The use of social media by interpreters has attracted growing attention in recent years, and yet the literature on the subject is still limited. While no official guidelines are available at the present time, authoritative guidance has been provided, for example, by AIIC*. An interesting initiative was launched in 2017 by Hugo Menendez (www.hugomendez.net) for London MET’s Conference interpreting MA program and popularized the #1ntHUSH hashtag (or rather hashtag). A research by Brett Best (www.brettbest.com), published in 2019 in the International Journal of Translation and Interpreting Research (http://trans-int.org), analyzed perceptions of how sign language interpreters use Facebook, and concluded: “Maintaining client confidentiality was found to be the most pressing challenge Facebook brings to the profession. Educational measures to raise awareness about e-professionalism were generally viewed favorably.”

I recently launched a survey* inviting fellow interpreters to answer a number of questions on their use, perception, and thoughts on interpreting and social media. The survey was advertised on social media and was open from August 1 to September 10, 2019. The results, while far from exhaustive, shed some light on interesting aspects relating to the level of awareness of social media netiquette among #1nt professionals, the perception of fellow #1nters with a high profile on social media, and their view of which posts are acceptable and what are, at the other end of the spectrum, questionable or clearly inappropriate for an interpreting professional.

The complete results of the survey are currently being summarized and will be presented on my social media and at all ad-hoc events in the coming months.

Key Findings:
- **Interpreters On Social Media**: Of the 245 respondents from all over the world who contributed their views, almost 90% are professional interpreters. Around 25% have been in the profession for 5 years or less and 40% for more than 15. Around half do not belong to any professional association. In terms of social media presence, 89% are on LinkedIn, 85% on Facebook, and 62% on Instagram and Twitter. As regards the use of social media for professional purposes, 88% indicate LinkedIn as their platform of choice, followed by Twitter (41%), Facebook (38%) and Instagram (13%).

- **Your Reputation Is On(line)**: From the standpoint of the interpreter’s reputation, 57.6% do not believe that “posting pictures of your assignments enhances your reputation as a professional interpreter”, while 42.4% do. Of those who do post pictures of their assignments, 92.1% believe that posting gives them visibility which is good for business. When asked if posting makes it more or less likely to be contacted by a colleague for a job, 40% believe that colleagues don’t care, 32% believe that posts make this more likely, and 30.2% state that it depends on the colleague’s age. As regards one’s own privacy, around 37% do not find it annoying to appear in colleagues’ pictures at all (20.2% actually admit they will likely share the post themselves), while only 4.4% find it so annoying that they may not work with that colleague again.

- **To Post Or Not To Post**: While 41.6% of respondents say they have never posted pictures of assignments, 58.4% admit to having done so – mostly pictures of themselves and their colleagues (55.8%), views from the booth (51.7%), interpreting equipment like microphones and consoles (49.7%), the venue (49%), and selfies or photos of themselves (47.6%). 18.4% admit that they don’t ask permission from the client before posting a picture and 21.4% sometimes do. 4% admit to including information about the client in their post. The main concerns when posting about an assignment are that no sensitive material is visible (84.9%). 38.2% make sure that they look professional in the picture. Only 6.6% say they are concerned with “looking good” in the picture.

Key Findings:
- **Social Media & Confidentiality**: Opinions of colleagues who post pictures on social media vary: 42% of respondents feel that “interpreters should generally not post pictures about their assignments”, but 31.5% agree with the statement that “[these terps] must be good interpreters, because they work so much.” 92.7% of respondents are aware of privacy requirements they need to comply with when posting on social media, mostly by virtue of confidentiality agreements signed with the client (81.5%) and common sense (80.6%). Interestingly, while 36.2% declare that their clients do not generally require them to sign a confidentiality agreement, 85.6% of respondents include a confidentiality clause in their contracts.

Key Findings:
- **What do you do for professional purposes?**

- **Do you feel that posting pictures of your assignments enhances your reputation as a professional interpreter?**

Conclusions

While by no means exhaustive, the available data indicates that professional conference interpreters are largely aware of confidentiality issues regarding pictures of assignments that are posted on social media. However, they may not always be aware or fully aware of the consequences on the interpreter’s reputation among clients as well as among fellow interpreters. It would therefore appear advisable for national and international associations to issue guidelines to their members and to encourage ad-hoc CPD training so as to prevent any faux-pas dictated by lack of familiarity with social media and/or netiquette. Young interpreters in particular should be made aware of the consequences of their online activity on their career, an aspect that should be included in the curricula of interpreting training programs. Social media, however, may actually take on a “public service” role by raising awareness on the issue, disseminating literature and information on the subject (e.g., podcasts by Troublesome Terps - https://www.troubleterps.com/16).