



University of
Western Sydney

CENTRE FOR
CULTURAL RESEARCH



Date

November 29, 2010

Time

2pm - 3:30pm

Venue

Gallery
Female Orphan School
Building EZ
Parramatta Campus
([view map](#))

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Facebook - From cool to Kula

Because Facebook was originally launched as a means for students to connect with each other, the assumption has been this is a cool, youth-oriented, but also relatively shallow new media. Today with 500 million users across the world, and with the most rapidly expanding demographic amongst older users, we have to appreciate that these origins may tell us little about how Facebook will evolve in the future. This paper starts from an ethnographic study of the way Facebook impacts upon the population of Trinidad and why so many people spend several hours a day on Facebook. It shows how this represents a challenge to key assumptions in Social Science about modern life, kinship and community. It ends with a theoretical account of Facebook as culture based on studies of the Kula ring in New Guinea.

Daniel Miller is a professor of material culture studies at the Department of Anthropology at University College London. He is the author and editor of many books based on ethnographic research in India, the Philippines, Trinidad and London on topics ranging from clothing and housing, the impact of mobile phones on poverty to the nature of consumption. His work has been used across a number of disciplines from anthropology to cultural and media studies. He is internationally regarded as one of the leading figures in the study of material culture. Current projects include *The Global Denim Project*, a forthcoming book on the social impact of Facebook, and a **Philippines' based ethnographic study of the use of new media in maintaining relationships between people** separated for long periods. The first of a two volume retrospective collection of his work, *Stuff*, was published by Polity in 2010.

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