

'25 Things' becomes one of Facebook's biggest fads

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It's the newest Facebook obsession -- creating a list of 25 random facts about yourself and letting 25 of your closest "friends" in on it.

Essentially a chain letter, the note includes 25 or so facts about the author, who tags [Facebook](#) friends to read the note and carry on the chain.

The chain's dispersal has been phenomenal. Nearly 5 million notes - "25 Things" and others - were created on the [social networking](#) site the week of Feb. 1, wrote Meredith Chin, a Facebook spokeswoman. That's more than double the previous week and more than any other week in the history of Facebook.

The site boasts more than 150 million active users.

"We don't have specific data on the types of Notes users are creating, but we think this growth has a strong correlation to the sharing of the '25 Random Things About Me Note,'" Chin wrote in an e-mail.

University of Maryland freshman Kelly Daniluk, 18, was at first hesitant to jump onto the "25 Things" bandwagon.

"At first I dismissed it as one of those things that the typical Facebook addicts do if they're bored," she said. After she was tagged in several of her friends' "25 Things" notes, she was persuaded to write her own.

Jennifer Golbeck, an assistant professor in the University of Maryland College of Information Studies who conducts research on social networks, said she believes the freedom of the note's author to list whatever she wants as a "random fact" is what makes this particularly appealing to Facebook users.

"It's not a fixed set of questions that you have to answer, which can feel like an assignment," Golbeck said. "With '25 Things,' the only constraint is that there's 25, and some people don't even follow that exactly. It embodies a lot of what Facebook is in that you get to make this profile of yourself in this list of 25 things and totally control the way you are portraying yourself to your friends."

University of Maryland junior Vivian Wang, 20, agreed.

"I usually hate chain things, and I never fill them out. Most of these chain notes involve filling out very specific questions, like a survey. ... I realized that this was more appealing than the usual chain notes because you have the freedom to share whatever you want."

Added George Luo, 20, also a University of Maryland junior: "Just because it's viral doesn't mean it can't also be fun."

The so-called "random facts" posted to these notes range from those that seem to only scratch the surface of the individual to those that seem intimately personal and those that could only be described as random.

"I have an incredibly tall singular bamboo plant from Ikea that has been my best non-talking friend since sophomore year," Wang wrote in her note. "It will cause me much grief if it ever dies."

"As a little kid, one way I got myself to eat my vegetables was to pretend that I was a rabbit or a deer," wrote Luo in his list.

Golbeck advises Facebook users to be mindful of the kinds of personal content they post to their profiles, because the information's longevity on the Internet could cause inappropriate content to come back to haunt them years down the road.

"It's important to consider that these things that you're putting up there are things that in five years you're not going to want the people working under you and your supervisors to find out," Golbeck said. "There's a lot of things to be wary about, and I think a lot of people are missing a real appreciation of how long this stuff sticks around."

But this does not mean that posting personal information to Facebook is dangerous.

"I don't think sharing information on Facebook in general is a bad thing," Golbeck said. "It's just a matter of considering when your situation changes, is this personal information something that, one, you'll be comfortable having out there and, two, somebody else is not going to negatively react to."

What kind of facts did Golbeck post in her own "25 Things" note?

"I know how to say, 'I really don't like pickle on a stick' in Hebrew."

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