Social networking sites, libraries, users

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SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES, LIBRARIES, USERS

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Abstract

In this paper, Facebook statistics will show the growth of the SNS. In short literature review published papers on using Facebook in libraries will be discussed. Results of a survey of students participants of 2012 Erasmus Intensive Program Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School (IP LibCMASS) will be analyzed.

Key words: *Facebook statistics, Bulgarian students, Croatian students, French students, Turkish students*

The worlds' most popular social networking site (SNS), Facebook, was launched in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg with an attention to be a mean of communication for Harvard students [18]. Soon, it was introduced to other colleges and universities in the USA [1]. Since September 2006, the site has been opened to everyone who is older than 13 [9]. Today, there are more than 800,000,000 Facebook users all over the world – it became the most popular social networking site. It is not used only by individuals but also by institutions and organizations for promoting their products and activities.

In this paper, Facebook statistics will show the growth of the SNS. In short literature review published papers on using Facebook in libraries will be discussed. Results of a survey of students participants of 2012 Erasmus Intensive Program Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School (IP LibCMASS) will be analyzed.

Facebook statistics

Number of Facebook users in the world is increasing constantly. Facebook statistics show that the growth was from 664,032,460 in March 2011 to 835,525,280 in March 2012 [10]. There some assumptions that the number could reach 1 billion by the end of 2012 [15]. Comparing Facebook usage by geographic regions, Europe is at the first place with 232,835,740 Facebook

users in March 2012. It is followed by Asia (195,034,380 users), North America (173,284,940 users), and South America (112,531,100 users).

If we look at the statistics for the four countries that participate in 2012 IP LibCMASS (Bulgaria, Croatia, France and Turkey), we can see that in March 2012 Bulgaria had population of 7,093,635 and 2,386,800 Facebook users (33.6% population penetration rate). Croatia had population of 4,483,804 and 1,452,300 Facebook users on (32.4% population penetration rate). France, with population of 65,102,719 had in March 2012 24,104,320 Facebook users (37.0% population penetration rate). Turkey with population of 78,785,548 had 30,963,100 Facebook users (39.3% population penetration rate). Population penetration rates are not so different for the countries; they are between 32.4% and 39.3%. The rates are similar if we compare them to the European Union – it had population of 502,748,071, with 171,305,880 Facebook users in December 2011 (34.1% population penetration rate).

The world's most popular social network in June 2012 was Facebook. Some countries where Facebook is not "number one" social network, usually use local social networks (e. g. VKontakte in Russia) or have censorship problem (like in Iran where state censorship blocks access to Facebook) [23]. According to the same statistics, the most usual social networks that are on the second or the third place in the countries where Facebook is most popular SNS are Linkedin and Twitter.

Age of an average Facebook user was 33 in 2008, 38 in 2010 [12] and 40.5 in 2012 [22]. An average Facebook user has 130 friends, 8 friend requests per month, spends 15.5 hours on Facebook each month, visits the site 40 times per month, creates 90 pieces of content per month and is connected to 80 community pages, groups or events [16].

Literature review

By the year 2007, Facebook become popular not only among individuals but also among libraries as institutions. Since that year studies and articles about Facebook and libraries have been published. Although there were some opinions that Facebook lies outside the bounds of librarianship [6], soon it was recognized as another place where libraries can meet their users. Facebook has become even more popular in libraries since the launch of Facebook pages in 2007 [5].

Some authors thought that the best way for libraries to communicate with their patrons via Facebook is to try to friend as many of them as possible [17]. On the contrary, some other authors thought that the better way for a library was to promote library's Facebook page and than let users find it them-

selves [21]. Breeding, in the same year, thought that Web 2.0 tools had great opportunities in academic libraries, but he also thought that it was not realistic to think students would like considering librarians as their "friends" [4]. According to Farkas creating social networking sites libraries make libraries more visible and more convenient to access [11]. Analysing students' behavior on MySpace and Facebook, Chu and Maulemans find out that the majority of students think that e-mail, not SNS, is the most appropriate way to communicate directly with professors [7]. In a 2008 survey about usage of Facebook in health sciences libraries it was shown that only 12.5% of surveyed libraries maintain a Facebook page [14]. Connell in 2009 published results of a survey of student opinions on academic libraries, Facebook and Myspace [8]. For the majority of respondents it is acceptable for a library to try to communicate with them via Facebook or Myspace.

The first research of Croatian libraries on Facebook dates in 2009 [20]. There were 37 Croatian libraries on Facebook in December 2009, but 9 of them were not opened and administrated by libraries but by the users. Author concludes that Facebook is becoming more and more popular – in future it will be important for libraries to be on Facebook. In another study of Croatian libraries on Facebook in 2011, complete sample of 94 libraries on Facebook were analysed by library type, type of Facebook presence and by number of friends, members or fans [3]. At the time the research was conducted, there were 55% of public libraries, 28% of school libraries, 15% of academic libraries and 2% of special libraries on Facebook. Majority of them (52%) were present on Facebook through profiles, 36% through Facebook pages and 12% through Facebook groups.

Study of Croatian public libraries on Facebook, compared with Irish public libraries, was presented on QQML 2012 conference in Limerick, Ireland, in May 2012 [13]. In the study, 29 Croatian and 21 Irish public libraries with Facebook pages were analysed. Croatian public libraries have more fans than Irish libraries, but the average number of "Talking about this" is similar. Croatian libraries publish more photos and announce more events but Irish libraries publish more wall posts.

In another survey of Croatian libraries (May and June 2011), wall activity of 91 Croatian libraries was analysed [2]. In a 14-day period 402 posts was published, 468 photos were published, 157 comments to posts and 1368 "likes" to posts.

Survey of Croatian public libraries on Facebook that was presented in June 2012 on IADIS Multi Conference on Computer Science and Information Systems in Lisbon, Portugal [19] shows libraries "interests" (Facebook pages

that are liked by libraries). They were categorized in 8 categories. The most important category was "Other libraries". Category "Entertainment" was on the second place, "Book promotion" on the third place. Librarians who administrate Facebook pages rarely express their private interests and points of views (opposed to library administrators of Facebook profiles). In conclusion, authors say that Facebook is just another communication channel and all the ethical guidelines that count in real world, should be taken in account in virtual world too.

Survey of Bulgarian, Croatian, French and Turkish students

A survey of 22 students, participants of 2012 Erasmus Intensive Program Library, Information and Cultural Management – Academic Summer School in Zagreb was taken on the 10th of September 2012. Students were from four countries – Bulgaria (7 students), Croatia (4 students), France (4 students) and Turkey (7 students). The sample is small so the survey was conducted only in order to test a short questionnaire, as well as to find out if there is a need of a more detailed survey on students' use of libraries' Facebook pages in the four countries.

Questionnaire was distributed among the students. Students were asked if they use Facebook, how often they use it, how many friends they have and if they communicate with their library or libraries via Facebook. Students were also offered eleven statements and they were asked to mark their degree of agreement.

Results showed that 20 out of 22 students had Facebook profiles. Asked about the number of their Facebook friends, three students answered that they have 20-50 friends, two students have 51-100 friends, nine students have 101-300 friends and 6 students have more than 300 friends. They all use Facebook at least once a day (17 of them more than once a day and 3 of them once a day). Eleven out of 20 students receive library related information via Facebook.

Students were asked to mark their degree of agreement to 11 statements. They could agree, be neutral or disagree.

Nineteen out of 22 students agree to the statement that it is good if a library tries reaching as many people as possible via Facebook.

Ten students agree that the purpose of Facebook is spending free time and having fun. Five students are neutral and 7 disagree.

Nine students out of 22 would search for a library on Facebook to find the information they need. Seven students are neutral and 6 of them would

not search for a library on Facebook.

Ten students use library Facebook pages to find some relevant information. Eight out of 22 students do not use them.

Sixteen students do not use library Facebook pages to search the library catalogue. Only one use them, and 5 are neutral.

Twelve students do not use library Facebook pages to contact with library reference service. Six students use them and 4 are neutral.

Ten students would not mind if a library tries to reach them through Facebook. Five would mind and 7 are neutral.

Fifteen students would like to see library's announcements in their news feed every day. Four students would not like to see the announcements and 3 are neutral.

Nine students like to keep their Facebook activities separate from school and administration. Six do not do that and 7 are neutral.

Three students often comment on libraries' posts on Facebook. Thirteen do not practice that and 6 are neutral.

One student "friend" people he/she has never met in real life. All the other 21 students do not do that.

Although the sample is small, the pilot survey shows that students do use Facebook to communicate with their libraries. Despite their opinion that Facebook is for fun, they think that it is good if a library tries to reach as many people as possible on Facebook. Students rarely use Facebook to search library catalogues but the reason might be small number of libraries that offer the catalogue feature on their Facebook pages. Small sample does not allow us to conclude about using reference service through Facebook or about students' practice of commenting on libraries' posts. It would be interesting to conduct surveys with larger samples to find out students' practices in using Facebook for finding information and for communication with their libraries.

Conclusion

Facebook is definitely number one social networking site at the moment. Libraries have always wanted to be where their users are, so at the moment, many libraries try to be on Facebook. The most appropriate Facebook presence is through Facebook pages. Facebook pages should be created and managed by official representatives of libraries. Facebook pages should represent libraries as cultural and educational institutions, not the librarians as

persons.

In Bulgaria, Croatia, France and Turkey, Facebook has similar population penetration (approximately 33 to 39%). Students in all the countries use Facebook regularly, majority of them have 50 to 300 friends and they do not "friend" people they have not met in the real life. It seems like they are willing to communicate with their libraries via Facebook, but larger surveys should be undertaken to prove the theses.

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