships with vetted individuals of differing backgrounds.

3. Coping in a de-physicalised environment: An ability to appreciate the consciousness of the human apart from their physical attributes. Students will value the working contributions of an individual in the online realm, above that individual’s physical background. Students will consider how changing ontology impacts their ethical behaviours considering how their behaviours change when no longer bound by physical constraints such as contemplating their ability to mislead others anonymously online. Students will enact increasing amounts of personal agency exploring how they might formulate new means of impacting the community through launching group projects such as through the formulation and execution of community events in the online realm that encourage the increased participation of other citizens.
4. Identity Construction: the ability to create situations and scenarios that allow the individual to experiment experientially to explore and develop new facets of their personal character. Students will experiment with different personas and situations, assessing the impact of: changes to their profile (such as pictures, names, interests, relationships); behaviours toward others explored through role-play scenarios (such as betraying friendships, confessing mistakes); sharing interests (such as posting or discussing accomplishments and hobbies).

5. Coping with Shame: Strategies to healthily (and safely) expose and cope with issues of shame, including approach behaviours or the appropriate use of anonymity

Students will choose appropriate responses in coping with shame: such as enacting approach behaviours to shame when the circumstances are advantageous, supporting those who have suffered shame through actively voicing support, exposing hypocrisy, identifying shame as the motivator of their actions

6. Enacting Virtuel Ethics: enacting a specific formulation of virtue ethics for the online world

Students will become familiar with the tenets of virtuel ethics, reflecting on how their interactions demonstrate these principles such as: conversing with peers or instructors about their choice of conversation topics, sharing media (poems, videos, pictures) online with peers that spur questions of virtue ethics in everyday life
Proactive Engagements

Students should practice in the educational environment to proactively engage with:

1. Digitally convergent technologies: Such as the integration of mobile phone technologies or social networking sites as tools of education

2. Immersion in perpetually connected, interactive, environments where the boundaries between the online and offline realms are blurred: Such as through contained projects like the Facebook Laboratory where controlled variables allow crossover between levels of abstraction whilst maintaining control of an immersive space (a city, school, or venue).

3. Resources of ethical and philosophical resources:
   - Levels of abstraction crossing over between the online and offline worlds: such as through posting photos or videos from offline experience online or using online resources to formulate events in the offline world
   - Memory: such as through legacy building memorable projects or the honouring of another’s actions or name
   - Shame: such as through presenting and discussing topics deemed to be shameful
   - Communities built on common interest: such as through interacting with vetted members of the public who share interests and hobbies
   - Virtue Ethics: such as through developing knowledge and practise of Platonic Virtue Ethics including: Arete, Phronesis, Eudamonia, and the Chariot of Desire, and Reason
Arete: facilitating students to consider who they are and who they would like to be (their most excellent version of themselves) through online experimentation

Phronesis: providing students with safe opportunities to make mistakes in judgement and reflect on those errors, or to practice advising other characters (reflecting on the best course of action in a situation)

Eudamonia: encouraging students to envision the potential for their life in the online environment through practising this experience online

Platonic Chariot: promoting a balance of fun and discipline as a means of achieving outcomes in the online environment

**Develop**

Students will develop ethical tools through sustained practical application of philosophical tenets.

1. Critical Ethical Resources: Students must demonstrate the processes of virtuel ethics in action through their daily practice in a practical learning environment (such as the Facebook Laboratory)

2. A Personal Digital Philosophy: Students must demonstrate the exploration and implementation of healthy ethical attitudes and ideas in the online environment through a process of sustained reflection on their conduct.

As noted in chapter 6, many other factors might yet be identified and incorporated as an integral part of virtuel ethics, including the eventual inclusion of strategies to support higher order learning outcomes.
6.10 Consolidating the Analysis

To reach the culmination of this work in the model for digital civics pedagogy, this chapter has discussed and analysed findings from the Facebook Laboratory, an environment theorised and enacted to foster ethical development in citizens of the infosphere. The behaviours of participants in this environment demonstrated an affinity for Platonic philosophical resources as a means of problem solving in the online world. They also demonstrated an organically arising system of ethics, with similarity to virtue ethics, specific to digital interactions, herein called “virtuel ethics”. Consolidating the findings and analysis into a model for digital civics pedagogy, Civics, Philosophy, History, and Ethics, were all brought together as conceptual underpinnings to ground the model, which explored the Awareness of Influences, Skills for Interaction, and Proactive Engagements that need to be practiced, to meet the learning outcomes of developing critical ethical resources and a personal digital philosophy.

In chapter 7, I will conclude this research reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the model, the Facebook Laboratory, and the research process as a whole, before finally commenting on how digital civics pedagogy might be taken forward.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

“Virtue ethics thus promises to serve as a critical ethical resource for our developing a shared but pluralistic global information and computing ethics” (Ess, 2010a: 296).

7.1 Conclusions

It has been the primary aim of this research to present how digital media education might meet the challenges of preparing students for ethically responsible participation as citizens of a digitally convergent society. Formulating an understanding of these challenges as a part of the infosphere, this research has explored a solution through digital civics pedagogy. Consequently, the prime motivator, and contribution of this work has been the development of a new model for digital civics pedagogy characterised through an exemplar in the form of a learning environment presented as the Facebook Laboratory. This model, intended for use in formal education, incorporates social media and live performance, aimed at secondary aged students, in an action-based project designed to foster the development of critical ethical resources: it formulates a conceptual approach to ethical agency in the infosphere, grounded in the philosophy of information and historical theory. I further introduce “virtuel ethics”, a term to describe the organically arising set of self-regulatory behaviours that stem from a practise of ethics with resemblance to Platonic philosophy and virtue ethics in the infosphere. The project’s potential ability to succeed has been demonstrated through its implementation with a group of research participants in Dublin, Ireland in 2010.

In concluding this work, I will: briefly a) restate the themes of this thesis, relating back to the body of literature reviewed, addressing the context within which
this thesis seeks to make a contribution to knowledge; b) consider the conceptual contributions of the work, reviewing the research findings; c) reflect on the model for digital civics in pedagogy, discussing the benefits and limitations of this model; d) discuss the benefits and limitations of the Facebook Laboratory; and finally, e) comment on the need for further study in this area.

At the beginning of this project, I provided a definition for the term “digital civics”, noting that this term was still acquiring currency. By doing so I created the parameters for a useful study into the lives of citizens in the infosphere and opened a discussion as to how education might address the needs of these citizens. In attempting to take account of the difficulties faced by educators due to digital convergence, I considered the factors mitigating the use of digital technologies, such as the fears of commercial or sexual exploitation that may arise from the deployment of ICTs in education, and the litigious threats schools face. Discussing the prevalence of competing over-arching philosophies in regards to the integration of digitally convergent technologies in schools, I commented on the complex position of administrators and teachers in this context. This chapter further observed the role of self-regulation in the infosphere and suggested the necessity of self-regulation as a means of human co-existence in the digital sphere. I presented the insights of ethicist, Charles Ess as a foundation for the employment of virtue ethics in digital civics (Ess, 2010a), and sought to extend and develop this argument in favour of virtue ethics throughout this work. I then identified the groundwork for introducing social networking into classrooms already present in literature, and offer an approach to constructing a project that balances the constructivist theory of Papert (1994) and Negroponte (2006) with Ess’ “embodiment” (Ess, 2003) through well trained
teachers. I articulated my interest in using a digital civics pedagogy project incorporating social media as an answer to the challenges facing media educators in the digital age. I address the element Mimi Ito describes as “missing” (Ito, 2011) in educational practise, by creating, and subsequently exploring this space ethnographically. The project findings contribute to this awareness, envisioning and realising an example of a project using the “geeking out” space, titled the “Facebook Laboratory” and examining how such a project contributes to civic engagement.

7.2 Conceptual Contributions

To ground digital civics in a philosophical tradition, I followed the lead of Charles Ess, and considered the work of information philosopher, Luciano Floridi. Subscribing to Floridi’s informational ontology, and considering his views on the fourth revolution, I formulated a theoretical framework, conceptually grounded in the philosophy of information, from which to develop and theorise the work of this thesis. Acknowledging the importance of Floridi’s work as an opportunity for making meaning within the digital age, I explored new dimensions of PI by espousing a digital civics grounded in a digital philosophy. In exploring Floridi’s insights on the implications of PI and the fourth revolution on citizens, and taking account of the nature of the infosphere in its interactive, convergent, and perpetually connective nature, I developed an approach exploring the relationship between ontological and ethical crises. I formulated links between these questions and historical societal responses (including those of the Victorian Aestheticists), presenting the need to incorporate further historical enquiry into exploring ontological change in the
Identifying the need for greater historical context, I turned to the task of grounding digital civics in an historical tradition. This task, too overwhelming to be relegated to a single chapter in a dissertation, served to create a skeleton, both for the later consideration of issues in digital civics, and the foundation for relevant pedagogical discussion, within this work. Noting that there was a need for digital media scholarship to re-examine its historical roots, I identified the work of David Ulansey, who observes parallels between the digital and Hellenistic ages to formulate insights about humanity’s behaviours, and formation of systems of ethical belief. Ulansey’s work provided further foundation for understanding the shift in ethical beliefs that requires exploration in the digital age due to changes in ontological and cosmological vision. I integrated these insights with Floridi’s ideas of the fourth revolution and the infosphere. In observing their shared insights, I provided further evidence of a digital age shift in ontology with impact on ethical beliefs, and formulated new insights on the importance of acknowledging historical antecedents on digital age philosophy, including their potential for creating educational ethical resources. I placed the area for digital civics to make a contribution within the realm of how society perceives its understanding to exercise agency in the digital age. Further, noting Ulansey’s identification of Plato’s distribution of new scientific knowledge as the catalyst for such changes, I postulated the usefulness of Platonic philosophy in formulating responses to ethical challenges in the digital age. I also identified ideas that appeared to be of value in understanding the relevance of the Platonic tradition in the digital age, including: memory, virtue, communities of
common interest, pluralism, and shame. I concluded, contextualising the parameters around digital civics in this study, by theorising the immersion of students as ethical agents in the online environment, as an educational means to develop approaches to philosophical and ethical questions about the digital world.

Bringing these foundations of educational, philosophical, and historical underpinnings together, I then present the methodological intentions in chapter 4. Reflecting on the various pragmatic approaches to alternative theatre, and experimental digital education in learning with specific reference to Rieber (1996; 1992), I create a novel means of instruction outlined with deference to the practicalities faced by educators. Using narrative and transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006a) through community informatics, I develop on Elwell’s paradigm of a transmediated-self (Elwell, 2014), in which the infosphere is utilised as a space for identity development, actualising it through the Facebook Laboratory. Providing considerations from the perspective of both a researcher and a project director, I divided these roles to prevent compromising the research data. The separation of roles also demonstrated the approach that a teacher might utilise to implement a similar project independent of research outcomes. To analyse the project data, I presented a strategy of ethnography, teamed with recursive abstraction, borrowing broadly from recursive frame analysis, which allowed for the summation of research material.

Chapter 5 presents data and findings from the Facebook Laboratory, exploring the space ethnographically. This included the data derived from interviews with the participants and live action behaviours, in addition to the participation taking place on Facebook (presented through print screens). To exemplify the student participant
behaviours in the infospheric environment, I offered a case study of the final project event, the ‘Monetta Wedding’, highlighting the various aspects of interaction noted throughout the project’s month long process. From ethnographic data presented in the weekly summaries, I then provided summaries of the overall interaction initiating the process of recursive abstraction for use in chapter 6. This interaction was observed in reference to converging levels of abstraction, converging of education content, and converging of educational community. Interaction was also characterised into behavioural themes to explore the individual and community aspects at play in civic interaction, and the relationship between these aspects. The behaviours that were pertinent to the individual included the way in which behaviours were ‘de-physicalised’ in the infosphere, and the valuing of individuals based on their ideas, as opposed to their physicality. They also demonstrated the participants’ individual desires to create and honour memory and legacy; to engage with one another honestly and to uncover factual truths. In so doing, they were forced to engage with shame and its impact on their lives. They also sought to develop themselves authentically, trying to formulate an identity that they perceived as true to themselves. They sought to improve their decision-making abilities, creating reflections of real life situations from which they could learn. And they pursued happiness, experimenting with identities and behaviours that they felt might help them achieve this end.

In approaching their community, the participants explored the shared ownership of work, exploring the flexibility in their approach with one another that was to prove necessary to success. They built communities based on common interest (as opposed to kinship or location based ties), and sought out the experiences of others to develop their knowledge further in a disciplined and long-term fashion.
These ethical behaviours indicated sympathy with Platonic philosophy and focused on various aspects of Platonic virtue ethics.

Drawing from the interactions summarized in chapter 5, I proposed six anchoring concepts for discussion in chapter 6:

(1) That there is an affinity for Platonic philosophy as a means of approaching ethical problems in the infosphere, and that it has potential as a means of developing problem solving strategies to digital age problems. (2) That virtue ethics, specifically Platonic virtue ethics, could play an active role in ethical interactions in the infosphere. (3) Ideally, fun and self-discipline will balance participant behaviours, akin to a Platonic Chariot, integrating the positive and negative qualities of citizens to move forward toward a more ethically enlightened state. (4) Shame plays a strong and prevalent role in the interactions of citizens in the infosphere. Both in the role it plays as a mitigating factor, preventing individuals from speaking or enacting their true selves, and also as an approach behaviour in which individuals attempt to overcome issues of shame through their public proclamations, drawing shameful issues into the public sphere for open discussion. (5) Virtue ethics provides potential to meet the demands of self-regulation in the infosphere; although initial difficulties may occur during adjustment to this new means of behavioural regulation. (6) In drawing together the concepts of Virtue Ethics and Self-Regulation for application in Digital Civics Education, a process called Virtuel ethics appears to arise organically in the infosphere.

Drawing together this work, a model was then formulated for digital civics pedagogy. Building upon the conceptual undepinnings of Civics, Philosophy, History, and Ethics, it grounded itself in civic rights and responsibilities and educational practice, the philosophy of information, historical consciousness, and
Platonic virtue ethics respectively. Exploring the design of digital civics pedagogy environments, I presented the structural implementation for a digital civics project that should result in Virtuel Ethics. I also presented the required Awareness of Influences, Skills for Interaction, and Proactive Engagements that need to be practiced, to meet the learning outcomes of developing critical ethical resources and a personal digital philosophy.

Exploration of the observations noted in the research findings that gave rise to the understanding of and model for digital civics pedagogy, outlined that:

Virtue ethics is vital to successful digital civics education. The assertion by Charles Ess, that virtue ethics “promises to serve as a critical ethical resource for our developing a shared but pluralistic global information and computing ethics” (Ess, 2010a: 296) was explored, and evidence gathered was compatible with this view. Taking this forward, the ethics observed in participant interactions showed similarities with virtue ethics, but also appeared to have characteristics specific to its practise in the infosphere: including approach behaviours to shame (discussed in 6.5), and a notable incidence of convergence (discussed in 5.6). In addition to this, it was also valuable in encouraging the development of self-regulatory qualities within student participants. Further, the use of fun and self-discipline within the project appeared to function as a learning mechanism for the Platonic equivalent of the Chariot of Desire and Reason: an integration of the “geeking out” fun space and more disciplined educational pursuit for enacting civic engagement, discussed by Ito (2010) as a “missing piece” in media education.
Shame was acknowledged as a mitigating influence on the actualisation of personal agency by the participants. The work suggests there are opportunities for the educational capabilities of social networking, or Rieberian styled learning environments, to facilitate approach behaviours (as discussed by Hooge et al. [2011]) to overcome issues of shame. The work has further suggested that Silverstone’s notion of a public ethical discourse for effective media literacy should take account of the impact of shame and find ways of eliminating shame’s influence; finding ways of encouraging authentic civic engagement when drawing sensitive topics into the public sphere (including the use of anonymity [Turkle, 1996] or approach behaviours [Hooge et al. 2011]).

In exploring the ideas of virtue ethics, memory, and shame, I built on the observations in chapter 3, of a Platonic legacy within the infosphere and the hypothesis that Platonic philosophy will help further our understanding of the digital age. Participant behaviour in the Facebook Laboratory demonstrated the application of Platonic philosophical resources is attempting to solve digital age social problems. Thus, digital civics appreciates the importance of Platonic virtue ethics in online interactions. I labelled the behavioural online interactions occurring in the infosphere with regard to this ethical enquiry “virtuel ethics”, a term I introduced as a means of encompassing the various self-regulatory behaviours that stem from ethical practise that includes an exploration of themes with considerable resemblance to Platonic philosophy (such as shame and memory), and with similarity to virtue ethics, that functions in the infosphere specifically. I further noted that this practising of virtuel ethics was organic to participant behaviour. It arose from the individual who self-regulates, an internal behavioural motivation based on intrinsically valuing responsible civic behaviour.
7.3 Benefits of The Research and the Facebook Laboratory

The research began as an exploration to understand digital civics, and to develop pedagogy for it. The work developed two outcomes: seeking new knowledge about civics and ethics, and the creation of a pedagogical programme. From this work, a model has developed to address the question of digital civics pedagogy for citizens in the infosphere. Its conceptual underpinnings grounded in strong traditions help to explore what digital civics is, and better contextualize its role in 21st century life. So too, the awareness of influences developed through the research created a better understanding of the social forces at work in the digital world. In chapter 4, I noted 5 points through which to explore evidence of civic education behaviours and assess whether the project was meeting its research outcomes. These included exploration of the three aspects of convergence (community, content, and levels of abstraction), project ownership (sustainability and self-regulation), and identity exploration. Acknowledging the limitations of the research – the small group of student participants, and the short length of study – good progress was made in developing knowledge of digital civics and its educational environment:

1. In addressing whether the students would take ownership of the project, and whether this learning could become self-sustaining.

This was successful, the student participants took full ownership of the project, and within a short period of time had created their own events, formulating an impressive online play in the Monetta Wedding. Their daily discipline was all the more impressive, given they were only asked to log in once a week.
2. In raising questions of identity, and identity exploration, the student participants clearly demonstrated such principles, without any guidance to do so. This work continued long after the project had already concluded.

3. Converging of community in digital education did occur with flexible cooperation. However, there were difficulties getting external partners to deliver (particularly the business community).

4. Converging levels of abstraction occurred only in the pre-planned events, students did not foster opportunities for themselves, nor did they all attend live action events. The short-term of the project made this a difficult research outcome to assess.

5. Converging learning content, explored through the table of learning outcomes noted discernable skill development in a variety of disciplines.

The interdisciplinary approach of the research proved assistive in formulating the philosophical and historical underpinnings for this research as well as for the analysis of the data. Integrating digital ethnography, with less commonly used methods such as recursive abstraction, proved assistive in developing a structured approach to the qualitative data. The use of recursive abstraction to focus on themes in the ethnography was helpful when coping with philosophy or ideas-based work, natural to ethical discourse. As social networking relies on social interactions, the integration of psychological tools aimed specifically at understanding such exchanges, is logical and advantageous. The approaches enmesh well, given their shared iterative natures.
In regards to the students’ learning, there were numerous benefits to the project. Pupils were enabled to formulate approaches to ethical and social problems, which provided insight into influential notions in their lives, such as shame, virtue, and memory. For example, they explored the presence of shame and its impact on life decisions, through their character interactions. The potential to act independently of shame, or to ‘overcome’ its negative influence on their life choices was seen in the eventual actions taken by the character participants. Shame was identified on numerous occasions and consciously identified as a factor in life behaviours, by the participants. By the end of the project, it was clear that students had enacted numerous scenarios that would provide them insight into virtue, both within the safety of the Facebook Laboratory, and also in their own life interactions with friends and peers. These included: their mistaken behaviour in deceiving their schoolfriends incognito and unprompted correction of this behaviour; their role playing of sibling kindess and support for one another on the death of their father, and their insistence that their mother tell the truth; and their exploration of the mitigating role of shame in the Monetta wedding.

The concept of memory was further clearly raised for the group of student learners; both through the value they placed on the legacy of those who had gone before, as well as the legacy they wished to create. Student and character participants alike discussed their desire to be true to the events that had occurred historically when portraying their characters and put a great deal of effort into researching their own characters. The students themselves articulated how they would also have enjoyed this aspect of the project had they been assigned an historical character. In this respect, the project took advantage of what appeared to be a naturally occurring instance in the digital age (the respect for memory), capitalizing on its capacity to
motivate historical research for educational betterment. Further to this, the student participants had a strong desire to create their own event in the project that would contribute its own legacy, leading to their creation of the online wedding. Here again, appreciating the respect and interest students had for memory, naturally produced educational outcomes.

Another benefit was the way in which students, and even character participants, were able to consolidate the past and present day to formulate a richer understanding of their world. They were able to see that citizens of the digital age are not isolated to a new pocket in history devoid of help or influence from their past. Comparisons made by the participants drawing parallels between the Victorians and the digital age raised numerous themes relevant to life in the infosphere. Articulated ideas from Victorian characters regarding technological development demonstrated historical precedent for questioning progress and the future, potentially helping students to ease tensions about their own future. They were also able to develop skills enabling them to view history as a “real” time and place, and to see historical figures as real people, not merely as distant figures from the past. Many of the historical characters were celebrities, suggesting potential to open media literacy discussions with students about celebrity. Thus, opportunities may be present to apply this knowledge to media deconstruction and building traditional critical analysis skills.

The motivating factor of fun, and the opportunity to generate learning experiences grounded in personal interests occurred within the project, and demonstrated the usefulness of the social media space. Students’ active learning in traditional school subjects occurred, not within the confines of the traditional classroom, but on their personal fun time, in their own “geeking out” space. The community oriented interactions, which relied on collaboration and community
building, provided relevant skills for the “real world” outside the classroom. It also provided students the freedom to integrate their own knowledge into the project.

The students also utilised the project to explore notions of identity and the presentation of their own identity online. They created difficult conditions and scenarios that served dual functions: keeping their narrative active, and allowing them to explore how people interact in a variety of situations.

7.4 Benefits and limitations of the model

The model for digital civics in pedagogy, arising out of the project, is useful as a means of addressing numerous issues that arise in the infosphere. Its philosophical nature makes it an effective tool both on its own, and as a complementary measure to other traditional educational practises. Its long reaching impact is demonstrated on the lives of participants, who continued to be affected by the philosophies they developed for some time after the project’s completion. Digital civics focus on developing skills of ethical thinking that assist in the development of civic behaviours also formulates a strong foundation for future ethical development and the opportunity to create sustained ethical discourses for lifelong learning.

Virtuel ethics potential to address ethical issues in the digital age could be enacted in numerous ways: through its problem solving mechanisms, such as its use of phronesis to formulate responses to new experiences online; its focus on drawing from historical traditions, such as Platonic philosophy, to ensure citizens are not isolated and devoid of help from their past; and the acknowledgement of the informational nature of reality, as a means of appreciating and coping with ontological change. It appears to be organically arising, providing a natural entry
point for the formation of ethical discourse in the infosphere. The model also
develops citizens to a higher level of ethical and social understanding; one in which
they are capable of taking on more responsibility for themselves and their society.
This encourages the development of a personal level of insight into behaviour, and
greater uptake of personal power and involvement in civic society.

There are however, limitations to this model, which should be addressed:

(1) The benefit of increased personal levels of insights, and indeed the
development of the individual to a high standard is time and labour intensive. It
requires educational time and personal time (for reflection) for development, in
addition to educational resources, including well-trained teachers. The model relies
on the ability of educators to work with students, and of participants to work with one
another. Without a cohesive community in which a majority of participants are
willing to take part, the model does not function. Nor can it function in the absence of
well trained and personally developed educators who are willing to take risks and
innovate; who are comfortably educated enough to deal with the unexpected as it
arises in participant interactions, and who feel sufficiently administratively supported
to proceed in facilitating philosophical discourse. Indeed, the philosophical nature of
digital civics, while its greatest asset, is also one of its drawbacks. Philosophies can
be misinterpreted, and are difficult to quantify in terms of outcomes. It could prove
challenging to justify the merits of philosophical education against fiscal expenditure
in traditional figures, when the results of philosophy are not quantifiable in traditional
terms.

(2) The reliance on self-regulation presents another potential challenge. It
requires consequences to be taken by the user. In the atmosphere of increased
responsibility being placed onto the user already, this may place the practitioner of
digital civics in a vulnerable position. One in which they are so comfortable with their own responsibility in interactions that they may fail to appreciate the importance of legal protections. This may lead to a situation in which existent legal protections are removed from citizens in favour of expecting increasingly higher levels of regulation from citizens. It is necessary to balance the role of self-regulation against the role of legal protections to ensure that the behavioural role of self-regulation does not lead to a legal scenario in which legal protections are unappreciated or removed.

(3) The complex interrelationship between legal regulation and ethics presents another challenge to the model for digital civics. In cases where a dissonance exists between what is legal and what is ethical, actions taken by citizens may be moral, or virtuous, following the pattern of behaviours one would ideally anticipate from virtue ethics; but these behaviours may prove inconsistent or contradictory to some legislation. The implementation of digital civics on a large scale introduces the potential for short-term confusion regarding regulatory measures and even the role of law in society. This could result in challenges to the existent legal system, such as test cases, or even a move toward de-regulation which, though it may appear preferable to restrictive regulation, risks the loss of certain civic protections.

(4) Finally, while the focus on self-regulation does include an understanding of consequences on others and society, the project should seek to further develop skills in empathy. The project lent itself to developing empathy, such as through its offering opportunity to step into the lives of another person (the creating of new and historical persona’s and the creation of narratives between those characters) but this aspect was under-explored. So while this digital civics model formulates the initial building blocks for the development of empathy, and clearly has the potential to develop there is a need to explore further the educational formulations that might
constitute successful educational provision for this virtue. This is particularly so in light of more recent research arising after the Facebook Laboratory’s completion, which discusses the central importance of ethics of care in virtue ethics for the digital age, such as that presented by Shannon Vallor (2016). Consequently, an examination of the ethics of care, a field which explores the virtue of empathy and similar virtues focused on “caring action” for the needs of others (Vallor, 2016: 133), in relation to digital civics would make an important next step in the development of this model; adding a new, and critical, element in taking digital civics further. This might include an examination of other specific virtues that might be integrated into the model, and how these virtues might fit and interact with one other. Work that should be drawn from as a valuable starting point for this exploration includes the aforementioned ideas of Shannon Vallor in presenting technomoral virtues (Vallor, 2016), and that of Charles Ess, who posits the usefulness of feminist virtue theory and ethics of care in his work (Ess, 2010b). It would be useful to consider ways in which the concept of empathy could be operationalized in the model, and further study in this area would provide important new resources vital for ethical development.

7.5 Implications for Design: Areas for Improvement in the Facebook Laboratory

The Facebook Laboratory would benefit from reform in several areas to provide greater learning opportunities. While I did draw on plenty of relevant resources to construct the Victorian Wilde environment (such as autobiographies, and academic experts), there were other existing scholastic digital resources already online relevant to educating about Wilde, the Victorians, and the 1890s, that could have been included, such as: the Oscholars website for free research exchange on
Oscar Wilde; lectures on YouTube that provide clips from documentaries about Wilde; and images from Pinterest that provide information about the period. Not only would this have been a time saving measure preventing new content creation, but could have provided interesting new avenues to contextualise the participants’ daily interactions. Numerous sites, videos, podcasts, images, and webquests already exist online, many of them constructed by experts with a passion for their discipline. Rather than simply circulating a topic and providing a brief explanation to support participants, I might have provided context for the topic by linking to an existing digital resource. Further, to add an element of secrecy or excitement, I might have simply provided a link each day for participants to follow which would reveal their daily topic (much like a secret agent assignment). This might have motivated an increased level of personal engagement with individual topics in the project. With time and experience, participants might even be given differing topics that conjoined to formulate new conversations.

The results of the prototype also make clear that the project would run successfully over an increased duration. Before many of the participant’s ideas could fully take shape, the project had already completed. Such a project would be suited to a long-term approach (such as a full academic year). Given a broader period for implementation, participants may have explored not only differing topics and philosophies, but also have interacted to differing degrees (that is, while some participants may have played a large part of the action for several months, other participants might take on story arches of their own in time, allowing each individual

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98 See for example, the Oscholars website: https://oscholars-oscholars.com/; Kevin Dettmar’s YouTube lecture (2013) featuring Wilde’s Dorian Grey: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZQ9GfsVqOA; and Gravity-Fashions’ infographic on Victorian corsetry: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/345721708871651491/
opportunity to “play” in accordance with their own style of interaction and schedule.

Further, as students took time to become accustomed to the environment and test the boundaries of interaction, they may have developed further strategies and educational ideas useful for their development. The short-term nature of the project was due largely to the low expectations of the researcher. I had assumed that by the end of a month, participants would “get bored” with the project and it might fail to maintain cohesion, particularly once the citywide program of events hosted by One City, One Book had concluded. Rather, at the end of a month, people wished to continue, and claimed that they lacked enough time to enact some of their ideas fully.

In chapter 6, the project data suggested there were important opportunities for the educational capabilities of social networking, specifically as Rieberian styled learning environments, to facilitate approach behaviours to overcome issues of shame (as suggested by Hooge et al. [2011]). The opportunity to cope with a factor so ubiquitous and potentially destructive to society (Gilbert, 1997) is quite important, and integrating a more structured approach to discussing issues of shame would likely prove assistive. The shape that such an approach might take could vary, but, at the very least, consciously articulating its presence, and suggesting students review the number of interactions in which shame is present may prove a highly effective exercise.

Another issue with this model is assessment. Collecting data to examine student processes and interactions is not only the preserve of the researcher; it is also the process used by the educator to ensure that students are meeting learning objectives. Challengingly, some student growth is unquantifiable by traditional means of assessment. As a researcher, all data is useful- that students did not utilize the feedback types I had created was valuable in forming a hypothesis and subsequently a
theory about digital interaction. Teachers, however, do not always have such freedom. There are potentials to assess student efforts on Facebook, given that each student’s individual profile provides a log of interactions. Although the number of hours cannot be logged (an aspect of design that might be remedied in conjunction with Facebook), the number of posts, messages, friends, pages, and events can be monitored. The content of students’ posts reflects their knowledge (for example, their ability to discuss relevant issues or introduce new information) and their behaviours (such as attendance at community events) could all be indicators for assessment. Students should push the boundaries of traditional communication to present their intentions as “authors” with clarity. Utilizing assignments designed to provoke original means of knowledge presentation, assessment strategies should allow feedback utilising visual or aural material in addition to the written word.

But assessing how a student has changed or developed their philosophical view is a more complex process, and cannot be measured in the form of tickboxes or a traditional rubrik. Sometimes it cannot even be measured through a student’s conscious articulations. Exploring a new model for assessment that allows multiple types of feedback, and takes into account the various ways in which students formulate philosophical understanding would be a useful contribution that could offer much, not only to this research, but the educational community at large. While the learning outcomes for traditional subject areas, and specific behaviours were outlined and presented through a table in chapter 5 and discussed, it is extremely difficult to quantify personal growth. Learning outcomes that can be measured are valuable as a means of helping set appropriate learning goals, communicating intentions, and justifying approaches: they offer transparency in the learning process through their ability to be open to public inspection. However, finding ways of measuring how
affected a student’s development will be over the long term, how their life may change, or how they feel about themselves, is not something that can always be openly observed within a single academic year, or even an academic career in secondary school. Certainly, longer term forms of assessment should be explored, particularly in conjunction with such ideas based projects.

Finally, the age scope for implementation of social networking is technically limited to teenagers: Facebook, for example, allows user accounts at the age of 13. Even at this age, schools are uncomfortable exposing minors to the risks of public interaction given the potential consequences if problems arise. Unlike most other educationally oriented digital learning environments, Facebook is open to the World Wide Web, indeed, this access to the broader educational community is an important aspect of the digital civics program that can present challenges to the traditional closed school environment. While Facebook might prove useful to students in the upper levels of secondary education, a practise social networking site might prove conducive to education (and policy) requirements in earlier levels. A closed-circuit, school contained, monitored, transparent program, lacking the feature of private messaging (and thereby the potential to covertly compose damaging communications to other schools or fellow pupils), might be implemented to assist younger students in learning about the world of social networking, while mitigating some of the risks of public interaction. Such a project for young people might be called “schoolbook” (similar to closed environments such as Blackboard learning systems) and could be developed through several stages of exposure (or stratified) to the outside environment. This would allow students to learn skills appropriate to their age level, with an aim to eventually managing their interactions within the convergent
environment. It would further allow them the opportunity to learn about risk taking and self-regulation in an environment where their mistakes would have marginalised consequences.

In chapter 6, I observed the potential for virtuel ethics instruction beginning with the philosophical tenets independent of digital technologies, and it is likely that introduction of such models of thought could be introduced during the formative years of development in primary school, without the perceived dangers of online interaction. The school would thus become a place initiating philosophical preparation at a young age; where errors and the students themselves, are “safe”; and where students may view the educational environment as a laboratory for experiments in formulating identity development, and ethical agency.

Finally, in practical terms, the amount of work and energy that went into shaping and sculpting the digital environment was intensive. The project called on the researcher to develop a high level of unanticipated technical skills and to re-develop out-dated technical skills. Consequently, educators will face a burden of developing their own range of skills for implementation. Subsequently, the labour intensive digital environment that had been sculpted took on its own shape, and many of the materials created weren't utilised by the participants. To the educator, whose planning time is limited, this may seem frustrating. When designing future projects, it is useful for educators to consider:

- Students will create their own resources (probably far more easily than an educator), so consider allowing student contributions from the outset of planning

- Students will create their own research scenarios, so creating only a minimum bare skeleton which they can flesh out is desirable. Forcing too many details only pushes the students down the instructor’s path; students require scaffolding, not sculpting,
and populating a skeletal site with user created materials is how social networks are intended to function.

- Learning material acquisition is much easier than might be anticipated given that numerous resources already exist online. Numerous types of media might be utilised (video clips, podcasts, webpages, or apps, as well as written communications). For example, giving explanations to participants via email, could equally be accomplished by sharing a YouTube link of a particular event, or an informative podcast.

- Organizations and individuals already exist whose help is readily available. Though it is necessary to confirm their identities for online interaction, and safety checks should be conducted.

- Traditional means of assessment will prove challenging in this model. The project will not fit into rigid assessment schemes. Employing numerous options for assessment would be preferable, but the project will likely require a new form of assessment.

7.6 Going Forward

Digital civics can be a powerful tool for civic engagement, and for citizenship itself. New models for pedagogy such as this digital civics model encourage students to become engaged, critically thinking digital citizens. As a project functioning in the sphere of informal education, this project was highly successful at encouraging learning on numerous levels. If adopted into the formal school curriculum, this work could motivate study through its “fun” approach, thus improving measurable outcomes in terms of what students learn in traditional academic disciplines. It also demonstrates long-term benefits for individuals and for society through the more personal endeavor of developing a philosophy about the digital world. Further study in this area would create and explore new dimensions of digital civics, and find ways of further operationalizing it to formulate higher learning outcomes, such as the development of greater empathy in interactions.
The presence of virtuel ethics in the infosphere offers useful insight into digital civics pedagogy and can provide a new underpinning for further educational models seeking to understand the challenges of teaching in the infosphere. The nature of virtuel ethics, and its role in interactions in the infosphere in another avenue of further study that would contribute to greater understanding of life in the infosphere.

Critical thinking and engaged citizens are necessary for successful life in the infosphere. Digital civics in pedagogy offers a solution for educators to proactively take account of the infosphere and civically prepare students for their world.
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