

## Chapter 1

# The Many Faces of Facebook

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Discovering Facebook
- ▶ Knowing what you can and can't do on Facebook
- ▶ Finding out how Facebook is different from other social sites
- ▶ Seeing how different people use Facebook . . . differently

**T**hink about the people you interacted with throughout the past day. In the morning, you may have gone to get the paper and chatted with the neighbor. You may have asked your kids what time they'd be home and negotiated with your partner about whose turn it is to cook dinner. Perhaps you spent the day at the office, chatting, joking, and (heaven forbid) getting things done with your co-workers. In the evening, you may have shot off an e-mail to an old college roommate, called your mom (it's her birthday, after all), and made plans to have dinner with some friends this weekend. At the end of the day, you unwound in front of your favorite newscaster telling you about the various politicians and celebrities whose lives may (or may not) interest you. You may have, at various points in the day, asked someone to recommend a plumber to unclog your drain or had a full conversation of grunts with your dentist.

That's a one-foot view of the world in which you're the center.

Pan the camera back a ways (farther . . . farther . . . even farther), and you see that each person you interact with — family, friends, the newspaper delivery guy, the lunch lady, your favorite musician, and even me, your dedicated author — are at the center of their own realities. So is each person *they* know. The connections between every single person in the world intertwine, interplay, and interlock to form a sort of network. In the network of people you interact with — your friends, acquaintances, and loved ones — all these people exist online and represent themselves through Facebook, just like you're about to do. Facebook is the online representation of the web of connections between people in the real world. Facebook (and other Internet companies) like to call this network the *social graph*.

Now, you may be asking, if this graph or network exists in the real world, why do I need it online, too? Good question (gold stars all around). The answer is that having it online facilitates and improves all your social relationships. In other words, Facebook makes your life easier and your friendships better. It can help with the very practical, like remembering a friend's birthday, to the more abstract, like staying close with family you aren't physically near.

Getting set up and familiar with Facebook does take a little work (which you know, or else you wouldn't be starting out on this book-length journey). It may feel a little overwhelming at times, but the reward is worth it, I promise you.

## So . . . What Is Facebook, Exactly?

Yes, Carolyn, you're saying, I know it's going to help me stay in touch with my friends and communicate with the people in my life, but what *is* it?

Well, at its most basic, Facebook is a website. You'll find it through a web browser like Safari, Firefox, or Internet Explorer, the same way you might navigate to a search engine like Google or to an airline's website to book tickets. Figure 1-1 shows what you will probably see when you navigate to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

**Figure 1-1:**  
Welcome to  
Facebook.  
Would you  
like fries  
with that?

The screenshot shows the Facebook homepage layout. At the top, the Facebook logo is on the left, and the login section is on the right, featuring input fields for Email and Password, a 'Log In' button, and links for 'Keep me logged in' and 'Forgot your password?'. Below the logo, the text 'Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life.' is displayed above a network graph of stylized people icons. To the right of the graph is the 'Sign Up' section, which includes the text 'It's free and always will be.' and a series of input fields for First Name, Last Name, Your Email, Re-enter Email, and New Password. Below these are dropdown menus for 'I am:', 'Select Sex:', and 'Birthday:' (with sub-dropdowns for Month, Day, and Year). A 'Sign Up' button is at the bottom of this section. At the very bottom of the page, there is a horizontal line with a list of language links (English (US), Español, Português (Brasil), Français (France), Deutsch, Italiano, العربية, हिन्दी, 中文(简体), 日本語) and a footer with copyright information and various site links.

Facebook is a website where you go to accomplish certain tasks. These tasks usually fall under the umbrella category of *social maintenance*. For example, you may go to Facebook to

- ✓ Find the phone number of an old friend
- ✓ Check out what your friends are up to today
- ✓ Make a contact in a city you're moving to or at an office where you're applying for a job
- ✓ Plan an event
- ✓ Garner support for a cause
- ✓ Get recommendations from friends for movies, books, and restaurants
- ✓ Show off the pictures from your latest vacation
- ✓ Tell your friends and family about your recent successes, show them your photos, or let them know you're thinking of them
- ✓ Remember everyone's birthday

So what Facebook *is*, exactly, is a website built to help you represent yourself online and share with your real-world friends online. The rest of it — how that's accomplished, what people typically share on Facebook, and how it all works — is what this book is all about.

## *Discovering What You Can Do on Facebook*

Now that you know that Facebook is a means by which you can connect with people who matter to you, your next question may be, "How?" More gold stars for you! In the next few sections, I give you an overview.

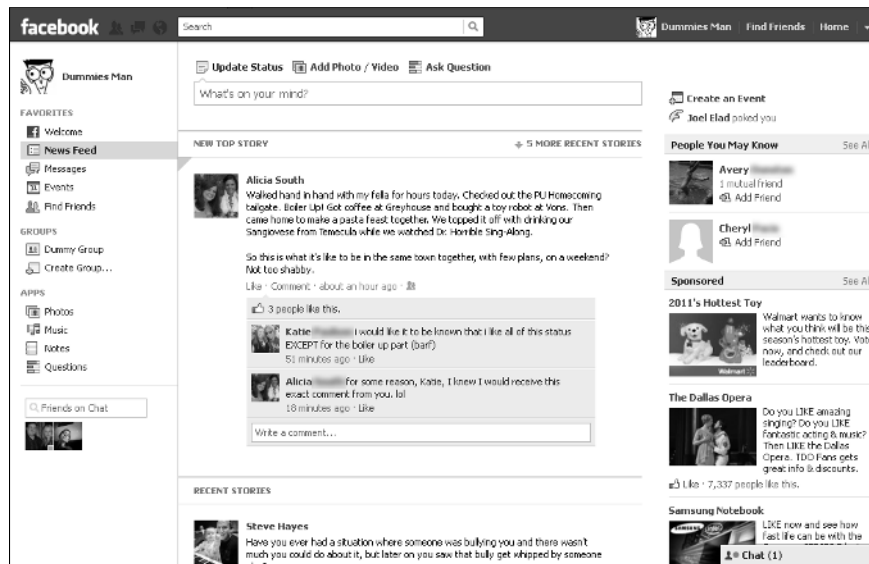
### *Establish a Profile*

When you sign up for Facebook, one of the first things you do is establish your *Profile*. A Profile on Facebook is a social résumé — a page about you that you keep up-to-date with all the information you want people to know.

If you were handing out résumés in the real world, you'd probably give different documents to different people. Your social résumé may have your phone number, your favorite quotes, and pictures from that crazy night in

you-know-where with you-know-who. Your résumé for a potential employer would probably share your education and employment history. Your résumé for your family may include your personal address as well as show off your recent vacation photos and news about your life's changes.

You show different slices of your life and personality to different people, and a Facebook Profile, shown in Figure 1-2, allows you (no, *encourages* you) to do the same. To this end, your Profile is set up with all kinds of privacy controls to specify *who* you want to see *which* information. Many people find great value in adding to their Profile just about every piece of information they can and then unveiling each particular piece cautiously. Facebook is now organizing that information into a timeline format, which I cover more in Chapter 2. The safest rule here is to share on your Profile any piece of information you'd share with someone in real life. The corollary applies, too: Don't share on your Profile any information that you wouldn't share with someone in real life. I provide more detail about the Profile in Chapter 2. For now, think of it like a personal web page with privacy controls for particular pieces of information. This page accurately reflects you so that you hand the right social résumé to the right person.



**Figure 1-2:**  
An  
example of  
a Facebook  
Profile.

The motivations for establishing a Profile on Facebook are twofold. First, a Profile helps the people who know you in real life find and connect with you on Facebook. Each individual is actively (or actively trying) to keep track of the people she knows. If your name is something relatively common, such as James Brown or Maria Gonzales, it's difficult for people to find you without additional identifiers. Information about you, such as your hometown, your

education history, or your photos, helps people find the right James or Maria.

The second (and way cooler) reason to establish an accurate Profile is the work it saves you. Keeping your Profile detailed and relevant means that your friends and family can always get the latest information about where you live, who you know, and what you're up to. You no longer have to read your phone number to someone while he fumbles to find a pen. Just tell him, "It's on Facebook." If a cousin wants to send you a birthday present, he doesn't have to ruin the surprise by asking you for your address. When your Profile is up-to-date, conversations that used to start with the open-ended, "How have you been?" can skip straight to the good stuff: "I saw your pictures from Hawaii last week. *Please* tell me how you ended up wearing those coconuts."

## *Connect with friends*

Now that you know about Profiles, you should know that there are ways to connect your Profile to the Profiles of people you know. These connections are called *friendships*. On Facebook, it's pretty common to refer to *friending* people you know. This just means establishing the virtual connection. Friending people allows you to communicate and share with them more easily. Friends are basically the reason Facebook can be so powerful and useful to people. After all, you can only sit and stare at your own Profile for so long. Facebook offers the following tools to help you find your friends:

- ✔ **Facebook Friend Finder:** Allows you to scan the e-mail addresses in your e-mail address book to find whether those people are already on Facebook. Selectively choose among those with whom you'd like to connect.
- ✔ **People You May Know:** Shows you the names and pictures of people you likely know. These people are selected for you based on various signals like where you live or work or how many friends you have in common.
- ✔ **Search:** Helps you find the people who are most likely already using Facebook.

After you establish a few connections, use those connections to find other people you know by searching through their connections for familiar names. We explain how to find people you know on Facebook in Chapter 6.

## *Communicate with Facebook friends*

As Facebook grows, it becomes more likely that anyone with whom you're trying to communicate can be reached. These days it's a fairly safe assumption that you'll be able to find that person you just met at a dinner party,

an old professor from college, or the childhood friend you've been meaning to catch up with. Digging up a person's contact information could require calls to mutual friends, a trip to the white pages (provided you know enough about that person to identify the right contact information), or an e-mail sent to a potentially outdated e-mail address. You may have different methods of reaching people depending on how you met the person, or what limited information you have about him or her.

Facebook streamlines finding and contacting people in a reliable forum. If the friend you're reaching out to is active on Facebook, no matter where she lives or how many times she's changed her e-mail address, you can reach one another.

## *Share your thoughts*

You have something to say. I can just tell by the look on your face. Maybe you're proud of the home team, maybe you're excited for Friday, or maybe you can't believe what you saw on the way to work this morning. All day long, things are happening to all of us that make us just want to turn to our friends and say, "You know what? . . . That's what." Facebook gives you the stage and an eager audience. In Chapter 7, I explain how you can make short or long posts about the things happening around you, and how they're distributed to your friends in an easy way.

## *Share your pictures*

Since the invention of the modern-day camera, people have been all too eager to yell, "Cheese!" Photographs can make great tour guides on trips down memory lane, but only if we actually remember to develop, upload, or scrapbook them. Many memories fade away when the smiling faces are stuffed into an old shoe box, remain on undeveloped rolls of film, or are forgotten in some folder on a hard drive.

Facebook offers three great incentives for uploading, organizing, and editing your photos:

- ✔ **Facebook provides one easy-to-access location for all your photos.** Directing any interested person to your Facebook Profile is easier than e-mailing pictures individually, sending a complicated link to a photo site, or waiting until the family reunion to show off the my-how-the-kids-have-grown pics.
- ✔ **Every photo you upload can be linked to the Profiles of the people in the photo.** For example, you upload pictures of you and your sister and link them to her Profile. Whenever someone visits her Profile, he sees those pictures; he doesn't even have to know you. This is great because

it introduces a longevity to photos that they've never had before. As long as people are visiting your sister's Profile, they can see those pictures. Photo albums no longer have to be something people look at right after the event and maybe then again years later.

- ✓ **Facebook gives you the power to control exactly who has access to your photos.** Every time you upload a photo or create a new photo album on Facebook, you can decide whether you want everyone on Facebook to see it, just your friends, or even just a subset of your friends based on your comfort level. You may choose to show your wedding photos to all your friends, but perhaps only some friends see the honeymoon. This control enables you to tailor your audience to those friends who might be most interested. All your friends might enjoy your baby photos, but maybe only your co-workers will care about photos from the recent company party.

## *Plan Events, join groups*

Just about anything you do with other people is easier on Facebook . . . except cuddling. Facebook isn't meant to be a replacement for face-to-face interaction; it's meant to facilitate interactions when face time isn't possible or to facilitate the planning of face time. Two of the greatest tools for this are Facebook Events and Facebook Groups.

*Events* are just what they sound like: a system for creating Events, inviting people to them, sending out messages about them, and so on. Your friends and other guests RSVP to Events, which allows the Event organizers to plan accordingly and allows attendees to receive Event reminders. Facebook Events can be used for something as small as a lunch date or something as big as a march on Washington, D.C. Sometimes Events are abstract rather than physical. For example, someone could create an Event for Ride Your Bike to Work Day and hope the invitation spreads far and wide (through friends and friends of friends) to promote awareness. I use Events to plan barbecues for my friends as well as to put together a larger reading series. I cover Events in detail in Chapter 11.

*Groups* are also what they sound like: groups of people organized around a common topic or real-world organization. One group may be intimate, such as five best friends who plan several activities together. Another group could be practical, for example, PTA Members of Denver Schools. Within a group, all members can share relevant information, photos, or discussions. My groups include one for my family where we might post photos we don't want to share with the world at large, one for my Dummies editorial team so we can update each other on how the writing is going, and one for a group of friends who are all planning to take a trip together next year. Groups are covered in detail in Chapter 9.

## *Facebook and the web*

Facebook Photos, Groups, and Events are only a small sampling of how you can use Facebook to connect with the people you know. Throughout this book, you'll find information about how Facebook interacts with the greater Internet. You might see articles recommended by friends when you go to *The New York Times* website, or information about what music your friends like when you go to Pandora, an Internet radio website. Additionally, in Chapter 14, I explain in detail the Games and Applications that you can use with your Facebook information.

Many of these websites and applications have been built by *outside developers*, people who don't work for Facebook. They include tools to help you edit your photos; create slideshows; play games with friends across the globe; divvy up bills among people who live or hang out together; and exchange information about good movies, music, books, and restaurants. After you get a little more comfortable with the Facebook basics, you can try some of the thousands of applications and websites that allow you to interact with your Facebook friends through their services.

## *Promote a cause or business*

In addition to your friends and family, you interact with tons of other things or entities every day. These may be a newspaper or magazine, a celebrity whose marriage travails you can't help but be fascinated by, a television show that has you on the edge of your seat, or a cause that's near and dear to your heart. All these entities can be represented on Facebook through Pages (with a capital P). These Pages look almost exactly like Profiles, just for the not-quite-people among us. Instead of becoming "Friends" with Pages, you can "Like" them. So when you Like a television show (say, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*), you'll start to see updates from *The Daily Show* on your Home page. Liking Pages for businesses or causes helps you stay up-to-date with news from them.

If you're the one managing something like a small business, a cause, or a newsletter, you can also create a Page. After you've created that page, your users/customers/fans can like it and then you can update them with news about whatever's going on in the world of your store/cause/thing. We'll talk about all the ins and outs of Pages in Chapter 13.



## *Keeping in Mind What You Can't Do on Facebook*

Facebook is meant to represent real people and real associations; it's also meant to be safe. Many of the rules of participation on Facebook exist to uphold those two goals.

**Note:** There are things you can't do on Facebook other than what we list here. For example, you can't send multiple unsolicited messages to people you're not friends with; you can't join the school network of a school you didn't attend (or a workplace network of a company you don't work for); and you can't spin straw into gold. These rules may change how you use Facebook, but probably won't change *whether* you use it. The following four rules are highlighted in this section because, if any are a problem for you, you probably won't get to the rest of the book.

### *You can't lie*

Okay, you can, but you shouldn't, especially not about your basic information. Lying about your identity is a violation of the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and grounds for your Profile being disabled. Although many people try, Facebook doesn't let anyone sign up with an obviously fake name like Marilyn Manson or Fakey McFakerson. Those who do make it past the name checks will likely find their account flagged and disabled.

### *You can't be twelve*

Or younger. Seriously. Facebook takes very seriously the U.S. law that prohibits minors under the age of 13 from creating an online Profile for themselves. This rule is in place for the safety of minors, and it's a particular safety rule that Facebook takes extremely seriously. If you or someone you know on Facebook is under 13, deactivate (or make them deactivate) the account now. If you're reported to the Facebook user operations team and they confirm that you are underage, your account will be disabled.

### *You can't troll or spam*

On the Internet, *trolling* refers to posting deliberately offensive material to websites in order to get people upset. *Spamming* refers to sending out bulk promotional messages. If you do either of these things on Facebook, there's a good chance your account will get shut down.

The logic for this is that Facebook is about real people and real connections. It is one thing to message a mutual friend or the occasional stranger whose Profile implies being open to meeting new people if the two of you have matching interests. However, between Facebook's automatic detection systems and user-generated reports, sending too many unsolicited messages is likely to get your account flagged and disabled.

Similarly, Facebook aims to be a "trusted" environment for people to exchange ideas and information. If people deliberately disturb the peace with pornographic, hateful, or bullying content, that trust is pretty much broken.

Chances are, you have no intention of spamming or trolling, so keep in mind that if you see either of these things happening, you can report the content or person to Facebook (you can learn how to report a photo, for example, in Chapter 12), and its User Operations team investigates the report.

## *You can't upload illegal content*

Facebook Users live in virtually every country in the world, so Facebook is often obligated to respect the local laws for its users. Respecting these laws is something Facebook has to do regardless of its own position on pornography (where minors can see it), copyrighted material, hate speech, depictions of crimes, and other offensive content. However, doing so is also in line with Facebook's value of being a safe, happy place for people 13 and older. Don't confuse this with censorship; Facebook is all about freedom of speech and self-expression, but the moment that compromises anyone's safety or breaks any law, disciplinary action is taken.

## *Realizing How Facebook Is Different from Other Social Sites*

Several social sites besides Facebook try to help people connect. Some of the most popular sites are Twitter, MySpace, Friendster, Orkut, LinkedIn, Windows Live Spaces, Bebo, Meebo, Match.com, and QQ.

In some cases, these sites have slightly different goals than Facebook. LinkedIn, for example, is a tool for connecting with people specifically for career networking. MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) is a way for people to connect to lots of people outside their real-world experience, especially for people to connect with their favorite musicians and bands. Match.com ([www.match.com](http://www.match.com)) is a social networking site specifically geared toward people looking to date. Alternatively, other sites have the same goals as Facebook;

they just have different strategies. MySpace gives users complete customization over the look and feel of their Profile, whereas Facebook maintains a pretty consistent design and expects users to differentiate their Profiles by uploading unique content. On the other extreme, Twitter allows its members to share very short bits of text and photos to achieve super-simple and consistent information sharing, whereas Facebook allows more flexibility with respect to sharing complete photo albums, videos, and more. That's not to say one model is better than another; different models may appeal to different people.

## How You Can Use Facebook

Originally, Facebook was created as a way for students at a particular college or university to find and connect with each another. In fact, when Facebook launched, only those people with a verified college e-mail address were permitted to sign up.

After a few years of being “that site for college kids,” Facebook knocked down its walls and invited everyone to sign up. Now, Facebook Nation is 800 million strong and growing every day the world over. This means that all sorts of different people are using Facebook with all sorts of different goals in mind. Here are a few common ways people use Facebook. You might see yourself here multiple times. If you don't see yourself at all, don't worry; there's plenty of room for someone like you on Facebook, too.



Eight hundred million people use Facebook, but not all of them can see your whole Profile. You can share as much or as little with as many or as few people as you so desire. Put under lock and key the parts of your Profile you *don't* want to share with everyone. Chapter 5 goes into much greater detail on how to protect yourself and your information.

The following list is by no means comprehensive, and I've left out some of the things already mentioned in this chapter (things like sharing photos and Events and groups). These are more specific use-cases than an advertisement for Facebook's features.

## Getting information

At any age, you may need to find someone's phone number or connect with a friend of a friend to organize something. Facebook can make these very practical tasks a little bit easier. As long as you can search for someone's name, you should be able to find them on Facebook and find the information you're looking for.

## *Keeping up with long-distance friends*

These days, families and friends are often spread far and wide across state or country lines. Children go to college; grandparents move to Florida; people move for their job or because they want a change of scenery. These distances make it hard for people to interact in any more significant way than gathering together once per year to share some turkey and pie (pecan, preferably). Facebook offers a place where you can virtually meet and interact. Upload photos of the kids for everyone to see; write notes about what everyone is up to. Even the more mundane information about your life (“I’m at jury duty”) can make someone across the world feel like, just for a second, they are sitting next to you and commiserating with you about your jury summons.

## *Flirting*

Throughout this book, you will read about ways to communicate: messages, chatting, poking, liking, and commenting. These fairly neutral activities will stay neutral, but between two people interested in each other, they can take on a whole new meaning and spark.

Your Profile has the ability to inform people who you’re looking to meet (women, men, or both) and for what purpose (relationship, dating, friendship, and so on). Those already in a relationship can link to their significant other’s Profile for the world to see.

## *Moving to a new city*

Landing in a new city with all your worldly belongings and an upside-down map can be hugely intimidating. Having some open arms or at least numbers to call when you arrive can greatly ease the transition. Although you may already know some people who live in your new city, Facebook can help connect with all the old friends and acquaintances you either forgot live there or have moved there since you last heard from them. These people can help you find doctors, apartments, hair stylists, Frisbee leagues, and restaurants.

As you meet more and more new friends, you can connect with them on Facebook. Sooner than you thought possible, when someone posts about construction slowing down their commute, you know exactly the street they mean and you may realize, *I’m home*.

## *Getting a job*

Plenty of people use Facebook as a tool for managing their careers as well as their social lives. If you're looking at a particular company, find people who already work there to get the inside scoop or to land an interview. If you're thinking about moving into a particular industry, browse your friends by past jobs and interests to find someone to connect with. If you go to a conference for professional development, you can keep track of the other people you meet there as your Facebook friends.

## *Facebook reunion*

Thanks to life's curveballs, your friends at any given time may not be the people in your life at another. The memories of people you consider to be most important in your life fade over the years so that even trying to recall a last name may give you pause. The primary reason for this lapse is a legitimate one: There are only so many hours in a day. While we make new, close friends, others drift away because it's impossible to maintain many intense relationships. Facebook is an extremely powerful tool; however, it hasn't yet found a way to extend the number of hours in a day, so it can't exactly fix the problem of growing apart. Facebook can, however, lessen the finality and inevitability of the distance.

Because Facebook is less than seven years old (and because you're reading this book), you probably don't have your entire social history mapped out. Some may find it a daunting task to create connections with everyone they've ever known, which we don't recommend. Instead, build your graph as you need to or as opportunity presents. Perhaps you want to upload a photo taken from your high school graduation. Search for the people in the photo on Facebook; form the friend connection; and then *tag*, or mark, them as being in the photo. Maybe you're thinking about opening a restaurant, and you'd like to contact a friend from college who was headed into the restaurant business after graduation. Perhaps you never told your true feelings to the one who got away — your unicorn. For all these reasons, you may find yourself using the Facebook Search box.



Frequently, I receive reports from adopted children who connect with their biological parents, or estranged siblings who find each other on Facebook. I once heard from my sixth-grade bully, who found me on Facebook and apologized for his behavior as a kid.

## *Organizing movements*

If you kept up on the news of the “Arab Spring” uprisings in the early part of 2011, you couldn’t avoid hearing about the role Facebook played. Young people used Facebook as an organizing tool, letting each other know about protest locations and times. People in geographically distant regions could share ideas about their countries and what they wanted to see outside of the watchful eye of oppressive regimes.

And as the drama unfolded, plenty of people with family in the affected areas turned to Facebook to make sure their loved ones were okay. People unrelated but concerned offered their support through their own status updates and more.

The term *movement*, here, can apply to anything. Whether it’s a campaign to raise awareness about gay teen suicides or a campaign to raise money for victims of a natural disaster, Facebook can be used to bring support and spread the word.

### **The birth of the ‘Book**

In the old days, say, ten years ago, most college freshmen would receive a thinly bound book containing the names and faces of everyone in their matriculating class. These *face books* were useful for matching names to the students seen around campus or for pointing out particular people to friends. There were several problems with these face books. If someone didn’t send his picture in, they were incomplete. They were outdated by junior year because many people looked drastically different, and the book didn’t reflect the students who had transferred in or who were from any other class. Finally, they had little information about each person.

In February 2004, Mark Zuckerberg, a sophomore at Harvard, launched an online “book” to which people could upload their photos and personal information; a service that solved

many of these problems. Within a month, more than half the Harvard undergraduates had created their own Profiles. Zuckerberg was then joined by others to help expand the site into other schools. I was the first non-Harvard student to receive an account. During the summer of the same year, Facebook moved to Palo Alto, California, where the site and the company kept growing. By December 2004, the site had grown to one million college students. Every time Facebook opened to a new demographic — high school, then work users, then everyone — the rate at which people joined the site continued to increase. At the end of 2006, the site had more than 10 million users; 2007 closed out with more than 50 million active users. At the time of this book’s publication in 2011, that final count has grown more than 16-fold, passing 800 million active users logging in each month.