

Online anonymity icon dislikes Facebook model

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Christopher "moot" Poole, the founder of Internet anonymity haven 4chan, thinks Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg is mistaken when it comes to online identities. Remaining unknown online frees people to blaze ahead with creative endeavors they might otherwise shy away from for fear of being embarrassed, Poole said at the South By Southwest festival.

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Remaining unknown online frees people to blaze ahead with creative endeavors they might otherwise shy away from for fear of being embarrassed, Christopher "moot" Poole said at the South By Southwest festival ending Tuesday in Texas.

"To fail where you are identified by your real name is really costly,"

Poole said. "Being anonymous lets people poke and prod all they want without fear.

"Anonymity is authenticity."

Poole said Zuckerberg's model in which everyone gets an online identity they take with them about the Internet was "totally wrong" and threatened to strip online life of the "innocence of youth."

"At 4chan people are judged by the wit of their contributions, not who they are," Poole said. "In terms of content creation it allows you to play in ways that you wouldn't be able to otherwise."

Anonymity will remain sacrosanct at 4chan, which has earned a reputation as the birthplace of [hacker](#) group Anonymous and a refuge for those keen on sharing thoughts while cloaking identities.

"4chan is the dark part of the Internet," Poole said of the online message board started in 2003 as a place for fans of Japanese comics and culture.

"The ticking, beating heart notorious for its memes and for its exploits, the activism," he said. "I don't recommend you go poking around without knowing what you are clicking on."

On any given day, there are about 16,000 people "waiting and watching" 4chan's random message board, according to Poole.

4chan not only shuns identifying website users it keeps no archive of comments.

"It is this constant waterfall of content popping up and then falling off the site," Poole said. "It has led to this survival of the fittest idea where stuff that resonates with the community stays on the site and that which

doesn't falls into the abyss."

Poole's latest project is Canvas, an online forum where people add their touches to drawings or graphics started by others.

"People describe it as 4chan 2.0," Poole said.

"But, that is not the purpose of it," he continued. "It is to take all the things that I learned in eight years to build this great site for people to play, share, collaborate and hang out."

He showed how a glamour shot of Internet-born pop star Justin Bieber was transformed at Canvas into an image of a porcine young man complete with double-chin.

In another example from a test version of the website, a bare-bones sketch that appeared to be a bowler hat and a head at Canvas was given many forms, one of them a play on works by late Belgian surrealist painter Rene Magritte.

"It is a place where people go to find and manipulate images," Poole explained, saying he was inspired by an online refrigerator magnet game.

In a deviation from the 4chan credo of absolute anonymity, Canvas is in private test mode using a Facebook Connect platform based on recognizing people by profile identities at the world's most popular social network.

"We sort of needed it," Poole explained. "This is a way to filter out trolls, people who want to come in and mess things up."

People can request to be part of the Canvas test group at website www.canv.as/sxsw.

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