Considering Facebook in the Library

Josh Boyer
Joseph Ryan
NCSU Libraries

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Outline

• Facebook
  – Why do people use it?
• Libraries in Facebook
  – What have libraries done so far?
  – How well is it working?
• Case Study: NCSU Libraries Activity Wall
  – Project Overview and History
  – Student Feedback
Facebook?

• Online social network with more than 175 million users
• Average Facebook user is connected with 120 other Facebook users (“friends”).
• 850 million photos added to Facebook each month.
• 28 million links posted each month.
• 25 million active user groups.
Facebook?

• Currently available in 35 languages (60 additional in development)
• 70% of users outside of the United States
• Users spend 3 billion minutes of time on Facebook every day.

Facebook Use Cases: Adults

• Common:
  – Professional networking
  – Reconnect with former classmates
  – Dating

• Less Common:
  – Comment on friends’ activity
  – Regular profile edits
  – Add photographs
Facebook Use Cases: Teens

• **Common:**
  – Socializing with friends
  – Regular profile edits
  – Comment on friends’ activity

• **Less Common:**
  – Professional networking
Library Facebook Apps

• As of March 2009, approximately 60 public and academic libraries offer Facebook applications

• Typical Features
  – Catalog Search
  – Article Database Search
  – Metasearch
  – Library News
  – Library Information (hours, contact information)
Some Unique Applications

• **Swem Tools** (College of William and Mary)
  Clickable map to notify friends of your physical location in the library

• **Booth Library Ask?Away** (Eastern Illinois University)
  Live Reference Chat
But how popular are they?

• Facebook measures application popularity using a metric called **Monthly Active Users** - a monthly average of the number of people who are *using* the application.

• **Loughborough University Library** most popular library app: **139** MAU.

• **Causes** most popular overall: **25.7 million** MAU.

• Average library app: **15** MAU.
Why is use so low?

User motivations for Facebook use, regardless of demographic group, do **not** overlap with the functionality provided by existing library Facebook apps.
Traditional library web use case
Facebook use case
Thesis

Focusing on helping people connect with each other, rather than on providing another entry point to library resources, may be a more successful outreach strategy for libraries in Facebook.
NCSU Libraries Activity Wall

- **Goal:** help students who are the library or planning to come to the library meet up in an informal way.
- **Secondarily,** provide relevant information in temporal context.
**NCSU Libraries Activity Wall**
Connect with other NCSU students at the library.

**What are you working on right now?**

**I am...**
- working on... somewhere in the library

- Allow people to join me

**Recent activity by everyone**
- Jane Doe FINALLY beat Castle Crashers in the Learning Commons.
- John Doe, Jane Smith, and 4 others are working on that ECE problem set on the 9th floor.
- James Doe and Janelle Smitherton are hunkered down, well fed, and completely prepared to study all day long and all night long for that CHE 101 exam on the 7th floor.

**Recent activity by your friends**
- Jane Doe FINALLY beat Castle Crashers in the Learning Commons.
- Jim Doe, Jill Johnson, and 2 others are studying for the ENG 101 exam on the 3rd floor.
- Joe Johnson is gonna get some shut-eye in the West Wing.

**Need a Study Room?**
- 11:30AM - 9:00PM Tower 3rd Floor Group Study
- 2:30PM - 8:00PM Tower 5th Floor Group Study
- 7:00PM - 9:00PM Tower 8th Floor Group Study
March 2009 Focus Group

Likes

• Loved idea of tool to form study groups in a low-barrier way.

• “A lot of people are begging for study groups at the end of the semester” -- especially in large lecture courses

• “It definitely has a lot of potential.”
March 2009 Focus Group

Dislikes

• Does it have to be a Facebook app?
• All participants disliked Facebook apps
• Facebook app a “barrier” to system use
• Facebook too “noisy” already
• Strong interest in organizing activities around courses, not physical location
Not an isolated phenomenon
April 2009 Focus Groups

• First focus group: facilitating group study is the killer feature

• Procedure
  – Where do students do group study?
  – How do they set up group study sessions?
  – What problems exist with current practices?
  – Reactions to concept pictures
April 2009 Focus Group Results

• Where?
  – Primarily the library

• How?
  – Exchange contact information in class
  – Phone (text and voice), Facebook, email

• Problems?
  – Late arrivals
  – Location
  – Cell phone reception in library
Whiteboard

- Potential for abuse
- Forcible relocation
- Repurposing
- Obscenity
- Removal of others’ events.

Chem 101 - 3rd floor
group study

English - Dr Harris -
Learning Commons Group
Study A
Kiosk System

• Wanted to be able to read/write system data from anywhere
• Did not want to wait in line to use
• Wanted a touch screen interface
Eboard Version A

• Wanted to be able to read/write system data from anywhere
• Update activities if location changes?
• Can other people edit my activity?
Eboard Version B

• Concerned about whether or not it will display ANY available rooms as they are highly used
Summary

• Look before you leap!
• Facebook is popular...
• Libraries have outstanding information resources...
• ... but mixing them together can be challenging. Connect with your patrons to see how they use Facebook now and whether or not your library can fit in.
Thank you!

Josh Boyer
josh_boyer@ncsu.edu

Joseph Ryan
joseph_ryan@ncsu.edu
References


• Facebook application use statistics retrieved on March 27, 2009