

## **“Social Networking Literacy Competencies for Librarians: Exploring Considerations and Engaging Participation”**

(Contributed paper, Scale the heights theme. Fourteenth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries, March 12-15, 2009, Seattle, Washington.)

Joseph Murphy  
[joseph.murphy-at-yale.edu](mailto:joseph.murphy-at-yale.edu)

Heather Moulaison  
[heather.moulaison-at-rutgers.edu](mailto:heather.moulaison-at-rutgers.edu)

The social networking literate librarian has the skills to provide services in and with a variety of online social networking sites. The world of information continues to evolve towards interaction, consumer creation, and flexibility in the platforms and behaviors of information and its purveyors. Social networking sites are becoming central forums for accessing and sharing information. Librarians are responding to the popularity and utility of social networking sites by using them as central media for interacting with library patrons for traditional and novel services. Librarians need a new branch of skill sets specific to utilizing and leveraging social networking sites to provide quality services and maintain their role as info experts.

The following competencies comprise a suggested set of skills that librarians should possess as social networking literate information professionals capable of utilizing information and implementing library services within social networking sites. Librarians possessing these skills are capable of efficiently and effectively navigating online social networking sites and applying their expertise by providing services within this now central realm for interacting with information.

The following competencies are based on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and are general enough to be applicable across various social networking sites and are flexible for new sites and their evolving applications to library services.

Understanding and articulating social networking sites and their roles

The social networking literate librarian and is capable of articulating the nature and roles of online social networking sites and their importance in scholarly research, communication, and the information cycle. Librarians should be familiar with a diversity of social networking sites and social media including the major sites relevant to their patrons. Librarians also need to be able to articulate why online soc nets are important to libraries to peers, administrators, and patrons.

---

### **Citation:**

Murphy, Joseph and Moulaison, Heather. (2009). “Social Networking Literacy Competencies for Librarians: Exploring Considerations and Engaging Participation.” Dawn M. Mueller (ed.).In: *Pushing the Edge: Explore, Extend, Engage: Proceedings of the Fourteenth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries*, March 12-15, 2009, Seattle, Washington. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, pp. 328-332.

### Creating content

The social networking literate librarian is capable of contributing content in various formats including images, text, audio, video, links, and more within and beyond the presence of their library. This includes adding and revising content in with various tools. This extends to creating the library presence, including creating pages, groups, and profiles.

### Evaluating information

The social networking literate librarian is capable of critically evaluating information encountered in social networking sites on the basis of authority, currency, and bias. Librarians also need to be able to assist patrons gain and apply these skills to evaluate information they encounter in various online social networks.

### Applying information ethically

The social networking literate librarian applies information in social networking sites ethically and legally, respecting copyright and intellectual property, and in full respect of the unique applicable cultural norms. This includes applying info found in soc nets to other media and applying info to projects within soc nets

### Searching and navigating

The social networking literate librarian is able to effectively search and browse various online social networks for contacts (known and unknown), and for information and resources in a variety of formats. These skills include understanding the search tools available in the sites, knowledge of using outside search engines to scour the sites, and an understanding of what fields are searchable. Also important are skills for navigating and browsing within the sites and between a variety of individual networks and outside websites.

### Interaction

The social networking literate librarian is familiar with the diverse methods of communicating over social networking sites and is aware of and able to apply the unique cultural norms and expectations of each method. All social networking sites allow for varying degrees of interactivity that can serve as avenues for connecting with patrons. These processes for communicating include messaging within the sites, posts on profile walls, comments on status updates, notes, pictures, posted items and blogs, and the sites' various synchronous chat features.

Librarians also need the skills for interacting over social networking sites through the popular mobile methods: including smart phone applications, through mobile webpages, by email, through software and third party clients, and by text message.

### Teaching

The social networking literate librarian is capable of teaching these skills to our patrons and peers. This includes guiding and training patrons through targeted aspects of soc nets that arise in their use of them as resources and tools, teaching about the use of soc nets for scholarly purposes, and teaching faculty and instructors about the role of soc nets and their place and

---

#### **Citation:**

Murphy, Joseph and Moulaison, Heather. (2009). "Social Networking Literacy Competencies for Librarians: Exploring Considerations and Engaging Participation." Dawn M. Mueller (ed.).In: *Pushing the Edge: Explore, Extend, Engage: Proceedings of the Fourteenth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries*, March 12-15, 2009, Seattle, Washington. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, pp. 328-332.

considerations for issues affecting their students' work.

### Providing Services

The social networking literate librarian is capable of utilizing a variety of online social networking sites to provide quality library services. This includes building and managing the library's presence in the form of profiles or applications, developing work flows for services, marketing available services, weeding spam, understanding and working with privacy levels, assessing the library's presence and services, knowledge of and ability to leverage tagging and favoriting, understanding and engaging vendor and other third party applications, and being aware of relevant security topics. It is important that librarians know the steps and etiquette for initiating and responding to friend requests in building networks.

### Flexibility

The defining skill for librarians in this context of engaging people and information through social networking sites is flexibility. Librarians must be able to apply the above skills to unique and novel social networking sites as they emerge. Familiarity with each of the above skills in multiple social networking sites will help librarians be flexible in applying these skills to future sites and services.

Possibly the most important, yet hardest to develop, skill is to look ahead and envision, create, and manage robust library services in full consideration of and within social networking sites. This takes vision, creativity, and a constant thumb on the pulse of the social web and its users.

### **Training:**

Training for librarians can be based on learning outcomes derived from the above competencies. Though teaching methods will vary, they should emphasize active learning because proficiency with social networking sites is most easily gained through active and personal engagement. Librarians will most easily learn these skills if they are given opportunities to play with these sites, gain personal confidence, and internalize their ease and value. After buy in has been achieved, step by step training should be performed with targeted activities.

The focus should be on general competencies applicable across sites that will help librarians excel at using any of them, not specific skills for specific resources.

### **Roles:**

Professional associations, MLIS degree granting institutions, and individual library systems have roles to play in supporting librarians in gaining and maintaining these skills. Professional Associations, such as ALA and its divisions, can provide support and resources for its members to develop these skills through continuing education programs and resources. LIS schools/programs can help their graduates gain these critical skills by including these competencies in their curricula with help from the ALA as the accrediting institution. Individual library systems can ensure that their librarians and new hires possess these skills by making them required qualifications and providing training for these skills. Every librarian has a responsibility

---

### **Citation:**

Murphy, Joseph and Moulaison, Heather. (2009). "Social Networking Literacy Competencies for Librarians: Exploring Considerations and Engaging Participation." Dawn M. Mueller (ed.).In: *Pushing the Edge: Explore, Extend, Engage: Proceedings of the Fourteenth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries*, March 12-15, 2009, Seattle, Washington. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, pp. 328-332.

for being aware of these important trends and issues. We should all be taking the time to make sure we are aware of these resources just as we do with more traditional lib and info resources and trends.

**Future:**

The next step should be to apply these skills to library instruction activities. This will entail developing social networking literacy competencies for library patrons and structures for helping our patrons learn these competencies.

The authors suggest further discussion to investigate how libraries can truly host library resources and services on social networking sites and how librarians can be supported in gaining these skills. It is the opinion of the authors that in the near future, the evolving nature of libraries will include full integration of library services with popular social networking sites such as Facebook. This may include locally developed applications that can be integrated into patrons' online social networking experience. These applications would be flexible for multiple online platforms as well as smart phones such as Apple's iPhone and mobile devices that run on Google's Android software. These will serve as a library presence and a means to of access to resources and services that truly embrace social and mobile features.

---

**Citation:**

Murphy, Joseph and Moulaison, Heather. (2009). "Social Networking Literacy Competencies for Librarians: Exploring Considerations and Engaging Participation." Dawn M. Mueller (ed.).In: *Pushing the Edge: Explore, Extend, Engage: Proceedings of the Fourteenth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries*, March 12-15, 2009, Seattle, Washington. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, pp. 328-332.