

Has Facebook created a generation of "self-absorbed spin doctors?"

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Like it or loathe it, 10 years on from the day it was founded (February 4 2004), you can't escape Facebook and for a generation of 20 something digital natives it has helped to create a culture of narcissism, says academic Victoria Mapplebeck from Royal Holloway, University of London.

"How do we curate our lives online? How honest are we about our lives on social [media](#)? Facebook profiles and postings often seem relentlessly upbeat. We create an avatar of our lives, an avatar who is slimmer, has more friends, a better love life and a better job than we do," she says.

"We have become our own spin doctors and constantly want people to find out what is going on in our lives, from the incredibly mundane to

personal decisions and choices that would have otherwise been private."

The academic, who is an interactive media expert from the Department of Media Arts at Royal Holloway, looked into whether being constantly in the spotlight of [social media](#) – where nothing is truly ever deleted – fundamentally changes the experience of growing up and how we portray ourselves.

"There is only a 'like' button on Facebook, there is no place to describe our deficiencies, only space to paint a rather superficial and idealised portrait of our digital lives," she says.

But Victoria says she was troubled to hear about Facebook revealing that they were researching a 'sympathy button', so users would have a way of responding to posts about bad news, relationship break-ups, career setbacks or illnesses.

"How will Facebook respond in the future to the full range of human emotions, can all our emotions be turned into clickable options? Is it possible for technology to meet the demands we place on it?"

Victoria questions how many of our Facebook friends we actually see in person and how much we care about what we are reading about these people. She says: "It will always be quicker to log onto Facebook than arrange to meet with friends in person or even to ring them. But by endlessly taking the digital short cut, perhaps we are beginning to expect more from technology and less from each other."

Provided by Royal Holloway, University of London

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