

LIBRARYTHING, SHELFARI, ANOBII AND THE OTHERS: ARE BOOK SOCIAL NETWORKS SUITABLE FOR ASTRONOMY?

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From “Web 1.0” to “Web 2.0: the differences

WEB 1.0 (1990's-2004?)

- ◎ The Web represents a “democratized access to information” (M. Farkas)
- ◎ It is mainly a one-way structure: the web pages are set up by “creators”, on the other side there are “users”
- ◎ Users generally are not allowed to and they can not put their contents on the Web
- ◎ Users mainly search contents from major companies (i.e. Netscape, Encyclopedia Britannica)
- ◎ First appearance of some kind of social software, as electronic mailing lists and forums

From “Web 1.0” to “Web 2.0: the differences

WEB 2.0 (2004-today)

- ⊙ The Web is now “democratized participation” (M. Farkas)
- ⊙ Information and web contents are set up by community of users
- ⊙ People is allowed and able to easily add contents
- ⊙ Birth of social networks
- ⊙ Merging of publication and communication instruments
- ⊙ The Web is now a place where people can share images, videos, knowledge, every kind of information

Examples of Web 2.0:

- ◎ Wikis (Wikipedia)
- ◎ Sharing media sites [Flickr (Web 2.0 photo sharing site) / YouTube (Web 2.0 for videos)]
- ◎ Blogs
- ◎ Travel sites (Trip Advisor)
- ◎ Social Networks (MySpace / Facebook)
- ◎ “Folksonomies” (=folk taxonomies)

Library 2.0

- ◎ A new (?) model of library, less static than previously and where interaction with users plays a fundamental role.
- ◎ In the world of Library 2.0 users are able to (and solicited to) talk with library, sending their comments, suggestions and requests to library itself.
- ◎ On the other side, the library intensively communicates with users through blogs and social networks, and collects and publishes various materials through library wikis.

Book Social Networks (1)

- ⦿ Sites generally addressed to “Readers” or Book lovers
- ⦿ The aim is to give people the opportunity to share with other readers info about their books and readings in a social-network-style
- ⦿ The lists of books are generated by searching on many databases of sellers or libraries
- ⦿ Generally it is essential to have the ISBN to add a book
- ⦿ Users can write and share reviews of books and very often there is some rating system (1-5 stars)

Book Social Networks (2)

- ◎ Many of these sites are mainly devoted to electronic publication of works of (new) authors or to give readers the opportunity to preview excerpts of books or to read the entire book online
- ◎ Others are reviews and reading suggestions oriented
- ◎ Others are focused on sharing reading with friends, and allow tracking of personal and friends readings
- ◎ Almost all give some opportunity to buy paper or electronic books, via Amazon or other big sellers

BSN and Astronomy libraries

- ⦿ Can these applications be used in astronomy libraries in any “librarian” way?
- ⦿ The fundamental element to do this is a good integration between catalogue and social network.

Requirements

- ◎ Effective cataloguing tools:
 - Sources of data
 - Chance to import/export data in standard formats such as .CSV, .TXT, .HTML and so on
 - Possibility to add a record manually
 - Level of detail of the record
- ◎ Possibility of adding call numbers, loan data, subjects
- ◎ Search and sort criteria
- ◎ Possibility of “bulk editing”
- ◎ Possibility of customizing types and formats of data/info retrieved/displayed
- ◎ Only books ?

The candidates...

- ◎ Anobii
- ◎ BookJetty
- ◎ Goodreads
- ◎ Gurulib
- ◎ LibraryThing
- ◎ Shelfari

...and the Winner is...

- ◎ Each of them offers some interesting features, but – no doubt about it - the most complete and in some way the most flexible is ***Library Thing***, that is also the only one offering a special version for libraries (Library Thing for Libraries) which allows to embed LT data into the library catalogue page.

Interesting features

- ◎ **TAGS:** they originate from a user's need to retrieve her/his own information, but in some mystical way, have demonstrate to be effective in making information available and retrievable from other users too
- ◎ **CONNECTIONS:** between users that read the same or similar books. These connections may have the format of **recommendations** and/or **suggestions** automatically generated or simply be **info** about people/libraries holding the same and/or similar books

Warnings

- ⦿ Third party sites (lack of interoperability with other systems, backups, security, etc.)
- ⦿ Individual concerns related to using such a technology
- ⦿ Legal Risks, related to copyright issues and use of trademarks or trade names, or to infringement of privacy
- ⦿ Possibility of inaccurate or misleading data

Problems: an approach

- ◎ Brian Kelly of UKOLN has developed a very interesting “Risks and Opportunities Framework”, recently presented at the the “Cultural Heritage Online 2009 Conference” which was held in Florence on 15-16th December 2009

(<http://www.rinascimento-digitale.it/eventi/conference2009/proceedings-2009/kelly.pdf>)

Conclusions (1)

- ⊙ Book Social Networks, especially Library Thing, can be used and result helpful, as an addition to the traditional catalogue
- ⊙ Folksonomies (folk + taxonomies) are not hierarchically structured and have a bottom up structure: theoretically, they should not be effective, but we professional librarians know very well that neither professional taxonomies work always...so, if folksonomies can be helpful in finding/retrieving information, why not?

Conclusions (2)

- ⦿ Recommendations, together with the reviews written by readers (especially if the review is written by people who works in the same field) can be very helpful for both undergraduates/graduates/post-doc fellows and professional astronomers
- ⦿ Last but not least, the typical social network features allow the creation of groups on specific topics
- ⦿ It very important, however, to be aware of the concerns and risks related to the use of these applications, and of how to solve them