

Social Technologies/Products Glossary

Avatar

An avatar is a computer user's representation in graphic form. Avatars can take many forms including three dimensional digital models or two dimensional pictures.

Blogs

Blogs are webpages composed of short entries that loosely follow a topic or theme. Blogs can be a wonderful resource for collecting new ideas about methods or concepts in library instruction. These blogs frequently discuss information literacy: Academic Library <http://blogs.princeton.edu/librarian> and The Gypsy Librarian <http://gypsylibrarian.blogspot.com>. You can sign up for a free blogging account at sites like Blogger and WordPress.

Digg

Digg is a site where the internet's most popular content is showcased. Users submit a news story, blog post, video, etc. to Digg and Digg users have the option to "digg" the items they like. Many popular blog hosting and news sites include a button at the bottom of each post for a viewer to "digg" their content. Digg can be accessed at <http://digg.com>.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging, often shortened to IM, is a synchronous text-based communication over the Internet. There are several IM clients, the most popular being AIM, MSN, Yahoo, ICQ, Google Talk, and Jabber. Products like Meebo and Pidgin are web-based Instant Messaging aggregators. With Meebo, you can contact multiple IM users in one chat window and instant message different IM service users from your Meebo account. Meebo also allows you to access your IM account from any machine. Meebo has an additional feature that is great for libraries called a Meebo Me Widget. The Meebo Me Widget is a web-based entry screen that allows users to enter into a chat session right from a website where the widget appears without logging into an IM client.

Microblogging, or Twitter

Microblogging is a form of blogging, generally text only, that is roughly 140 characters or less. Messages can be sent via several means - text messaging, instant messaging, the web, etc. Users can subscribe to their friends and colleagues messages via the web or cell phone. Twitter <http://www.twitter.com/> is the most widely recognized service for microblogging. Social networking sites also provided a similar service – called "status updates" in some cases.

Online research guides

Online research guides combine all your printed finding guides as well as other content you want to make available to your users on one webpage. One commercial example is LibGuides research guide management system. See

Using Social Technology in Library Instruction Forum

I-Share Instruction Team

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<http://community.libguides.com/> for examples of LibGuides created by over 490 libraries. For some locally generated LibGuides, see <http://tinyurl.com/anhu3h> and <http://library.queensu.ca/help/guides> .

Open source software

Open source software is software available to users without fees. Source code is usually made available as well, allowing for product modification and collaboration among users.

Photosharing

Photosharing allows a user to upload pictures from their own personal computer to a photosharing site. These sites have shared server space with thousands of other users. Once pictures are uploaded, images can be edited, tagged, and shared. Common sites for photosharing are Flickr, Photobucket, SmugMug, WebShots, Picasa, Shutterfly, and Snapfish. Facebook is another means of photosharing; users do not need a Facebook account to send links to photos.

Podcasting

Podcasting is a series of audio or video digital media files distributed via the Internet. A podcast is distinguished from most other digital media formats by its ability to be syndicated, subscribed to, and downloaded automatically when new content is added. Podcasting is becoming increasingly popular in education to deliver lecture and video content.

RSS Feeds

RSS commonly stands for "Really Simple Syndication." RSS allows someone to "subscribe" to a web page where the content of the page changes frequently. Rather than a user checking a web page for current updates, RSS feeds put all updates in one convenient place to save the user time. To subscribe using RSS, a news aggregator or feed reader is needed on the user's computer. Once the software is installed (or the user signs up for the feed reader), the user will look for this symbol:



Once the user clicks on this, a subscription can be set up. After subscriptions are added, the user simply opens the news aggregator or feed reader and checks for updates. Free web-based feed readers include MyYahoo! (<http://my.yahoo.com/>), Bloglines (<http://www.bloglines.com/>), and Google Reader (<http://www.google.com/reader/view/#directory-welcome-2-page>)

Screencasting

Screencasting is a digital recording of a computer screen output which is often turned into a video tutorial complete with narration, captions, and verbal directions. Librarians use screencasting to demonstrate library products and services. Freeware tools include ScreenToaster, Screencast-O-Matic, CamStudio, Capture Fox, Jing.

Examples of paid software include Camtasia and Adobe Captivate. I-Share tutorials, created by the I-Share Instruction Team, can be found here:

<http://www.carli.illinois.edu/mem-serv/mem-train/movies/opac-mov.html>. ANts, or ANimated Tutorial Sharing Project is a great place to see examples and share library tutorials: <http://ants.wetpaint.com/?t=anon>.

Social bookmarking

Using social bookmarking websites, users create accounts to store and organize links to their favorite bookmarks in one central place in order to share them with others. They often tag their bookmarks with words they feel best describe the content of that site. They decide who is allowed to view their lists of bookmarks. Other features of these sites are the ability to search for other bookmarks and to provide feeds so that subscribers can be alerted to new content. Users can also assign ratings to bookmarks, import and export them, e-mail them, and see how many others have bookmarked a given website. Librarians can provide current lists of informative links for instruction. Examples of social bookmarking sites are: del.icio.us, Furl, Diigo, and Connotea. Digg and reddit are social news sites.

Social networking sites

A social networking site is an online representation of community. Users often build personal profiles that contain information which they wish to share: what city they live in, what their profession is, and even personal information such as photos, marital status, or religious or political beliefs. Sites like LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/>) are dedicated to professional networking. Users communicate between profiles via informal short blog posts, IM, email discussions, and links to outside information such as news articles. Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook also allow the creation of "groups" which users can join and share even more specific information (often related to an event or theme). Profiles can be created for libraries that discuss events and resources. Librarians can also establish "groups" dedicated to the classes they teach, which is an easy way to connect with students, post links important for their research, or even use IM to discuss reference questions.

Student response systems, or Clickers

Student response systems or audience response systems (aka "clickers") allow participants to submit answers to questions posed during a lecture or presentation. The technology commonly works with Microsoft PowerPoint and can be used to poll a class, get student feedback for assessment purposes, or gauge student comprehension. Many of the clicker software systems use infrared technology or radio frequency to send results from the students' response cards (the "clickers") to the instructor's computer. Student results may be kept anonymous, or each response card can be assigned to a particular student if grading. More advanced systems are able to work with cell phones, instead of response cards. Examples of clickers include: Turning Technologies: <http://www.turningtechnologies.com/>, Interwrite Learning: <http://www.interwritelearning.com>, iClicker: <http://www.iclicker.com/>.

Tags, or tagging

Tagging is the process of assigning a keyword to a piece of information (i.e., blog, online news article, web site). Unlike a controlled vocabulary, this informal system allows users to assign keywords of their choosing. Integral to Web 2.0 sites, users can search or browse by tags. The collection of these user-generated tags is known as a "folksonomy." Many sites offer a visual depiction of their tags – this is known as a "tag cloud." See social bookmarking.

Virtual learning environments

Virtual learning environments are "digital worlds" that can supplement traditional face to face classroom activities. Virtual learning environments can be used in place of course management systems. They are designed to support teaching and learning through a single intuitive interface. Some examples are WebCT and Blackboard. Second Life <http://secondlife.com/> is also being used by librarians to provide programming and instruction to patrons via the internet. Virtual learning environments were originally created to support distance education, but many instructors and librarians use them to supplement classes that meet on campus.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is the phrase coined by Tim O'Reilly to denote the "second generation" of the Internet. Web 2.0 is characterized by the movement away from static webpages to dynamic and shareable content. Examples of Web 2.0 technologies include: wikis, blogs, and microblogging. Librarians can use Web 2.0 technologies to create more interactive, user-centered library services.

Wikis

A wiki is a website made up of web pages that others are allowed to access in order to edit, to contribute content, or to add a new web page. A wiki can be devoted to one topic or one event, or it can be the website for a large project or a course. The wiki owner decides what kinds of access are to be given to those who collaborate. Users navigate between wiki pages using hypertext links. Other features of this website include the ability to comment on pages, to add tags and links, and to see the history of the edits that are made. For instruction, students can collaborate on exercises or projects from their own computers and share their answers and ideas in real time. Sign up for a free wiki at PBwiki: <http://pbwiki.com/>