Chapter 8
Social Networks and Web 2.0 Tools

ABSTRACT

Social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter can provide another opportunity for users to remotely access library resources. The creation of a library Facebook page provides the library with the ability to promote licensed databases and the information users need to remotely access those resources and course or electronic reserve materials. Twitter accounts provide libraries with the opportunity to keep users informed about changes to licensed databases, in other words, anytime they add or discontinue resources or there is a problem accessing them remotely. Another option is foursquare. Foursquare allows you to find your friends and discover your city or library. Libraries can use foursquare to introduce students to its resources and services. The library could develop a contest for users to earn points and badges by discovering information about the library such as, new books, databases or services. Social networks provide libraries and users with new ways to promote and provide remote access to licensed databases.

INTRODUCTION

In 2004 Mark Zuckerberg started Facebook from his dorm room at Harvard University. This social network has over 500 million members and growing (Fletcher, 2010). It has members from around the world and its members range from a variety of ages. It has extended beyond college students although they are still the core members. Because Facebook is still widely used by college students, it provides libraries with the opportunity to promote their resources and provide remote access to materials through social networks. By creating a Facebook page libraries can include a link to

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their web site allowing students to access library resources. Libraries can also use it to promote new resources and include links to tutorials on how to use library materials and remotely access licensed databases. Wikis and blogs are also part of social networks. They provide people with alternative sources of information and often have an RSS feed that allow users to read the most recent changes to the wiki or blog.

BACKGROUND

Facebook and Twitter are the two most popular social networks available to libraries to connect and stay connected with the students. It is an opportunity to build relationships with students and faculty. Facebook provides the library with the ability to market their services to a broader group of researchers. It presents the library with the ability to market not only their services such as, reference and instruction but also programs such as, outside speakers, poetry readings, book signings and research consultations. Since students have, a wide variety of Internet resources to select from it is important for libraries to connect with students where they collaborate and meet. Social networks become an extension of outreach to students and faculty. Web 2.0 tools encompass not only social networks but also blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, instant messaging, podcasting, and virtual communities. A review of 81 academic library web sites in New York State examined their use of specific Web 2.0 tools. These tools when combined with a traditional library web site enhance the services offered to students and faculty. The tools become an additional way to provide remote access to library resources.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison in their 2007 article about social network sites provide an in-depth definition of social network sites. According to Boyd and Ellison social network sites; “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p.1). Boyd and Ellison clearly and concisely convey the primary reason people join a social network. The connection they make with friends and colleagues who share similar likes and interests, or belong to or work for the same organization. It creates a common bond and can lead to collaboration and sharing of information.

Social networks connect people through common interests and through the social network develop relationships that can help them solve problems or achieve a common goal. Social network services like Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Delicious, LinkedIn and four-square help bring people together into a social network. Through a social network, people can find old friends, family members former co-workers or current business associates. They can also tag information found on the web. Through the social network, people can develop connections and form relationships allowing them to share information or work together on a group project. While libraries may not post links to licensed resources through a social network service they can provide information about accessing the licensed resources or new resources available to library users. What is the purpose of social network sites?

Facebook and Myspace are social network sites that allow users to create a profile page. Once the person creates a profile page, they can post photos, links to web sites, videos, information about what they are thinking or doing at a given moment. At one time, Myspace was the leader in social networking sites but Facebook quickly overtook them and as result Myspace lost half of their traffic to Facebook. In November of 2010, MySpace announced their users could connect their Facebook profile to Myspace. Myspace once