Chapter 20
Social Bookmarking Tools and Digital Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Digital libraries use the semantic web and social networking technologies to improve browsing and searching for resources. With digital libraries’ social and semantic services, every library user has the opportunity to bookmark interesting books, articles, or other materials in semantically annotated directories. Social bookmarking is indispensable to digital libraries. This chapter discusses some of the popular social bookmarks adopted in the digital libraries, the important requirements for including social bookmarking in a digital library system, the design principles of social bookmarks, features of social bookmarking tools, digital libraries and links with social bookmarking, social tagging, social bookmark and digital libraries, advantages and disadvantages of social tagging in digital libraries. The chapter highlights tips that users need to consider when using social bookmarking in digital libraries. The authors conclude that projecting into the future, it is expected that, more digital libraries will incorporate social bookmarking to enhance collaboration among their users.

INTRODUCTION

The availability of most information materials in the 21st century has contributed to the establishment of digital libraries in many organizations. Digital library uses semantic web and social networking technologies to improve browsing and searching for resources. With digital libraries social and semantic services, every library user has opportunity to bookmark interesting books, articles, or other materials in semantically annotated directories. Users can allow others to see their bookmarks and annotations and

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share their knowledge within a social network. Digital libraries can also treat a single library resource as a blog post. Users can comment on the content of the resource and reply to others’ comments and by so doing create new knowledge.

The development of social bookmarking tools lends themselves to use by groups to exchange, share and organise information. Like wikis, these tools enable learners to share spaces and resources and can be particularly effective to support group activities (Dixon, nd*). Educause Learning Initiative (2005) defined social bookmarking as the practice of saving bookmarks to a public Web site and “tagging” them with keywords. Bookmarking, on the other hand, is the practice of saving the address of a Website users wish to visit in the future on their computer. To create a collection of social bookmarks, users need to register with a social bookmarking site, which lets them store bookmarks, add tags of choice, and designate individual bookmarks as public or private. Some sites periodically verify that bookmarks still work, notifying users when a URL no longer functions. Visitors to social bookmarking sites can search for resources by keyword, person, or popularity and see the public bookmarks, tags, and classification schemes that registered users have created and saved.

Social bookmarking is a centralized online service which allows users to add, annotate, edit, and share bookmarks of Web documents (Austen, 1999, 2000). Many online bookmark management services have launched since 1996; Delicious, founded in 2003, popularized the terms “social bookmarking” and “tagging”. Tagging is a significant feature of social bookmarking systems that allow users to organize their bookmarks and develop shared vocabularies known as folksonomies.

Social bookmark in digital libraries has opened the door to new ways of organizing information and categorizing resources. The creator of a bookmark assigns tags to each resource, resulting in a user-directed, “amateur” method of classifying information. Because social bookmarking services indicate who created each bookmark and provide access to that person’s other bookmarked resources, users can easily make social connections with other individuals interested in just about any topic. Users can also see how many people have used a tag and search for all resources that have been assigned that tag. In this way, the community of users over time will develop a unique structure of keywords to define resources known as a “folksonomy.”

In terms of significance, activities like social bookmarking in digital libraries give users the opportunity to express differing perspectives on information and resources through informal organizational structures. As explained by Educase Initiative (2005), the process allows like-minded individuals to find one another and create new communities of users that continue to influence the ongoing evolution of folksonomies and common tags for resources. Using a folksonomy-based tool for research lets user take advantage of the insights of other users to find information related to the topic they are researching, even in areas that are not obviously connected to the primary topic. If users are looking for information about sailing, for example, they might find that other users saw a connection between sailing and boat repair, taking users to new, potentially valuable directions. These kinds of tools also encourage users to keep coming back because the folksonomy and the collections of resources are constantly changing. It’s easy to imagine assigning a value for individual resources, resulting in a ranking system that functions as a collaborative filter (Educause Initiative, 2005).

No doubt, the issue about social bookmarking in digital libraries is a very important one as the tools allow users to store, manage, search, organize, and share their bookmarks online and access them from anywhere; and more so the libraries have found social bookmarking to be useful as an easy way to provide lists of informative links to patrons (Rethlefsen, 2007). Although these tools have been around since the mid-90s, librarians have not generally embraced them as tools for building information resources.