

Social Media

For Librarianship

By Ashley Anstaett, Michael Elsener, Brian McCann, and Mary Melvin

Libraries are incorporating Social Media technologies to create a more progressive presence in the community. Social Media has become an essential way for libraries to communicate and engage patrons. These important tools can enhance learning skills and allows for an exchange of information that goes beyond the walls of the traditional library. Social Media has allowed librarians to promote events and connect with patrons throughout the community in many significant ways.

Ten Important Social Media Websites for Librarians

This is a list of some of the top social media websites that can be used by librarians. Each site can be used for learning while also engaging users in social interaction.

Librarians should consider having a social media presence to keep current and allow interaction with patrons. This can improve collections, increase circulation, and promote events and author signings. Social media has become a way of life for millions of people and libraries must utilize this technology to

stay current and relevant. Social Media allows an ongoing conversation between patrons and staff that can improve customer relations and ongoing feedback. These ten social media sites should be considered for any library system.

Facebook

www.facebook.com

Facebook has become one of the most popular social media sites allowing librarians to market their services online. Facebook can be used to gather comments and feedback from “fans” and a well managed Facebook page can provide insight to the needs of the community. Comments can help inform the public to educational activities and may provide a way to inform about upcoming community actions. Facebook allows a library to market itself for free and provide insight to upcoming events and news that may be important to the community.

Facebook is even more useful in an “active library” where events can be posted for library activities and users can join if they are going to attend (Jacobson, T.B. 2011). A library can better prepare for events by knowing how many people are planning on attending a book club or author signing.

Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com>

Flickr can be used in libraries in many different ways. It is a social media site that allows users to upload photos or videos and share them publicly or with users of their choosing. Libraries may use Flickr to display images of their library providing users with a sort of virtual tour. It could also be used to post images or videos of events going on at the library. All Flickr accounts, groups and pools also have an RSS feed that can be connected to the library website where the images will be displayed as they are being updated, allowing patrons to easily view the images. Flickr can be a great tool to promote library facilities and many of the services they offer in a visually appealing way. Libraries may also want to use Flickr’s Creative Commons licensing feature to find images they may use for free of charge when creating projects, posters, or presentations.

GoodReads

www.goodreads.com

GoodReads is on this list because it is a “social cataloging” website with over 10 million users. It allows its users to register books to create personal library catalogs and reading lists. It also allows its users to create their own groups of book discussions and suggestions. Librarians have found many uses for this technology since it was first introduced in 2006. One way that they use it for is readers’ advisory. In fact, EBSCO’s NoveList products actually incorporate reader ratings and book reviews from Goodreads. Another way librarians are using it is to assist in collection development, they have found that the reviews can be helpful in choosing materials. In addition, they

are using it to promote their libraries. For example, the OCLC partnership with GoodReads has produced more than 5 million web referrals to Worldcat.org.

Google Hangout

www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts

Google Hangout is a venue for virtual face-to-face communication in which multiple participants can interact in video chat, video conferencing, or live broadcasts. This service is free, requires no special software, and is available for recording for later access. Another main contender in this area is Skype, which is also a quality project, but which is harder to use for parties of more than two people.

Google Hangout provides an excellent venue for library staff to host webinars and conferences. In fact, ALA has already begun using Hangout to facilitate live panel discussions (<http://americanlibrarieslive.org/>). Hangout can also be used for providing online content for patrons, such as virtual author visits, online classes, or book groups.

LinkedIn

<http://www.linkedin.com/>

LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional networking site. Launched in 2003, the network contained over 183 million members as of September, 2012. LinkedIn provides a way to maintain professional contacts while keeping their social contacts separate. Users can upload resumes, curriculum vitas, slideshows, samples of work, and more.

Of particular use to librarians is LinkedIn’s separation from other social media. As more libraries become active with the public in places such as facebook and twitter, library staff can maintain professional contacts elsewhere. LinkedIn also provides a standard way to compare staff and professional abilities between different library systems and agencies, which all tend to do things differently.

LiveMocha

livemocha.com

LiveMocha is a social networking site that is a wonderful library addition for students wanting to learn new languages. Users can connect with friends from other countries to practice and learn languages. The student is not only learning, but has the opportunity to teach their own native language.

As social networking creates a smaller world, more people are finding value in learning languages

online. Language learning has always been difficult using only traditional library books. Feedback from native speakers is important for learning but finding fluent speakers can be challenging in smaller communities. Livemocha is a social networking language learning software that offers users a chance to get feedback from native speakers and advance their language at their own pace. It currently offers courses in over thirty languages.

Livemocha works on a Linux platform which allows users to have a social experience with people from other countries through chat sessions and interactive international experiences. Livemocha has over 14 millions members and 1 million teachers and is featured in in many libraries across the United States.

Pinterest

<http://pinterest.com/>

Pinterest can be a fun tool for libraries to use. It is visually appealing in a way that is similar to Flickr. Libraries can easily “Pin” links to different websites that, once pinned, display as images on their Pinterest page. These images can be organized into different boards. Libraries can create many different boards as many different types of information are relevant to libraries. Boards like “Libraries of the World”, “Books to Read”, and “Our Library” are very common and can be fun for users to peruse. Libraries can interact with other libraries and library users by “Repinning” their images. It also facilitates patron-library interaction as users may comment on any pinned image, providing the opportunity for the library to engage in conversation with its users.

Twitter

www.twitter.com

Twitter is one of the most powerful tools for librarians. Twitter allows a librarian to broadcast and promote events at the library, announce new additions to collections, and helps to engage patrons by allowing a conversation with users. Twitter only allows “tweets” with 140 characters or less making them concise micro-information sources for followers. Twitter has

proven to be an important indicator of emerging trends based on how many times a subject is tweeted or retweeted and encourages an exchange of ideas. Twitter can provide a librarian an outlet to share ideas over large groups of people who are technologically savvy.

Librarians must keep up with patrons and make sure they are responding when necessary to tweets. Twitter allows librarians to take an active role in the engagement process to reach out to potential users. Making sure employees have the time to respond and that their responses represent the library in positive ways can be a challenge. It is important for a library to follow uses and engage in conversations (Stuart 2010). A librarian can not let their twitter account run dormant or it will not be an effective marketing tool.

YouTube

www.youtube.com

YouTube (video-sharing community site) is on this list because millions of people use it every week and users can “favorite” videos, subscribe to feeds of videos, comment, and make connections. Librarians have used this technology in a variety of ways over the last few years. Some ways that they have found to use it include:

- Video tutorials
- Video library tours
- Digital projects/archives
- Creating a library presence
- Storytime programs
- Videoblogging

In addition, some have used videoblogging in conjunction with an RSS feed. As this allows for automatic aggregation and playback on mobile devices and personal computers, i.e., a video podcast.

Wikis

Wikis allow users to edit, share and update information in a collaborative manner. Users are also able to link between pages, making it easy to navigate from page to page to relevant information. The collaborative nature of wikis is what makes them particularly appealing for use in libraries. Libraries are able to interact more closely with one another through wikis. Wikis among libraries can be used to share library success/failure stories and to share ideas. It can be broken down into different areas like reference, outreach, circulation, etc, and these pages can be accessed with ease within the wiki. Wikis can also be used to help patrons, although in this case the setting is less collaborative. Many libraries use wikis as subject guides to assist patrons when conducting subject-specific searches, however in these cases patrons are unable to edit the content.

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