



Up Front

Deleting Online Possibilities

Linda W. Braun is an Educational Technology Consultant with LEO: Librarians & Educators Online and an adjunct faculty member for GSLIS. She works with educational institutions to help them figure out the best way to keep up with and integrate technologies. As a part of this work she keeps track of what's going on in and outside of libraries with emerging and recently emerged technologies. As a result she has tracked online social networking since its early days.

“I’m surrounded by middle-school boys.” That was the subject line of an email I received from Deirdre Johnson, the Head of Youth Services at the Mt. Kisco (NY) Public Library. What was she writing to tell me? She wanted me to know that ever since she published her MySpace page, middle-school boys visit her at the library and contact her electronically to find out how she “pimped” her space. They wanted to be able to do the same.

Johnson is just one of the librarians who have discovered the power of MySpace (and social networking) in the lives of teens. They also discovered the importance of integrating MySpace into their own library’s programs and services.

These kinds of connections might not be made if DOPA (the Deleting Online Predators Act), introduced in the House of Representatives last summer, is made into law. Sparked by fear that some of the people who use social networking sites are up to no good (which of course is sometimes true), the purpose of the act is to make it illegal for schools and libraries that receive E-Rate funding to provide access to social networking tools in their institutions.

Those sponsoring the act think that by making this access illegal, children and teens will be protected from the possible dangers associated with online social networking. On the other side, the side that I happen to agree with, people believe that by keeping teens and children away from these sites in schools and libraries, it actually will be harder to keep youth safe. If these tools are not used in educational settings, children and teens will have less opportunity to learn safe use of the technology, and as a result, won’t have all of the skills needed in order to make smart decisions about how to use social networking sites.

DOPA was quickly passed by the House in July and then moved on to the Senate. As this article is written, the Senate still has not voted on the act. It is assumed at this point that since the Senate has not yet acted, the legislation will not be voted on in the current session of Congress, and will actually die at the end of the year.

Tina Cherry, teen programmer at the Jerome Public Library in Jerome, Idaho, is a student in an online course that I’m teaching on teens, technology, and literacy, who has seen firsthand how MySpace gives teens opportunities for using critical thinking skills. On our class discussion board she recently wrote,

“After I messed with my MySpace profile page, (nearly an entire morning of searching and reading and experimenting) my 15-year-old came home from school. She

thought my page was ‘way cool’ and wanted to know where I got my background. I told her, she nudged me (gently) away from the computer, and spent the next 2 hours re-doing her MySpace. Most of that time was re-writing her profile, which she got excited about doing after she had the ‘look’ of her page the way she wanted it ... She wrote, edited, (because she has an audience in mind) laughed out loud, I Med, and wrote and wrote — proofing again and again, reading her writing out loud to me.”



The MySpace/social networking movement is somewhat new in the library world, but it’s one that is regularly gaining new converts. An example of a not-so-new convert is Brooklyn College Library. The library was mentioned in the September 15 issue of *Library Journal* in an article titled, “Google is Not The Net.” The article is about social networking in libraries and includes a quote from Beth Evans, a librarian at Brooklyn College, about her library’s initiation of a MySpace page. Evans said,

“Some people were like, ‘that’s not what a library looks like. But I don’t buy that. There’s no definition of what a library is supposed to look like, how a library is supposed to behave, or how librarians are supposed to look. It just seemed like a smart outreach move.”

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Snapshot

Linnea Johnson

“My Tivo recording list would reveal many guilty pleasures, but it has been sworn to secrecy.”

Linnea Johnson '04LS is the assistant manager of information technology for GSLIS. In the spring semester, she will teach a section of Technology for Information Professionals. Johnson grew up in Massachusetts and lives in Arlington, Massachusetts, with her two cats, Max and Lotus Jane.

Q:

Where did you grow up?

I lived in Arlington, Mass., until I was three. My family and I then moved to Winchester, Mass. My mom has been a kindergarten teacher in Winchester for the past 30 years and still lives in my childhood home. Ironically, I am now back living in the same three-family house in Arlington where I spent my first three years, which was built by my father's parents.

I am an only child and come from a small family, so my two older male cousins, Ralph and Charles, are like brothers to me. Growing up as the only girl in my family had its perks and I think influenced me to become independent at a young age.

How did you get interested in LIS?

When I joined the GSLIS staff in 2001, I honestly did not know much about the LIS field, but since a large portion of my colleagues are GSLIS alums, their passion quickly rubbed off on me. Soon I discovered that there is a way to combine the intricacies of information technology with LIS and entered the master's program in 2002. I got my degree in the summer of 2004.

What do you like best about your work?

I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to work with a group of individuals who are so passionate and believe so strongly in their work, and their enthusiasm is contagious. The staff, faculty, and students of GSLIS share a common belief in the LIS profession, which is reflected in everything they do. This synergy in the department makes me want to do the best job I can do in my position. The friendships that I have formed while working in GSLIS mean a tremendous amount to me.

What is the connection between who you are and what you do?

My interest in technology has been present for as long as I can remember. It probably started back when I got my first computer, a Macintosh IIsi, when I was 12 and just increased exponentially from there. I also enjoy teaching technology concepts and ideas to others. Watching their fear dissipate and their interest peak is very rewarding.

What are you passionate about, outside of work?

I have a close relationship with my family and spend as much time with them and my close friends as I can. Music has always been a large part of my life. It's an interest I inherited from my father, and my love of music has shifted from creating music on the piano, saxophone, clarinet, and a brief stint with the cello, to listening to it.

Do you find much time to go to concerts and shows?

I especially enjoy watching live music, and have seen my favorite artist, Alanis Morissette, more than 60 times since 1996. In fact, many of my closest friendships are the result of my travels to see Alanis at her shows. Those who know me will be surprised to learn that one of my closest friends and I sang on stage with Alanis before a crowd of 30,000 at the [then] Fleet Center. In the past 10 years, I've had many encounters with Alanis, and we usually have a chance to chat for a little while before or after her performances.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

Each of the last three years, Dale DeLetis [in the Simmons President's Office] has asked me to participate in the Simmons Speaker's Showcase and every year I declined the offer, due to a fear of public speaking. But this year, I decided to get over this fear and just go for it. My speech was a satire on how I am noticing traits in myself that are alarmingly similar to those exhibited by my mother, and I have been told by friends that it's quite funny. I invited my mom to the event, and despite the fact that the speech was poking fun of some of her quirks, she was moved. And I know that her being there in the audience meant as much to her as it did to me.

What's a guilty pleasure of yours?

My Tivo recording list would reveal many guilty pleasures, but it has been sworn to secrecy.

All right, then tell me a talent that you covet instead.

Sushi is my absolute favorite food in the world, and I've always admired the artistry and presentation with which a sushi chef is able to create a feast for the mouth and for the eyes.

You're a huge Red Sox fan now. Was that the case when you were a kid?

Growing up, I went to my share of baseball and basketball games with my mother. My mom grew up in a time when the Celtics were actually good and winning championships, and to this day, she refuses to give up on them. As I got older, I fell in love with the Red Sox and would consider myself a true member of Red Sox nation. Specifically, I really respect the team captain, Jason Varitek, whose leadership is incredibly admirable. The energy and devotion of Red Sox fans at Fenway and beyond is energizing and addicting. It makes me happy and proud to be so invested.

Do you play any sports yourself?

No, but the past two Labor Day weekends, I have gone white water rafting. Last year, we went rafting and kayaking on the Deerfield River in Deerfield, Mass. This year, we took the plunge and tackled the Kennebec and Dead Rivers in The Forks, Maine. Although it's a bit of a challenge heading down class 5 rapids, it is exhilarating.

Interview by Alison Cody



Deleting Online Possibilities

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Evans is most certainly a convert to social networking and MySpace, but her quote brings up a challenge that libraries have faced ever since the Web came to be (15 years ago). It's a challenge that pits the librarian against the user. It's a challenge that asks librarians to give up their assumptions about what libraries are and should be. It requires that librarians focus on meeting users where they are, as opposed to where the librarians want them to be.

How does MySpace do that? By giving libraries the chance to meet users in an environment where they already congregate. Most libraries that are using MySpace join this environment and use it as an outreach tool to members of their community whom they might not necessarily reach otherwise. On many library MySpace pages, visitors find links to library search tools, and sometimes even find a search box for the library catalog right on the library's MySpace page. (See Hennepin County Library's MySpace page: <http://www.myspace.com/hennepincountylibrary>.) The pages also often advertise upcoming events, and classes, highlight new materials, and provide information about how to use the library — either the physical space or the virtual space.

Some might say, "So what?" Some might say, "I can access that kind of information on the library website; what's the difference?" The difference is that people who might never think of visiting the library website will perhaps become a friend of the library on MySpace. Then, every time that person visits their personal MySpace page, they are reminded of the library because they see the library listed as a friend.

A library MySpace page is all about networking with users within the virtual communities that they populate. There are a host of other social networking sites in which these users connect virtually, and they include:

- ✦ del.icio.us, a social bookmarking tool used for adding content links and finding others who like to link to similar content areas. In school libraries, del.icio.us is used as a way to connect classes with information for specific lessons and assignments. The teacher and the librarian work together to create del.icio.us pages with lists of resources. Students add to the resource lists and see what their peers have added as well.
- ✦ Digg, a social bookmarking and ratings site where users rate content posted by others — the stories most often rated with a "thumbs up" rise to the front page of the Digg site. Imagine a library catalog that used this same type of technology. Visitors to the catalog could rate books, and the most popular titles of the week, the day, etc. would rise to the top page of the library web site.
- ✦ Vox, a blogging tool where Vox bloggers create a neighborhood and choose which members of the neighborhood get to see specific blog posts. In a school library setting, teachers and librarians could create Vox neighborhoods for specific classes or groups of students.

Now back to DOPA, when the act was announced, the library machine went into full action. Many librarians developed

materials, spoke to the press, and worked to educate their communities about the importance of social networking in the lives of users. Librarians who were already using these tools educated those who weren't. As a matter of fact, the reason Johnson and Cherry — quoted at the beginning of this article — are using MySpace is because they took part in professional development opportunities to find out the impact of social networking technologies on the lives of their users. These two librarians didn't assume that what others told them about the technologies was true. They found out for themselves so they could make accurate decisions about social networking and its uses in their libraries.

Librarians need to do more of that kind of thing. They need to discover firsthand what new technologies are all about and seriously consider how they can be used to improve library services to users and communities. The way libraries are incorporating MySpace is a perfect example of taking advantage of a new technology to meet the needs of users.

We don't know what the next technology will be that captures user imagination in the same way that MySpace has. But, librarians can't wait to hear about it from others. We need to keep trying things out, listening to what's on the horizon, and paying attention to what users are talking about. We can't wait to ramp-up and respond when the federal government comes calling. We need to ramp-up and demonstrate positive uses before anyone has a chance to think of the negative uses. It's a challenge, but one I'm sure we can meet.

Article by Linda Braun

Website list:

ALA Social Networking Wiki
<http://wikis.ala.org/iwa/index.php/>

Brooklyn College Library MySpace
<http://www.myspace.com/brooklyncollegelibrary>

del.icio.us
<http://del.icio.us/>

Digg
<http://www.digg.com/>

Google Is Not the Net, Library Journal,
September 15, 2006
<http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6370224.html>

Hennepin County Library MySpace
<http://www.myspace.com/hennepincountylibrary>

Mt. Kisco Public Library My Space
<http://www.myspace.com/mountkiscolibrary>

Tina Cherry My Space
<http://www.myspace.com/tinaatjpl>

Vox
<http://www.vox.com/>

December Events

Friday, December 1, ISI Samuel Lazerow Memorial Lecture sponsored by Thomson Scientific. Robert M. Hayes, Professor Emeritus, UCLA 'Libraries in National Information Economies: A Comparison of the United States, United Kingdom, and Croatia'. Linda K. Paresky Conference Center, Simmons College 12:30 lunch, followed by lecture at 1:30. RSVP to gslis@simmons.edu and indicate if you will be attending both lunch and the lecture, or only the lecture. No fees.

Saturday, December 2, Emerging Technologies Workshop: Google Earth. Love to travel but hate jet lag? Learn to explore the world without leaving your chair with Google Earth, a computer program that combines satellite imagery, maps, and Google search capabilities. GSLIS Tech Lab, Palace Road Building, Boston Campus, 1:00 p.m.

Monday, December 11, Submission deadline for petitions for transfer of credit/wavier/to enroll for discussion at December faculty meeting. Submit your petitions to Assistant Dean Knowles and contact your faculty advisor to let them know about your petition. (See Announcements from P-111 for more details).

Saturday, December 16, Boston and Mount Holyoke classes end.

Friday, December 22, Simmons closes for holiday break at noon.

More information about these and other events can be found at <http://my.simmons.edu/gslis/resources/calendars/events.shtml>.

Beta Phi Mu Book Award Recipient

Dear GSLIS Community,

As President of the Board of the Simmons chapter of Beta Phi Mu, I am delighted to announce the recipient of our first annual Beta Phi Mu Book Scholarship. First, let me note how impressed we were with the quality of the applicants for this inaugural award: every single entry was very strong, and all were worthy of the prize. Susanna Paterson, our winner, exemplifies the spirit of Beta Phi Mu: she has an outstanding academic record, and her essay perfectly captured the dedication to scholarship and service that defines our organization. We congratulate Susanna, and we encourage all eligible Simmons GSLIS students to watch for next fall's scholarship competition.

Sincerely,
Stephen Skuce
President, Beta Beta Chapter
Beta Phi Mu Honor Society

“Being involved with patron services means really becoming involved with the patrons; a service profession is merely a job if it is missing the idea of service.”

—Quoted from Susanna Paterson's winning essay for the first annual Beta Phi Mu, Beta Beta chapter Book Award

Announcements from P-111

Petitions for transfer of credit/wavier/to enroll: All petitions for transfer of credit/waivers must be submitted in complete form to Assistant Dean Em Claire Knowles in P111 by **Monday, December 11, 2006** for consideration at the December faculty meeting.

Petition to enroll: Please note that you must submit a petition to enroll form in order to enroll in courses at other institutions for credit toward your program of study at GSLIS. If you are interested in enrolling in any of the following programs taking place in Summer 2007, submit your petition to enroll by **Monday, December 11, 2006**.

For registration deadlines for UNC sponsored abroad programs, visit <http://sils.unc.edu/programs/international/index.html>. More information should be posted online in December, 2006.

- Summer 2007 session in Prague at Charles University, sponsored by the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, May 27-June 9, 2007.
- “Libraries and Librarianship: Past, Present and Future” summer seminar in Oxford, England, presented by University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and Oxford University will be held May 13-26, 2007.
- “Libraries and Librarianship on the Sunny Side of the Alps” summer seminar in the Republic of Slovenia, presented by University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the University of Ljubljana. The two-week seminar will be held in May and June, 2007.
- Pratt School of Information and Library Science summer institute in Florence, May 28-June 15, 2007, in collaboration with the Biblioteca Nazionale and the Uffizi Library: “Florentine Art and Culture—Resources and Documentation”. Applications are now being accepted. For more information visit: <http://www.pratt.edu/sils/index.html>.

InfoLink

InfoLink is the monthly newsletter of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College. Its purpose is to provide school- and career-related information and to foster community among the many diverse people who make up the school.

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Copy deadline for the November issue is **Monday, January 15, 2007**.