

# Social Networking Website for College: A Social Website Based Approach

Kaustubh Jagasia<sup>1</sup> Parimal Aglawe<sup>2</sup> Arthi CI<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>B.E. Student <sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor

<sup>1,2,3</sup>CMPN, VESIT

*Abstract*— This paper discusses about the use of social media platform for teaching and learning purposes. The amount of social space available to users can provide a more personalized and interactive experience for educative purpose. With the growing demand of engineers in the industry, it becomes important for the students to know about the practical use of technologies that are taught in the college and also to know about the latest technology and projects that the industry works with. Thus, a social media platform where students can interact with the industry professionals would prove to be a great benefit for them. In this project it is intended to create a social networking site exclusive for the college whereby students, faculty and selective people from the industry would be able to socialize and share their knowledge. Also it would be a medium to share information about all the ongoing activities in the college campus. This paper discusses about the features provided by this social networking site and how it can be preferred over the existing social networking mediums for educational purposes.

**Key words:** VESIT (Vivekananda Education Society's Institute of Technology), SNS (Social Networking Site), virtual bookshelves, objects, privacy, wall, account

## I. INTRODUCTION

As we already know about the increasing use of social networking sites, people register on various social media platforms depending on their requirements and interest. Social media is a powerful platform that can be used in so many ways to share news, knowledge, entertainment etc. The purpose is to build a social media platform for the college (VESIT) where everyone associated with the college campus such as students, staff members, associated industry professionals and passed out alumni can socialize with each other and share their knowledge about academics, projects, placements and all other activities going on in the campus. The functions of different categories of users are going to be segregated and each category of user will have its own privileged tasks. A hierarchy of these categories of users will be created such as The Principal, Industry professionals, General Staff, Passed out alumni, Current Students ( in

descending order ) where The Principal would have the maximum access to important data, then the Industry professionals and so on. This hierarchy is maintained in Bell Lapadula Configuration.

For example, it is very inconvenient for teachers to find students' parent contact information, our website will have an exclusive option for teachers to find parent's contact details with a click of button. All students when registering will compulsorily need to fill their parent's contact details so that it becomes easy for teachers to contact them when needed. Also considering the fact that parent's contact information is something which is too personal for a student, this social networking site will not be allowing a particular student to view other student's parent contact details as it can be misused.

Similarly, students would not be able to view all the personal details of faculty or industry people. They'll be allowed to view only the details which are relevant to them from academic or professional point of view. For example, they'll be able to view the research conducted by teachers, their department and subjects etc.

There would be a special R&D (Research and Development) column whereby students, faculty members and others would be sharing knowledge about various projects that they are working on. Thus this will be promoting teaching and learning through this platform which would increase the level of interest among students in academics and co-curricular activities.

## II. EXISTING SYSTEM SURVEY

### A. Comparison between Various Existing Social Networking Sites

We have gone through the features provided by various social networking sites and made a list of some basic functions which are or are not available in these sites.

This study would help us to understand which social media we can refer to in order to add our desired features. The following table provides an overall summary for some of the most popular social networking site.

	Facebook	Twitter	Google+	My space	LinkedIn
<b>Description</b>	Largest social network with wide appeal	A platform where people get updates about people/organization they find interesting	Integrates Google buzz and Google profiles	Focuses on music, art and other entertainment	Focused on connecting professionals with the purpose of sharing information and opportunities
<b>Privacy settings</b>	Privacy settings are highly customizable, allowing users to decide which	You can choose either public(default) or private account	Privacy settings are highly customizable, allowing users to decide which	Users between 13-15 are automatically private accounts. Older users can	Privacy settings are highly customizable, allowing users to decide which

	information to share with which users		information to share with which users	choose private or public account	information to share with which users
<b>Website widgets and integration</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Photo sharing</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
<b>Video sharing</b>	✓	✗	✓	No, but Flash can be embedded	✗
<b>Chat features</b>	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
<b>Private messaging</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1. Comparison study.

1) *Summary*

According to the above table [Table 1], it is evident that Facebook incorporates maximum features and makes the best use of privacy settings. Likewise, this site will also be providing users with an option to change their privacy settings and thus it will be somewhat similar to Facebook. Also just as in 'LinkedIn' there is an exclusive profile for business professionals, this site would be having a separate user profile which would contain information regarding only professional experience and academics which would allow industry professionals to interact with 3rd and 4th year students and provide them different opportunities such as internships, workshops etc.

B. *An Introduction to The Potential of Social Networking Sites in Education*

1) *Purpose of Study*

As this social networking site mainly focuses on collaborative teaching and learning, the above mentioned research has been studied to come across the positive and negative impacts of SNSs which will form the basis to assist us in regulating our SNS.

2) *Research and Analysis*

Facebook originated in Harvard University. Its membership was open only to the members of the campus. It has since expanded to include other educational institutions such as schools, universities, colleges and organization. By September'06, Facebook became available to all Internet users (Wikipedia – Facebook, 2008). This goes on to prove that it was originally meant only for users within the campus.

In a recent study by the London School of Economics and Politics, a case study surveyed about the use of Facebook among librarians. In this study it was noted that many librarians had joined Facebook for social reasons but the application can also be used for the professional world for promotion of education and library related events. It was also noted that Facebook has different tools, such as search tools COPAC (Copac, 2008) and Journal Storage is a United States-based online system for archiving academic journals – (Jstor, 2008), as well as various tools that allow virtual bookshelves to be shared with others. Seckor, 2005, p2). Sector also mentioned that Facebook had its origin in academics and it enabled communication with people in the campus where information is shared, and the virtual bookshelf applications strengthened discussions about prescribed readings of different subjects. Sector also

mentions the experience from the Georgia Institute of engineering and Technology where it was found that around 1300 students were registered on Facebook and used it as a medium to use library services to students in the College of Engineering. This study proves that even this site can promote virtual bookshelf and promote learning among students.

In addition to it there are other psychosocial benefits of SNS such as the facilitation of identity exploration, facility of social cognitive skills such as “perspective taking”, and to fulfill the need for social support, intimacy, autonomy, etc. The amount of social space available to people can provide a more personalized experience for learning and teaching in a SNS environment. This facility from instant messaging, wikis, blogs, discussion boards can add to what is taught in a traditional classroom in the campus.

The interactivity and dynamism available on SNS has appeared to be popular with students of the campus. Mazer, Murphy and Simonds have suggested that students expect a more professional and dynamic website, which is different from the static pages usually presented by the school or college. Students are also motivated and inspired by the educative information disclosed on a teachers' or academics' profile. The research conducted by Maserati reveals that the more personalized the Social Networking Site presence the greater the motivation of students to participate and learn subjects. Thus having a personalized social networking site for college would generate interest among students and faculty to participate in various educational and cultural activities thus merging academic and extracurricular activities.

The above factors contribute a great motivation for us to implements this project. Given all the positives, we came across some limitations or disadvantages too which also has to be considered while designing this project.

3) *Following Are Some of the Limitations of A SNS*

The amount of information shared among the users of Social Networking Site can greatly vary. This information can be elicited and data mined for illicit and harmful use. Young people can be victims of “sexual predators” as well as “cyber bullying” which can harm them. Also, the appeal of a global-stage can drive people into revealing their details which may seem harmless for friends; however they must be well aware of the privacy settings they set for public viewing. To overcome this problem it is important to promote the use of privacy settings so that users can

accordingly set their privacy. In addition to it there will also be a hierarchy whereby students would have only a limited amount of access to faculty's data so as to avoid any trouble to teachers by students. Further, Mazeretal has also suggested that Social Networking Site can be a potential threat to teachers as some applications allow users to interact through the network. It is further suggested that teachers and other staff members must also check the type of information and posts presented in front of students and other users via SNS to avoid any negative effects and to protect their credibility and dignity in the classroom. Thus to overcome this problem, it has been decided that whenever any student posts any content on the wall, it will first be examined by an authorized user so as to make sure no malicious content is posted. Only when the content is passed by the authority, it would be posted on the wall and available to be viewed by others.

#### 4) Conclusion

Thus after reviewing the positive and negative impacts of SNSs, a general approach to implement this social networking site have been planned which enhances the positives and try to avoid the shortcomings.

### C. Creation of Objects to Implement Different Modules in a Social Networking Site

#### 1) Purpose Of Study

The major purpose of studying the above document was to understand the methodology used in implementing various modules in social media platform.

#### 2) Project Description

This system provides users to register different types of profile like social, personal, general and professional. It allows users to upload photos, videos, posts, etc to share with their friends and groups. Users are allowed to join various communities according to their scenario. This system provides users to maintain their friend list and send invitation to other users and update their friend list. The users can update their profile and change the privacy settings.

#### 3) Implementation of Different Modules Using Objects

This system consists of various classes such as Server object, Account object, Chat session object, Message object, Wall post object etc that interact with each other during runtime and get constantly updated as an when a relevant change occurs.

##### a) Server Object

The Server class acts as a wrapper for all server functions and acts as a link between all the information such as accounts, account details, privacy settings, pages, notes, messages etc.

##### b) Account Object

The account class has four major purposes: hold the login information, hold the friend information, hold the privacy information and hold the profile information. With such a large amount of data to keep track of, the account class became difficult to work with. This problem was solved by breaking the account class into

##### c) Sub-Classes

- 1) The main account class to hold login and friend information.
- 2) The account detail class to hold profile information.

- 3) Privacy settings class to hold privacy settings information. This reduced the load factor on the main account class.

##### d) Account Details Object

This object is created as a helper class to the above account class to store profile information. Hence this class gets updated whenever a new account object is created or when the user updates his profile.

##### e) Privacy Settings Object

Even this object is created as a helper class to hold the privacy settings information. This class gets updated when a user changes his privacy settings or when a user tries to view the profile/posts of another user. In that case the server checks the database consisting details of these settings and decides whether to allow the user to view that information or not.

##### f) Wall Post Object

This object consists of all the news feed being posted on the wall. Whenever a new post is created, this object adds that information into the database. Then this information is posted on the wall in descending order of when they were received.

Likewise other objects such as message object, chat session object, etc helped us to understand the implementation part of these modules. It gave us an idea of how to go about building these objects and working with the database. As many of the above functions are similar to the ones in our project, this study helps in building and execution part.

As this social networking site would have limited number of users, there is no need to divide the account object further into 3 objects as storing the entire information within one object would be feasible.

### D. A Comparison Between Student and Faculty Uses of Social Networking Sites

#### 1) Purpose of Study

The main purpose of studying the above survey was to analyse the usage of a social media platform by students and faculty members.

#### 2) Result

It was found that while a large percentage of students were active on Facebook, the teachers comparatively showed a lesser percentage. It was inferred that faculty members prefer to use E-mail for educational purposes. The fact that Facebook reveals all the personal details of a particular person and has all the friends and family connections might be a reason behind the less usage by teachers for academic purposes.

#### 3) Conclusion

As this social media platform is confined to the college campus activities, it will considerably increase the likelihood of usage by the faculty members. This is one of the major reasons behind implementing this project as it will promote the students and faculty alike to strengthen their educational communications and collaborations.

### III. PROPOSED DESIGN

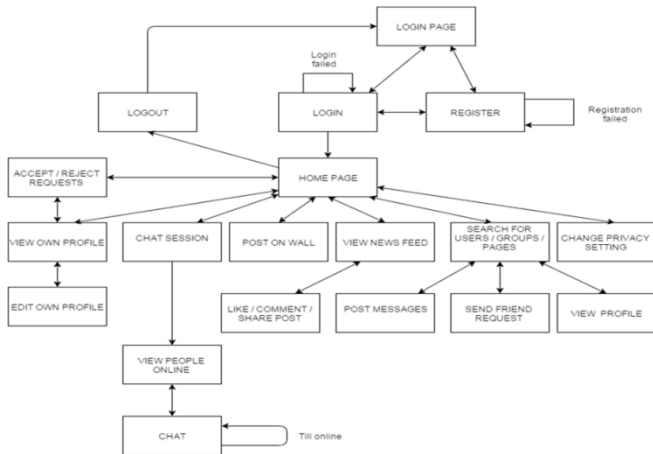


Fig. 1: Block Diagram

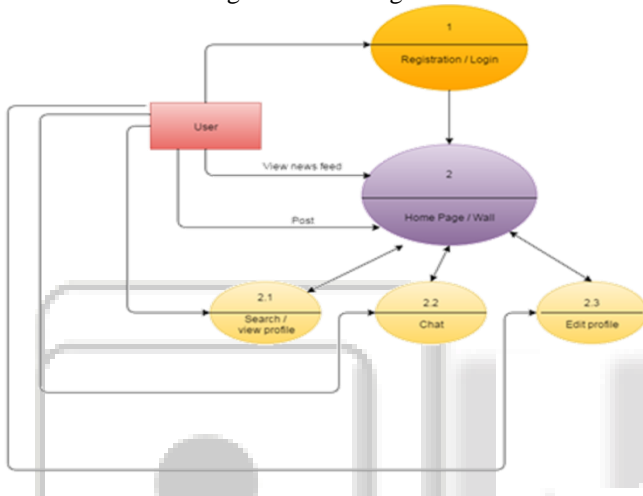


Fig. 2: Level 0 Data Flow Diagram

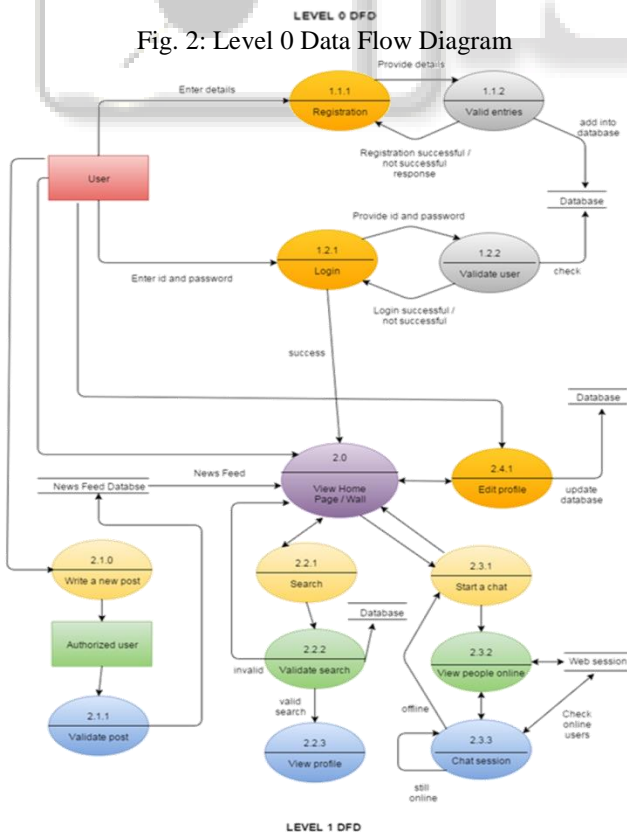


Fig. 3: Level 1 Data Flow Diagram

### IV. CONCLUSION

This website is intended to provide a common platform to students and faculty of our college for interacting and sharing knowledge. As a result of the survey conducted about related projects and information, requirements have been gathered for the project. With respect to other social networking media, this social networking site would be having the additional functionality of segregating the different classes of users and promoting online learning and teaching. Thus it would be enabling teachers to use a dynamic platform for academic purposes other than e-mail. The different modules to be implemented and the approach to build it have been understood. It will begin with the design of basic layouts i.e. User Interfaces for different categories of user which will give an instant feedback regarding the basic functions to be included in the Interface. This will be done using only HTML and CSS as it won't be permanent and it will be used just as a prototype. Later on these interfaces shall be enhanced using CSS, PHP and AJAX and shall be connected to MySQL database. Privacy of users will be a major priority and all necessary steps to maintain the privacy would be taken.

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