

## Call for Papers



### Special Issue of *Minds and Machines* on *The Construction of Personal Identities Online*

Guest editors  
**Luciano Floridi**  
**Dave Ward**

**Closing date for submissions: 15 December 2010**

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are building a new habitat (infosphere) in which future generations will spend an increasing amount of time. So, how individuals construct, shape and maintain their personal identities online (PIOs) is a problem of growing and pressing importance. Today, PIOs can be created and developed, as an ongoing work-in-progress, to provide experiential enrichment, expand, improve or even help to repair relationships with others and with the world, or enable imaginative projections (the "being in someone else's shoes" experience), thus fostering tolerance. However, PIOs can also be mis-constructed, stolen, "abused", or lead to psychologically or morally unhealthy lives, causing a loss of engagement with the actual world and real people. The construction of PIOs affects how individuals understand themselves and the groups, societies and cultures to which they belong, both online and offline. PIOs increasingly contribute to individuals' self-esteem, influence their life-styles, and affect their values, moral behaviours, and ethical expectations. It is a phenomenon with enormous practical implications, and yet, crucially, individuals as well as groups seem to lack a clear, conceptual understanding of who they are in the infosphere and what it means to be a responsible informational agent online.

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This special issue of *Minds and Machines* seeks to fill this important gap in our philosophical understanding. It will build on the current debate on PIO, and address questions such as:

- How does one go about constructing, developing and preserving a PIO? Who am I online?
- How do I, as well as other people, define and re-identify myself online?
- What is it like to be that particular me (instead of you, or another me with a different PIO), in a virtual environment?
- Should one care about what happens to one's own PIO and how one (with his/her PIO) is perceived to behave online?
- How do PIs online and offline feedback on each other?
- Do customisable, reproducible and disposable PIOs affect our understanding of our PI offline?
- How are we to interpret cases of multiple PIOs, or cases in which someone's PIO may become more important than, or even incompatible with, his or her PI offline?
- What is going to happen to our self-understanding when the online and offline realities become intertwined in an "onlife" continuum, and online and offline PIs have to be harmonised and negotiated?

Papers comparing and evaluating standard approaches to PI in order to analyse how far they may be extended to explain PIO are also very welcome.

Submissions will be double-blind refereed for academic rigor, originality and relevance to the theme. Please submit articles of no more than 10,000 words to [D.Ward2@herts.ac.uk](mailto:D.Ward2@herts.ac.uk) in .doc or .pdf format.

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## Workshops

The special issue is part of a series of workshops organised in connection with the AHRC-funded project *The Construction of Personal Identities Online*.

Authors may also wish to submit their papers to one of the workshops organized on the same topic. Submissions will also be considered for publication in the special issue.

More information about the project and the workshops is available here:  
<http://www.philosophyofinformation.net/grants/pio/index.html>

Please address any queries to Dave Ward: [D.Ward@herts.ac.uk](mailto:D.Ward@herts.ac.uk)

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