"We have lift off": the voyage into social space. PRE-READ

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Date - Time - Venue

Friday 15 November 2019
VU – Room 3
11:10 am – 11:55 am

Abstract

We live in a networked society with billions of people connected to the Internet. This increasingly connected world has fundamentally changed the way we live, work and socialise. New forms of social connection have evolved and continue to do so with the emergence of Web 2.0 social media technologies. Social networking sites have fast become the preferred platforms for many types of activities both personal and business.

It is essential for libraries to become increasingly more visual and participatory in the social spaces in which people frequent in order to make connections and facilitate more effective communication, collaboration and community building beyond the library's physical self.

Social media can be an effective information dissemination tool for libraries to promote resources, activities, services and events.   If used correctly, internet-based social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter for example, become powerful platforms for library outreach and marketing.

The key decision for libraries embarking on the journey into the social networking sphere is determining what social sites to implement; what will best fit the library's requirements in terms of functionality, features and most importantly the ability to reach and engage with patrons and potential patrons.

This paper discusses the direction and development undertaken in expanding library services into social spaces, and the challenge of establishing a social presence for community building through Facebook.

The opportunity and challenge of implementing a social site has been a voyage of discovery on a personal and professional level, from pre-launch checks to diversification with lift off and diving in to shape the provision of a social library.

'Discover, Diversify, Dive In' will provide a forum to discuss the impact of the library's social media efforts and offer opportunity for social networking knowledge sharing and learning.

Primer

This year marks the 50-year anniversary of the first manned moon landing, a landmark in space exploration and one of humanities greatest achievements. This amazing feat was a shared global experience as the world went to the moon on television. Television pictures afforded the audience the experience of watching Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin step onto the Moon.

We are also celebrating 50 years since the Internet's progenitor 'Arpanet' carried the first message, laying the foundation for today's networked world; a world in which there are now more Internet-connected devices than people.

Sesame Street is now 50 years old and counting. Television audiences were first introduced to the Street on 10 November 1969 with an orange version of Oscar the Grouch. Sesame Street has also been rocking the social media space on Facebook and Twitter since 2009.

From outer space to an international network the 'Internet' or the 'Net' - a global information and communication facility, to social networking spaces, the thread that ties 'is human interaction,' communication across distances, beyond that of face-to-face discussions.

Humankind are social beings and as Hendricks states in his history of social media, 'As social animals, people have always relied on communication to strengthen their relationships (2013).'

The 'social media' we refer to today is not a new trend; it has evolved from centuries of social media development, using various communication technologies to share information with others. From ancient stone markings to letters, smoke signals and drums, to the invention of the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, the Internet, emails and texting, to the emergence of the first recognisable social media site 'Six Degrees' in 1997, and beyond, social communication technologies have emerged to keep people in touch with each other (Hendricks, 2013).

Social Space, the final frontier...

This is the voyage of the starship Kalamunda Library Service. Its continuing 5-year mission: to explore strange new worlds beyond our library walls, to seek out and build an active online community through Facebook, to boldly go where we've not ventured before, to make visible the value our libraries bring to our community.

The voyage into social space

I invite delegates to join me on a social media journey; one I hope will engage and inspire you, encourage questions and contribution to the discussion on the use of Facebook by libraries. Facebook is hugely popular, however as a networking platform it 'Primarily supports the building of an online personal network among friends, families, colleagues, and acquaintances' (Mon & Mon 2014). The site is mainly about having fun and social searching.

How can libraries adapt services into 'personal' social spaces, establish a presence and maintain a following? My presentation will provide an overview of the development and direction the library has taken to extend and deliver library services using Facebook, adapting our services to social space.

Preparation for lift-off

Prior to the Symposium I would like you to check out our Facebook Page:
@Kalamunda Libraries http://www.facebook.com/kalamundalibraries/

'Find Us, Like Us & Follow Us' - take a look and see what, and how we are doing, join in the conversation.

To engage or not to engage in social media?

This is that all-important question asked and comprehensively discussed before embarking on our voyage. I will address this in detail in my presentation.

In addition to the above, I would also like you to consider the following statements and questions in order to join me in discussion as part of my presentation:

- Some of the challenges in using Facebook are: growing audience and followers, staff administration time, and posting engaging content. What are other challenges experienced?

- 'Without followers, a Facebook page is sending well thought-out content into an empty void. '

- 'Social media work must be in service of advancing the library's overall goal.'

- Share your thoughts and experience in using Facebook to facilitate communication, collaboration and community building.