

Overview

Social Networking in Libraries – Resources :

<http://www.library.nd.gov/Training/SocialNetworkingResources.pdf>

Will be discussing library-specific applications of these services. Not how to set them up or how to use them. There is some information about how-to on the *Resources* sheet.

Most important point right up front: If you're not going to maintain it, don't do it. Out-of-date gives a worse impression than no presence at all. Don't just get a staff volunteer. Put detailed updating policies in a job description and/or policy manual.

Will not actually be discussing MySpace. It all overlaps with Facebook for these purposes. But do consider the NPR article (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113974893>) and possibly further discussions like the original story. Try to find out which your specific patrons use.

Won't go into blogs because they're pretty well understood already. (Who has a library blog?) But do consider putting *Share* buttons on your blog posts, news items, etc. See local articles on the websites of the *Tribune* and *Forum* for examples of Share buttons. The *Herald* also has them but they're invisible until you hover just right.

Speaking of blogs, one of the major RSS readers – Bloglines, owned by Ask.com – has recently shut down. (Effective Nov. 01.) The primary reason is that so many people are subscribing to those same news streams via Facebook and Twitter instead. Google Reader, another RSS provider, does say they're doing fine.

One way that Facebook/Twitter/etc is similar to blogs is that you have to deal with comments. Just like with in-library patron behavior, there needs to be a clear policy (and an assigned enforcer) ahead of time. There is an article on the resources. And no one can control comments entirely any more than they can control conversations. Look at what can happen in the comments section of a newspaper article on the library. Avoidance is impossible so be prepared instead.

Neat new service: Social Mention. Enter your library's name (keywords fine) and see who is talking about you on Twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc. Very clunky/slow so far, but has potential.

Services not covered today but widely-used:

YouTube

Podcasts

LinkedIn

FriendFeed

FourSquare

QR codes

Mobile apps

Tumblr

FormSpring

Text reference/circulation

Second Life (cautionary tale of the tech gurus getting it wrong; major buzz at library conferences but never caught on with the public)

Social media directory page on **nd.gov**. A version for the NDLA website as been proposed. Counties, cities, and universities can do the same.

Meredith Farkas presentation : “You will never be cool to your [university] students but you can still be useful.” Don’t sell students short by assuming they require everything to be cool.

Perform user analysis before acting. Who in your community is using what tools? Classic library school project. Take advantage of the state’s distance ed students. Also take into account how you will evaluate in the future, and not just once.

The best way to understand how people actually use these sites is to have a personal account of your own. Not everyone spends a ton of time on them; it’s no more of a commitment than you want it to be. (And in fact it’s important to take into account when posting things that many of your users will not be checking in every day.)

There is a great article in the *Resources* on striking a balance between the personal and the professional on these services, written by a library director who is herself active in social networking. And it is getting to the point, especially in academic libraries, where not participating can count against you. But the sheer deluge of data out there on everyone also reduces just how much digging will be done and just how picky observers will be. Within reason. It’s also an opportunity to demonstrate good judgement.

And of course many Facebook and Twitter accounts are just as carefully managed as blogs – an opportunity to give the impression you want others to have. Some librarians even have “sunshine and rainbows” Twitter feeds under their real names and then rant and vent and swear under fake names. And when interviewing, remember that they are probably online too. Two-way street.

Facebook

Personal friends list includes: father, mother (both Boomers), aunt, mother-in-law, and husband’s grandmother. Also, now genealogical Denmark relations.

From a *Searcher* article : “interactive Rolodex”

Facebook is the most popular site by far.

That also means a lot of people who are not otherwise accustomed to the internet, which is why viruses spread so easily on it. The site is no less secure but the users are less experienced. That is one of the stronger reasons to offer classes to the community on it.

Mechanics of how the new pages work are too complex for today. But do a lot of reading up. The rules are very much in flux right now. Some basic things to look at are administration permissions and unofficial groups (community pages).

Don't limit yourself to articles about Facebook for libraries or for schools. Most articles oriented to small businesses are also applicable and are much more common. Also pieces for nonprofits.

Look at what your local businesses, agencies, and organizations are doing on Facebook, not just other libraries.

Set up an official non-human library account rather than an employee willing to be the public face of the library. It helps make it more clear which posts and comments are official and give you maximum flexibility for turnover. The director and other staff can certainly still participate, but you do want that neutral account.

You will have comments to moderate but much less spam than with a blog. You can delete comments and it's as important to have a clear policy on that as you do for kicking people out of the library. Also do engage patrons in the comments field. Reply to questions and comments. That will also improve behavior.

With a fan page, you don't have to friend anyone. Particularly nice when minors are involved. (Think about that with a personal account.)

Calendar features. Announce events. Send invitations if you need/want rsvps. There is a 'maybe' option. And depending on privacy settings, when someone rsvps to attend one of your events, that news will appear in the feeds of their friends, some of which will also be local and may not already have friended the library.

Announce new releases. The Fremont Public Library in Mundelein IL posts YouTube links for trailers for new movies and legal sampling links for new music. Lists can be easily attached. Even announce orders if your patrons can get on a pre-arrival hold list. (Note that you can look at library pages on Facebook without already having an account of your own; they do not require logging in to view. Just google the library name plus keyword Facebook.)

When books win awards or are in the news – and your library owns it – attach the story. If it's really big news, or it's a list of winners, you can (depending on budget) suggest ILL instead.

When new movies or tv shows are based on a book that you own. (Not everyone knows.)

Solicit ideas. Brainstorm. Survey. People love to comment or respond to unofficial polls. You don't even need to offer rewards. There are also some official poll applications available but be leery of 3rd party apps.

Repost interesting news that isn't library-related and tie it to a library resource like a database or a collection of books.

If you have a lot of teens, and a dedicated YA librarian with the time, consider a completely separate fan page for that department.

There are optional settings when creating an account to allow Google to crawl the wall posts as well as the main description.

Photo page not so good. Best to focus on Flickr for those, especially when it is a series of photos. Occasional single shots are good to put on the wall but don't expect to be able to organize them for later. Also crucial to avoid putting patrons in any Facebook shots because Facebook will allow them to be used in banner ads, etc.

The search feature is also not so good. You can find hundreds of other library accounts but good luck filtering down the list like geographically.

Fremont Public Library, Mundelein

- 120ish fans, town has about 33,000 people
- But keep in mind that each of these users then share things. They're just the *first* point of contact when disseminating information.

Champlain College Library

- 2000 total students, 126 fans (not all will be current students)
- Custom tabs across top
- Ask-a-Librarian box integrated
- Dec 18 – Great collection development exercise
- Info tab is inadequate; don't make them hunt for the library hours; fewest clicks possible without crowding the page

Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think!* is an excellent guide to website usability – written successfully for the general public, not just techies – and most of that advice carries over into social media as well. There are seven copies available in ODIN and he has a new (2010) guide to usability testing as well.

Personal and professional development use

Links can be shared without actually logging on to Facebook and being tempted to catch up. Your commentary will be fresh and you can let the conversation get going.

You can group your 'friends' by type into lists and filter who gets what. Sometimes you'll want to send something only to fellow librarians. (Or not share something with the same.) But keep in mind that some posts are an important form of advocacy. If it's positive or urgent, share it with everyone. Also consider geographic lists for local news.

Two major privacy settings (always in flux): whether others can see what is posted to your wall and the tagging of photos.

Twitter

October 01 is Follow a Library Day on Twitter!

Microblogging has pretty much moved over to Facebook status updates. Exception: Celebrities. Think *People* magazine.

Speaking of celebrities, following a favorite author can be very fun but sometimes you learn things about them that you'd really rather not. Even more so on Twitter than on FB or if they have a blog because posts are so much more knee-jerk.

Although you can market your library with Twitter, it is even better for professional development. Especially considering the number of patrons likely to actually be following you anytime soon. The State Library has almost none.

The user base is older and more tech savvy than Facebook. Definitely don't choose it for your library if you only have time to maintain one of the two.

Anyone can follow you and you'll get some very random ones. Blocking and reporting available when needed but you won't see their stuff in your feed regardless. Some is one-time spam and some is market research. Many non-personal sites are also set up to auto-follow anyone who uses certain keywords in a post, and then later they'll go back and prune. Many articles advise to you prune spammers in order to look more serious and thus increase the odds of someone re-following you.

Good to have a clear whom-to-follow (and especially re-follow) policy for a library account just like a policy for comments.

Excellent for breaking news like an event being cancelled. Especially when you ask people to retweet and otherwise help spread the news. City of Bismarck: Landfill fire. And most people who are on Twitter will also use other forums like Facebook, texting, and email to pass the information on; they know well how many people are not on Twitter.

When posting a message, make sure it can be retweeted (forwarded). This is one reason to keep your user name short but still legible. When looking at how many characters you used, remember your name plus 3 will be in a retweet. Plus many people will like to add their own commentary. And always shorten your urls, like with bitly or via Tweetdeck. Fortunately, they're rolling out more obvious shortenings where you can still tell it's from the New York Times, Amazon, etc.

Warn people when signing up to receive Twitter updates on their phone that each counts as a text message. That can get expensive. Smartphones allow you to read the stream directly as part of an unlimited data plan.

Twitter posts can be set to automatically show up on your Facebook page and vice versa. (Be careful about Facebook-to-Twitter because of the character limit.) But not everything for personal accounts are applicable to

both. Consider something like #fb instead. You can also display your Twitter feed on your website. That will only show your own posts, not replies.

You can track local discussions via *Advanced Search* (<http://search.twitter.com/advanced>). That can also give you an idea (while using a personal account) of whether there's enough local use to justify a library account.

Many vendors are on Twitter. Including Minitex.

Local and state government agencies. Courtesy to retweet their stuff and vice versa. Other university departments.

Good replacement for increasingly expensive professional development journals. Get the breaking news from the source rather than someone else's take on it a month or two later. Less time to read as well.

Many book reviewers and publishers. Source of ARCs and also good source of retweets.

Customize your stream (Tweetdeck, etc) so you only see library-related tweets while logged on at work. Also great for ongoing keyword searching.

If you're already using Facebook and considering Twitter, the biggest difference is the volume of the posts. Don't try to catch up every time you log on like you usually can with Facebook. People don't expect later responses anyway. It's just live, like at a gathering.

Also don't expect a lot of responses (or re-followers) early on. Which is an ego blow to many. It takes awhile to build up enough eyeballs on your tweets. Using 'follow Fridays' to get specialized users will help. Also you have to be comfortable jumping into conversations. And almost no one manages to keep their tweets 100% work-related.

When deciding whether to follow someone, don't be overwhelmed by their @s when you look at their profile. In your feed, the only responses you will see from them are those to users that you both follow.

Great way to virtually attend conferences and webinars.

#fridayreads gets 1,000+ responses every week. Collection development tool. Run by a freelance book marketer – has a *Publisher's Weekly* column (Book Maven) and also works for B&N.

Flickr

Make account public. Invitation-only accounts will be too complex for some users, interfere with true dissemination, and keep you from participating in the larger library community.

Groups cannot add your photos to their page without your consent. In fact, you have to both join the group and upload it yourself.

People can otherwise grab or forward the photos. Read up on the permissions options, most of which are tagging photos with *requests* on how the photos be used such as Creative Commons. But ultimately, it's the internet.

Think about the patrons in the photos. Can be even more problematic than newspaper photos because of the ways in which total strangers can use them. Talk to your attorney about what is needed for release forms. And there are many creative things you can do that don't involve human beings in the shots.

Flickr isn't like YouTube. They moderate it very closely for behavior, especially the comments. It is not a free speech zone.

Best thing about Flickr is all the tagging and description options. Makes finding things later very easy. You can be overwhelmed by tagging options, however.

The groups, sets, galleries, etc take some work to keep straight but they are an excellent organizational tool as well.

Do not upload a bunch of photos and skip the description and tagging process, even if you're putting in placeholders. It is a pain in the neck to go back and find them for editing later on.

Flickr is a resource for you as well as a marketing tool. Use the *Library and Librarians* group to find new ideas for book displays, events, publicity, etc.

Library and Librarians group

(discussion list; Facebook)

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/librariesandlibrarians/>

Chelmsford virtual tour

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/chelmsfordpubliclibrary/sets/72157603768148100/>

Lansing READ posters

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/lansinglibrary/sets/72057594106946697/>

ALA Library Snapshot Day

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/advocacy/statelocalefforts/snapshotday/states.cfm>

Card Your Library Users

<http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/news/ala/card-your-library-users-september>

Banned Books Week

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/bannedbooksweek2010/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45642324@N00/sets/72157625017535702/>

GoodReads and LibraryThing

Pretty well impossible to use Google to find information on book clubs that use these two sites because of the very generic names of the sites. You get too many hits.

Can be the safest way to get involved in social networking because it is book-specific. Easier to argue to higher-ups or city council, especially if they've heard too many stories about predators on MySpace, etc.

You can control who joins your groups but you can't control what else they do on the site and you will not be consulted first (or notified at all) if they get booted for bad behavior. Particularly important to know if participation is part of a class assignment.

The fact groups can be private is another reason they're so difficult to search for. But that private setting is very handy when minors are involved.

Both sites are also useful for collection development and reader's advisory. How people interact with their books. ARCs!

GoodReads is more user-friendly, younger, and more geared for interaction. LibraryThing is more serious, scholarly, and inventory-based.

LibraryThing is tagging book covers and making the data downloadable into OPACs for free.

LibraryThing can also give you an idea of what to expect when ODIN allows public tagging of books.

Some library-based groups on GoodReads: <http://www.goodreads.com/group/subtopic/100.Libraries>

Some school-based groups on GoodReads: http://www.goodreads.com/group/topic/8.Student_Groups

Bismarck Public Library on GoodReads: <http://www.goodreads.com/user/show/1706474>