

# THE COOPER UNION ALUMNI & PIONEER

## Facebook Policy

by Barry Drogin, EE '83

### Abstract

Written policies for all *Alumni Pioneer* staff for communication with the public, and for the public on communicating with the *Alumni Pioneer*, followed by the typical unnecessary ramblings and some hidden gems for those who actually read all of the way through to the end. Effective as of 10am on December 18, 2012. Come, celebrate, all ye brainless.

1. When new or revised *Alumni Pioneer* analyses are posted to the Not Nice Music website, abstracts will be posted, with titles and the link, to the Save Cooper Union Facebook group
  - 1.a Readers wishing to be informed by e-mail about new or revised *Alumni Pioneer* analyses should provide their e-mail address to the publisher
2. When *Alumni Pioneer* content is updated, a link to the HTML page, a headline (if appropriate), and, if needed, a brief summary of the content or change will be posted to the Save Cooper Union Facebook group
  - 1.a Readers wishing to be informed by e-mail about new or revised *Alumni Pioneer* content should provide their e-mail address to the publisher
3. *Alumni Pioneer* staff will not participate in Save Cooper Union discussions or otherwise respond to Save Cooper Union postings
4. All reader communications about existing *Alumni Pioneer* content will be through the publisher.
  - 4.a. Communications through Facebook messaging is turned off.
  - 4.b. E-mail communications are to [barry@notnicemusic.com](mailto:barry@notnicemusic.com)
    - 4.b.(1) E-mail is checked approximately three times on weekdays and once per day on weekend evenings
    - 4.b.(2) The publisher does not have instant messaging
    - 4.b.(3) Do not use tinyurl links or suspicious attachments
  - 4.c. Telephone communications are to 212-243-8784
    - 4.c.(1) Telephone messages are checked once per day in the evening.
  - 4.d. Snail mail communications are to 720 Greenwich Street, #5T, NY, NY 10014
    - 4.d.(1) Snail mail is picked up once per day in the evening
  - 4.e All reader communications are not considered confidential or off-the-record unless explicitly requested
5. The publisher will observe Save Cooper Union content two to three times per day.
  - 5.a Since pinning is not available on the Save Cooper Union Facebook group, readers wishing to provide information to *The Alumni Pioneer* should use one of the communication options above
6. Sources shall not use Facebook to communicate with *Alumni Pioneer* staff.

### Commentary:

Like the differences between fees and tuition, between merit, access, and scholarship, between free and not, the difference between a newspaper and a magazine, or between a news article, a news essay, and a news analysis, are worth considering. The "free as air and water" website was for posting of letters, articles, and opinions of any length. *The Alumni Pioneer* started as a single PDF posted as a URL. When a second PDF was posted and a link added to "free as air and water" by someone else, the problem of revision arose. The solution was to create an HTML page where filenames could remain fixed (from a Google search or off-site link point-of-

view), but the underlying file could change. It was also obvious, with material being deleted from the Cooper Union website, that a safe "controlled" space was needed.

Concurrent to this was the issue of viewable content – Save Cooper Union was not viewable without a Facebook membership and its settings could not be changed, according to Sean Cusack. Also, there are philosophical and moral issues that impact when a virtual space is moderated and unmoderated. This difference was made clear in the difference between the original unmoderated NewMusicBox discussion boards set up by Frank Oteri (now completely gone), and the lightly moderated C-Opera listserv which I did not create but did moderate for several years (still there but very silent under the new moderator). The former, on purpose, had no guidelines or policies and ended in chaos due to the presence of one anti-New Music contributor, the latter was founded (by others) with a clear philosophical intention. There was an amazing moment when a famous singer posted to the latter his frustrations over dealing with a production by a famous composer and, knowing that journalists were members of the listserv, they were reminded immediately of the presumed confidentiality of the on-line and e-mail space, but I digress.

Sean recently pointed out that long postings took up screenspace, and repeated postings were seen as shotgunning by those using one of several Facebook interfaces. This is another difference from the PDF, where presentation is strictly controlled, not arbitrarily cut off by some software or hardware interface. As an innovator in Graphical User Interface design from a usability standpoint (see <http://www.notnicemusic.com/ideasfull.jpg>), and as someone who has experienced firsthand the abuse of the 9/11 "truth" movement within their immoral public but "protected" spaces (see <http://www.notnicemusic.com/911idiots.html> from 2008), my complaints about Facebook itself were always about its programmers, not about the dream environment it creates for young people accustomed to living in a virtual world, both anonymously and not. Speaking specifically about "Save Cooper Union," without a moderator, without pinning, the notion of crowdsourcing becomes impossible, and the idea that the crowd (or those active or most skilled in interface tricks) should control the presentation of content, that policy and usage should be fluent, involving both anonymous and known personages, is equivalent, in my opinion, to saying that strict adherence to Robert's Rules of Order is bad, so let's use a method where someone can anonymously turn off someone's microphone while they are addressing a public assembly or shout them down or slander them when they slander you. OWS has solved this problem by the use of "mic check" and of hands raised and lowered.

Privacy concerns at Facebook are well-documented in the media, plus the fact that the company changes its privacy policies frequently to minimize the majority of its subscribers from re-adjusting their account settings to compensate. After the Halloween Massacre, several *Alumni Pioneer* staff members were on Facebook, but the publisher adamantly refused to join. Three staff members, including the publisher, were mercilessly pummeled on the Save Cooper Union group, although its settings were such that its content was not viewable to people without Facebook accounts. On rare occasions, the publisher, using his son's Facebook account, was able to view Save Cooper Union content, experiences which invariably resulted in immediate revulsion and regret.

However, by the end of the first academic year of the crisis, *The Alumni Pioneer* was inundated with requests for information from students, and Cooper Union Commons, where *Alumni Pioneer* updates had been posted, lapsed into oblivion (one does wonder whatever happened to freesairandwater). *Alumni Pioneer* staff were asked to post the updates to Facebook, and started sending screenshots of discussions.

Initially, I created a Facebook organization using my public e-mail address, but then discovered that organizations cannot join groups. Facebook lets you delete accounts, but makes you wait a few weeks before using the same e-mail address to create a new account. Using a secondary e-mail address, Facebook didn't believe that "Alumni Pioneer" was a real person's name (don't know how some of the anonymous posters, like Muse Befuddled, got past this step), so I used my old Jewish music business pseudonym, Baruch Skeer, instead. No evil intent there, just trying to keep "Barry Drogin" off of Facebook (later, a vicious blogger for *The Village*

*Voice* created a fake “Barry Drogin” Facebook account so he could tell his legal department that he had the right to use my copyrighted photograph without my permission – since the blogger has no journalist ethics, what can I say?). The profile “photo,” *Alumni Pioneer*, was evidence enough, plus Googling “Baruch Skeer” takes anyone right to my website (as a side note, I was the only composer to be interviewed on Kalvos & Damian’s New Music Bazaar twice, but as two different people, and I sang a station ID as a duet with myself!).

Early on, I was heartbroken when, writing a particularly cogent *responsa* as a supplement to an excellent posting of a student analysis of the administrative narrative, it was deleted when the student felt it was necessary to delete the teacher’s name from the analysis, delete the post (and my *responsa*), and repost. I started a policy of copying to Notepad important postings, in case I decided to use them later for *Alumni Pioneer* content. Believing in Nat Hentoff’s “The response to bad speech is more speech,” I responded to people cluttering up Save Cooper Union with random postings only peripherally connected to actually saving Cooper Union, to people actually trying to destroy Cooper Union, and to people more interested in sitting at their computers and spewing as gold whatever pops into their brains rather than performing any research or taking the time to read any facts. Eventually it became clear that Save Cooper Union had become a battleground between the “save the full-tuition scholarship” camp and the “save the building, faculty, and staff” camp, particularly because there were members of the latter who stubbornly refused, off of Facebook, to engage in any interaction with members of the former. Although it is inefficient in the extreme, anyone who has met me face-to-face knows that I will devote long periods of time to answering questions about the ins and outs of the Cooper Union financial crisis, only stopping if it becomes clear that there is too much to give, to which I then refer the person to *The Alumni Pioneer*. I have done this with alumni trustees, with alumni, with staff, and with students on occasions too numerous to count. I always clarify the difference between what is fact and conjecture.

The primary question has been whether the trustees pushed the college to the brink of financial ruin on purpose or through incompetence. The first I called the conspiracy theory, the latter the “In George We Trust” theory, although I know now that George Campbell was the puppet, not the puppeteer, the Count Dooku to the Executive Committee’s Senator Palpatine, if you like, so that it is better called the “Clueless Epstein” theory (remember, there are **two** theories). Enough *prima facie* evidence has accumulated to not believe that both theories are correct: that Master Planner Bernhard, followed by No Contingency Drucker, followed by Clueless Epstein, each had Secret Campbell followed by Propaganda Bharucha cover-up the mistakes of their predecessor and set up their successor.

A major problem has been that hosts of students, faculty, and alumni do not read *The Alumni Pioneer*, but that the administration reads every word, and monitors every Facebook posting. It is impossible to know who “follows” you on Facebook without using some virus-laden app, but my website statistics are completely available to me, and the Public Relations office and Alumni Affairs office would check me every day (and TC Westcott once quoted an obscure verbal comment from one of my YouTube videos). Jamshed Bharucha once wasted 30 minutes of an important trustee meeting he wasn’t even supposed to be at ranting about me, I have trouble believing the “full support of the board” he was recently granted in public on December 5, 2012, was anything but self-serving.

Anyway, some students – who I would gladly sit down with and have a calm conversation with – went off the deep-end on Facebook recently. At first I responded with a masochistic love poem, but then the students turned vicious and started posting fake versions of events I had witnessed, followed by quick postings immediately deleted so I could not read them, and attempts to get me kicked off Facebook for violating spam policies and the like.

So, as per the Facebook policy stated above, you’ve got my name, you’ve got my number, you’ve got my e-mail address (all of which have always been listed and public, from way before this Cooper Union fiasco), and

we have our protected space. Go fuck yourselves – you'll all be alumni on LinkedIn soon enough. **That** is moderated.

*The current version of this document can be found at <<http://www.notnicemusic.com/facebook.pdf>>. The original version was completed on December 18, 2012.*

*The Alumni Pioneer, <<http://www.notnicemusic.com/Cassandra/cooper.html>>, is a virtual newspaper with breaking news stories and links to analyses, sources and the media. It is written and formatted in an inverted-pyramid newspaper style to facilitate quick access to what is deemed the most important information.*