International Symposium

on

Digital Expressions of the Self

Organized by the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
National Institute of Technology Silchar

7–8 December 2020
Pre-Symposium Workshop: 5–6 December 2020

This symposium engages with the digital forms of expressions of the self. We invite papers that explore the ways in which, for instance, digital techniques now allow the construction of selves that often rely more on algorithms than any 'original' referent. Consider, for example, how algorithms simulate images, voices etc. and have become the basis for facial recognition, biometrics and similar datafication concerning the self. This shift is indicative of what we might term posthuman condition. Along these lines, we are interested in papers that engage with how expressions enhanced by algorithms produce multiple, fractured selves. Following Deleuze, we invite papers that engage with how the in-dividual has become 'dividual' in societies of post-control vis-a-vis the introduction of digital technologies. Finally we are interested in how people experiment with creative expressions of the self. Constructing the self in the digital sphere may involve processes of experimentation that in turn allow one to experience the self in multiple ways. This is mediated of course by the apparatus of the digital-codes and algorithms. Digital self-expression occurs both consciously and explicitly, and subconsciously and indirectly. Taking this as a point of departure, this symposium examines the broad range of digital expressions of the self. The symposium will pivot around, but not be limited to, these concerns:

- What, in the digital context, defines the self and its boundaries? How is the self articulated in digital culture and cultures of everyday life especially in relation to Web 2.0? When articulated digitally, where do we locate its forms and ontology?

- How is the digital expression of the self different from its analogue counterpart? What affordances of the digital, if at all, reconfigure the self? Consider, certain digital expressions can be evidential (eg: the selfie), viral, emotive or even tactile. How do the materialities of the specific platforms (eg: Instagram, MySpace.com, TikTok videos, Soundcloud, Tinder etc.) then impact the digital self or its expression?

- These platforms have become not only media of self-expression but also experimentation. How do users, especially youngsters, leverage these platforms to experiment with their gender, bodies, sexualities and identities, creating self-representations that often challenge normativity?

- How (im)proximate, in terms of referentiality, is the digital self to the so-called 'real' self? What does the digital expression entail epistemologically? How does it speak to the question of referentiality? In other words, to what extent, if at all, can these expressions be perceived as simulacrum? What is the nature of the human-algorithm interaction involved here?

- How does the notion of the (in)dividual play out while articulating one's self in the context of digitality, when the (post)human can be prosthetically 'engineered', Artificial Intelligence can govern societies, and robots can acquire personhood (or even citizenship)?

Abstract Submission

To apply to present at the symposium, please submit an abstract of about 400 words and a bio-note (150 words) using this link <https://forms.gle/UwQkdJdkxxuE4jFM7>. Abstracts will be considered on a rolling basis until May 22, 2020. For those accepted, unpublished draft papers (~4,000 words) have to be submitted by August 15, 2020. Final decisions on acceptance, based on the draft papers, will be communicated by August 28, 2020. Those who would require to travel from relatively far are requested to submit their abstracts earlier than the deadline for the organizers to be able to get back within a shorter turnaround time. This way, you will have a greater window to arrange your travel logistics.

Pre-Symposium Workshop

The symposium will be preceded by a workshop scheduled during December 5-6, 2020. This is targeted mainly at postgrad students and research scholars, whose projects bear resonance with the symposium theme and, broadly speaking, concern Digital Humanities.

Participants will be selected from the pool of symposium participants. During the workshop, experts will reflect on the state-of-the-art affairs in the field and advise informally on the students' projects. If you wish to participate in the workshop -- either as a scholar or as an expert, please express your intent during the abstract submission.

Financial Support

Limited subsidy to offset travel costs may be made available for a small number of participants. This is typically meant for postgraduate students, early-career and un(der)employed academics. Details about the travel bursaries will be communicated upon receipt of the draft papers.

Miscellaneous

Participants from outside the conventional Humanities & Social Sciences disciplines -- for example, scientists who work on AI, image processing, biometrics etc., gamers, game-designers, coders -- are encouraged to apply. Attendance at the symposium and the workshop will also be open to a limited number of non-presenters. There is no registration fee for participating or attending.

This event is a part of a SPARC (Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration) project funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), with additional support from the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI). The pre-symposium workshop is sponsored by the Northeast India Company (Silchar).

This event overlaps with the famous Hornbill Festival in Nagaland, relatively close to Silchar. Nagaland and Silchar are connected by rail route, but might require a transit at Lumding.

Contact Us

For questions and clarifications, write to <selfie2021@gmail.com>.