



The Digital Difference of Online Social Networking in the Caribbean

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Disappearing disciplinary borders in the social science library - global studies or sea change?

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Abstract

Users of online [social networking sites](#) have made significant advances in the development of global virtual communities. With their origins in listservs, egroups, blogs, chat rooms and instant messaging, social networking sites provide opportunities for users with the required skills, to construct public or semi-public profiles, to interact with “friends” and colleagues across the globe and to collaboratively create social capital.

The presentation focuses on the impact of social networking on the Caribbean. It will examine participation of Caribbean people, including candidates in recent general elections held in 2007 and 2008, in popular social networking sites, such as [Facebook](#), [MySpace](#) and [YouTube](#). The assessment covers factors influencing membership and participation, conditions under which content is created and information shared, as well as issues of privacy and protection.

In recognition of the successes of these sites in facilitating interaction among large geographically dispersed groups of users, sharing content, collaborating with peers, and linking communities, the presentation also examines and assesses the role of information literacy in the activities of library social networking sites, and their contribution to the development of interactive information resources in the social sciences.

Introduction

The increasing trend towards globalization has resulted in the determination by Thomas Friedman that “The World is Flat.” The ability to interact with people in different parts of the globe has been supported by the availability of the Internet and related hardware and software, and more recently by social networks which now involve millions of people. There are now more than one hundred networks (Wikipedia) and MySpace, one of the largest, is registered as having three hundred million members and operating in twenty languages in almost all the countries of the world.

One of the impacts of globalization on the Caribbean region has been increasing activity in the development of electronic communication including online social networks. Ingrid Riley, writing in May 2008, identified more than 10 Caribbean social networks, in considering the question: “Who’ll be No.1?” Riley considers that there are several serious contenders, the majority of which are using the Google adsense business model.

Since liberalization of the Caribbean telecommunications sector at the turn of the century, the access to the Internet and to the World Wide Web continues to expand and the spaces on social networking sites enable people to connect with others in the Caribbean and with relatives, friends and colleagues who may be dispersed all over the world with some concentrations in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada.

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Regional integration initiatives and the progress toward the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) have also begun to stimulate further crossing of national boundaries and the related trans-border data flows. Each of the major national and regional organizations has a web presence and facilitates access to the information which they generate.

Within the region there have been advances in Internet infrastructure, information and computer literacy - facilitated by globalization, liberalization of telecommunications and some degree of opening up of national economies

The most recent data on Internet access, provided by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), shows that Internet access in the CARICOM region ranges from as high as 95% in Barbados, and 74% in Bermuda to a low of 10% in Haiti. The following data for the Caribbean is extracted from global ITU data.

Table 1. Caricom Region - Access to the Internet

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION 2007

	<i>Internet</i>				<i>Broadband Subscribers</i>	
	<i>Subscribers</i>	<i>Subscribers per</i>	<i>Users</i>	<i>Users per</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Per 100</i>
	<i>(000s)</i>	<i>100 inhab.</i>	<i>(000s)</i>	<i>100 inhab.</i>	<i>(000s)</i>	<i>inhab.</i>
	<i>2007</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2007</i>
Antigua & Barbuda	11.3	13.75	60	72.29	6.8	8.23
Aruba	14	13.86	24	23.1	12.3	12.34
Bahamas	25.2	7.62	120	36.22	13	3.93
Barbados	...	...	280	95.27	55.3	20.45
Belize	7.9	2.74	32	11.12	6.5	2.27
Bermuda	37.9	58.82	48	74.42	23.6	36.71
Cayman Islands	...	...	22	46.6	...	...
Cuba	33.6	0.3	1'310.0	11.63	1.9	0.02
Dominica	6	8.44	26.5	37.22	3.3	4.56
Dominican Rep.	264.3	2.71	1'677.0	17.18	153.7	1.57
Grenada	7.3	7.03	23	21.77	5.5	5.35
Guyana	48	6.39	190	25.75	2	0.27
Haiti	75	0.91	1'000.0	10.42	-	-
Jamaica	85	3.19	1'500.0	55.27	79	2.97
Neth. Antilles	...	...	...	...	...	...
Puerto Rico	...	...	1'000.0	25.06	118.3	2.99
St. Kitts and Nevis	...	...	15	34.72	...	...
St. Lucia	...	...	110	66.7	...	...
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	7.4	6.16	57	47.34	6.9	5.7
Suriname	8.3	1.83	44	9.61	2.7	0.59
Trinidad & Tobago	63.4	4.75	225	16.88	15.6	1.17
Virgin Islands (US)	...	...	30	26.92	3	2.65

Source: International Telecommunications Union website www.itu.int <accessed May 2008>

The origins of social networks

Social networking has in the past five years been facilitated by globalization of trade, of culture, and movement of people to work and live, and interest and willingness of people to interact across the globe. The tools and gadgets which facilitated this expanding global communication and interaction all depend on the degree and quality of

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Internet access, links through like interests, global games, listservs such as IFLA's, web-based electronic discussion groups and now the social networking sites which are attracting millions of participants extended across the globe.

Churchill and Halverson (p.15), in discussing the development of research on "social networks", identified as influential, a group of anthropologists working in the 50s in Manchester, England. Their work drew on that of Alfred Radcliffe-Brown to initiate the conceptualization of what was to become social networking. John Barnes who worked with this group is considered to be the first researcher to have coined the term "social networks" Barnes continued research with Elizabeth Bott and he drew on the sociometric approach, focusing on people's informal social relationships. Much of this related to the nature of people's association within their own communities.

What difference has the Internet made to the Caribbean?

The Internet has extended the reach of social networks in the Caribbean and the possibilities of interaction among people with similar interests. The online social networking sites map all the relevant ties between the connected nodes. The capacity for increased interaction is supported by social software based on group communication. Facebook for example focuses on the development of groups of people who hold common interests. A recent search for "UWI" on the names of groups on Facebook , showed 307 groups of people associated with the University of the West Indies.

Online social networking sites are increasing the size of their memberships. According to comScore, in June 2007, the world's top three social networking sites—[YouTube](#), [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#) —attracted more than 350 million people to their Web sites, The minimum length of each visit was an hour and a half; while at Facebook the average duration of each visit was nearly four hours. In addition to accessing the popular public general networks, ten new social networks, with a total membership of over 600,000 were established to link Caribbean people residing at home and abroad. The following tables show the current size, and other significant characteristics of some of the networks in use in the Caribbean as provided by the sites themselves in June 2008:

Table 2. Size and Characteristics of Caribbean Networks

Network	Members	Access	Age limit	Language options	Traffic rank (alexa.com)
Facebook	80 million	Public, General	13 +	15 languages	6
MySpace	300 million	Public, General	14+	20 languages	7
Hi5	70 million	Public, general	13+	23 languages	16
Orkut.com	67 million	Public, general	18 +	12 languages	11

Table 3. Caribbean Social Networks

Names (and traffic rank from Alexa.com)	Objectives and focus	Date establ.	Features, services offered	Geographic region(s)/ Market(s)	Members
Ackee.com traffic rank 1,437,593	Bring Jamaican friends, and family, together	1997	Directories – White pages and Commercial	Jamaica New York	15,000
Caribbean-Entrepreneur.com traffic rank 14,558,635	Share experiences and knowledge on the Caribbean business environment.		Blog		
Caribbeanmassive.com* traffic rank 3,218,575			Chat Photo sharing Friends Blogs eCards Videos Forums Shopping		7,000
Caribfriends.com traffic rank 1,202,543	Connect old school friends,	2008	Friends Profiles, photos, email	Jamaica and	5,389
Caribgonewild.com traffic rank 4,653,529		2007	Webpages Email Chat Forum Shopping News Photo sharing Promoting business	Sp. Fr, Eng	8,000
Caribplanet.com traffic rank 1,173,765	Connect friends, and family	2003?	Email Forums Photo and		23,113

Names (and traffic rank from Alexa.com)	Objectives and focus	Date establ.	Features, services offered	Geographic region(s)/ Market(s)	Members
			video sharing		
Carib singles.com traffic rank 160,571	dating site Meet and mingle with singles.		Chat live, send private messages, share pictures.		28,868
Idletribes.com * traffic rank 611,862	Online community of Caribbean nationals grouped by "tribes"	2007	Friends photo and videos, sharing music and participate in competitions, blogs, forums and polls. points	Jamaica +	14,384
Jamdeal.com traffic rank 485,492	"The place to buy and sell in Jamaica"				7,494 1343 live auctions
SiliconCaribe.com traffic rank 884,662					
Vibesconnect.com * traffic rank 56,064				Jamaica originally now Caribbean and US African American	500,000

In their review article on the scholarship related to the topic, Boyd and Ellison (p.2)

define social networks as:

"web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a

connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”.

People in social networks are therefore able to:

CONNECT TO OTHERS WITH SIMILAR INTERESTS –

e.g. The University of the West Indies is reflected in various groups in Facebook., MySpace, YouTube and Hi5

e.g. Some groups of political parties in the Caribbean unite people located in various parts of the world

COLLABORATE – work on joint projects

CREATE –

e.g. individuals and organizations present and exchange information, about themselves develop content and social capital. At least one Caribbean university is promoting its programmes through videos mounted on YouTube.

In recognition of the fact that people in the Caribbean are creating, exploring and utilizing social networks, important questions for Caribbean librarians therefore include:

- (1) How are users and potential users of libraries connecting to others with similar interests?
- (2) How do they exchange information?
- (3) How do they collaborate to work on joint projects?
- (4) How do users develop content and social capital?
- (5) How are libraries facilitating access to social networks?
- (6) Which aspects of the social network model can libraries incorporate into their services?

Profiles in online social networking

Development of and regular updating of profiles are the key to the effective functioning of a social network. While a profile may simply enable a user to summarize his or her demographic information, it is also possible to utilize more complex applications such as presentation of favourite materials and personal collections.

The profiles of Caribbean individuals range from brief semi-anonymous statements with required information to professional presentations with links to scholarly work. The Executive Director of the Jamaican Broadcasting Commission has established a detailed profile on MySpace which would be of interest to professionals in the same area.

Of the Caribbean libraries consulted none were found to have established profiles on any of the social networks but there is the potential for such development taking into consideration the membership and ranking on these sites and the experience of Beth Evans getting Brooklyn College Library got on to MySpace and on to Facebook, Beth Evans highlights the difference which resulted from establishing a profile for the library and using the features of the social network to reach students in the same places where they socialize.

The profiles provide a major development from the simple lists of friends found in instant messaging such as Yahoo and Windows Live. In Facebook and other social networks the profiles can be extensive and can be modified whenever the user requires, as each member's self description includes indications of their interests, favourite books, music, movies etc.

These profiles can therefore be accessed by librarians to determine the best way of interacting with users; how to make users aware of relevant information resources; and how to adapt to new expectations and practices of users. Libraries can therefore exploit

social networks to meet users where they work or play. Users have been found to spend long hours on their chosen social network sites and consequently there are several new opportunities for engaging with audiences who are comfortable within the environment of their network.

Previous research

Previous scholarship on the issue of social networking has placed emphasis on privacy and trust and related concerns. boyd and Ellison's defining article identifies the main areas of research on as impression management, self presentation and friendship performance, networks and network structures, bridging online and offline networks, privacy, safety and trust. They also identified other research areas as race and ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality shaping of identity, and use of social networks in libraries, schools and universities.

The 2007 study done by OCLC, examined users' practices and preferences, their attitudes to sharing, privacy and trust on social spaces, the social networking practices of librarians and the potential of social networks for libraries. The people whose views were taken into consideration were directors of libraries from the United States and individuals from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The authors of the OCLC study concluded that "users want privacy windows – permanent impenetrable, but transparent and with the ability to open." They also found that users and librarians have dissimilar, perhaps conflicting views on sharing and privacy, and advocate creating a "social library"

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The question of existing and potential relationships between libraries and online social networking sites is being studied and is reflected in the literature in terms of librarians' perceptions of social networking, the expectations of users and researchers, issues of privacy and trust,

Online social networking sites have attracted membership involving users or potential library users. The experience in incorporating such large numbers provides indications that libraries can possibly use SNSs to interact with users and to support collaborative activities.

At the Department of Library and Information Studies, we have recognized the potential value of social networks to libraries, and have been undertaking research into the exponential growth of these networks, the perception of people who make up the communities served by the libraries. Social networks are therefore an area of research for some staff and students. In the last semester second year LIS students used social networks as the subject of their research proposals, and graduate students are also doing research including collection development and social networks in academic libraries.

Internet Usage in the Caribbean

Participation in social networks requires the availability of appropriate, reliable infrastructure. The 2007 figures for Internet usage provided by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) show that there is a range from the high of 95% for Barbados, 74.% for Bermuda and Antigua and Barbuda 72.%. In the mid range Jamaica has 55%, and St Vincent and the Grenadines 47% and at the low end Cuba has 11.% usage, Haiti, 10.%, and Suriname 9.%. The figures are improving with

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increasing broadband coverage throughout each country, and reduced rates as a result of increasing competition.

Growth of membership of Social Networks in the Caribbean

Of the over 100 public, general social networks, Facebook, MySpace, and Hi5 are three which are popular among people in the Caribbean. These networks reflect the concepts of globalization in terms of the extension across a number of countries and languages, the number of members and the amount of traffic related to each site. The traffic ranking given from alexa.com is calculated based on a three-month average of a combined measure of page views and users.

The table below which covers nine Caribbean countries, is extrapolated from *Top Sites by Country* compiled by Alexa. It also shows the ranking of the nine social networking sites which fall within the top 100 websites of each country. Of the nine public general sites, several sites are ranked very high with YouTube ranked as number one in Barbados, and number two in the Netherlands Antilles. Hi5 is ranked as number two in the Dominican Republic and four in Jamaica and Barbados. Facebook is ranked as number two in Trinidad and Tobago.

Of the ten sites originating in the Caribbean, only Vibes Connect ranked as forty in Jamaica, appeared within the top one hundred sites in the nine Caribbean countries covered by Alexa.

Table 4. Network Website Ranking

COUNTRY	NETWORKS WEBSITE RANKING - TOP 100 (alexa.com)								
	YouTube	Hi5	Facebook	MySpace	Flickr	Wikip	Badoo	Vibes	Orkut
Bahamas	4	7	8	10	-	9			
Barbados	1	4	7	10	65	8			
Cuba	9	13	41	53	96	7	34		
Guadeloupe	5	20	27	14	63	13	64		
Dom. Rep	4	2	11	8	41	9			
Jamaica	5	4	6	9	73			40	
Martinique	7	17	22	21			38		
Netherlands Antilles	2	6	7	9	26				23
Trinidad and Tobago	5	8	2	13	51	9			

Who is using social networks in the Caribbean?

University students in the Caribbean are also using social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, Hi5 and YouTube to post, create and access information. There are 307 groups on Facebook which belong to mainly to students and to some staff on the various campuses of the UWI. The information shared includes comments, both positive and negative about the UWI, Some groups are presentations by the Guild of Students, and one which is particularly inter active is the group of the official group of the UWI Law Society on the Cave Hill campus.

Caribbean politicians are another group which is involved in social networks. In the national elections held in 2007, political parties in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and St Lucia were visible on the networks.

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Gross, (p.1) writing in 2006, refers to social networking sites as “the next big thing in politics” He judges that “these sites are making the broadcasting method of information distribution obsolete” as the members of the networks are no longer just accessing information but rather are collaborators and creators, participating in the creation of content.

The Internet can be seen to offer several advantages to political campaigners. Laura Gordon-Murnane in assessing the use of online facilities in the 2008 US political campaign, (p. 19-20) indicates that candidates develop user – driven websites with links to the main social network sites. The candidates are therefore able to connect directly and interact with the voters. The candidates use their social networking websites and related blogs to announce campaign events, release new campaign advertisements, converse with voters, and attract younger people through posting photos and videos.

In Barbados, the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party established blogs using wordpress.com. These sites facilitated discussion among voters, provided links to the websites or blogs of the candidates, and show statistics of visitors.

The Miami Herald of Sept 3, 2007 in an article headlined “Jamaican politicians turn to Internet to stir up voting”, highlights the ways in which the two major political parties, the Jamaica Labour Party and the People’s National Party also used the social networking tools in the 2007 elections. The parties aimed to attract young voters and also to facilitate interaction with Jamaicans resident in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom. The website www.jamaicaelections.com provides a good example of the interaction which took place among voters.

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Although Trinidad and Tobago had elections in 2007, the party websites cannot be classified as encouraging or even facilitating social networking. The party websites provide useful information but do not go beyond this to provide the kind of interaction which would be possible with blogs and other social networking features

Overall election campaigns have begun to be impacted by the existence of social networks. In some sites such as the Jamaica Labour Party channel on YouTube the thirty five videos are really broadcasting excerpts from the party's public events, some advertisements, and some video clips taken from public television channels. While there is technical provision for comments and responses to user-created content, there is still much room for development in this area.

The table below shows some of the websites employed in the recent Caribbean election campaigns.

Table 5. Political Websites

Political Party	Features
BARBADOS	
Barbados Labour Party	Blog http://labourparty.wordpress.com/
Democratic Labour Party (Barbados)	Blog http://dlpbarbados.wordpress.com/
JAMAICA	
Jamaica Labour Party	http://www.youtube.com/user/jamaicalabourparty YouTube video channel – videos with advertisements, political meetings, speeches, debates. History of the Party,
People’s National Party (Jamaica)	Blog: http://cblog.pnpjamaica.org/ Facebook PNPYO History of the PNPYO and discussion
National Democratic Movement (Jamaica)	Website with chatroom under construction http://www.ndm4jamaica.org/
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	
Congress of the People (Trinidad and Tobago)	Website http://www.congresstnt.com/Press.aspx
People’s National Movement (Trinidad and Tobago)	Website http://www.pnm.org.tt/

In the Caribbean we have seen that there is increasing membership of social networks as well as creation of new ones focused on Caribbean people. The most recent of the Caribbean networks is CaribFriends which was started at the early in 2008, and displays its membership and visitor data on its Home Page. On July 4 the statistics were 5,588 members, 5,789 friends and 3,686 comments.

The focus of CaribFriends is “connecting old school friends” and the membership composed of graduates from 2004 onwards, seems to focus on seeking out people who were in their high school at about the same time. Members are using handles like “outlawz” “bbshrub” “stargirl1968Tich” although they do state their real names on their

profiles. CaribFriends provides a link to CaribSingles.com a dating site offering live chat, private messages and sharing of photos.

Librarians and Social Networking

The traffic ranking and membership data shown earlier in Table 4, indicates that the public general sites are increasing in popularity in the Caribbean. Individuals and organizations are seizing the opportunity offered by these networks, and are using the sites to interact with users and to exchange information.

A number of libraries have established profiles on MySpace and use this location to provide places of interest for their clientele. A search on library in MySpace brought up a number of entries some related to public libraries and some to college libraries. The Denver Public Library showed incorporated links to a blog, to a section on summer reading, events, contests and to a survey. The profile also provides a link to the library's OPAC which clients can search. I did a search on Harry Potter and found a number of relevant entries.

Several other libraries including the Brooklyn College Library, the CENTRAL Falls Free Public Library and the Cleveland Public Library were found to have profiles on MySpace and to be providing users with links to library activities and facilities.

Librarians are actively engaging in social networks for teaching, exchanging information and for locating information resources. During the recent ACURIL conference held in Jamaica in the first week of June of this year, the librarians and others attending the

DLIS session on social networking were requested to complete a questionnaire to provide a picture of their preferences and practices as related to social networking and their views on Internet privacy, trust and security, and the role of librarians in social networking.

The questionnaire therefore sought information on the individuals and their access to the Internet, their knowledge and use of social networking, their views of security and trust of people on these sites, and their views of the roles which libraries should play in social networking. Thirty two librarians completed the questionnaire to which the following responses were received:

1. **AGE** : Of the librarians who responded 97% were over 30 years of age.
2. **GENDER**: 66% were female, 9% were female and 25% gave no response from 25%.
3. **LOCATION OF INTERNET ACCESS**: 69% of respondents accessed the Internet from home, 88% at work, and 3% from other locations
4. **INTERNET CONNECTION SPEED** 9% reported below 256 kbps, 53% reported above 256 kbps, 22% did not know the speed and 16% did not respond.
5. **APPLICATIONS CONSIDERED TO BE INCLUDED IN SOCIAL NETWORKING**
Respondents indicated that they considered the following to be included in social networking as follows:

Blogs 81% , video sharing 81%, photo sharing 84%, file sharing 72% , e-groups 78%, wikis 50% and instant messaging 94% and 13% indicated others.
6. **FIRST AWARENESS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING** 22% of respondents first learned of social networking in 2008, 16% in 2007, 22% in 2006, and 25% in 2005.
7. **MEMBERSHIP OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES** 31% of respondents reported being members of Facebook 19% of MySpace, 22% of Hi5 and 0% of Friendstr
8. **FORMATS IN WHICH INFORMATION IS ACCESSED** 66% of respondents indicated that they access information in text format, 56% as photos, 22% as video, 19% in audio format, and 28% gave no response.

- 9. FORMATS USED FOR POSTING INFORMATION** 53% of the respondents reported that they post information as text, 34% as photos, 3% for audio and video formats and 41% gave no response.
- 10. FREQUENCY OF ACCESS** 19% reported that they accessed social networking sites several times daily while 13% accessed once daily, 19% weekly, 9% monthly and 9% and 31% gave no response.
- 11. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES USED IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS** Facebook and Hi5 were both identified by 34% of the respondents. While MySpace was reportedly used by 28%
- 12. PERSONAL INFORMATION SUPPLIED** 56% of the respondents indicated that they had posted contact information, 31% reported that they had posted personal information - birthdays, IDs etc, while 31% had supplied information on their interests and 28% had posted information on their academic achievements.
- 13. REASONS FOR USE OF PREFERRED NETWORK** 66% reported that they use their preferred network to contact friends, 25% used it to meet people, 31% to interact with a community, 61% to document personal experiences, 22% to express themselves creatively, 50% to find useful information, 34% for fun and entertainment and 34% gave no response.
- 14. SECURITY OF PERSONAL INFORMATION** Only 3% considered that their personal information is extremely secure, 34% secure, while 34% considered that their personal information is insecure and 6% extremely insecure. 22% gave no response.
- 15. FREQUENCY OF TRUST OF PEOPLE MET** Only 3% indicated that they very often trust people they meet on social networks, 22% reported that they often trusted, 44% reported not very often, and 3% reported that they never trusted such people.
- 16. PRESERVING PRIVACY OF INTERESTS, REQUESTS ETC.** 66% percent of the respondents considered that a library should keep confidential information on one's interests requests etc. 13% considered this important, 6% were neutral, 6% ranked privacy as not very important and 9% gave no response.
- 17. ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN SOCIAL NETWORKS** 38% strongly agreed, 44% agreed 13% were neutral, and 6% gave no response.
- 18. LIBRARY ACTIVITIES IN A SOCIAL NETWORK**

94% indicated that they would participate in notification of new items while 6% gave no response.;

66% said yes to participating in viewing other people's personal collections, 19% said no and 14% gave no response.

53% said yes to descriptions of their own personal collections and 22% said no while 25% gave no response.

66% said yes to posting of their own work, while 13% said no and 21% gave no response

88% said yes to sharing ideas with library staff about services while 6% said no and 6% gave no response

91% said yes to participating in online discussions while 9% said no

72% said yes to meeting others online which 9% said no and 6% gave no response.

Table 6. Responses on Library Activities in a Social Networking Questionnaire

Notification of new items	94%
Viewing other's personal collections	66%
Posting descriptions of your own collections	53%
Posting your own work	66%
Sharing ideas with library staff re services	88%
Participating in online discussions	91%
Meeting others online	72%

The respondents to the questionnaire showed that they have high interest in participating in the activities of a social network through their library, but were less willing to post their own work or descriptions of their own collections.

CONCLUSION

Social Networks seem to provide a new opportunity for libraries to establish a central

“space” for interacting with people on their campus or in their community. This new

“space” can therefore be used to deliver reliable content in formats to which their users

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have become accustomed for are becoming accustomed. Social networks can also be advanced by linking library webpages to those of their “friends” with common interests.

Privacy and safety of identify on the other hand still seem to be an important concern to librarians and to users, and this is likely to impact the uptake of services based on social networks.

Libraries and users can create personal web pages with profiles and develop social capital based on blogs, digital photographs, favourite music, text, video clips etc.

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