Social network services and Libraries

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Abstract

Online Social Networks and Blogs are two leading web 2.0 technologies that can be adapted as a part of online services in the libraries. The history of social network service providers is discussed. The authors highlight the basic structure, additional features and the new emerging trends in the field of social networking services. In this paper author review the different impact on the society of the social network sites. Different types of domains are working for social networking. These networks can also be used for information distribution. The new generation users can get the library services at their own space and time by the libraries profile on these networks. To improve the status of Library and LIS professionals in the society in today's busy digital era, social networking is one of the best media, because most of internet users are frequently using the social networking sites. And it is the best way of marketing of library services as well as strengthen the Library and LIS Profession and Professionals. A lot of libraries are using this for marketing of library services, promoting events, books reviews, users support, CAS, SDI, reference desk, library consortia etc. The merits and demerits of these social networking tools are also mentioned.

Keywords: Social networking, Emerging trends, Social impact, Marketing of library services.

Introduction

Social networking is a broad term that refers to the building of online communities based on common interests and activities. The social networking tools can be used by the libraries for their information services. Users can interact over the internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging through the web bases social network services. Users can share ideas, activities, events and interests with their individual networks by the social networking sites. The most popular sites for the social networking are: Facebook, Bebo, Twitter, MySpace, Linkendin, Nexopis, Bebo, Hi5, Hyves, StudiVZ, iWiW, Tuenti, Decayenne, Tagged, XING, Badoo, Skyrck, Orkut, Ning, Facebook. Although some of the largest social networks were founded on the notion of digitizing real world connections, many networks focus on categories from books and music to non-profit business to motherhood as ways to provide both services and community to individuals with shared interests.

Basics Typical Structure and Additional Features

Social networking sites tend to share some conventional features. Most often, individual users are encouraged to create profiles containing various information about them. Users can often upload pictures of themselves to their profiles, post blog entries for others to read, search for other users with similar interests, and compile and share lists of contacts. To protect user privacy, social networks usually have controls that allow users to choose who can view their profile, contact them, add them to their list of contacts, and so on. In recent years, it has also become common for a wide variety of organizations to create profiles to advertise products and services.

Some social networks have additional features, such as the ability to create groups that share common interests or affiliations, upload or stream live videos, and hold discussions in forums. Geo-social networking co-opts internet mapping services to organize user participation around geographic features and their attributes. There is also a trend for more interoperability between social networks led by technologies such as OpenID and Open Social. Lately, mobile social networking has become popular. This social network allows professionals to exchange information, opportunities, and ideas. Professionals are able to stay informed with new knowledge about their field.

Emerging Trends in Social Networks

As the increase in popularity of social networking is on a constant rise, new uses for the technology are constantly being observed. Social networking is allowing scientific groups to expand their knowledge base and share ideas, and without these new means of communicating their theories might become "isolated and irrelevant". Social networks are also being used by teachers and students as a communication tool. Because many students are already using a wide-range of social networking sites, teachers have begun to familiarize themselves with this trend and are now using it to their advantage. Teachers and professors are doing everything from creating chat-room forums and groups to extend classroom discussion to posting assignments, tests and quizzes, to assisting with homework outside of the classroom setting. The use of online social networks by libraries is also an increasingly prevalent and growing tool that is being used to communicate with more potential library users, as well as extending the services provided by individual libraries.

Social Impacts

Today the social networking tools are increasingly the object of scholarly research. Scholars in many fields have begun to investigate the impact of social networking sites, investigating how such sites may play into issues of identity, privacy, social capital, youth culture and education. Some of

the benefits of these social networking tools are as under:
1. They provide a global list of contacts, and multi level contacts through the first level of contacts.
2. Brings people together to communicate, learn and share
3. Brings to gather people with similar interests
4. Forms a platform to moot and regulate ideas
5. Provides a flow of information dissemination
6. Assists in creating online resources
7. Accelerates the process of knowledge dissemination
8. Cost effective marketing tool

In the Library Sphere
Today a lot of library related social networks are available on internet and for user oriented services, suggestions, marketing library services, other special services, MySpace, Facebook, Ning, etc. social networks are being used by various libraries Some examples of the libraries and LIS professionals which/who use social networking/ web 2.0 technologies are listed as under.
1. ALA- http://alamembers.ning.com
2. Cambridge Libraries - http://www2.cambridgelibraries.ca/blog
3. casa Grande Library - http://twitter.com/cglibrary
4. Denver public library - http://podcast.denverlibrary.org
5. DepED Library Hub Community - http://libraryhub.ning.com
6. Edmonton Public Library – http://www.epl.ca/EPLFacebook.com
7. georgina Public Library - http://www.georginareads.blogspot.com
8. Help Desk for Library and Society - http://lishelp.ning.com
9. Indian LIS Professionals - http://lislinks.ning.com
10. Kendriya vidyalaya - http://librarykvpattorn.worldpress.com
11. Law Libraries and Librarians - http://lawlibraries.ning.com
12. Libraries of the Future - http://librariesofthefuture.ning.com
13. Library 2.0 - http://library20.ning.com
14. Library Junction - http://libraryjunction.ning.com
15. Library Youth and Teens Service 2.0 - http://libraryyouth.ning.com
16. Mashed Library - http://masedlibrary.ning.com
17. Power Libraries - http://powerlibraries.ning.com
18. Roselle Public Library Network - http://rosellelibrary.ning.com
19. Teacher Librarian Ningh - http://teacherlibrarian.ning.com
20. The University of Malaya Library Weblog - http://umlibweb.wordpress.com/
21. university of Alberta - http://www.library.ualberta.ca/
22. University of Oxford - http://vereharmsworthlibrary.blogspot.com

With the help of social networking, the library's services, resources, and programs online can be easily promoted. These sites can be very effective tools for reaching online audiences.

Marketing library Services
Many libraries have already been using these sites in various ways for different purposes. The most obvious applications of blogs are for propagating library news, notices and services, which are needed to be updated frequently and easily. Sometimes the services of a library are valuable but costly that their promoting and sale become obvious. Here blogging software helps in making the job easy enough for anyone to do it. Besides this there are other ways of using blogs in a library, some

Promoting Library Events
A blog created for a library can promote its regular events and programs. The blog reaches out beyond the visitors of regular website of the library. The RSS feed can be set up for the blog to alert everyone in the community to include the headlines of the library on their sites or can use an RSS newsreader to see what is up at the library. Libraries can also try E-commerce sites to turn each visitor into a repeat customer. On the blog site an e-mail subscription form can be put up to encourage visitors to sign up for permission. Through this permission-based marketing library news can be sent regularly straight to the user's in box. By this way an opportunity can be availed to invite visitors to come back to the library or its website more frequently. In order to make the blog distinguish among others some special content that captures readers' interest should be included.

Supporting Users
Most of the library visitors hunt the library online to find out what new materials like books, videos, CDs, or DVDs have been added to the collection. Regular updating of the information may serve the clients by setting up topics on your blog for each genre: mysteries, horror, science fiction, romance and so on. The college and university libraries can prepare special alerts about new resources for particular departments or colleges through blog.

Community Engagement
In library blog new book reviews and book award lists can be posted for information as well as selection for users. An online book discussion area can be created for readers to recommend books. The users' community can be invited to comment and suggest for inclusion and modification in the blog.
    Other applications in libraries the blogs developed for a library can be
1. Current Awareness Services
2. SDI
3. Book Review
4. As reference desk
5. As libraries consortia
6. To link recommended sites
Here are just few examples of libraries which are using social networking service for their services or promote events.

1. Engineering library blog features news and events in one column of the library home page. http://library.usask.ca/engin
2. Georgia State University Library News is a weblog featuring library related news, events, and resources. http://library.gsu.edu/news/index.asp
3. H20boro lib blog is a Waterboro Public Library's Weblog of literary and library news and resources. http://waterborolibrary.org/blog.html
4. Jenny Levine's Shifted Librarian helps to make libraries more portable to serve users better. http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com
5. LISNews.com focuses on news for information professionals and is a collaborative Weblog. http://www.lisnews.com
6. Peter Scott's Library Blog offers links and news about library resources and libraries around the world. http://blog.xrefer.com
7. Roselle Public Library Blogger Book Club is an online book discussion group for kids to share their thoughts about books. http://bloggerbookclub.blogspot.com
8. The St. Joseph County Publick library Book blog focus on upcoming releases in publishing and entertainment. http://homepage.mac.com/nrdtsjcpl/B1732759005/index.html

Merits

As a place to talk, these sites are also places to listen what our library users are telling to us. The advantages of blogs for a library point of view include the following:

1. The users are potentially better informed
2. A strong relation between the library and its users is developed, as they interact with the 'human face' of the library through this platform.
3. In an intranet environment, these sites can be an excellent way of sharing knowledge among library users.
4. These sites can be a positive way of getting feedback, as readers react to certain services, facilities and also suggest some ideas.

Demerits

Every thing has the both points positive as well as negative. The disadvantages of these are as:

1. The fore most disadvantage of blog for a library is its timely updating which is all the time required but some times not possible to do and result brings bad impression of the users on the reputation of the library.
2. Multiple tones and opinions in blog make many organization/ libraries look like disorganized. Instead of suggestions for improvement users start critizing about the functioning of the library in the interactive sphere in blog.
3. People also question publicly in written, which some time becomes difficult to reply.

Conclusion

Reshaping the online library into a more open, interactive, communicative and collaborative place for teaching and learning activities, can be supported by these tools or services. Social networking is now most popular among the people to raise their voice or share their views among the huge internet users community on any specific area of their interest. The emergence of online social networks and its expanding user based demand immediate attention from the site of academic libraries. The libraries profile on these networks facilitates the reaching out strategy to the new generation users at their own space and time. Social networking is one of the most effective media to improve status of Library and LIS professionals in the society in today's busy digital era. Most of the Internet users are frequently using social networking websites like MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Ning, Hi5, Blogspot etc. Keeping all this in view, it is the best way of marketing of library services and to strengthen the Library and LIS Profession/Professionals.

Conflict of Interest: None.

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