

to deepen our understanding and enrich our learning. This volume serves as a primer in understanding and attempts to inspire faculty to use social networking in their teaching and research.

Jarvis, J. (2011). *Public Parts: How Sharing in the Digital Age Improves the Way we Work and Live*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 263 pp. ISBN: 9781451636000.

Review by Andrew Battista, University of Montevallo

In the weeks before Facebook's initial public offering on May 18, 2012, some Wall Street pundits guessed that the company could be worth as much as \$104 billion. Perhaps the only thing more remarkable than the speculative value of Facebook is the fact that all of its actual value is generated by people who voluntarily reveal information about themselves. Not only do people post links, pictures, videos, and messages to a public audience, but they also share things—thoughts, opinions, pictures from dinners or dates—that as recently as ten years ago would have been considered too private to escape the walls of one's own home. Now, many Facebook users contribute almost every facet of their lives—including political leanings, relationship status, music preferences, travels, and favorite foods—to an ongoing public record. Why do people share such personal things, and what does this pattern of free disclosure say about how today's digital age students think, learn, and acquire information?

The answers to these questions form the thesis of Jeff Jarvis's *Public Parts: How Sharing in the Digital Age Improves the Way we Work and Live*. Jarvis makes a radical intervention in discussions about social media and privacy. He suggests that we stand to gain much more than we can lose by making information about ourselves public. According to Jarvis, publicness and privacy are interdependent categories that businesses, schools, and colleges need to think about more deeply. He warns that "if we become too obsessed with privacy, we could lose opportunities to make connections in this age of links" (p. 5). Jarvis does admit that public and private are choices we make on a daily basis, and both are accompanied by respective benefits and hazards. *Public Parts*, then, is a sustained meditation on how we ne-

gotiate the distance between public and private, a process digital age learners and workers undergo on a daily basis. However, rather than being paralyzed by the perils of information sharing, Jarvis maintains that by interacting on public platforms, like blogs and social media networks, we form strong communities, improve our products and services, and sharpen our ability to learn from others.

What makes *Public Parts* so compelling is that its argument is counterintuitive. We can think of many instances where posting on social media platforms could be deleterious to one's personal and professional relationships. However, Jarvis asks us to slow down and imagine about everything that self-presentation in the public sphere can entail. To start, publicness on social media platforms is an ethic that "threatens institutions whose power is invested in the control of information and audiences" (p. 11). Trafficking ideas in public can be an empowering experience that wrests control from traditional media institutions and places it in the hands of individuals and communities. Publicness is also an approach to knowledge that dispels the myth of final or complete learning. Some of our most successful products and intellectual achievements have been released in beta format and then honed by users (e.g., Mozilla Firefox and Wikipedia). "By operating in public," Jarvis writes, "we no longer hold ourselves to the ideal of perfection. By rejecting perfection as a premise, we are free to make what we do ever better" (53).

Public Parts is most valuable for what it implies about digital and multimodal pedagogy. Although there is a significant body of research, especially by the Stanford Study of Writing (Fishman, et al., 2005), that says public performance compels students to write and speak more critically, there is also an ethical element to having students make their work public that many teachers overlook. Of course, Jarvis' argument should persuade students that publicness is a good thing, and indeed many students who are digital natives already have no qualms about public presentation. Still, when students participate on public networks for a class, they can leave a residue on the Internet that is difficult, if not impossible to erase. When we ask our students to do work that is publicly available online, we need to have discussions with them about what it means to create a public presence and walk them through this fundamental digital literacy as they do so. *Public Parts* will no doubt help teachers and students broach the discussion.

Another thing I like about Jarvis is that he puts his money where his mouth is. In his book, and on his companion blog Buzzfeed, he shares many facets of his personal life and discloses all of his financial investments that could imply a conflict of interests. And he is very forthright about his own beliefs and tastes. I don't care that he listens to Joni Mitchell, watches porn occasionally, or owns shares in Google. What matters is his larger point: that many of us would be stronger friends, citizens, and colleagues if we were less stringent about what we chose to disclose about ourselves. Still, while Public Parts makes a compelling argument for why readers should re-think the relationship between public and private, Jarvis' thesis is to a degree limited by the scope and relevance of its examples. Jarvis references his own experience with prostate cancer, recalling how his graphic narrative of his prostate removal surgery—what he refers to as the “penis post” on his blog—put him in touch with many people who helped him heal. He learned from others what to expect in the recovery process, and he in turn was able to help other readers who shared his plight. The anecdote bears out his point that sharing personal information can yield great personal and social benefits, but Jarvis returns to it too often. At these junctures, I would have liked to see more critical reflection and less anecdotal narrative about the benefits of publicness. In the end, this is a minor caveat in a book that will reframe our understanding of social media networks.

References

Fishman, J. et al. (2005). Performing writing, performing literacy. *College Composition and Communication*, 57(2), 224-252.

Kyeong-Ju Seo, K. (2013). Using Social media Effectively in the Classroom: Blogs, Wikis, Twitter, and More. New York, NY: Routledge. 240 pp. ISBN: 0415896800.

Review by Annie Phillips Newton, University of North Texas

In October 2012, Facebook reported having more than one billion active users per month. Countless social media sites exist to provide an outlet for people to connect, create, and share. It is no