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## **Social Network Sites as Social Learning Resources: Designing for the Learning Ecology**

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Increasingly popular among a wide range of users, social network sites are quickly becoming a major mechanism of socialization. However, popular media accounts have linked these youth-initiated spaces to lowered academic learning, declining standards of literacy and threats to societal values based not only on unspecified definitions of "literacy" and "learning" but also on a lack of research about what young people actually do when they engage in social network sites. In this presentation, I argue that social network sites fulfill essential social learning functions, outlining results from one study of the online social networking practices of high school students from low-income families. This work illuminates the conversation about the boundaries between formal and informal learning that has featured prominently in debates about technology in education. Finally, I summarize one design project, a social networking application for high school and college students, in which we are investigating how knowledge of environmental science issues, interest and civic action strategies developed among the application's users.



Dr. Christine Greenhow is an Assistant Professor with a joint appointment in the College of Education and in the College of Information Sciences (iSchool) at the University of Maryland, College Park. She completed postdoctoral work in learning technologies and in the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota, where she won the university's Outstanding Postdoctoral Scholar Award for extraordinary scholarly achievement. From 2009-2010, Greenhow was also a visiting fellow at the Yale Information Society Project (ISP), and part of the Cyberscholars program, an

interdisciplinary collaboration between the Yale ISP, Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society and Comparative Media Studies at MIT. She is currently working on a book about education and social media as an outgrowth of this experience. She earned her doctorate at Harvard University, her master's from Boston College, and undergraduate degrees from Dartmouth College. Her research focuses on learning in social media contexts such as online social networks, from learning sciences, new literacy studies, and learning technologies perspectives and always

with the goal of improving theory, practice and policy. She is the Principal Investigator on the Youth and Social Media research and development project funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Founding Chair of the Social Networks Research Collaborative, an interdisciplinary research group funded by the Institute for Advanced Studies. A former high school teacher, Christine has been active in national educational reform efforts and is the co-founder of an award-winning educational non-profit. ●