University of Kentucky

UKnowledge

[Library Faculty and Staff Publications](#)　　　　　　　　[University of Kentucky Libraries](#)

Fall 2006

Internet Reviews: Social Networking Software: Facebook and MySpace

Stacey Greenwell
University of Kentucky, staceyg@email.uky.edu

Beth Kraemer
University of Kentucky, kraemer@uky.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/libraries_facpub

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

Repository Citation

Internet Reviews: Social Networking Software: Facebook and MySpace

Notes/Citation Information

Published in *Kentucky Libraries*, v. 70, issue 4, p. 12-16.

The copyright holder has granted the permission for posting the article here.

INTERNET REVIEWS: SOCIAL NETWORKING SOFTWARE: FACEBOOK AND MYSPACE

BY STACEY GREENWELL AND BETH KRAEMER

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY LIBRARIES

Author's note: Shortly after this article was submitted for publication, Facebook disabled the UK Libraries profile, citing a violation of their Terms of Agreement which they say specifies that organizational profiles are not allowed. Profiles must be created for individuals only. We are disputing this interpretation of the Facebook Terms. Facebook recommends that Libraries create individual profiles for librarians and establish a "Facebook Group" to represent the library itself. Contact the authors for more information about this incident and the current status of our profile. At the moment, several libraries do have active Facebook profiles, but the implication is that more may be shut down in the coming months.

Static HTML pages? That's so yesterday. The new trend for libraries looking for a web presence that appeals to the younger generation is Social Networking. Public and academic libraries around the country are experimenting with this new trend and the University of Kentucky has established profiles in both Facebook and MySpace, two of the most popular services. This column offers a general overview of these two services, as well as insights based on the University of Kentucky experience.

WHAT IS SOCIAL NETWORKING SOFTWARE?

Social networking sites are hot. These web-based tools allow individuals to meet, interact, collaborate, and share. There are a variety of sites for a variety of purposes, including:
- Meeting friends (e.g., MySpace and Facebook)
- Sharing media (e.g., Flickr and YouTube)
- Sharing ideas (e.g., blogs and wikis)
- Collaborating at work (e.g., SharePoint)
- Dating (e.g., eHarmony)

An individual can create his or her own personal space within the service, but interaction with other users is the key feature.

MySpace and Facebook are particularly popular with "Net Generation" users. An estimated 85% of students in high school and college have at least one profile in at least one of these sites. The central feature of this particular kind of social networking site is the ability to identify a group of friends whose profiles become linked to yours. Your group of friends becomes a network with unique communication privileges. Your friends can post comments that will appear on your site. You are able to broadcast announcements that go to your entire group of friends or your network in one stroke. The personal connection encouraged by these sites is both the strength and potential vulnerability of this type of social networking.

CONCERNS AND BENEFITS

MySpace and Facebook have both been in the news recently with stories about users who have suffered some consequence as a result of content they posted to their own profiles. Colleges and universities have charged students with violation of campus alcohol policies based on photos found on the sites. Graduating students have cited Facebook profiles as a factor in cases where the student was turned down for a professional position. It's not just your friends who are exploring these services: parents, potential employers, and university administrators are aware of the popularity of MySpace and Facebook and the kind of information that can be mined from profiles.

Concerns about MySpace and Facebook center on the nature of the content users are posting and the relatively open access of the sites. Parents are particularly concerned about who has access to their children's profiles. Both services now allow users the option to restrict access to their profiles to their approved group of friends only. User education is key to preventing problems. Users need
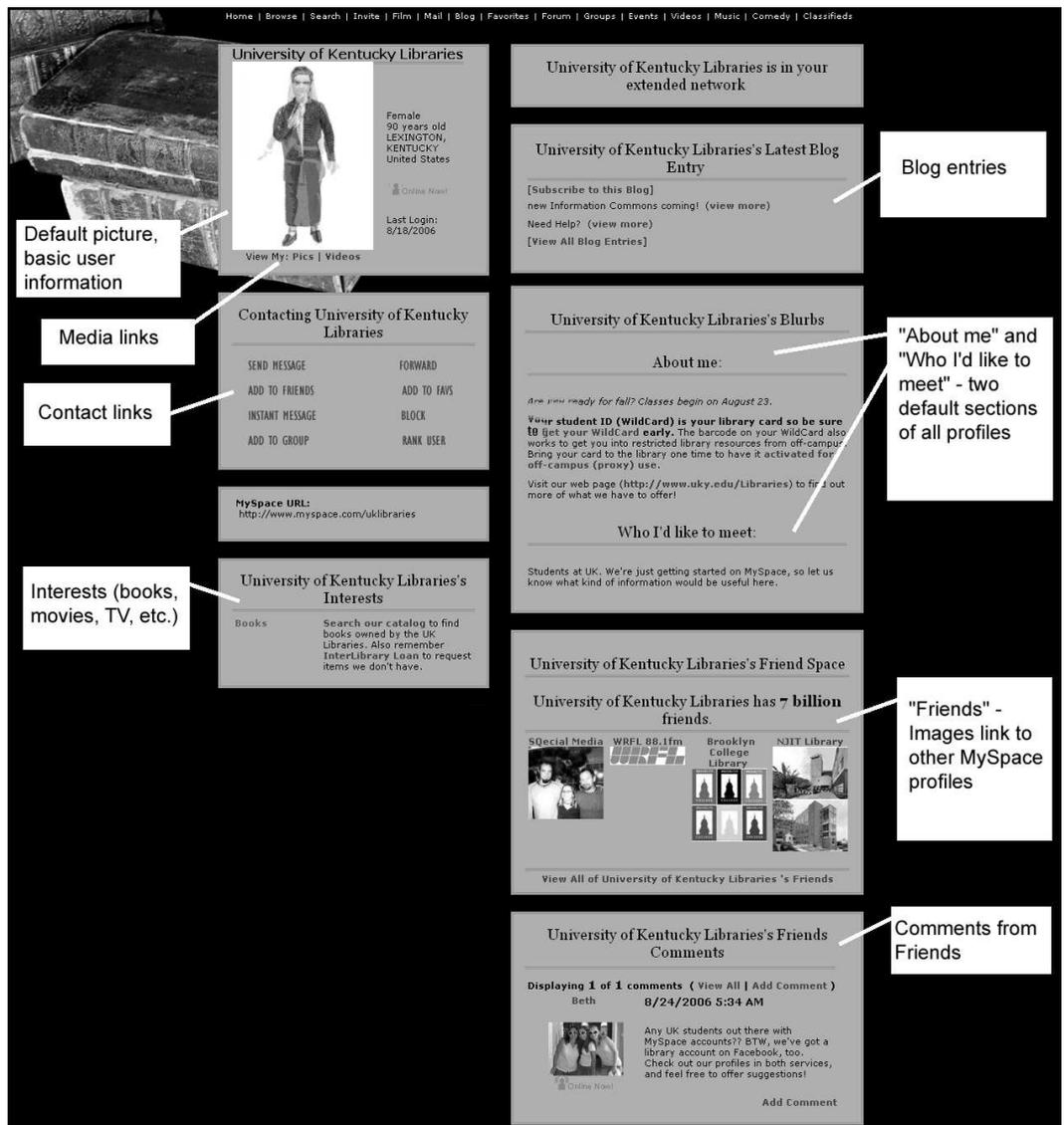
12

to be aware of the option to restrict access, need to be judicious about accepting friend requests (other users may misrepresent themselves and are potentially not who they say they are), and need to be aware that open profiles are open to anyone.

With user education to reduce problems, we see exciting benefits in social networking sites, particularly MySpace and Facebook. The sites integrate web, email, chat, blog and media-sharing in one neat package. Institutional users — such as libraries — can use the sites to facilitate two-way communication with users rather than the traditional one-sided web presence. User comments can enhance the site, making it more personally appealing to this audience and more timely. Patrons can post questions to the site and answers will be visible to all visitors. The "friends" feature also provides a focused group for advertising, such as promoting library classes and services of interest to younger

patrons. Finally, MySpace and Facebook are wildly popular with this particular audience. Profiles are free and easy to create. The only investment is the time required to create and maintain content. This is a high-visibility arena and participation is cheap and easy; having a library presence there makes sense.

MySpace
(http://www.myspace.com/)
MySpace is the most trafficked internet site in the U.S. A MySpace profile can be created by anyone with an email address. The ability to customize the "look" of your profile makes it popular with high school students and anyone looking to advertise to this younger audience. Independent musicians create profiles to advertise their music directly to listeners. Movies geared toward teen audiences are also being promoted directly on MySpace. Libraries — particularly public libraries — have also begun to create MySpace profiles as another way to reach this set of their user population.

Figure 1

facebook   home   search   browse   invite   help   logout
University of Kentucky Library's Profile   Kentucky

Default picture and contact link

Information

Account Info
Name: University of Kentucky Library
Network: Kentucky Faculty
Last Update: August 21, 2006

Contact Info
Email: WEBADMIN@LSV.UKY.EDU
AIM Screenname: uklibraries
Land Phone: 859-257-0500 x 2170
Current Town: Lexington, KY 40506
Website: http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/

Personal Info
Interests: Helping students find information in person, chat, email, or phone--just ask us because we want to help you!

Basic user information

Personal information & interests

View All University's Friends
Send University a Message
Poke University!

Status
University is at the library.
Updated on Thursday

Kentucky Friends
29 friends at Kentucky.   See All

Beth Kraemer   Rob Aken   Stacey Greenwell

"Friends" - Images link to other Facebook profiles

Photos
University has 3 albums.   See All

Banners in Young Library
Updated August 21

Librarians are people, too
Updated August 17

Photo albums, if any

Friends in Other Networks
Networks with the most friends
Kentucky (29)
Lexington, KY (2)
ASU (1)
Athens High School (1)
Bennington (1)
Bethel MN (1)
Catholic (1)

Networks you belong to
Kentucky (29)
    Show All Networks

Notes
University has 2 notes.   See All

how to find stuff @ the library
8:52am Tuesday, Aug 22

FIND ARTICLES:
Use a database http://www.uky.edu/Librari es/dbsearch.ph... . Our webpage also organizes selected databases by subject http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/subject.php... If you know a particular journal you want to see online, use http://lib.uky.edu/pubjrnl /FMPro?-db=ejr...

Continue reading...

No comments | Add a comment   Report | Updated 21 hours ago

Notes (like posting comments yourself)

Groups
Displaying the only 2 groups.   See All

VOTE FOR THE WILDCAT • UK Library Staff

Group memberships

The Wall
Displaying the only 2 wall posts.   Write Something

Beth Kraemer wrote
at 12:26pm August 16th, 2006
Nice banners! A bit of color on those white walls...
Wall-to-Wall • Write on My Wall • Delete

Jacob Broderick wrote
at 9:38pm August 8th, 2006
Wow, Librarians are cool!
Wall-to-Wall

"The Wall" - comments from friends

Figure 2

A basic MySpace profile is created by completing a form. Some questions on the form are required (e.g., birth date) and others are optional. The optional sections will display on your profile if you have provided content, and won't display if you have not. You can provide information ranging from your favorite movies, where and when you went to high school or college, your sexual orientation, and where you work. Any responses become search terms that will allow other users to find your profile (e.g., find everyone who graduated from the University of Kentucky in 2002, or find everyone who likes to watch "Deadwood").

After your basic profile is complete, you may add optional elements like blog entries, pictures, videos, etc. The basic look of the site (colors, font, some layout elements) can also be customized, and a variety of sites exist where you can download free MySpace layouts for your profile. **Figure 1** shows the University of Kentucky Libraries MySpace profile (http://www.myspace.com/ uklibraries),

with the basic elements common to any MySpace profile identified.

Facebook
(http://www.facebook.com)
For the most part, Facebook is open only to registered users with a valid education-oriented email address. As a result, access is considerably more restricted than MySpace. A Facebook user has limited access to view profiles outside of one's network (the network typically being the educational institution of which one is affiliated.) Like MySpace, individual users may choose to limit who can view their profile by adjusting privacy settings. Despite these restrictions, more than 7.5 million people are registered users of Facebook. According to the Facebook website, two-thirds of those registered return to the site each day, and as of this writing, Facebook was the seventh-most trafficked site in the United States.

Facebook is particularly popular with college students. On a sprawling and unfamiliar campus, Facebook can serve as a lifeline to staying

connected with old friends and can aid in meeting new people. Facebook users can easily connect with individuals from one's high school, hometown, etc. Links within Facebook profiles make it simple to find others who share the same interests (favorite bands, movies, hobbies, etc.), live in the same dorm, participate in the same school activities, etc. Students can create groups based upon interests which can further help in connecting with others.

When creating one's Facebook profile, the user will be prompted to enter basic information such as gender, birthday, email address, phone, etc. Sections are provided for personal information as well — political interests; activities; interests; and favorite music, movies, TV shows, books, and quotes. Like the basic contact information, a Facebook user can adjust the privacy settings to hide this information from others — across the board or for specified users only. Facebook users can also choose not to fill in these personal information categories at all.

The Courses portion of the profile gives faculty the opportunity to become more involved with Facebook, as students or faculty can indicate courses taught or taken by course number. Increasing faculty use of Facebook is not too surprising, especially considering that some of the newest faculty are of the social networking generation anyway. A recent examination of some librarians on Facebook revealed faculty librarians at other institutions born as late as 1980.

Another important part of the Facebook profile is one's photo. Photos vary widely from profile to profile. Some users will post a current photo, others may post a childhood photo, dog, cat, friend, movie star; short of pornography (users must agree to this when uploading any photo), anything goes. Facebook users who do not upload a photo will appear as a question mark. Facebook users can also create photo albums. Photo albums can be shared with anyone, including individuals who do not have Facebook profiles.

In addition to all of the user-supplied information (contact information, personal information, photos), profiles include several essential social parts: friends, the wall, and groups. Like MySpace, users can request a "friend" linking with another profile. Recipients of friend requests are notified and can accept or deny friend requests. Friends are grouped by networks-first within one's own local network

and then within other networks, typically by college or geographic area. Facebook profiles include a wall which allows other Facebook users to post comments and links. Facebook users can write "wall-to-wall" and carry on a conversation with another user. **Figure 2** shows the University of Kentucky Libraries Facebook profile, with the basic elements common to any Facebook profile identified.

Facebook users can create groups which can be open to anyone or restricted. Groups are considerably wide-ranging, from groups affiliated with a campus club or activity, to more general groups such as "Why do I pay for a dorm room when I spend all my time at the library" or "UK Basketball rocks my world!!!" Groups can provide an easy way to share information with others and message all members; they can be particularly useful in planning an event or a regular meeting. Groups can be fun and sometimes irreverent, and they further shape one's profile and add to one's network.

SHOULD LIBRARIES GET INVOLVED?

Since an email address is all that is essentially required to create a profile, virtually anyone or anything can have a profile. Mascots, departments, and inanimate objects have Facebook profiles. At the University of Kentucky, for example, even the Patterson Statue has a Facebook profile. So technically speaking, it is no problem for a library to obtain an account. As far as setting up the profile, it takes a matter of minutes. As with any online presence, what is most essential is, of course, the content.

Students are increasingly using these social networks, to the degree that some are choosing the messaging feature in these social networks over traditional email and other communication methods. Some students log into these services and remain there all day — for them, it is as essential as phone and email were to other generations.

We try to reach students in a variety of ways — by hosting open houses, distributing flyers, setting up a table at campus or community events. Since social networks are where an overwhelming number of our students spend their time, it makes sense that we would want to be there as well. Setting up library profiles on social networking sites can serve as just one more way to put the library's contact information out there. In addition to providing information about the library, the profile can serve as just one more way for students to provide feedback to the library. A number of students

15

won't bother with paper feedback forms, but they just might be inclined to submit comments electronically. If even a handful of students find the library in a social network and use its services as a result, isn't it worth it?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Initially most of our "friends" in both MySpace and Facebook were other libraries around the country. We're all experimenting, and exploring the profiles of other libraries is one of the best ways to get ideas and learn what is possible. (If your library has a profile in either service, send us a friend request!) Students at the University of Kentucky are primarily Facebook users. We expect to see more MySpace usage as high school students with elaborate profiles established in that service go off to college, but for now we are seeing more activity in our Facebook account. After our profile was established and had a certain amount of content, the next step was to attract friends. We decided not to solicit directly to students. There is some question about whether students would see that as an invasion of "their space." Our strategy was to send friend requests to students we knew (primarily library student workers) and faculty at UK who had Facebook profiles. We also sent a friend request to the Wildcat mascot, who has a Facebook account. Once our profile became linked to those profiles, the friends of our friends were able to discover the library profile and several new students sent us friend requests as a result. We combined this less aggressive form of direct advertising with other methods, such as promoting our Facebook profile during student orientation sessions. Our profile is still fairly new, but we are seeing slow and steady growth in the number of UK students who have become our friends.

We plan to continue updating our profiles regularly with new content. Two of us are primarily responsible to maintaining the profiles in both services, but we have recruited help from several other librarians in the system to contribute content. In addition to basic contact information and tips on using the library, we regularly add items that we hope will be of interest to students. At the beginning of the fall semester, we included tips for new students as well as information about obtaining and activating the campus ID card. We linked to some tips for using Facebook wisely and featured information about a campus safety seminar which discussed responsible use of Facebook. We have created a series of photo albums to give the site some color, including an album of sketches of the future Information Commons, a collection of campus banners on display in Young Library, and a fun series of librarians on vacation and just generally having fun.

In general, we strive to keep up with what's new. Today's number one site may be MySpace, but it will inevitably be replaced by something else. Just a few years ago, Friendster was the hottest social networking site around. Mention it to a student today and you may get a blank look or "ugh, that's where my big sister's friends used to hang out."

Social networking sites give libraries just another option to reach our clientele in new ways. As we utilize these new tools, it makes us realize that it is truly an exciting time to be in this profession.

Stacey Greenwell
staceyg@email.uky.edu
Beth Kraemer
kraemer@email.uky.edu

FOR FURTHER READING

Abram, Stephen. "What Can MySpace Teach Us in Special Libraries." *Information Outlook.* 10. 5 (May 2006): 34-5.

Farkas, Meredith. "Libraries in Social Networking Software." *Information Wants To Be Free* May 10, 2006, accessed August 28, 2006 <http://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/index.php/ 2006/05/10/libraries-in-social-networking-software/>.

Libraries on MySpace. Accessed August 28, 2006 <http://groups.myspace.com/myspacelibraries>.

Mathews, Brian S. "Do you Facebook? Networking with students online." *College & Research Libraries News* 67.5 (May 2006): 306-7.

Mitrano, Tracy. "Thoughts on Facebook." Cornell University Office of Information Technologies Policy Office. April 2006, accessed August 28, 2006 <http://www.cit.cornell.edu/policy/memos/facebook.html>.

Murray, Robb. "Students using Facebook to find virtual relationships." *Minnesota State University, Mankato.* February 14, 2006, accessed August 28, 2006 <http://www.mnsu.edu/news/read.php?id=old-1139930573>.

"MySpace." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.* Accessed August 28, 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MySpace>.