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Blogging: Confessing to the world

Some time ago, a website highlighted the risks of public check-ins – online announcements of your whereabouts. The site's points were blunt: you may think you are just telling the world, 'Hey, I'm at this place' – but you are also advertising your out-and-about-ness to all kinds of people everywhere – not all of them people you might like to bump into. This appeared to confirm the growing awareness that there might be a downside to all the frantic sharing the web has enabled. The vast new opportunities to publish any and every aspect of our lives to a potentially global audience hold out all sorts of tantalising possibilities: Wealth! Fame! So we plunge into the maelstrom of the internet, tossing confessions, personal photos and stories into the digital vortex. Too late we realize that the water is crowded and treacherous – and we are lost.

Depressing? Perhaps, but don't give up. This future has a map, drawn for us years ago by a reckless group of online pioneers. In the early days of the web, they sailed these waters and located all the treacherous shoals. They got fired from their jobs, found and lost friends and navigated celebrity's temptations and perils – all long before the invention of social networking. These pioneers, the first of what we now call bloggers, have already been where the rest of us seem to be going. Before their tales scroll off our collective screen, it's worth spending a little time with them. After all, those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

In January 1994, Justin Hall, a 19-year-old student, began posting to the 'WWW', as it was then known, something inhabited mostly by grad students, scientists and a handful of precocious teens like him. The web had been invented at CERN, the international physics lab in Switzerland, so researchers could more easily share their work. Hall saw something else: an opportunity to share his life. Link by link, he built a hypertext edifice of autobiography, a dense thicket of verbal self-exposure leavened with photos and art. In January 1996, on a dare, he began posting a daily blog, and readers flocked to the spectacle of a reckless young man pushing the boundaries of this new medium in every direction at once.

1. In che modo lo Statuto dell'Università degli Studi di Foggia considera l'internazionalizzazione un obiettivo strategico dell'Ateneo e quale ruolo svolgono il Senato Accademico e il Consiglio di Amministrazione nella promozione, programmazione e attuazione delle politiche di internazionalizzazione?