

# **Social Media for Creative Libraries**



# **Social Media for Creative Libraries**

Second edition of  
How to Use Web 2.0 in Your Library

Phil Bradley



**facet publishing**

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# Contents

<b>List of figures .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>1 An introduction to social media .....</b>	<b>1</b>
So what is 'social media'? .....	2
Complexity and simplicity .....	4
Cloud-based versus computer-based .....	5
Browser-based or installed software .....	6
Solitary or crowd-based .....	8
Communication .....	9
Where is data now? .....	10
Validating content .....	12
Control through the website, or dispersed .....	12
Web/internet/social search.....	13
Information tracked down, or brought to us .....	13
Getting it right or getting it quickly.....	14
Connection speeds and storage costs .....	15
Our roles .....	15
Web 1.0 was about limitations, social media is about freedom .....	16
Summary .....	16
<b>2 Authority checking .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Introduction .....	17
Facebook.....	19
Twitter .....	21
LinkedIn .....	23
Google properties .....	23
Blogs .....	25
Other ways to check authority .....	26
Summary .....	27
URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	28

<b>3</b>	<b>Guiding tools.....</b>	<b>31</b>
	Introduction .....	31
	Home or start pages.....	32
	Pearltrees .....	36
	Google customized search engines .....	38
	Bookmarking packages.....	39
	Blending bookmarks into a social media strategy .....	41
	Summary .....	42
	URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	43
<b>4</b>	<b>Current awareness and selective dissemination of information resources .....</b>	<b>45</b>
	Introduction .....	45
	Let the networks take the strain! .....	46
	Tablet-based applications .....	47
	Web-based curation tools .....	48
	News curation by e-mail .....	54
	Summary .....	54
	URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	56
<b>5</b>	<b>Presentation tools .....</b>	<b>59</b>
	Introduction .....	59
	Additions to PowerPoint.....	59
	Prezi .....	62
	Interactive presentations .....	64
	Timeline packages.....	66
	Easy-to-create presentations .....	67
	Animated presentations .....	69
	Summary .....	70
	URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	70
<b>6</b>	<b>Teaching and training .....</b>	<b>73</b>
	Introduction .....	73
	Screencasting .....	73
	Screencapture .....	76
	Interactive training: Google+ Hangouts .....	78
	Interactive training: other resources .....	80
	MOOCs .....	81
	Advantages and disadvantages of e-learning .....	82
	Summary .....	83
	URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	83
<b>7</b>	<b>Communication.....</b>	<b>85</b>
	Introduction .....	85
	'Just the facts' .....	86
	Twitter .....	87
	Facebook.....	93
	LinkedIn .....	97

Google+ communities .....	98
Blogging .....	98
Chat rooms .....	103
Wikis .....	104
Sticky note software.....	105
Google Docs.....	107
Distributing your content .....	107
Summary .....	108
URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	108
<b>8 Marketing and promotion – the groundwork .....</b>	<b>111</b>
Introduction .....	111
Blending your social media presences.....	111
Getting past the organization roadblock.....	115
Search engine optimization (SEO) .....	121
Location .....	122
Consumer rather than creator .....	123
Monitoring tools.....	124
Summary .....	125
URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	126
<b>9 Marketing and promotion – the practicalities.....</b>	<b>127</b>
Introduction .....	127
Images .....	127
Photographic manipulation .....	131
Make images more exciting.....	132
Infographics.....	136
Podcasting .....	137
Video .....	140
Augmented reality.....	142
Summary .....	143
URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	144
<b>10 Creating a social media policy .....</b>	<b>147</b>
Introduction .....	147
Why an organization needs a social media policy.....	148
Defining social media .....	149
Social media policies for specific tools.....	150
Personal versus professional .....	152
The chain of command.....	154
Dealing with criticism .....	156
Do’s and don’ts.....	156
Legal issues .....	157
How often should a policy be reviewed? .....	158
Summary .....	158
URLs mentioned in this chapter .....	158

<b>Appendix: Social media disasters .....</b>	<b>159</b>
'United Breaks Guitars' .....	159
Never seconds .....	160
Tweeting from the wrong handle .....	161
Employees being stupid .....	161
Turning a negative into a positive.....	162
Watch the news, don't just react to it .....	163
Don't pick a fight with the internet!.....	164
Summary .....	164
 <b>Index .....</b>	 <b>167</b>

# List of figures

1.1	Google Ngram Viewer .....	3
2.1	Screenshot of a Google result for Danny Sullivan .....	24
2.2	The author's Google+ profile.....	25
3.1	The author's Symbaloo home page.....	32
3.2	An RSS feed pulled from the BBC News website .....	33
3.3	The Symbaloo tiles for The Guardian newspaper .....	33
3.4	The author's Pearltree collection .....	36
3.5	The Search Engines Pearltree .....	37
3.6	Social Media search engines on Pearlrees .....	37
4.1	A screenshot from the author's Scoop.it! page.....	49
4.2	The Scoop.it! bookmarklet in action.....	50
4.3	The Paper.li newspaper, 'The Phil Bradley Daily' .....	52
5.1	A Knovio presentation by the author .....	60
5.2	Prezi presentation on social media for music students .....	63
5.3	The Meograph menu.....	66
5.4	A Wright brothers timeline made with Timeglider .....	67
5.5	The Powtoon dashboard .....	70
6.1	Windows toolbar with Snipping tool icon .....	76
6.2	Elements of the Snipping tool.....	77
7.1	Essex Libraries Facebook page .....	95
7.2	A Padlet wall in action.....	106
8.1	The author's Twitter avatar with associated 'twibbons' .....	114
8.2	The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library Foursquare entry .....	123
9.1	An example of a badge created in BigHugeLabs.....	128
9.2	A trading card created using BigHugeLabs.....	128
9.3	A Tagxedo word cloud of Sherlock Holmes .....	131



## Preface

I first discovered social media by accident in about 2005. Of course, I'd been blogging for a few years by then, and found blogs a really useful way to keep up to date with what was happening in the areas that interested me. However, I started to notice a sudden influx of new tools that internet users could use to add content to their existing websites, to produce their own guides and so on. I also heard rumblings of a resource called Facebook, and shortly afterwards, some bizarre thing called Twitter. As I thought that some of these tools might be of interest to the information community I started to collect them and created a list on my website of about 100. I blogged once to tell readers that I had done this and within a week I was getting 50,000 hits a day on my website, and it was at about then that I realized there was a really large seismic shift in the way that the internet was evolving. Of course in those days we knew it as Web 2.0, and indeed in 2007 I wrote a title for Facet called *How to Use Web 2.0 in Your Library*.

Thankfully we quickly dropped the 'Web 2.0' terminology and moved on. Social media has developed since those early days and it has indeed changed the internet that we know, but it's also had a huge effect on the way that the world in general works and communicates. People are realizing that they have more power than ever before to create their own content, to share material with other people, to hold companies to account or indeed perhaps change the political structures of the country that they live in. Social media tools change the way that we get our news, and indeed, we can now become citizen journalists ourselves, but with that power also comes the responsibility of using it correctly. Some people have

found to their cost and liberty that they're not as free to say what they want as they perhaps thought they were.

However, 'social media' as a term is not something I find particularly helpful, since it comes with a great deal of baggage, much of it heaped on by the mainstream media. As you'll discover as you read this book, I have tried to look at social media in a rather different way. Rather than focusing on tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest I have looked at what activities information professionals carry out, and to see how these tools can assist them in those activities – how they can be done quicker, faster, cheaper and more effectively.

People often say to me things such as 'I want to have a Twitter account' or 'We need to be on Facebook', and if you're coming to this title hoping that I'm going to tell you that yes, you absolutely need to be using various tools, you may be a little disappointed. However, if you want to know how to communicate more effectively, how to teach people different skills, or how to market and promote your service, then I hope that you'll find what you need between these covers.

I have written this book so that it can either be read sequentially or, if you wish, to just dip in and out according to your interests or requirements. However, let's take a quick run through of each chapter in turn.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to social media. For a subject that is constantly in the news, referred to everywhere online, and something that most of us use on a daily basis (or dislike enough not to use on a daily basis!) a clear definition is hard to come by. For many people, it's all about the tools, but as we'll see in the chapter, I'm much more interested in activities rather than tools.

Chapter 2 deals with the thorny issue of authority checking. An advantage of social media tools is that anyone can become a creator of content, and an equal disadvantage is that it seems most people do. It's becoming much harder to sift the good from the bad, particularly when people present clever hoaxes as fact to promote a television show or simply to increase their own 'fame' on the net. Information professionals are more needed than ever in a social media world, and this chapter goes into detail on the whys and wherefores.

Chapter 3 – guiding tools. Once you have found good material it's worth holding onto it, and providing users with access to that material is a key role that we can take on. As a profession we are one of the most trusted,

and we should capitalize on that, not only to help our patrons and clients, but to promote our own skills and abilities.

Chapter 4 covers current awareness and the selective dissemination of information. There's no point in actually spending time creating all this great content, finding good quality material and establishing guiding tools to it if we're not actually telling people about it. There are plenty of ways of doing this quickly and effectively, and this chapter deals with them in some detail.

Chapter 5 looks at the difficult question of presentations. We all suffer poor presentations, and most of us have given one or two bad ones in our time. However, it's really not necessary; these days there are some excellent alternatives to 'death by PowerPoint'.

Chapter 6 is focused on teaching and training. This is a role that more and more information specialists are having to take on, and for many people who haven't done it before it can be quite daunting. There's no need to worry, however, since the tools that are available make the whole task not only easy but quite fun.

Chapter 7 concentrates on communication. If we do anything as a profession, it's communicate. Whatever we do or find, or however we answer a question for a library member, we have to get that information to them. There are plenty of ways of doing that, and also telling people what else we're doing, as you'll see in this chapter.

Chapter 8 is directed towards the concepts behind marketing and promotion. Not only is it necessary to decide what you want to do, and who you want to market it towards, but you may also have to fight the powers that be to allow you to do it, using these 'new-fangled' ideas. This chapter addresses some of those issues.

Chapter 9 then moves the discussion forward onto the practicalities of marketing and promotion; the hows, whys and whens.

Finally, in Chapter 10 you'll have an opportunity to consider the things that must be taken into account when creating a social media policy.

In the Appendix, as a reward for all of the hard work, I've taken a look at a few social media disasters, and how they could have been avoided if a sensible policy had been in place.

It's worth mentioning that this title isn't really a 'how-to' book, in the sense that I don't go into a lot of detail on how to use specific social media tools, or how to set up accounts and so on. There are plenty of guides already available that do that for you; if you are in any doubt, take a quick peep on YouTube and you'll be bombarded with them. Second, tools

change on a regular basis, and what might well be an accurate description today may not be so accurate when you come to read it yourself. Instead, I've chosen to focus on what activities you can do better, differently or more effectively in the future, with examples of tools that can help you do that.

I've also tried not to narrow down the focus of the book to a particular type of library or information centre, either. It doesn't really matter if we look at the jobs and roles of school librarians, public librarians or government or corporate librarians – they are all involved in similar activities. It's true that their audiences will be very different, but all information professionals need to be concerned with the authority of their sources, and all of them have to communicate information to their different groups. While the environment is different, the fundamentals stay the same. You'll also notice that I try to vary the words that I use to describe the people that you work with; your clients, customers, users, patrons, members or any other terms that a thesaurus can turn up. This has been deliberate on my part, since I don't believe that one term fits all, and I don't particularly like any one term. 'Clients' and 'customers' does tend to imply that the role of the information professional is transaction-based (usually financial) and in most instances that isn't the case. However, some librarians do bill different departments for their time, so it can be a valid description. I know that a lot of American readers of this book will cringe at the widely used British term 'user', since there is the potential for drug-related associations, but I actually quite like the idea of people being addicted to books and libraries. Similarly British users are going to get annoyed at the 'patrons' term, since it's simply never used in this country. So while you're tutting over one term, sympathize with a colleague elsewhere in the world who will be tutting over another. Finally I've used 'member' quite often, and it's my personal preference. If a library service is about and for anything, it's the people who make use of it. A 'library member' implies to me someone who buys into a particular service, not particularly in terms of money, but in terms of time, enthusiasm, trust and belief in the services that are provided by professionals. However, if you prefer some other term, do feel free to use your own global 'delete and replace' in your head, and accept my apologies!

There is of course an inevitable problem when writing a book, and that is that it's out of date. While writing this preface, I'm already aware of things that I have to go back and change, and there will have to be continual updates until the book goes to press. There's very little that I can do about

that, of course, but I can at least try and mitigate the annoyance for readers. I'll be producing a short video for every chapter, which will be hosted on the Facet Publishing YouTube channel, and there will be a link to each of them at the end of the chapter concerned. Each video will be a little different – one might be me introducing new ideas or tools that have been created after the book has been published, another might address issues that have changed, while a third may be a 'how-to' type of video. You'll have to look through each video in turn to find out exactly what I'm covering, because at this stage even I don't know, and it's quite probable that I'll replace videos with new ones through the lifetime of the title.

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Finally I'd like to thank all my friends and colleagues who helped me with this title, either directly with suggestions, thoughts, ideas or cups of tea, or indirectly by pointing me towards useful tools, or made me think harder about various subjects. This is dedicated with love to some very important people in my life: Bee, Jill, Gaynor, Marian and Sam.

**Phil Bradley**



## **An introduction to social media**

The Jetsons – a futuristic cartoon created in the 1960s and set 100 years later – told the story of the eponymous family and their day-to-day life. George Jetson worked two days a week, for an hour each day, and he commuted to his office in an aerocar that looked vaguely like a flying saucer. He would fly through the air, along with everyone else on their daily commute, and when he got to work his aerocar would pack down into the size of a suitcase until it was time for the trip home. There's also a cut scene in the opening where Mrs Jetson takes Mr Jetson's wallet, leaving him with the \$10 note that he was originally offering her. Hanna-Barbera looked into the future and were able to tell that things were going to be different – we were all going to have aerocars, but they were unable to take the next leap, which was to further extrapolate that we probably wouldn't need to physically go to work.

You may be wondering why I'm beginning a book on social media with a brief description of an elderly cartoon series, but what is interesting isn't the cartoon itself, but the attitudes shown towards the future, and how things were going to be different – or stay very much the same. I run courses on social media on a regular basis, and it's interesting to see how delegates view the concept of social media when we begin. Some people see social media as a whole new world, in which everything has changed, or at least has the potential to change; the tools to them are like the aerocar, promising excitement and difference. Other people on the same course will have had experience of some tools and will say that nothing has actually changed; as with the aerocar, Mr Jetson still has to go to work and put the car

somewhere until he's ready for the trip home.

My delegates' views of social media can therefore be seen in exactly the same way that Hanna-Barbera gazed into the future; everything changed but paradoxically everything remained the same. There is a very great temptation to view the future in the way that we have viewed the past; it's easy, comforting and doesn't take very much hard work. However, it's also the wrong thing to do. Eric Shinseki, a retired US Army general, is quoted as saying 'If you dislike change, you're going to dislike irrelevance even more.' In order to understand exactly what social media is, the extent to which it is different from what we have had in the past, and how it will change libraries, it's necessary to compare and contrast the 'old' way of doing things (I'll leave it up to you to define 'old' – for some it may only be a few minutes while for others it will be years) with the way in which things work in the new world of social media.

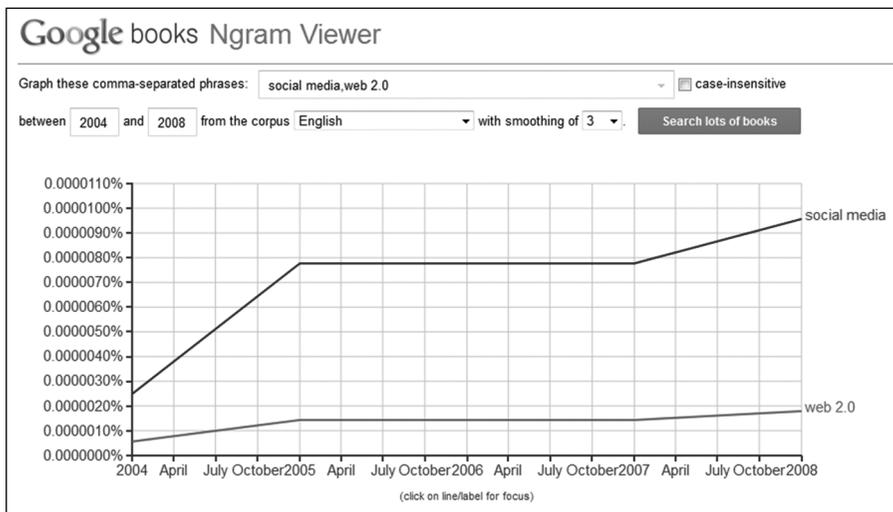
### **So what is 'social media'?**

It's impossible not to hear references to the term these days. If your colleagues are not talking about the social media presence the company has, you'll be hearing the media making a huge fuss about the latest scandal, or your children talking about something that makes very little sense, but relates in some way to them talking to their friends using an app you have never heard of. Before we can get anywhere, therefore, we have to have a clear indication of exactly what we (and when I say 'we', in the context of this book I mean 'I') are talking about.

In 2005 I started to notice that there was a minor explosion in the functionality that could be added to web pages, to turn them from an entirely static screen full of information to a jigsaw where information from a news site, for example, could be dropped directly onto a page and then updated real-time. I saw that people were able to create chat rooms quickly and easily, or share documents with each other without requiring a qualification in computer programming. In short, life was very quickly becoming easier for everyone and much more could be done on the net. Furthermore, there was a small little start-up company called Facebook which was really just for students to chat to each other. We also had LinkedIn, a place that you could look for a new job, or MySpace, which was a very exciting innovation, allowing people to share their ideas, thoughts, opinions and hobbies.

I decided to create a simple one-page listing of all of these new tools, and this was quickly picked up by the Digg bookmarking service; by the end of the first week that the page was available it was getting 50,000 hits per day. It was at that point I thought to myself ‘Hmm, I might be onto something here’.

Over the course of the next few months the phrase ‘Web 2.0’ really started to take off, to the point that just about everything seemed to have 2.0 tacked on the end of it. The phrase did serve a purpose over the next few years, but it did bring with it some baggage – rather too technical a phrase for what was really a change in the way that people were starting to use the internet. People began to look at the rise of sites such as MySpace and Facebook, as well as LinkedIn, and as a result the current term, ‘social media’ became the preferred one. If we take a look at the Google Ngram Viewer (Figure 1.1) for the two phrases we’ll see that ‘social media’ as a phrase really began to take off in 2005, and has remained the dominant term ever since.



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**Figure 1.1** Google Ngram Viewer

In all honesty, I’m not entirely sure if the phrase has helped or hindered the use of tools that are generally regarded as being an integral part of the phenomenon. The mainstream media tends to emphasize the ‘social’ element of the phrase, and concomitant with that is the suggestion that it’s about friends, having fun and for pleasure, rather than work. Taking into account

the inevitable sensationalism of stories of out-of-control parties, stalkers and vigilantes, it's not surprising that some employers want to steer clear of any association with this internet development. My personal preference is to use the term 'stuff', as in 'there's lots of stuff out there that you can use to make your job easier and more effective'. However, I'm aware that simply using 'stuff' isn't really going to be enough of a definition, so let's look in a little more detail at the difference between the internet as it was, and as it is now.

### **Complexity and simplicity**

The internet used to be a far more complicated place in some respects. In order to share information you had to be able to create a website, which meant a working knowledge of the basics of HTML (HyperText Markup Language), the money to get a domain name and web space, the ability to FTP (copy across) your files, and then some idea of how best to create content that would rank highly with search engines. Moreover, given that a lot of website creation was taken over by web editing teams or technical support departments, it meant that the majority of people really didn't have much of an outlet for their own thoughts, opinions and creativity, other than using their own weblogs, of course.

Weblog software did however point the way forward for most of us; authoring packages such as Blogger and LiveJournal, which had been around since about 2000, showed people that they didn't have to have all of that knowledge. A simple (and in most cases free) blogging platform meant that people could create their own blogs on whatever subjects interested them, and start to share their enthusiasm or expertise. Nowadays, of course, it is simplicity itself to create a group on Facebook or Google+, start a wiki or have your own television channel hosted by YouTube.

The ability for people to create their own user-generated content has had very far-reaching effects, and it's not an exaggeration to say that it has changed (and continues to change) the way that society develops, from protesters communicating by Blackberry Messenger (which now seems almost quaint) to people using apps and their smartphones to become citizen journalists. This is even before we start to look at the sheer amount of content that is produced and disseminated on the internet every day. For now, in this simple overview, let's limit ourselves to the idea that social media tools allow us all to create, rather than just consume. It is, however, something that I'd like to put into a little more perspective. In order to gain

an indication of the enormous scale of the content that we are producing, a few illustrative statistics should suffice. In September 2013 Twitter's data showed that 200 million users sent over 400 million tweets daily. Five new Facebook profiles are created every second, and 300 million photographs are uploaded to the social network every day. There are currently over 2 million LinkedIn groups, with 8000 new groups created every week (figures from [www.business2community.com/infographics/social-media-nutshell-0781415#!xvFdD](http://www.business2community.com/infographics/social-media-nutshell-0781415#!xvFdD)).

### **Cloud-based versus computer-based**

Most of us used to store our content on our desktop machines, or on office intranets, which is really a big version of the same thing. With the ease of use of CD ROM and DVD technology it became easier to take our information with us. The ubiquitous nature of USB drives has extended this even further, and most of us will be able to put our hands on several of these devices within seconds. While this does make our lives easier, it still means that we are tied to our data physically, or at least, it did. Now, however, we have access to 'the cloud', which is to say unlimited storage space on servers online. If I want to give a presentation I can simply upload it onto one of several presentation-sharing websites, and make it available for people to view, embed or download. My bookmarks are stored online using any one of a number of services, and the system can be automated so that if I tweet a link to a site it's automatically copied to my bookmarking service. It also means that I can share my bookmarks with other people (mostly people that I don't actually know) with ease. I have created YouTube training videos which are stored on their servers and I can curate subject areas of interest using yet more tools. As I'm writing this chapter my computer is taking an entire back-up of my hard drive and placing it onto a cloud-based storage system.

We are finally moving into an environment where the artefact – the book, the CD or even the USB stick, are becoming redundant. As long as I have access to the net (which I agree is sometimes a big ask), I have access to all of my data, and I can choose who I want to share that with. Not only does it make my life easier without having to worry about carrying about data back-ups with me, it means that we can far more easily work with colleagues, since content is available to be shared and used 24/7. These tools mean that I can take a photograph on my smartphone and it's almost

instantly available on my desktop. I can start reading a chapter of a book on a Kindle on the train and finish it on my tablet in bed at night. We can all become citizen journalists, sharing our videos with the world seconds after they have been recorded, creating a new immediacy, and redefining what ‘news’ actually means.

### **Browser-based or installed software**

When you bought a new computer it was common practice to buy a suite of software to go with it, and if you were using a Windows-based operating system that usually meant something like Microsoft Office. Moreover, if you needed a particular job done, such as video conferencing or sharing access to a computer across a network, you had to buy a specific piece of software. Software was seldom cheap, and to justify the price the manufacturer would provide lots of extra functionality that the vast majority of us would never use. I suspect that it’s only a very small number of people using Microsoft Word who have ever used much in the way of page layout functions, references or mailing lists. Over the course of time users would get patches to their software and then a new version would be made available for people to buy, and the whole cycle would begin again.

Everyone bought into the concept that software cost money – a lot of money – and that there was a particular cycle of updating and purchasing that went with it. It meant that people who were in charge of buying software products had to make sure that the tool was suitable for the job, and that everyone had to use exactly the same piece of software to make life easier for technical support staff. It also meant buying into a particular operating system, and accepting a particular view that the tool was the important thing. After all, staff had to be trained on it, or follow a steep learning curve, budgets had to be agreed, and the package had to be everything to everyone.

However, social media-based tools have turned this notion on its head. Many of the tools that people create now are entirely free at point of use. This can be difficult for some people to really get to grips with, and a question that I am often asked is ‘if this is all free software, how do people make money?’ There are a number of answers to this question. Sometimes people are just not that interested in making money; some people just like creating software and get pleasure from other people using it. Others will provide full access to the software, but with some sort of limit on it; a

maximum number of files, or storage space for example. Others are hopeful that if lots of people use their product and are complimentary about it one of the big companies will come in and buy them out. While the financial approach differs, what remains the same is that in order to be used the software has to be of a high standard; anything less than that and people will go elsewhere. The idea of brand or product loyalty is beginning to die a death now. The important thing to bear in mind isn't the tool, it's the activity. If I want to send a large file to someone, there are lots of tools out there that I can use; I really don't care which one it happens to be as long as it does the job that I want it to. I may or may not use that tool again, or another one may take my attention instead.

Consequently we can now rethink our attitudes towards software. A well known aphorism is that people who buy drills don't want a drill, they want a hole in their wall, and much the same can be said of computer software. It's far too easy to say 'we need a Twitter account' with the reason behind it being 'everyone else has one' but really the social media savvy will be saying 'we want to communicate more effectively – what tool will help us do that?' There is a reasonable and justifiable concern that free software means unreliable software, and I can certainly provide examples of when free tools have ceased operation. However, they generally make it clear that the resource is being closed down and will provide ways that people can move their data from one tool to another, and if they don't, the competition certainly will! To balance that view though, I can also provide examples of software that hasn't been updated because the company selling it has gone out of business. After all, if we cannot trust the liquidity of banking institutions these days, we certainly can't trust individual companies.

My advice therefore is to ignore the tool and concentrate on the activity first and foremost. When you're clear in what you want to achieve, then find a tool that does what you need. Next, check out the competition (there's always competition, irrespective of the resource), and see which one(s) colleagues use. If the tool ceases to do what is required of it, simply move to a different tool; you do not owe anyone brand loyalty, as I mentioned before; it is one of the victims of the way in which we now work online.

So if the tool isn't important – what about the browser? Any good tool should work within any browser, so you should be prepared to try out any number of them. Obvious suggestions are Firefox, Chrome and Internet Explorer, but there's also Safari for Apple-based products, TOR (The Onion

Router) for privacy, Opera and so on. Indeed, forget the idea that it's necessary to just choose one browser – since you're not paying for them, have several available to use. In fact, it makes a lot of sense to do exactly that – have one browser that you use to log into your Facebook and Google accounts (for example) and another browser that you can use in an anonymous mode for the times when privacy and confidentiality are paramount. If you add to this the point that each browser has access to different apps and bolt-ons, it actually makes sense to tailor browsers for different purposes.

### **Solitary or crowd-based**

The internet – and indeed computing generally – used to be quite an isolated and isolating place; we're all aware of the films that have the solitary young man alone in his room with nothing but his computer for company before he goes on a horrific killing spree. I wouldn't quite want to go to those extremes, but I would go so far as to say that it used to be very difficult to share things online, be they ideas, thoughts and opinions, or bookmarks, files or presentations.

Social media has, of course, opened this out now so that everyone who has access to a computer or mobile device and the internet can share and interact with other people across the globe in ways that were previously unimaginable. Everyone was locked into his or her own silo, but now we can share our wisdom (such as it is) with the crowds. I no longer have to try and work out what would be a good restaurant to eat in when I visit a new city: I can simply go into Facebook and run a search to see which restaurants my friends have recommended. If I am considering staying in a particular hotel it makes sense to check with an online review site to see if it really is as good as the website makes out. If I need ideas or opinions on a subject I just go onto Twitter, ask my question, and within the space of half an hour or so helpful colleagues will have pointed me in the right direction.

There are advantages and disadvantages to a system where everyone can share indiscriminately. One good aspect is that the individual is no longer alone; if he or she is being bullied or ignored by a large corporate, crowdsourcing of ideas or harnessing outrage can help to right a wrong. Even something as seemingly innocuous as watching a YouTube video can make a difference, as Canadian musician Dave Carroll found out. He had the unfortunate experience that his guitar was broken during a trip on

United Airlines in 2008, and had poor customer service. He wrote and produced a song, *United Breaks Guitars* which he put onto YouTube, whereupon it became an immediate hit, as well as a terrible public relations disaster for the airline. For the full story, see the Appendix, p. 159. In another case a graphic designer known as HiddenEloise found that her work had been used without permission by a well known design company. People on Twitter flexed their muscles and a media storm quickly blew up, resulting in recognition by the company of the designer's work.

Unfortunately, however, it is all too easy for false information to spread widely via social media, and any number of celebrities are mourned, while still healthy and alive. For one very brief evening back in August 2012 it appeared (wrongly) that a lion was loose in Essex, a county in eastern England. People were tweeting sightings of the lion, making jokes about it, postings photographs and so on. The police contacted circuses to see if any lions were missing, the RSPCA got involved and while a good time was had by all, resources could have been put to much better use.

The lesson is clear – just because something is reported on social media does not make it true or accurate. Hundreds of thousands of people can be wrong, they can be whipped up into a frenzy and jokes can turn into facts and facts can be misinterpreted. As a result, the role of the information professional in this situation is clear – to ignore the numbers, track the story back to its origins, sift the facts from the fiction and then make that information available as appropriate.

## **Communication**

Communicating on the internet used to be simplicity itself – you had an e-mail address and sent people e-mail. This developed to the point that we then had mailing lists that we could use to share content back and forth between larger numbers of people. Other early developments were IRC or Internet Relay Chat, which allowed for real-time typed chat back and forth between groups of people in specially designed chatrooms, and newsgroups or USENET – a worldwide distributed discussion system. However, despite these alternatives, e-mail was still the major way that people would send and receive information. It is expected that the total number of e-mail accounts worldwide is going to increase from nearly 3.9 billion accounts in 2013 to almost 5 billion by the end of 2017. It is also estimated the total number of e-mails sent/received per day in 2014 is 191.4

billion, an increased growth rate of 5% over the previous year ([www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Email-Statistics-Report-2013-2017-Executive-Summary.pdf](http://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Email-Statistics-Report-2013-2017-Executive-Summary.pdf)).

While the growth in e-mail remains quite astonishing, it is matched by the number of other ways that we can now contact people and share information with them. For example: if my friend has a smartphone I can text her, and share links, multimedia content and more:

- Most of my friends are on Facebook, so it's easy to simply message them, or if they are online at the same time, we can chat, or start a video conversation.
- Similarly, Google provides me with the ability to set up a Google+ Hangout and chat with my colleagues.
- Several of my friends are keen photographers, and they use Flickr to post and share their photographs, mainly on a daily basis. It's simplicity itself to just go to Flickr and send them a memo.
- Some colleagues are on LinkedIn, so I can post them a message, or if they are active in a LinkedIn group, I can leave a comment in the form of a post.
- Obviously I can go onto Twitter and message friends, or send private direct messages.
- Chatroom software exists in abundance: it doesn't require software installation, or even registration – you can just open a chatroom, invite some friends and off you go.

I could easily go on, but I'm sure you get the point; communicating within the 'new' internet – with real-time media – is no longer the simple system that it once was. In actual fact it's far more complicated than it has ever been, and it's important to make sure that you choose the right tool at the right time.

### **Where is data now?**

In the past, if you wanted to know about an organization or a company it was relatively easy – you would simply go to your favourite search engine, type in the name of the company and then click on the link to their website. Of course, you can still do that, but now it's more important to think of exactly what it is that you want to do, with what sort of information. For

example, if you simply need their address or phone number, getting that via the website is still the obvious course of action. However, if you wish to talk to a representative of the company is it better to contact them via their Twitter account (and if so, which one, if they have several), or their Facebook page? Perhaps they have a profile on Pinterest, or they may be active on some other social networking site.

The information that people can make available now has not only increased exponentially, but the places where you can find the information has similarly increased. A couple of years ago the National Trust (a cultural and historical body in the UK) produced, in conjunction with a television company, an interesting programme ('The Manor Reborn') on the restoration of a run-down property. I watched it with interest, but had lots of questions about what was being done to the property, so I visited the National Trust website. All that was able to tell me was that the programme was on television at a particular time on a particular channel; not terribly useful, since I already had that information. However, I then went to the National Trust Facebook page and the top update on the site mentioned the programme and pointed out that several experts were online at that moment, waiting to take questions and get involved in discussions around issues that the programme aired. Doubtless I could also have got involved via Twitter with an appropriate hashtag as well.

So as a consumer of content it's increasingly necessary to spread the net much wider to get access to all sorts of information that's made available in different places. As creators of content, we are in a similar position. A dozen or so years ago I would write an article and share it directly on my website for people to view it. Then in 2003 I started writing my own blog and I was faced with the dilemma of what to put where – exacerbated by creating a second blog a short while after. I can now tweet material that I think is interesting, share it on a news curation or magazine site such as Scoop.it!, pin images to my Pinterest account, let my friends and colleagues see it via Facebook or Google+ updates, update my Flickr account with new photographs; the list is almost endless. I then also have to decide if I am going to cross-reference this material to other resources; if I tweet something, should I also share it on Facebook, annoying the people who follow me in both places? What about those on Facebook who don't follow me on Twitter, though? A particular skill in using social media is to know where to publish material, in what format (a long blog post or a short tweet for example), to which group(s) of people, and when this process should

take place. The blessing of real-time media is also the curse; multiplying sources of content multiplies the work we need to do to find or publish our own content.

### **Validating content**

Hard on the heels of finding information in a wide variety of places is the increasing need to check its validity. In the print days, this was simple; who was the publisher, what was their reputation, who was the author, what had they previously published and who cited them, and when was the material published? The internet gave rise to a whole different set of problems, but this could in many ways be overcome by a careful consideration of the website that the material was found on. Was the address one of the top-level domains, such as an .edu or .gov site, and which country did it come from? However, with social media we quickly found ourselves back in the bad old days of frontier life – few rules and regulations. Was the person who had a certain Twitter handle actually the celebrity that you thought it was? Is the Facebook offer that you see from a particular supermarket really genuine? Is some bizarre happening reported by people on the internet nothing more than a hoax perpetrated by some celebrity? The role of the information professional is going to be increasingly important in the future for sorting out what resources are accurate, truthful and relevant from those that are a waste of time.

### **Control through the website, or dispersed**

This is a problem for many companies that have grown up with the idea that the website is the be-all and end-all of their involvement on the internet. Everything that they do, from providing access to company reports, publications, access to customer support, details on new products and so on has always gone through the website. This is now no longer the case, as social media tools are taking over a lot of the responsibility for that work. One only has to look at advertisements on the television or in the local press to see that more and more companies are pointing people to their Facebook or Twitter presence, rather than the website. We will always need websites of course, but the way in which they will be used in the future is going to change rapidly. In order to communicate with users or customers, it's necessary to develop social media accounts, and to go to

where the conversations are taking place.

The particular issue that faces middle and senior management of course is that they realize that they no longer have control – of either the content or the message. However, that control was only ever illusory at the best of times, since people would always share information on organizations by e-mail, mailing lists or word of mouth. Social media has just exacerbated that situation.

### **Web/internet/social search**

We often hear the irritating phrase ‘it’s all on Google’. Of course, it’s never been all on Google, since while Google indexes trillions of pages, it’s unable to index databases, information behind paywalls, content that authors don’t want indexed, and so on. The rise of user-generated content has simply taken this to the next level. While Google is amazing in what it can do, even the search giant has limitations. YouTube videos are uploaded at the rate of 100 hours per minute, and Twitter processes between 400 million and 600 million tweets per day, to give you just two examples. There is no way that a single search engine can keep up with that level of output, so it’s necessary to start looking at specialist social media search engines that can find the information that we need from blogs, comments on blogs, microblogging, photographs, video, and so on. Furthermore, Google has introduced its own social network, Google+, and this has had an impact on the way in which search results can be viewed, with a greater emphasis on people and organizations that have a G+ account. Meanwhile, Bing is working in conjunction with Facebook to bring in information from a user’s friends, and Facebook itself is working hard to provide users with a superior search experience based upon their interests and those of their friends.

### **Information tracked down, or brought to us**

Long gone are the days when we had to go out and find the information that we needed on a regular basis. Of course, we still need to track down the information that we are asked for, but the content that we need continually updated on a day-to-day basis, or developments in an area that interests us, can now be brought to us, saving time and providing more efficiency.

There are plenty of tools out there which do this job for us – the traditional RSS newsreaders, home or start pages, curation tools, resources that create magazines tailored to our personal exact interests – all are helping to spin a web for us where we sit at the centre. We can now spend more of our time sifting through content to find what we need and discarding the rest instead of hunting it down in the first place.

### **Getting it right or getting it quickly**

Now this is not an either/or situation, of course – the date of the Battle of Hastings is never going to change, and if you provide someone with the answer '1065' you're just wrong. What I mean here is that there is a tendency towards making sure that everything possible has been done to check out a particular tool or resource, for example. When I am training, and showing delegates a particular tool, a common question is 'Who else is using this? We can't be the first.' There is a danger that if you wait too long for exactly the right tool, that may never happen, and the opportunity to get the information to the user passes.

The activity is the key element here; if I want to send a large file to someone for instance, that's exactly what I want to do. I don't particularly care which of the dozens of resources I use to do it, I just need the file sent. There is an understandable temptation to remain loyal to a particular product or tool, and that makes sense if you have paid money for it, or invested a lot of staff time in training. However, the days of loyalty are very long gone now, and your responsibility is towards your library members. Use the tool that will get the job done. If that tool is still there tomorrow, then that's great, use it again, and if it isn't, use something else instead.

In the past we had to focus on the tools, because they were expensive, and we had to get the tool to work as hard as possible. Consequently, the tool helped to define the activity; if you wanted to create a poster you would look at the functionality that Microsoft Word gave you for example, because that's the tool you had. With all of the resources that are now available, there are plenty of finely honed tools that create fantastic posters, far superior to anything that a word processing package could provide.

In essence – the tool is less important than the activity, and the activity should always define which tool or type of tool you use, not the other way around. Your members will expect to get the material or information that they need quickly, and it matters far less to them exactly how they get it.

## **Connection speeds and storage costs**

In the past, the technical issues of connection speed and the cost of storing content online meant that far more work was done on desktop computers, and more latterly laptops. However, with many people now owning and using tablet devices and smartphones, storing their content in the cloud, these concerns are – for users in many countries – a thing of the past. We can now store everything that we need online; presentations can be made available on file-sharing sites, obviating the need to take presentations on physical media such as DVDs or thumbdrives. It also means that it's far easier to share content than ever before, and in many different formats – podcasts and video being obvious examples, but we shouldn't forget the newer resources such as augmented reality apps that sit on our smartphones.

## **Our roles**

In the 'Web 1.0' world it was reasonably easy to settle ourselves into specific roles – librarian, researcher, author, reader, journalist, teacher, and so on. However, now that everyone can create and contribute, these traditional roles are beginning to fall apart. If I see an event happening in front of me I can video it, upload it and tweet about it there and then. I have become a 'citizen journalist'. We can all be book reviewers or film critics with our own channels on YouTube or pages on Facebook. It's much easier to teach people using webinars, screencasts, or one-on-one training via webcam.

Looking at this from a broader canvas, we are no longer restricted to watching television at particular periods of time, given all of the on-demand resources that are available to us. Indeed, why watch television at all, when we have tablets and smartphones available? Our role as passive viewer is becoming a thing of the past as we can choose what to watch, when we watch it, and how we discuss it with our friends afterwards.

We can still purchase printed materials and while we'll still do that, of course, the concept of news is changing, and personalized news feeds, culling content from people we follow on Twitter and Facebook, as well as other subject areas of interest, are becoming more important. This leads onto a second issue here, which is 'who is producing the news?' In the past our news has been pre-chosen, packaged and delivered for us by the national or local news, but now it's far easier to identify experts who cover subjects that interest us, and we can get our news from those people instead. Of course, we can also be those newscasters as well.

## **Web 1.0 was about limitations, social media is about freedom**

For the majority of its 40+ years' existence, the internet has limited what people can do with it. Perhaps the best way to create content was via a website, and in order to do that it was necessary to understand HyperText Markup Language, File Transfer Protocols, search engine optimization, and so on. While USENET newsgroups and early blogging platforms helped people break away from those limitations it's only been in the last decade that the rise of user-generated content has exploded, giving everyone with access to the internet a chance to find their own voice.

### **Summary**

Social media has changed the way in which society as a whole works, and more particularly the way that information professionals are able to do their jobs. While the focus is very often on the actual tools that we can use, Twitter, Facebook and the like are simply that – tools. In the wrong hands the best that can be achieved is nothing, since in order to use a tool it's necessary to understand how it can work, the uses that it can be put to, and the activities that it supports. The following chapters look in detail at various activities information professionals can take part in, and indeed are already taking part in, and the role that various different tools have in supporting this work.



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