

## FEATURES



### Vaguely necessary

By JAPNEET  
KAUR  
*Photo editor*

## Think, then post

I've been active online for some years now, which has its benefits and downfalls, of course. When I was younger and much more active on forums, I was naïve about the repercussions of posting anything on the Internet. I've gotten older and despite all sorts of warnings and Terms of Service agreements, I still don't think I ever realized how dangerous posting things online can be.

It suddenly hit me when someone who found me online started quoting things to my parents from my Flickr account. *How*, I thought? When my profile is mad-deningly devoid of any personal information, how did this person older than my parents (who I didn't even realize knew how to use a computer) ever find me?

I thought back and realized that over time, my fear had decreased and I had become much more comfortable with being addressed by my real name by contacts on my profile, and had even posted a few photos of myself, going so far as to explain where they were taken. The wall I'd built up around me to provide both anonymity and security had begun to crumble, and I was no longer as secure as I once was. Ironically, I felt much more comfortable at this point than I did in the beginning, when I was paranoid.

Where do we draw the line, though? Take, for example, being a journalist. How do you know that the source you're going to meet, who now has your e-mail address and cell, isn't some deranged psycho? Or the "client" who came out to your home photography studio to see how you work is in fact waiting for the night when you're home alone to do something unimaginably evil?

I can hear warning bells going off in my head as I write this, telling me I'm overreacting. This may not seem possible

in our reality, but these things are not unheard of. Besides, a reporter's business card or the contact information displayed on a portfolio site is still much less revealing than the information people around the world display on their Myspace and Facebook profiles. True stories of how this information is misused are definitely heard of. How many of us take these as an example and are actually careful about what we post online?

Thinking back on anything even slightly revealing I may have posted on a public forum anywhere, I realized that anyone could piece it all together and find me. I'm still not sure what I'm going to do about what I've come to realize – especially considering once something is on the Internet, it's on the Internet forever. If not deleting what's already there, I will at least be more careful in the future – and maybe you should be, too.