

# Virtual Social Networks and Library Outreach



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## What are Virtual Social Networks?

A group of individuals connected through a variety of software applications that facilitate interactions and collaborations. These individuals form relationships from casual acquaintances to colleagues to close friendships.

Top 15 Social Networking Sites by Market Share of Visits Week ending March 4, 2006				
Rank	Name	Domain	Market Share	Average Session Time
1	MySpace	<a href="http://www.myspace.com">www.myspace.com</a>	75.56%	28:09
2	TheFaceBook	<a href="http://www.thefacebook.com">www.thefacebook.com</a>	8.26%	NA
3	Xanga	<a href="http://www.xanga.com">www.xanga.com</a>	7.34%	15:37

Source: <http://www.imediconnection.com/content/8554.asp>

## Widely-Used Social Computing Tools:

- Friends (MySpace, Friendster, hi5, Yahoo 360, MSN Spaces, etc.)
- Schools (Facebook, XuQa, Bebo, Sconex, Tagged, etc.)
- Blogs & RSS (Xanga, Blogger, LiveJournal, Bloglines, Feedster, etc.)
- Dating (Match, e-Harmony, Yahoo Personals, Collabodate, etc.)
- IM (AIM, Yahoo, MSN, etc.)
- SMS, TXTing, (mobile phones)
- Discussion Boards
- Email, Listservs, etc.

## Newer Social Applications & Fusions

- Wikis (Wikipedia, Wikibooks, etc.)
- Jobs (Tribe.net, LinkedIn, Jobster, ZeroDegrees, Ryze, etc.)
- Social Bookmarking (Del.icio.us, Rojo, CiteULike, etc.)
- Photo & Video Sharing (Flickr, Vidilife, Bolt, etc.)
- Podcasts, Vodcasts (iTunes, YouTube, etc.)
- Combination of Social Applications (Dodgeball, etc.)
- Virtual Worlds (Second Life, Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, etc.)

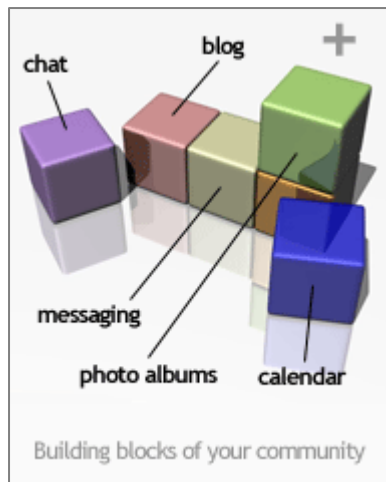
## Why Utilize Virtual Social Networks for Library Outreach?

- Net Generation accustomed to virtual spaces and connections and use them to get information
- Tap into a pre-existing college community and be viewed as participant/ally
- Create a library community/sub-community
- Foster peer-to-peer information sharing & learning
- Extend accessibility of library/librarians
- Market library services and events and develop new services based on students
- Enhance communication and gain understanding of users' needs
- Creative and personal communication with an integrated multimedia-based suite of social computing tools (IM, email alerts, blogs, pix & video sharing, bulletin boards)

... while traffic to newer sites built around user participation has soared.

SITE	PERCENTAGE CHANGE, FEB. 2005 TO FEB. 2006
Blogger.com	528%
MySpace.com	318
Wikipedia.org	275
Citysearch.com	185
Whitepages.com	60

SOURCE: comScore Media Metrix  
 GRAPHIC: The Washington Post



Source: [http://www.me.com/\\_snapp/features](http://www.me.com/_snapp/features)

## Issues to Consider in Using Social Networks

- Pre-determine objectives and the best tool/method to achieve them
- Technology is generally simple and can be inexpensive or free
- May be difficult to get buy-in from those unfamiliar with concepts
- Build a plan to determine workflow and maintenance
- Be aware of spamming and security and privacy issues
- Be flexible and respond to users and what works

## Tools to Create New Communities

- Drupal: open source social computing tools and course management <http://drupal.org>
- SNAPP: Social Networking Application Platform [http://sl.me.com/\\_snapp/](http://sl.me.com/_snapp/)
- Online Community Toolkit <http://www.fullcirc.com/community/communitymanual.htm>

## Blogs on Social Networking and Libraries

- The Shifted Librarian: <http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com/>
- Social Software Weblog: <http://socialsoftware.weblogsinc.com/>
- Many 2 Many: <http://many.corante.com/>
- TechEssence.info: <http://techesence.info/>
- Second Life Library Blog: <http://secondlifelibrary.blogspot.com/>
- Intersections: <http://mingus.exp.sis.pitt.edu:8888/intersections/>
- Tame the Web: <http://tametheweb.com/>
- Walking Paper: <http://walkingpaper.org/>

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