



## Digital Footprint & Social Media Checks

***“Will Your Current Practices Stand?”***

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Assistant Supt. for Human Resources  
April 30, 2025*



Hello  
my name is



NAME  
LOCATION  
POSITION  
\*WHERE/WHEN DID YOU  
FIRST  
LOG ON TO THE INTERNET?

A little about me...



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with passion



A little about me...

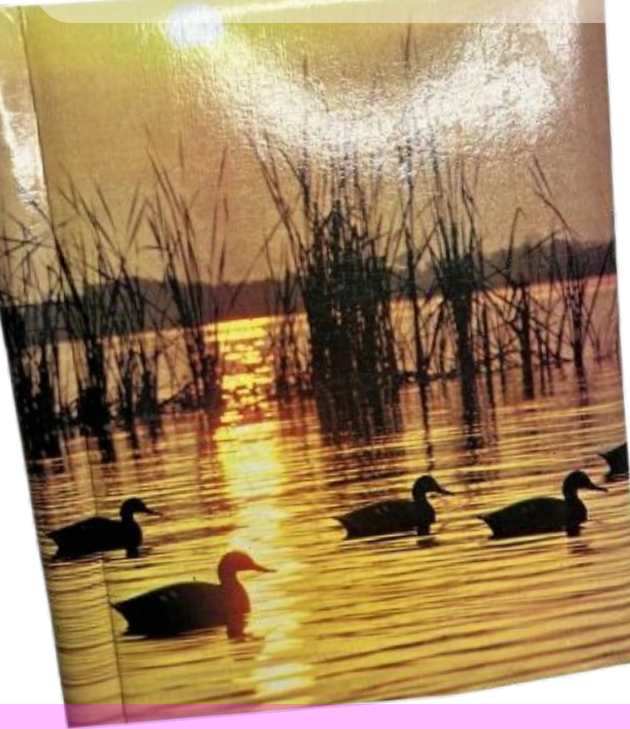


PURSuing YOUR PURP



# What would have been *the equivalent* of social media checks *30 years ago*?

Looking through an applicant's personal family photo albums?



\*photos courtesy of awkwardfamilyphotos.com

What would have been *the equivalent of*  
social media checks *30 years ago?*

ILLINOIS  
ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE

25

CELEBRATING  
75  
YEARS



\*photos courtesy of [awkwardfamilyphotos.com](http://awkwardfamilyphotos.com)

X #iasboAC25

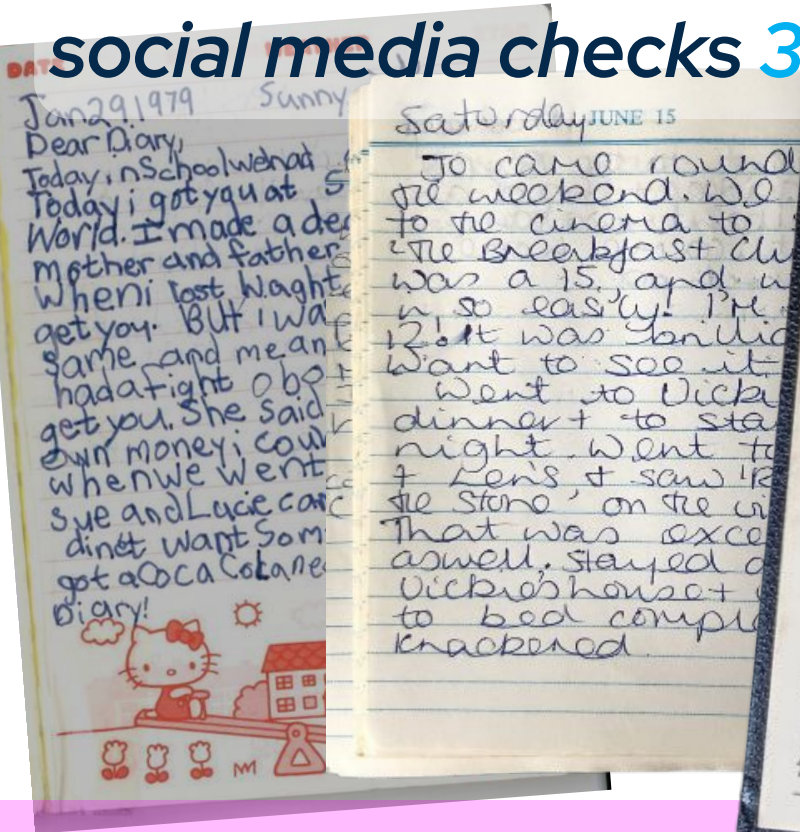
PURSuing YOUR PURPOSE *with passion*



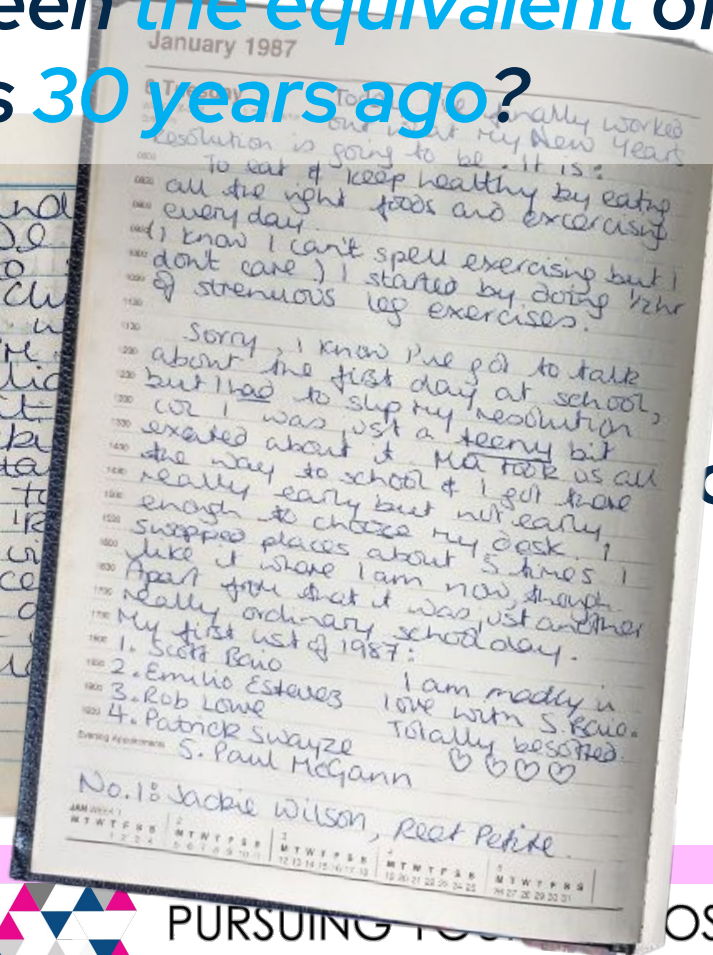
# What would have been the equivalent of social media checks 30 years ago?



## Reading your candidate's diary pages?



Saturday JUNE 15  
To came round  
the weekend. We  
to the cinema to  
the breakfast club  
was a 15, and I  
was so easily. I'm  
12! It was brill!  
Want to see it.  
Went to Vicki's  
dinner + to stay  
night. Went to  
+ Len's + saw the  
the Stone' on the vi  
That was exce  
as well. Stayed at  
Vicki's house +  
to bed complet  
knackered.



What would have been *the equivalent of*  
social media checks *30 years ago?*



Eavesdropping on  
your potential hire's  
best friend?

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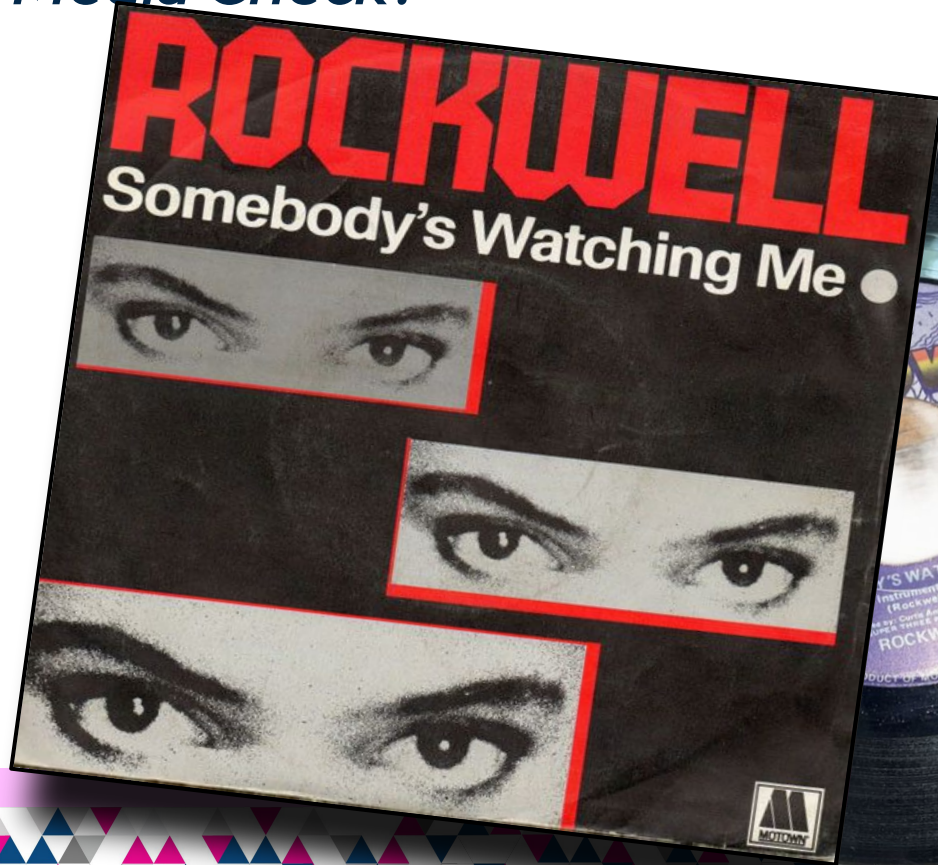
# Today's *Learning Goal*...

- 1.) To be able to describe *WHAT* a Social Media Check is,
- 2.) tell *WHY* they're important,
- 3.) state *WHEN* you should conduct one, and
- 4.) report *WHO* the key players are in the process...

...and to *keep you employed.*



**WHAT** is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Check?



CELEBRATING  
**25** | **75**  
FERENCE YEARS

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# WHAT is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Checkup



- Social Media started in what year?
  - 1997...with **Six Degrees** profile uploading service and then...
  - **Friendster** in 2001.
- Of the social media companies that are popular today, who do you think was first?
  - **LinkedIn** in 2002 (today has over 7M users)
- Social Media searches in business first became popular in

## 2017

Madams. (2023, October 30). The evolution of social media: How did it begin, and where could it go next?. Maryville University Online. <https://online.maryville.edu/blog/evolution-social-media/>

**WHAT** is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Check?



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# WHAT is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Check?



- Fair Credit Reporting Act and other related online privacy laws
  - Username (or “handles”) can be asked for, however
    - we just **can't demand access** to the private sides of their accounts
    - ...nor **demand passwords**.
    - ...nor require they **"friend" us** as a condition of employment.
  - Gov. Pat Quinn (D) – 2012 – “Specifically, the law prohibits employers from requesting that employees provide personal identifiers for such social networking sites and from forcing, without revealing their passwords, employees and prospective employees to display portions of their social networking profiles for review.”

# WHAT is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Check?



## Triggers



### Hate Speech

- **Derogatory, abusive** and/or **threatening statements** toward a specific group of people typically on the basis of **race, religion** or **sexual orientation**.



### Insults and Bullying

- **Name calling** or derogatory statements toward an individual about their **physical characteristics** such as weight, height, looks, intelligence, etc.



### Narcotics

- Statements related to **drugs**/drug use including **slang words, street names** and phrases.

### Obscene Language



- **Profanity, cursing, swearing** or in general crude or vulgar words and phrases

### Political Speech



- **Statements** considered on the **fringes** of **mainstream values**. Typically statements considered on either the far-left or far-right of the ideological spectrum. These often focus on specific issues such as abortion, environmental, immigration, government, etc.



# WHAT is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Check?



## Triggers (cont.)



### Self-Harm

- Indications of wanting to **hurt oneself** or take one's own life intentionally



### Threat of Violence

- An **intent to inflict harm** or loss of another person's life.



### Toxic Language

- A way of communicating that is considered to be **rude, disrespectful**, blaming, labelling or using guilt.



### Drug-related Images

- Images of pills/**illicit substances**, syringes, paraphernalia and alcohol



### Explicit/Racy Images

- Mostly **explicit nudity** and some partial nudity



### Violent Images

- Images of disfigurements, open wounds, burns, crime scenes and guns/weapons

# WHAT is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Check?

Be careful when evaluating webscrape reports:

- Avoid protected class information
- Age
- Citizenship status
- Pregnancy or children
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Religion
- Race





# WHAT is a “digital footprint” and a Social Media Check?



## Procedures and Controls:

- Want to ensure **uniformity in process**
- Make sure a search is conducted consistently for **every hire**
- Information is searched **in the same way**, with the **same parameters**, and is distributed to the **smallest decision-making group** possible
- May want **1** person (Director , Asst Supt. etc.) within the dept. to view and determine if content is problematic
- **Adverse Action** - Meet with the candidate and allow for **due process** and **explain problematic content** before adverse action is taken
- Be sure to **pre-identify** internally what is considered “disqualifying content” for the district
- Ethics and Conduct policy




*WHY* are social media checks important?

EVENTUS  
STULTORUM  
MAGISTER



**Fools have to  
learn from  
experience...**

*(Learn the lesson  
without the spanking.)*

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# WHY are social media checks important?



What's **required** by school law? (105 ILCS 5/10-21.9 & 5/21B-80)

- Criminal Background Checks
- Statewide Sex Offender Database
- Statewide Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Database
- Shortcomings....and SO MUCH MORE INFORMATION NEEDED (and **available**) apart from criminal activity

# WHY are social media checks important?

- Late to the party...
  - School districts vs the Business World
  - A recent survey by CareerBuilder found that 70% of employers are already using social media to screen candidates. Among them, a whopping 54% have claimed to have found content as a result of the social media background check that caused them not to hire a candidate. (LinkedIn, 2023)
  - Public Ed WAY behind on this one...



\*image by Douglass Crocker

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Why social media checks are worth the time  
and effort.



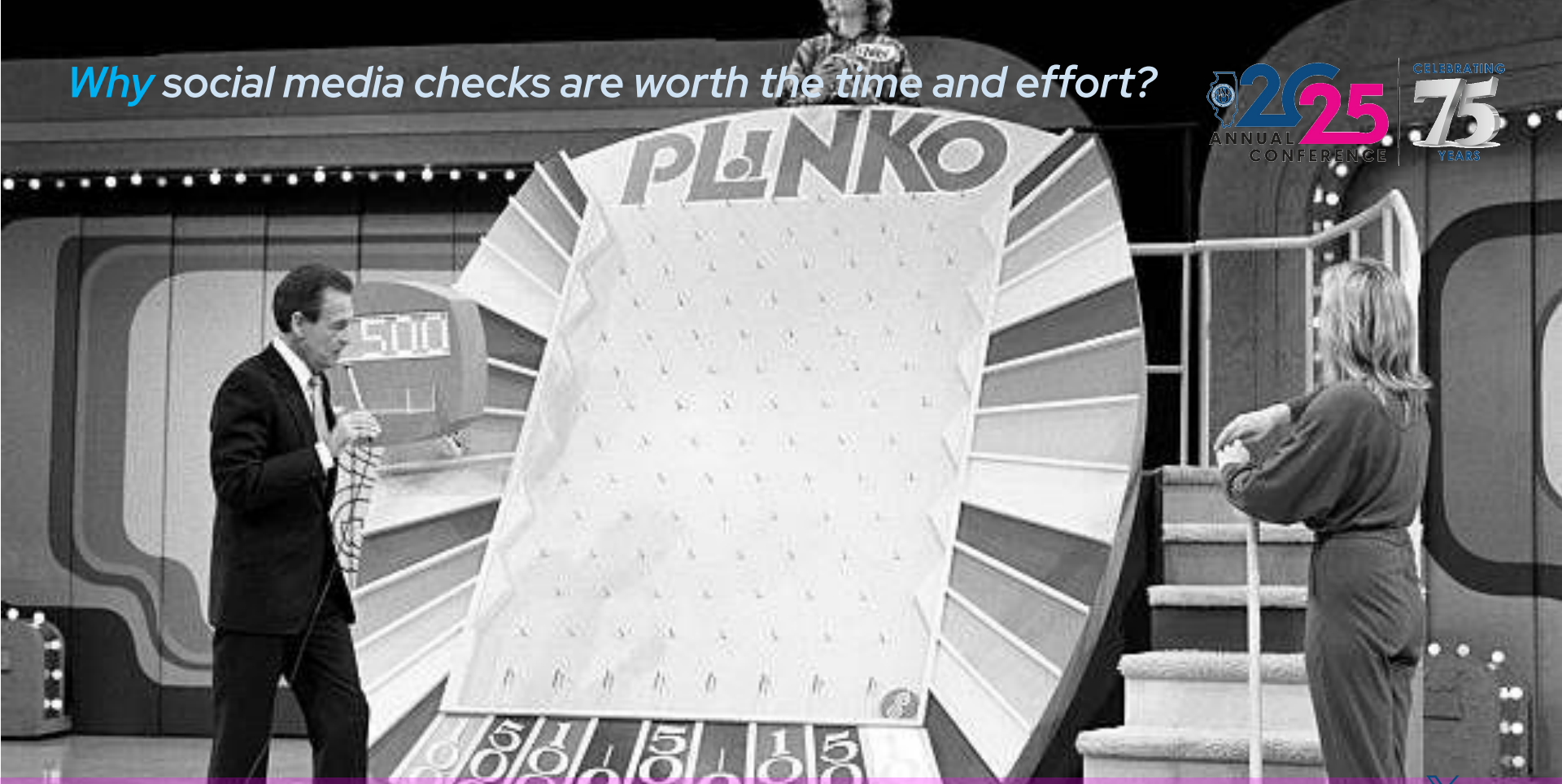
"Knowledge  
is power."




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Why social media checks are worth the time and effort?



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# Why social media checks are worth the time and effort

- IF YOU **DO**...
  - **Unique insight** into the social responsibility, character, values, and behavior of your hire
  - Bolster your **credential check** process
  - Protect yourself from **unnecessary scrutiny** and...
  - Ultimately, **KIDS**.... Remember, we are largely, if not solely, responsible for the practices and protocol that frame the gateway from the outside world to STANDING IN FRONT OF STUDENTS.
  - My **whole educational world** changed when...



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- IF YOU **DON'T**...

- In today's market, solid candidates are getting **scarce**
  - With this shortage, comes pressure to **hire quickly**
    - **Hasty hires** leads to mistakes

- Not all admin are **created alike**...
  - You are relying on the tech skills of each individual hiring administrator
  - **BUT MAYBE NOTHING WILL HAPPEN**



- IF YOU **DON'T**...
  - Are you willing to **risk your job** that all of your hiring admin are competent AND persistent enough to find problematic web content before hire??!
    - Trust in your school district can be **easily broken** (and the cancel-culture/court of public opinion is wildly unforgiving)

**WHEN** should social media checks be conducted?



*"...and when will then be now?"*

*"Soon."*



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# WHEN should social media check be conducted?



- My \$0.02
  - Once you narrow down the pool to one candidate but **BEFORE** job offer
  - Before hire when reference checks are being conducted
  - Third-parties can get you a standardized report in 1-3 days



# WHEN should social media check be conducted?

- Be sure to have language in your application template...
  - Digital Footprint Inspection Notification
    - *"As part of the screening and hiring process, Homer CCSD 33C researches public information connected to candidates on the internet prior to their interview, should they be selected. Homer CCSD 33C discourages the use of social media to post or display comments about others or even general views, pictures or symbols that are vulgar, obscene, threatening, intimidating, harassing, or a violation of Federal and state of Illinois mandates for employees working in an educational setting and our workplace policies against discrimination, harassment, or hostility on account of age, race, religion, sex, ethnicity, nationality, disability, or other protected class, status, or characteristic."*




# WHO

*can help with  
social media  
checks?*



 **25**  
ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE

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**75**  
YEARS

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# WHO can help with social media checks?

- “The Hired Help” – third party vendors
  - Often some AI and human-based element
  - Removes impartiality
  - Can be a time saver
    - To complete a thorough digital footprint check can take a lot of time (one rabbit hole after another)
  - Can ask for info you can’t in validating online identities
  - Can handle the “collecting consent” piece for you
  - Only report information you can rightly base hiring decisions on
  - Follow all federal law (Fair Credit Reporting Act) and state privacy laws
  - Remove protected class information, mitigating risk of hiring-based discrimination/litigation

# HELP!

**Sample Report**  
[HERE](#)



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# WHO can help with social media checks?



- Not all vendors are created equally
- Some companies who “specialize” in background checks don’t in social media searches
- Cost is anywhere from \$25/report to \$25k annually
- Known Vendors to Investigate...



*thank  
you.*

**AND PLEASE REACH OUT IF I CAN HELP!**