

SecureId :: Security of Identity Through Knowledge

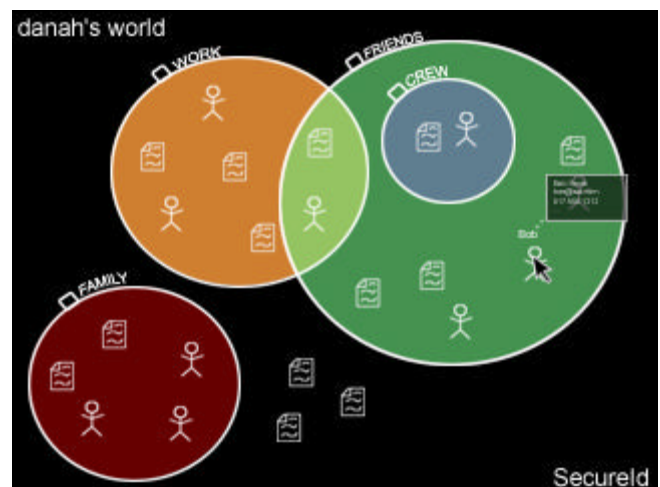
<http://smg.media.mit.edu/projects/SecureId/>
Sociable Media ... danah boyd ... Nelson Lai

In the physical world, you control your identity by portraying yourself differently depending on the context, often as defined by location. While context is just as important for presenting different facets in the digital world, location is not as valuable of a marker. Not only does digital location fail to provide the rich cues that you gain from the physical version, but also because information can be aggregated across multiple environments online, location does not convey the level of segmentation that you might initially think. Thus, the persona you present in the work-related newsgroup might be easily integrated with the message board you use to get emotional support. In order to properly present yourself online requires different mechanisms than simply acting differently depending on the location (i.e. work versus the bar). Given these differences, how can you control what facets of yourself are available to which people?

SecureId is a program that helps you protect and control your **digital identity** by allowing you to determine who can access your private information. While location is no longer a useful marker for context, people and type of interactions are still fundamental to the idea of context. By allowing you to articulate your **digital contexts** based on **facets of your identity**, *SecureId* provides the framework for you to properly relate identity information and people with contexts, thereby giving you the ability to portray yourself properly.

In everyday life, people can gain access to different aspects of your identity depending on various levels of awareness about you and your presentation. If they know the meaning behind your clothes or have a particular type of relationship with you, they have different levels of knowledge through which they can make different assumptions about how you are presenting yourself. Knowing this level of context, you can adjust your presentation accordingly. In a similar fashion, *SecureId* uses a **knowledge-based security** system to help you manage access to various facets of your identity. While everyone can

access public data, those who can provide matching identity characteristics (such as similar email association) or knowledge (based on predetermined questions) are able to access data associated with particular facets. Within these faceted borders, you can secure different types of information that reveal aspects of your identity including demographic data, e-commerce habits, documents and media, and contact access.



The initial mock-up (shown above) represents how danah's world might appear. In her world, danah has articulated four different facets (circles), some of which overlap. Within these facets, she has associated various types of information (text icons). Each facet is secured in one of three schemes used to assess someone's knowledge - opens question/answer, limited question/answer or shared identity information. Over time, individuals have populated danah's world by having conveyed the appropriate knowledge. By looking at this image, danah can see who has gained access to her different facets.

SecureId offers you an **interactive visual landscape** for articulating your identity facets and associating appropriate data with them. Through this mechanism, you can quickly see who has access to what aspects of your self. By presenting you with a **portrait of your digital identity**, *SecureId* also gives you a virtual mirror to your social performance, an awareness that is taken for granted in the physical world.