

University of Michigan Library

FutureLibCon, Theme 1: Social Computing

Librarian Conversation: Social Media, Librarians and the Future Learning Environment

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Discussion Leader: Gillian Mayman, Health Sciences Libraries

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Gillian's intro: she is currently teaching a class on social media in the School of Public Health

Warm up questions for the group: How many are fans on Facebook of another library? Etc.

Twitter: On it Gillian gets some good info, e.g. a mention of seven-fold increase in mobile device use

Virtual worlds: kids are now saturated in them. E.g. Webkins stuffed animals and McDonald's Happy Meal prizes that come with access to virtual play environments

How do virtual worlds work with hand-held devices? Isn't there some tension between those?

Generating Top Ten lists – fears and goals

A. Top Ten (plus) Fears

1. Loss of personal interaction and forms of communication that are more direct (face to face, telephone conversation, etc.)
2. We don't preserve any alternatives for the opt-outers (those with different work styles): What if students aren't comfortable with some technologies? Or aren't comfortable with using those technologies for learning, as opposed to for their social lives?
3. Losing yourself from the content: How do you keep your personal/your department's presence? How do you avoid becoming a "magical elf" behind the scenes?
4. Digital divide, i.e barriers of cost and access widening
5. I'll become ineffectual or obsolete because I don't have the right inclination or needs
6. Compromising of everybody's privacy, including my own: I'm uncomfortable with everyone I've ever known seeing a current photograph of me
7. The data trail we're creating that could be used via data mining techniques to do what knows what
8. The idea that the library doesn't belong in these new media spaces

9. Generational divide
10. Preservation: How do we keep what we want to keep?
11. Tension between using new technologies and their having a clear educational use:
Fear that we'll be left behind because we've said, "it's not clearly educational"
12. Homogenization of search results, preference for "good enough" over *best*
13. Less effective use of time

B. Top Ten Hopes, Dreams, Goals, Wishes

1. We become more connected and reach out to a broader audience geographically
2. We can be in more locations than ever before, e.g. embedded in CTools course sites for every course taught at the University
3. We can take experiences to a greater extreme: more people participating, synergy, creation of new possibilities for promotion of our collections and services
4. Empowerment through connection, e.g. medical patients informed about their condition
5. Social media will be like a gateway drug that will lead students into the library and better resources
6. Ability to create events quickly with wide input and very low costs that have a big impact; rapid prototyping—quicker, cheaper, more participation [*negative flip side: having to cope with more crazy people and ideas because it's also easier for them to enter the process*]
7. Social media can lead to us becoming more visible and ubiquitous (present and available "everywhere") [*negative flip side: gradual evolution into a faceless "Library Borg" a la Star Trek*]
8. Can democratize information, lead to more lifelong learning
9. Greater ability to reach out to the disabled
10. Can lead to students teaching each other, caring more about their academic work because it's more socially shared

Fears are more numerous and strongly felt than hopes and dreams.

Imagine the library's website in 10 years...what's it like? What characteristics does it have?

- small, mobile interface option
- can be customized to your interests
- comes to you via a device attached to your eyeglasses or retina
- has much more porous borders, especially internationally—is a collective
- may be more expensive for users to access, if energy crisis makes all Internet access more expensive
- includes microcontent/user-generated content

Infrastructure changes: maybe you have to do something different than you do now, but you're still needed

Social Media and Instruction:

--How do we get students to take content up and make it their own and share it among themselves?

--Students want their peers to help them. We do this face to face at reference desks, but not so much in our virtual presence and outreach

--Hope that social media could make assessment of instruction better

--Metadata: We need to find a way to use social media to create useful metadata structures, to harness group observations about our content that can be usefully shared. We could create games that motivate users to participate in metadata creation and sharing. We could encourage users to make corrections to errors in our digital texts created via Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology, thus improving accuracy and retrieval. Or to submit marginal notes on texts (though users often don't want to share these).

--We could use the tools that users do, to push librarian-created content outwards (e.g. mounting instructional videos on YouTube)

--We need a way to select and preserve the best of socially generated content

Job description of future librarians:

--Blurring of the line between technological and social outreach & interaction skills

--Catalogers will use social media to catalog more quickly (by reaching out to experts, etc.)

--Reference librarians will need programming skills too, e.g. so they can use APIs.

--We have to learn more about usability and assessment; right now there is lots of crappy stuff in librarianship

--Librarians have been "Academic Light", and we need to get more serious

Top Ten new technologies that will radically alter what we do:

1. Google Wave
2. Virtual worlds
3. Location-aware computing, "augmented reality" technology
4. A better way (not yet developed) to interact with very large bodies of text
5. Translating programs
6. Text-mining and visualization of data
7. Hands-free technologies
8. Person-aware computing (device knows who you are, to greater or lesser extent)
9. Integration of multiple technologies
10. Global saturation of cell phone/handheld technology to previously disconnected, isolated, remote, "silent" lower economic classes (billions of new people)

[If some form of continuation of this discussion ends up getting set up, we should sent out information about that to all participants registered for this event in the TeachTec registration system.]