

Undergraduates' use of information sources and social networking media: Implications for librarians in the networked community

Relationship with the conference theme and statements of intent

Focusing on the use of information sources and social networking media among undergraduate students, the study aims to shed light on improving user service and LIS education for academic librarianship in the networked community. Specifically, this study attempts to provide practical implications to academic libraries that are challenged to serve users in rapidly changing environment and to find possible partnership between LIS educators and practitioners.

Scope

Research findings from two related projects will be presented: (1) project on undergraduate students' use of information sources (n=500); (2) project on undergraduates' use of information sources as well as social networking media (n=300). The projects aimed to identify service areas needing to improve by understanding undergraduates' information behavior.

Research questions

1. What are the popular information sources used by undergraduate students?
2. What are the characteristics of the popular sources, perceived by undergraduates?
3. What are the popular communication media used by undergraduates?
4. What can librarians do to promote useful information sources and services for undergraduate students?
5. How can LIS educators help librarians better serve undergraduates?

Method(s)

For both projects, survey method was used to collect data. Project 1 used Web-based questionnaires while Project 2 used paper-and-pencil ones. Data were collected in two different academic institutions at different times.

Background

In recent years, along with the advancement of information technology such as the Internet, there has been a proliferation of information sources and channels (OCLC, 2004). In colleges and universities, for example, an abundance of information has been made available outside the traditional libraries where most of academic search tasks used to be carried out. Recent research shows that the younger generation is the frequent user of the Internet (Jones & Madden, 2002). Some researchers and educators are concerned that students tend to be overly relying on information from the Internet sources, and that the students often fail to properly evaluate the information they obtained from the Internet (Grimes & Boening, 2001; Herring, 2001).

Despite growing popularity of the social networking Websites (SNW) among young Internet users, little attention has been paid to understanding the impact of SNW on library education and service. As existing research suggests the importance of people as an information source (Hertzum & Pejtersen, 2000), SNW has potential to be a key channel for information services. Recent studies on

college students' Facebook usage suggest leveraging Facebook for marketing library services (Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis, 2007; Brain, 2006).

Significance

This study can help academic librarians better understand their users' information behavior and find ways of their services and resources integrated into the rapidly changing 'information lives' of their users. It can also be used as a resource for possible partnership between LIS educators and academic librarians to reach out, communicate and educate the users in new social trends.

References

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