

Facebook phenomenon continues to grow

by Niki Klukas

Lately it seems as though everyone and their dog are on Facebook.

According to Facebook.com, they are "a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study, and live around them."

"People use Facebook to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet."

For most people, Facebook is a place to post pictures, comment to friends and cyber-stalk old acquaintances.

Facebook users agree that the service is a good way to keep in touch with friends who are far away.

Avid Facebooker Stacy Richardson says, "It is a quick and easy way to keep in touch with everyone and be able to catch up with old friends. I like being able to write quick messages to people, especially if I just want to say 'hi' and don't have time to have a long conversation."

"I have been able to get back in touch with friends from where I lived when I was little, which is really nice because I'm not sure how that would have happened otherwise," Richardson continues.

Frequent Facebook user Emily Bretzel finds that Facebook can help her organize things in her life. She says, "One of my favorite Facebook features is the event organizer. If I want to get my friends together, I don't have to make phone calls or collect emails. I just let Facebook do it for me!"

She continues, "I also enjoy writing quick hellos or comments on peoples' walls. It's fun and helps me keep in touch with people I don't get to see or talk to very often. I love Facebook!"

As of February 2007, Facebook had 17 million registered users.

Begun by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard in February 2004, the Facebook system began grew rapidly. By December 2004, it was popular throughout all of the Ivy League schools. Zuckerberg was then granted additional funding and spread Facebook across North America.

Some people who have helped

Facebook along the way include PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel and Sean Parker, a co-founder of Napster.

"On September 22, 2006, it was revealed that Yahoo had offered \$900 million for Facebook. Within hours, Facebook users created hundreds of groups protesting against the possible acquisition," says Anick Jesdanun of Yahoo News.

There have been rumors that Justin Trudeau, who on February 22, 2007, announced that he would seek the federal nomination in the Montreal riding of Papineau, is going to implement the use of Facebook in his campaign.

Most Facebook users seem to log on quite frequently. Longtime user Briana Erickson says, "I log onto Facebook on average about twice a day. Sometimes more, sometimes less."

Proud user Luke Ledebuhr says, "I am on the computer all day at work, and when I get home I am on the computer again, usually doing homework for school. So I do log on about three or four times per day periodically."

Les Adams, Dalhousie graduate, says that he usually logs on at least once a day. He continues, "I enjoy it because I have friends all over the place, so it's a way to keep in touch without having to talk on MSN all of the time."

"Also you can join groups for things such as your high school, work, or clubs."

In addition to simply keeping people up to date with friends, the groups that people can join seem to be a popular use for Facebook.

Some of the most popular groups include ones dealing with TV shows, sports, or other common interests. But some of the groups range from odd to extremely bizarre.

A few groups include: An Odd Conversation About David Beckham, Together We Shall Unite Our Feet To Crunch Every Leaf On This Earth, and Giant Radioactive Snails.

Joel Seligstein, a Facebook engineer, says, "Groups on Facebook seem to be used in two entirely different ways. First, groups are used to organize around a real-life interest or group, and members of these groups visit the pages to find out new information about its happenings."

Jonathan Hudon / The Brunswickan

He continues, "On the other hand, groups can be great just to declare an affiliation, such as my obsession with Thin Mints."

One new Facebook user, Jacqueline Kelly of Fredericton, is not so sure about the intrigue of the service in her life.

She says, "I'm new to Facebook, and I don't really get the point of it. But I'm still trying. I went to look up my high school people, and there is no one from my graduating class, so I'm thinking that maybe there's a bit of a generation gap. I graduated in '93."

Kelly says she signed up because "a few people had invited me, and it was right around the time that I started a new business, so I thought it might be a good networking tool. I checked it a few times and there was nothing to see so I don't quite see the allure."

"Facebook gives lonely people something to do to amuse them, and it gets them to stop bugging their friends on MSN. If there's really nothing to see, then I'll probably stop checking it pretty soon because it's kind of lame," she concludes.

Co-founder Dustin Moskovitz notes that "almost ten million differ-

ent users sign into the site every day, more than half the user base. During our biggest peaks, Sunday and Monday nights around 10:00 pm Eastern Time, more than one million people will be simultaneously logged into the site. So when something occupies a big portion of the population's attention, we notice."

Facebook seems to have some seriously addictive qualities. Stacy Richardson explains, "It can be really addictive, mostly because it is something to do when you are bored, and it is a way to get gossip without talking to anyone."

"I go on here when I need to waste some time or I am procrastinating (which can be a lot)," she concludes.

Luke Ledebuhr agrees. "Facebook is very addictive. Part of the reason I think that it is so addictive is because it is a quick link to all of your friends, and we have quick access to the Internet basically anywhere we are," he says.

Les Adams goes on to say, "You almost have withdrawal if you don't log on daily during your first week or so. I've heard so many people say they are addicted to it."

"At first you get hooked on finding as many of your friends as possible and then new friends keep joining. Also you sometimes stumble across friends that know other friends of yours that you didn't know of. It's a vicious cycle," Adams explains.

Ezra Callahan, a senior product manager at Facebook, warns that it is important to use the services of Facebook wisely.

He says users should be very careful about posting personal information, such as phone numbers or addresses, on group and event walls.

Callahan also warns against accepting random friend requests, sharing your password, and posting pictures of people, including yourself, doing illegal things.

It is important to remember that no matter how insulated Facebook may seem, if you are not careful, anyone registered can have access to your posted information.

Out in that crazy Internet world people will continue to chat, share pictures, look up old friends, and search for others with common interests. With the craze of Facebook, it seems as though the connections are limitless.

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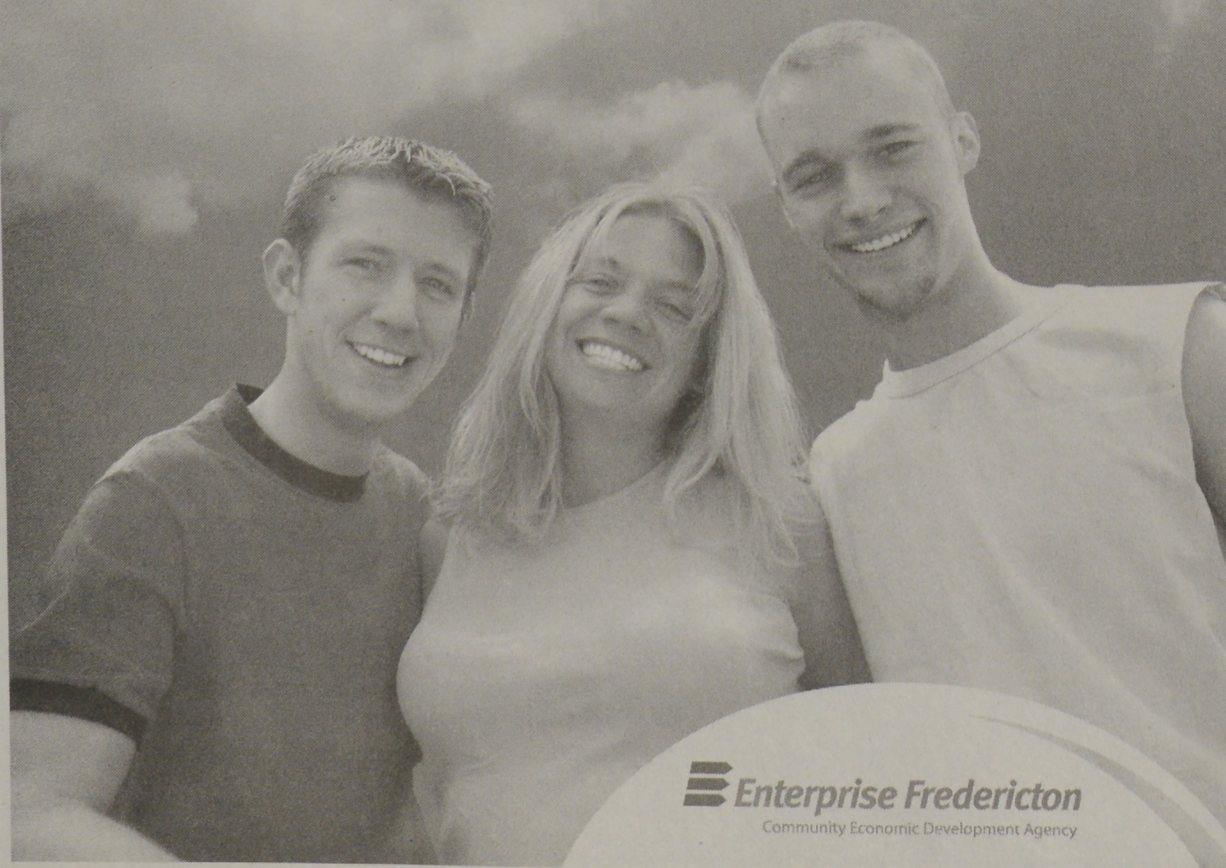
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