Title of Session: C3 - Cyber Victimization in Higher Ed
Moderator: Davina Pruitt-Mentle
Guest Speaker: Amy Ginther
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Room: Cyber 3 Group

DavinaP: Lets go ahead and get started --others I am sure will enter in and we can introduce as we go

BjB : a reminder that there is information about this session on the featured whiteboard...

BjB : and a ppt presentation under featured items that will serve as an agenda

DavinaP: tonight we have a great topic and a wonderful guest speaker--Amy Ginther director of Project netics at the university of Maryland

DavinaP: to help her gain some background--if each could introduce themselves that would be great

BjB . o O (and after you open the ppt, if you're new to Tapped In, go to the Actions menu in the top right of your chat and select DETACH)

AmyMG: Intros could be what setting you work in and where?

JenniferLT: My name is Jennifer - I am an instructor of Psychology at Tarleton State University. I am also a 3rd year doctoral student at Texas A & M - Commerce.

BjB : I'm a retired teacher in Pennsylvania and I'm eagerly waiting to see what Amy has to share!

JeffC: I'm on Tapped In Helpdesk, in Forest Grove Oregon, and always interested in learning new stuff about CyberSafety, etc.

DanielBr: I'm a *new* asst prof in finance in Canada

DavinaP: Davina Director Ed Tech policy, research and Outreach--host of the C3 forum

AmyMG: As I thought about the topic, I can say I'm fairly satisfied with the individual attention we give to victims of individual incidents, but I have lots of work to do on the broader outreach level.

DavinaP: we had several interested in a hot topic of late...harassment-related issues in the online environment.

DavinaP: so...without any more waiting Amy please share

AmyMG: I wonder if participants have an interest in a particular part of the topic...individual cases, responses to them, prevention strategies, policy?

AmyMG: Anyone have questions based on personal experience with an incident, or based on knowledge of someone else's experience?

BjB listens to Jeff's experience

JeffC: lol

BjB gently prods Jeff

JeffC: Well... my experience is that I answer questions on Yahoo Answers.

DavinaP: I am sure some will come up --perhaps share some incidents that have happened on your watch

JeffC: And this post came up from some woman who (with a little research on my part) turns out to be cyberstalking an ex-professor of hers.

JeffC: I found out that she had been google bombing him and posting rants on several message boards including Yahoo Answers.

JeffC: I reported the abuse to the Yahoo Answer people... they deleted *some* of the posts... and reaped the account.

JeffC: But... she's come back.

JeffC: I also tracked down the professor and asked him if there was anything I could do... we corresponded a bit.

AmyMG: Unfortunately, not an unfamiliar scenario to me in assistance I've provided a couple of different faculty members.

JeffC: I thought that this would be a good venue to get professional advice.

JeffC: The bottom line question is what can be done?

JeffC: Can google be contacted to erase all remnants of her google bombing?

AmyMG: We also have had some responsiveness from Yahoo in removing problematical content.

JeffC: Does he have to go through the courts?

JeffC: It seems to me that google (and other search engines) should have remedies for this.

JeffC: Of course she's also emailing him.

AmyMG: We've assisted people with getting content uncached from Google, but it can live on in other search engines. It's very tricky to really fully address.

JeffC: So her psychosis isn't just limited to the public net.

JeffC: It's almost analogous to people who suffer from identity theft.

DanielBr: I've had a similar experience...exacerbated by the fact the student is no longer a student at the university so that route is closed. Getting things off google is time consuming

AmyMG: Contact to the perpetrator's internet service/e-mail providers can get accounts shut down, but of course other accounts can be acquired.

DavinaP: Amy how does one even contact google? does it have to come from a school or person like yourself or can it come from the indiv?

AmyMG: It can come from the individual but my office does work on behalf of univ. folks.

AmyMG: I have to go way back in my memory, though, to summon up a case where our "authoritative voice" helped get something addressed, and it was from a smaller service provider.

JeffC: There are plenty of sites that deal with credit check and fixing your credit... is there one that handles this type of problem regarding cyberstalking?

AmyMG: Still, sometimes the extra noise from the university gets that account shut down...sometimes we just don't know that action has been taken.

JeffC: In my case... this is an ex-student... and the stalking has gone on for years.

JeffC: So... shutting down her university account is moot... even shutting down her home ISP wouldn't work (she could use the public library). Are the courts the only remedy?

AmyMG: There are lots of sites on internet safety, especially for the k-12 audience; I'm not aware of a definitive site on cyberstalking (need to develop our own content, perhaps).

JeffC: ok... let's pretend this is a K-12 student being cyberstalked/harrassed/bullied... would their remedies be any different or greater?

AmyMG: Remedies for Jeff...probably...have you connected with legal staff?

JeffC: what's to stop students from setting up phony sites, etc. libeling someone?

JeffC: The person who is being stalked is now looking at legal remedies, yes.

JeffC: obviously what he needs is a "virtual restraining order."

JeffC: not to mention a real one.

AmyMG: Yes, and the courts are somewhat behind the technology on recognizing this.

JeffC: no kidding!

JeffC: now... if the woman was actually sending *letters*... maybe the postal service could get involved... I have no idea... but there aren't any Net Police, are there...

AmyMG: We have a real gap in being able to enforce university policy against unacceptable uses of tech. when it doesn't meet a criminal standard...we dead end on cases because we can't get the ISP records to identify the origin of the activity.

JeffC: this prof has saved the harassing emails, etc., so there is a virtual paper trail.

JeffC: the police can't do anything unless there is a physical threat... which there hasn't been.

JenniferLT: What laws are out there to help protect people against cyberbullying?

AmyMG: Let me take a moment here...are others finding this helpful or might Jeff and I take this into more depth off line later so I can be more helpful?

JeffC: my concern after reading a number of posts is that this woman is so unbalanced that it will only escalate to the point where there will be a physical confrontation... and then it will be too late.

AmyMG: Jennifer...that's a question I am not fully equipped to answer as I've not studied state statutes.

DavinaP: it is helpful but perhaps share some other cases you have had on campus and what has been done and that might help brainstorm ideas

AmyMG: What we can leverage is language in the law on harassment and threats.

JeffC: I'm willing to take it one on one with you later if you want, Amy. I'm really intrigued by what it will take to get "virtual restraining orders" in effect... what kind of legislation would have to be passed, or if the current laws would enable a restraining order to prevent a cyberstalker from posting anything anywhere or having any contact with their victim.

DavinaP: interesting explain

JenniferLT: I find it interesting. I see more information on students being cyberbullied but not a lot of attention has been directed to faculty being cyberbullied by students. Are you aware of any statistics on this?

LaurenEM joined the room.

BjB: welcome, Lauren!

LaurenEM: hi all

AmyMG: No stats, but anecdotally, I've dealt with 3 cases in 3 years involving delicate issues with faculty victims.

AmyMG: Though that doesn't seem like a lot. Each of them took much time and emotional energy for the victims.

DanielBr: Could you discuss some of the steps taken?

AmyMG: In one case, (an example from the slides), defamatory material was sent to a professional committee of a faculty member. Though we could not identify the perpetrator, we could establish that the message was sent on a public access machine the perp. would have known protected his anonymity.

AmyMG: At least our sharing some facts of the case with the recipients of the message sent a message on the faculty member's behalf that the origin of the material was suspicious. (My language was more eloquent in the full statement.)

LaurenEM: how was the perpetrator traced?

AmyMG: In the end, we were not able to conclusively tie things up (or identify the suspect to the committee).

AmyMG: We need to work to require authentication on public access library machines while protecting users' privacy in that environment.

JenniferLT: I have heard of some cases, from the junior high age group, of kids logging in as someone else and harassing someone that way. Have you dealt with anything similar to this where someone is using someone else identity to do the bullying?

LaurenEM : wow....what would you say are some ways of preventing harassment and dealing with it?

DanielBr: It seems like a lot of what can be done is after the fact. As in the previous example, letting those involved know that cyberstalking is taking place. But there is little that can be done beforehand.

AmyMG: Lots to react to here...I'm getting behind. Daniel's right in some ways, but that's why it's impt. to do some educational programs with students.

JeffC: It seems like there is little that can be done *after* the fact either, Daniel.

DanielBr: Damage control.

AmyMG: Well, Jeff, we have had cases conclude in a probationary judgment with community service; with an expulsion from the univ., with a suspension.

AmyMG: Sometimes, in these situations, the perp. has had a longer history of violating behavior and eventually makes a mistake in covering their tracks. We get the break we need and get justice done.

JeffC: right... that's for cases where everyone is still in the same school.

JeffC: which I'm sure is a majority of the cases.

DavinaP: Amy has anything every happened outside the university domain--but that impacted faculty on campus

AmyMG: Yes, we had a situation in which a faculty member's research was harmful to an external interest (or perceived to be). It resulted in some damaging speech on some Yahoo groups.

AmyMG: With our assistance, it was a time Yahoo was responsive to removing the material and shutting down accounts.

LaurenEM : how long or quick is the usual response time on those types of things?

AmyMG: Back to Jennifer's question on concealing identity...yes...also, anyone can maintain it wasn't their fingers on the keyboard...we put the whole facts of the case together

JeffC: a little off track here, but somewhat similar... has anyone heard of 911 Spam? Apparently people were using internet phone calls (somewhat untraceable) to say there was a shooting or drug deal in a (usually random) house... there's an article about it: http://www.kentucky.com/216/story/680161.html

AmyMG: and our student conduct board uses a standard of proof that is a "medium" level of rigor, so as long as a case is clearly convincing, not every doubt has to be erased.

JeffC: basically sending SWAT teams out to random victims. but in the cases here... most of the victims aren't random... usually it's a case of finding out who the perp is... but that's not always enough.

JenniferLT: Are a majority of the student cases taking place on social networking sites like myspace and facebook or it is mainly through emails?

AmyMG: Lauren: I think we were working daily and getting same day responses on the postings.

AmyMG: Jennifer--interesting. I'd say our data are still heavier on e-mail but we've had myspace/facebook incidents as well.

DavinaP: how have the SNS been to deal with

JenniferLT: There is also a site called ratemyprofessor.com (or something like that) that I have seen some questionable comments made about professors.

JeffC: yes... and now ratemyprofessors allows profs to "strike back" and reply.

AmyMG: Typically more is going on with a case and there are internal pieces of evidence we can use--university account intrusions, dropping someone from classes.

AmyMG: Jeff: that's a reasonable feature to allow!

JeffC: absolutely

LaurenEM: the fake 911 calls from internet phones...that is horrible

JeffC: yup

DanielBr: On Lauren's question: Unfortunately, I've had to become quite proficient at having postings removed from google. They will only remove links if the originating website has been altered. Then it's still a while (days at least) before they eliminate the link.

JeffC: Google really needs to adapt a policy where cyberstalking and google bombs is proven, that they need a quicker remedy to take them down. Perhaps one solution would be to threaten Google with a class action lawsuit for libel.

JeffC knows an excellent class-action attorney... I'll talk to him about it!

JenniferLT: It just seems that since we are becoming more and more advanced with technology that putting in safe guards to protect users should just be a part of the development plan. I hope that statement makes sense.

AmyMG: Absolutely. I'm beginning to feel strongly I need to work at the level of the state legislature to close the gap between cases that aren't criminal and our need to enforce our university policy. But, we dead end in investigations because we can't get the subpoena for the ISP records.

JeffC: removing false information from the net shouldn't be harder than removing false info from a credit report... but it is... many times more so.

AmyMG: Still, that may be fraught with privacy issues. Why should some administrator get to have access to those records if they don't involve me?

DavinaP: I agree Jennifer--but people really need to be informed and also seems need some ethical training

AmyMG: my last comment was in response to the ISP subpoena issue, not removal of false info...I agree with that, Jeff

JenniferLT: I agree

DavinaP: So Amy you think legislation would be helpful? what should it include?

JeffC: I think it should include input from Amy, also Nancy Willard, as well as testimony from victims.

AmyMG: And I've begun to cultivate those witness victims...a faculty member and a student cyberbullying victim understand the issues and are willing to work on it.

JeffC: I can have my cybervictim get in touch with you as well, Amy. Obviously there's a list of things that need to be done.

AmyMG: It would need to be pretty narrow...it would give me the ability to get a magistrate's approval for a subpoena of records for incidents in which university policy is violated but law enforcement has declined to take the case.

AmyMG: Great Jeff. aginther@umd.edu is my e-mail; I'll look at the thread of what you shared and hope I can be helpful

JeffC: remember though... free speech does not protect libel... and search engines like google (who are extremely loathe to remove *anything*) need to come up with solutions.

DavinaP: BJ just indicated our hour has come to a close--does anyone have other questions for Amy?

DanielBr: No questions. But thank you for your insight!

AmyMG: You are welcome.

DavinaP: Amy's email was included both in the PPT and within this transcript--if anyone would like to contact her

BjB : The next Cyber 3 discussion will take place on March 2

LaurenEM : thanks

BjB : I hope you will all take time to participate

DavinaP: Amy again big hug for talking with our group

BjB : Thanks, Amy, for guest speaking ;-)

LaurenEM : thanks Amy

BjB . o O (Davina's hug out-trumps my thanks ;-))

DavinaP: an issue that seems to be a problem both in K12 and beyond

AmyMG: A pleasure, and very motivating to figure out some of these tough issues.

DavinaP: I'll say good night then

BjB waves goodnight.

DavinaP: until next month

BjB : thanks, Davina

JeffC: Thanks Amy and Davina.

DavinaP: thank you all for joining! good night