



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

DIGITAL WILDFIRE: (MIS)INFORMATION FLOWS, PROPAGATION AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE CUREC reference SSD/CUREC1A/15-002

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This sheet gives you information about the study to help you decide if you would like to take part.

Our project team is conducting a research study on the effective regulation of interactions on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. As part of this we are conducting research in organisations that deal with social media platforms and/or the consequences of social media interactions in their everyday work. As a member of an organisation that is participating in our project, we would like to ask for your permission to interview you and/or to be observed whilst conducting your work.

Participation is totally voluntary and we hope you will consider taking part. If you agree to participate you are free to change your mind during data collection or at any time before 01 July 2016 when we will begin writing up the study findings. If you do change your mind, any data you contributed will be immediately destroyed. No further reference will be made to any information you provided or your participation in the project.

Please note that our research focuses on the work activities people perform in relation to social media and how people go about this work in their organisations. We are not interested in evaluating (positively or negatively) the content or quality of the work conducted by individuals or organisations.

If you are interested in taking part please read the rest of this information sheet, which provides further details of the study. You can also speak to a member of the research team if you have any questions. You can take your time to decide if you would like to take part in the study.

What is the study about?

The 'Digital Wildfire' project is led by the University of Oxford and is being conducted in collaboration with the Universities of Cardiff, Warwick and de Montfort. Our project is interested in social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook etc. The use of these platforms is growing quickly and can help to support social connections and cooperation. However social media also has the capacity for harm – in the form of bullying, hate speech etc. Our project is investigating how people interact on social media in order to identify ways to

improve the effective regulation of these platforms. This will include external forms of regulation as well as steps users themselves can adopt to prevent and protect themselves from harm. As part of this, we are visiting organisations whose everyday work includes dealing with social media and/or the (potentially harmful) consequences of social media interactions.

Why have I been chosen?

We would like to collect data with participants who deal with social media platforms or the consequences of social media interactions as part of their everyday work. We are interested in the different views and experiences these participants have, as well as the different ways their work relates to social media. The work of your organisation is highly relevant to our study and for this reason we would like to ask you to take part.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is totally voluntary. You can withdraw during data collection at any point and you do not have to give a reason for doing so. You can also withdraw after data collection at any time before 09 May 2015, when we will begin writing up our study findings. If you agree to participate and then have reservations either during or following data collection before this date, the data you contributed will be immediately be destroyed. No further reference will be made to any information you provided or your participation in the project.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to participate in one or more of the following research activities:

- 1) a personal interview, either in person or by telephone or Skype, lasting from 20-60 minutes. We will ask you various questions regarding your views and experiences of social media platforms and interactions as relevant to your everyday work. The interview will be audio-recorded.
- 2) observations of you at work. We are interested in observing the day to day conduct of your work that involves social media.

With your permission, we would like to audio record and transcribe the interviews, and/or take photographs, audio or video record you for short periods during the observations.

What are the benefits and risks of the study?

The benefits of this research are that it will contribute to our understanding of social media and in particular how social media interactions can be governed more effectively (including through the self-governance of users). This research poses no specific risks other than the risks involved in undertaking ordinary everyday activities. As our research focuses on topics related to your everyday work, it is unlikely that you will find the process upsetting. However if you do feel uncomfortable during an interview, you can request not to answer particular questions, request a short break or ask for the interview to be stopped. Similarly, if you feel uncomfortable being observed you can talk to the research team and we will take steps to address this – including stopping the observation if necessary. We are interested in understanding *how* people work in relation to social media and do not make any kind of (positive or negative) evaluation of the content or quality or people's work. Therefore taking part in the study presents no risk to your job.

What will happen to the data you collect? Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Your anonymity will be preserved throughout the study. We will not tell others beyond the project team that you have taken part. We will give you a study number and pseudonym and use these instead of your name

on project documentation and the write up of our findings. Audio and video recordings will be transcribed and analysed. Field notes, audio and video material will be shared between and discussed by the project team for the purposes of analysis.

When we present our findings we will use pseudonyms for people and workplaces and also remove or alter any other potentially identifying details. Direct quotations from transcripts plus photographs and stills from video recordings may be produced in publications and presentations of our findings. We will not use (anonymised) direct quotations if there is a possibility you might be identified. When we show video stills we will blur the faces of all participants – and any other identifying details – in order to preserve anonymity.

All data and project documentation will be kept securely to protect confidentiality. Electronic data – such as the audio file of your interview - will be password protected and securely shared with others in the project team. Printed information, including signed consent forms, will be stored in secure, locked, university spaces. All information collected will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998. Once the project and project write up is complete all backup copies of recordings will be destroyed. However, regulations at the participating universities state that originals must be stored securely for a minimum of three further years.

The funders of this project – the Economic and Social Research Council – are committed to the responsible sharing of anonymised research data amongst university research professionals. For this reason anonymised transcripts of the interviews conducted may be placed within a data repository that can be accessed by other researchers. Access is only possible under strict conditions that ensure good ethical practice. No personal details will be placed within the repository.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The study results will be reported in printed and on-line journals, books, conference presentations, a project Showcase event and some smaller meetings. If you are interested in hearing about the study results, please contact Helena Webb (details below) and she will make arrangements for this.

Who is organising and paying for the study?

The study is being organised by a group of researchers at the Universities of Oxford, Warwick, Cardiff and de Montfort. It is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The ESRC works to fund high quality research covering various aspects of social life, including information technology and digital welfare.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact project researcher Helena Webb:

Dr Helena Webb

Department of Computer Science
University of Oxford
Parks Road
Oxford
OX1 3QD

helena.webb@cs.ox.ac.uk

Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to project leader Professor Marina Jirotko at the University of Oxford: marina.jirotko@cs.ox.ac.uk or 01865 270550. She will do her best to answer your query. She should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how she intends to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (using the contact details below) who will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner:

Chair

Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee

Research Services
University of Oxford
Wellington Square
Oxford
OX1 2JD

ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research. Please feel free to ask any questions if you would like further details of the study.