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Intro to Computer-Mediated Communication

A walk through CMC's past

1. Computer-mediated communication is not a new phenomenon.

2. Theories of CMC have evolved with the technology.

3. BUT this evolution cannot keep pace with technological developments.
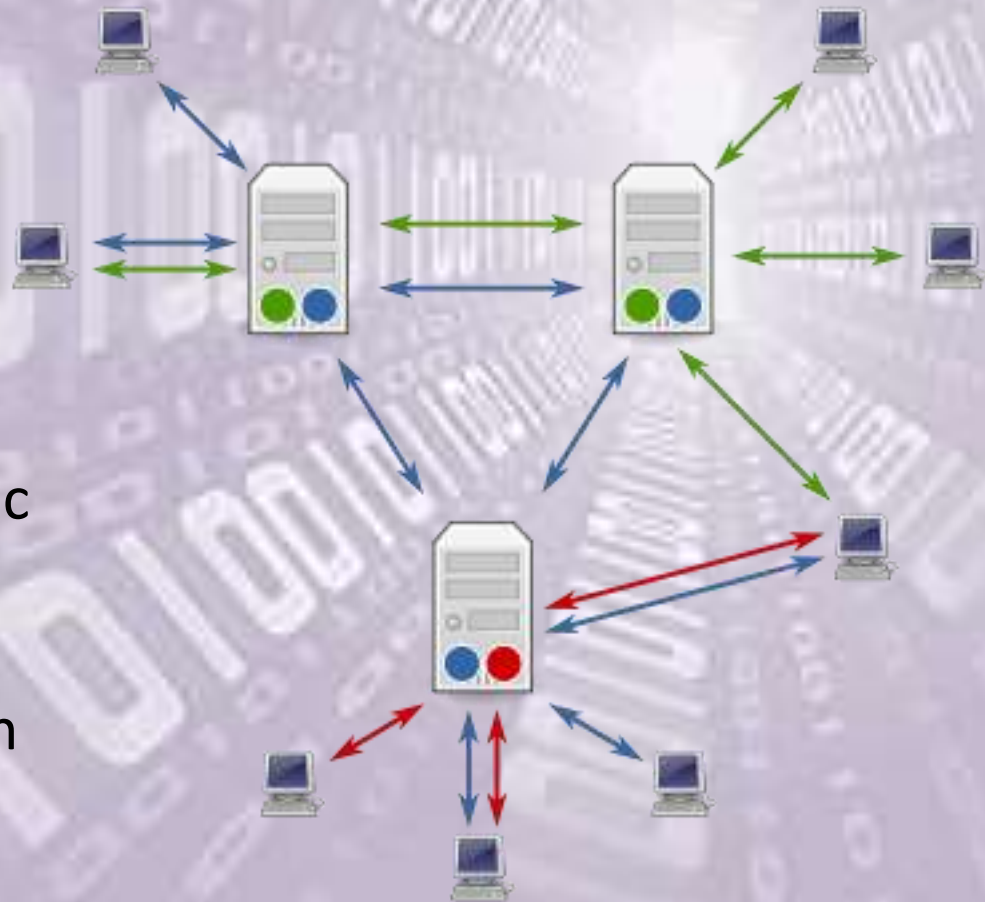
CMC is as old as the Internet

Usenet (1979)

Best-known and widely researched online discussion forum.

Newsgroups for every topic imaginable.

See Baym (1998) & Donath (1999) for examples of research using Usenet.
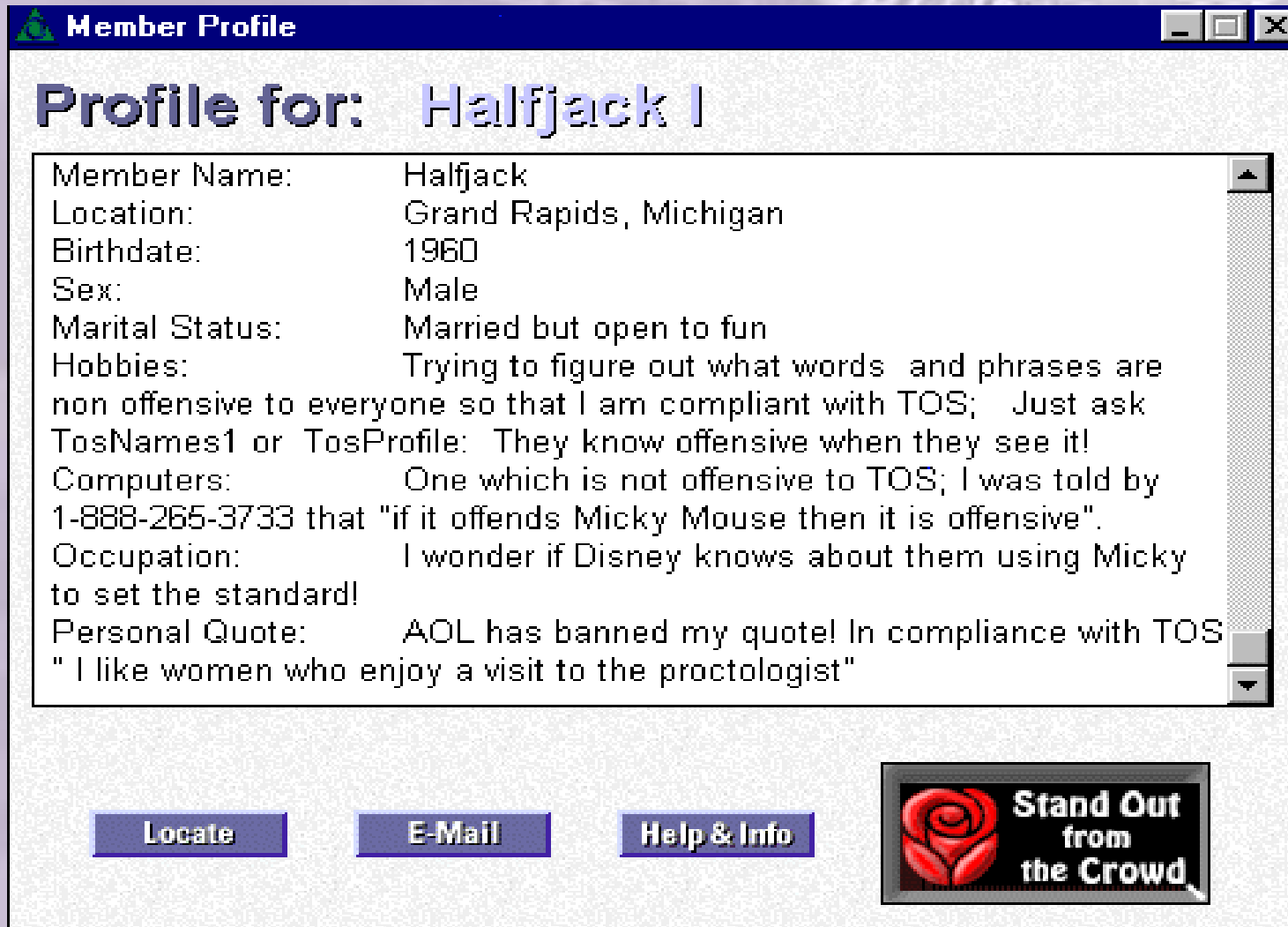
CMC is as old as the Internet

AOL connected millions of people to the Internet and served as both an ISP and as a homebase for establishing an online identity.

AOL Chat Rooms enabled large-group pseuodonymous, synchronous interactions.

AIM (1996) enabled synchronous one-to-one interactions.

CMC is as old as the Internet

Member Profile

Profile for: Halfjack I

Member Name:	Halfjack
Location:	Grand Rapids, Michigan
Birthdate:	1960
Sex:	Male
Marital Status:	Married but open to fun
Hobbies:	Trying to figure out what words and phrases are

non offensive to everyone so that I am compliant with TOS; Just ask
TosNames1 or TosProfile: They know offensive when they see it!

Computers:	One which is not offensive to TOS; I was told by

1-888-265-3733 that "if it offends Micky Mouse then it is offensive".

Occupation:	I wonder if Disney knows about them using Micky

to set the standard!

Personal Quote:	AOL has banned my quote! In compliance with TOS

" I like women who enjoy a visit to the proctologist"

Locate   **E-Mail**   **Help & Info**

Stand Out from the Crowd
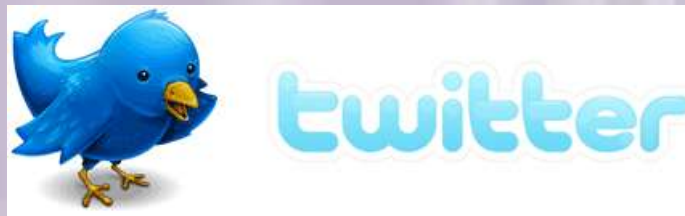
CMC is as old as the Internet

Online dating sites serve a very specific purpose: finding someone to date (casually or seriously)

Modality switching.

Static profiles →
asynchronous communication
→ synchronous communication
→ face-to-face meetings.

CMC is as old as the Internet

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define SNSs 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."

Theories of CMC

Cues-filtered-out approach (Culnan & Markus, 1987)

Dominant in 1980s and into the 1990s

CMC is *impersonal*; less social/personal; leaner than in-person interactions

"CMC, because of its lack of audio or video cues, will be perceived as impersonal and lacking in normative reinforcement, so there will be less socioemotional content exchanged" (Rice & Love, 1987).
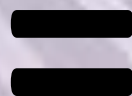
Theories of CMC

Social Information Processing (SIP) Theory
(Walther, 1992)

Direct response to cues filtered out approach.

Relationships can and do form online, albeit at a slower rate than in face-to-face environments.

Theories of CMC

Hyperpersonal Model (Walther, 1996)

Sometimes, the unique affordances of CMC allow individuals to develop develop relationships that are "more socially desirable than we tend to experience in parallel FtF interaction" (p. 17).

Role of sender, receiver, channel, and feedback.

Theories of CMC

Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects
(SIDE; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995)

In deindividuated/depersonalized settings, individual identity is submerged into the group identity.

We identify with the "in group" and disassociate with the "outgroup."

Evolution of CMC

CMC's early features:

(1) Asynchronous
Examples: Email, discussion forums
Benefits: Allows user to carefully compose and edit messages prior to sending.
Drawbacks: limited/no real-time interactions → slowed down processes

(2) Reduced-cues environment
Examples: any text-only online interaction
Benefits: selective self-presentation, identity play
Drawbacks: No visual cues → misinterpretations of messages, deception

Evolution of CMC

CMC now is:

(1) Highly interactive

(2) Highly visual

(3) Synchronous, near synchronous, and asynchronous communication

(4) Interactions are with FRIENDS, not strangers