Web 2.0 moves 2.0 quickly 2.0 wait: setting up a library Facebook presence at the University of Warwick

Katharine Widdows
Information Assistant,
Science Team,
The Library,
The University of Warwick
Tel: 024 7652 8150
E-mail:k.widdows@warwick.ac.uk

LIBRARY 2.0

A range of Web 2.0 services is now being delivered by libraries. The Bodleian law library's Meebo box allows users to converse with librarians over the web in real time;[1] University College Dublin libraries have been in the virtual world of Second Life since 2007;[2] and the British Library has a range of blogs to support users.[3]

There are thousands of other examples, and if you would like to get involved in the discussion and ideas sharing around them do visit Library 2.0 on Ning or a similar professional network.[4]

THE WARWICK APPROACH

In 2007 senior management at the University of Warwick library decided to open the doors to Web 2.0 and invited academic support liaison staff to get stuck in. No project proposals, no interim reports, no long-winded committee-based approvals needed. Just do it!

So we did.

My contribution to this adventure was to set up the Facebook page, a multimedia social networking presence for the library. It was quick and easy to do and it was obvious, just from observing our students in the library, that Facebook was being used by our target audience.

Of course there were things that had to be considered. Briefly:

- Did we want fans to be able to post on the wall? Considering not only the potential for unwanted/unmediated comments to appear, but also the question of who would be responsible for fielding any feedback or enquiries received (and the fact that we have procedures in place already for this type of communication): no. Decision made.
- Did we want to upload photos? With the remodelling of the building in progress, and the fantastic changes happening on the floors: yes. Done.

But there wasn't much more.
Once the Page was created a few colleagues had a quick look at it and a few changes were made. And then it was live within a matter of days. It looked something like Figure 1.

Figure 1. The University of Warwick library's first Facebook page

FANS

The fan base grew quite quickly with relatively little advertising. A note was posted on the library home page and a slide was added to the plasma screen in our main foyer. Over time it was also mentioned on our blogs, in staff–student liaison committee meetings, at student induction sessions etc. About 50 new fans are now adding themselves each month, and as of 23 April 2009 we had 1,084.[5]

But who are our fans? And are we reaching our intended audience?

23,880 current members of Facebook have joined the Warwick network, indicating that, in some way, they consider themselves related to the university – if they are members of the university, they are members of the library. Not all Warwick Facebook users will have joined the Warwick network, and not all Warwick network members will be current staff or students, but we do have a reasonable indication from the numbers on the network that our library users *are* on Facebook and that Facebook is a good place for us to communicate with them.

Furthermore, we can see from the library-page statistics that there is an approximately equal male/female ratio of fans, and that the majority of them (56%) are in the 18–24 age range,

 the same age range as a large proportion of our students.

We are also well aware that a small proportion of our fans are curious librarians from other organisations – but that's okay, because we are watching their pages too!

SPEAKING OF CURIOUS LIBRARIANS …

It wasn't long before I started to receive enquiries about the 'project' from other libraries. I am still taking them now, and am still struck by the amount of preparation that some libraries require from staff before a Facebook page can be launched. Library staff were (and some still are) engaged in sending out questionnaires, collating feedback, writing project proposals and sending plans to managers for approval (for example) before they go ahead. I was fortunately spared this level of scrutiny and would suggest that other libraries with similar aims should cut down as far as possible on the amount of staff time invested in preparing to do something so simple.

Of course there are important considerations for managers but Web 2.0 moves fast – blink (or write another project report) and you could miss it.

CONSIDERATIONS

In the early days of library involvement, debates sprang up all over Library Land about a few key issues. I had a lot of enquiries from other libraries about how Warwick was addressing these issues.

The popular ones, and my responses to them, were:

1 *Should we encroach on student social space?*

Yes!

Pages have always been opt-in, and we are not encroaching: we are offering our services in a place students already visit. They don't have to use them. Just to be sure, we asked the Warwick students union, who agreed we should have a presence and even posted links to our page and uploaded some of our materials to their Facebook pages!

2 *What about the terms and conditions?*

It is important that we are aware of what Facebook might do with any content we post, and discussions about this have recently been fuelled further by the changes Facebook tried to implement in February this year. (See the list of suggested reading at the end of this article.)

3 *What about students who don't want to sign up for Facebook? Are we giving preferential treatment to students who use Facebook?*

Well, that's fine if they don't want to engage with us here. Warwick does not offer anything via Facebook that students cannot access without using Facebook. No dilemma.

A TEAM EFFORT

Although I did start the Facebook page and am posting on it, sending out occasional updates and fielding enquiries and so on relating to it, I am by no means the only person who has worked on Warwick's Facebook presence.

As well as creating pages for organisations to use, Facebook also allows anybody to create any kind of application they want. While some have created applications that allow members to throw pies at each other, or to create colourful circles to show how all of their friends are related to each other, librarians started building applications to search OPACs (Online Public Access Catalogues). One of those librarians, at Ryerson University library, posted the basic code used to build their Facebook OPAC application on an LMS (Library Management System) discussion board, where our LMS co-ordinator picked it up. It took our systems specialist less than half a day to build, test

and launch the catalogue application (see Figure 2), which now has 724 users.

Figure 2. Warwick's Facebook catalogue application

It wasn't long after this that our e-resources librarian found a way to make our e-journals search work within Facebook, so we added that to the page too (see Figure 3).
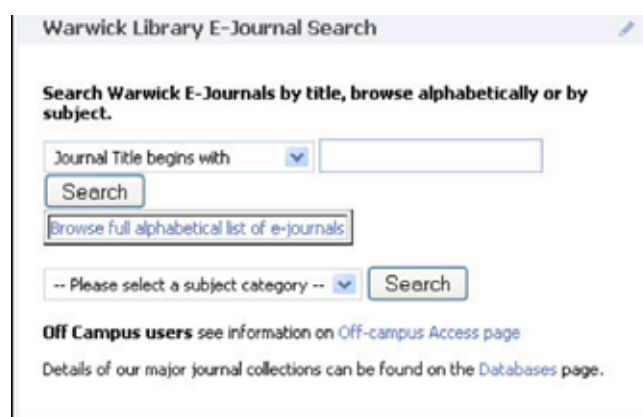

Figure 3. Warwick's Facebook e-journal search application

Other contributors to Warwick's Facebook presence include our politics and international studies librarian, who has started to experiment with Facebook as a way of fielding subject-specific enquiries; a librarian at Wolverhampton University learning centres who provided us with the basic code from which our library links box was created; and one of our teaching grid advisors who I spent a fun afternoon with trying to get our blogs to feed to Facebook pages after the recent interface changes.

I am now in the process of asking the British Library how they did some of their Facebook stuff – if you don't ask, you don't get!

RECENT CHANGES ...

There have been two big issues with Facebook over recent months that do need to be considered

by anyone setting up or managing a page at the moment.

1 Terms of use

In February 2009 Facebook changed its terms of use. The terms of use currently available on the Facebook site[6] have since been amended in response to member demand. And it would seem, from reading the Facebook blog postings about this,[7] that the situation is still under review. So what was all the fuss about?

Well, Facebook changed its terms to state that:

'The following sections will survive any termination of your use of the Facebook Service: Prohibited Conduct, User Content, Your Privacy Practices, Gift Credits, Ownership; Proprietary Rights, Licenses, Submissions, User Disputes; Complaints, Indemnity, General Disclaimers, Limitation on Liability, Termination and Changes to the Facebook Service, Arbitration, Governing Law; Venue and Jurisdiction and Other.'[8]

Members were concerned that Facebook would potentially be able to do anything they wanted with user content, even after members had deleted their Facebook accounts.[9]

While the decision was quickly reversed in response to pressure from members,[10] it did high-light the possibility that Facebook could change its terms of use and there could be knock-on effects for businesses and individuals alike – it's a case of watch-this-space.

THE INTERFACE

Since March 2009 'pages' are now called 'public profiles'[11] and they function much like the personal profiles that individuals have. The main issue I have had with this is that fans visiting the public profile are now presented with the wall (see Figure 4), and the rest of our content is hidden away in tabs behind it. What this means is that any photos, videos, links or applications you have added to your public profile are not immediately visible to your fans. It also means that unless you post content to your wall your public profile will appear to be inactive when fans first land there. In order to get around this we have fed our library blogs through Yahoo Pipes and into Facebook Notes, which will then feed the content onto our wall. (Instructions on how to do this can be seen on my blog.[12])

Figure 4. The University of Warwick library Facebook wall

The 'Boxes' tab you can see above the wall is where our photos, applications and links are held (see Figure 5), and is ideally where I would like our fans to be directed to when they visit the public profile, but sadly there is not an option in the settings to do this. I have been in contact with Facebook and hope this will be possible later on.
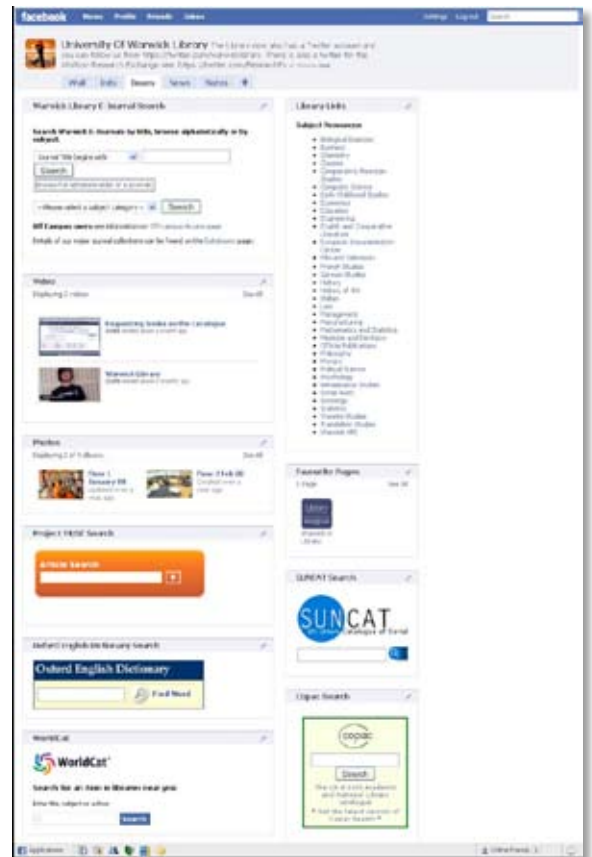

Figure 5. The University of Warwick library Facebook boxes

THE FUTURE

Facebook has made significant changes to various aspects of its service several times since our page was launched. It is bound to make more over time. If we are going to continue to use it as a communication tool, we need to keep up with the changes it makes and respond to them quickly. Staff man-

aging public profiles need to have the freedom to adapt them as soon as changes happen. They also need to have the power to quickly remove content from their organisation's public profile, or to delete it, should this be deemed necessary at any time.

Of course it's not just changes at Facebook that will shape our decisions about how much effort we commit to maintaining and developing our public profiles there. How long will Facebook be popular with our target audience? The members of our target audience change all the time: the 18–21-year-old undergraduate today is using Facebook, but what are the current 15–18 year olds using? Anyone under the age of 13 isn't allowed a Facebook account – what are the 12-year-olds using? And when they get to be 18 and go to university, will they migrate to Facebook or will they stick with what they know … or will there be a whole new set of options open to them that we have never imagined?

Web technology moves fast and we need to keep up. Facebook alone is not going to be enough to keep in touch with our digital-native users. Other current Web 2.0 developments running at Warwick library include: an iGoogle catalogue search widget; using delicious.com to direct students to subject-specific resources; use of wikis to build reading lists in collaboration with students and departmental staff; and instant messaging tools as a potential enquiry service – and this month we launched our Twitter service.

Minimal planning, no project proposals, no rubber-stamping – Web 2.0 moves quickly and so should we.

For additional information on the issues surrounding the Facebook terms of use please see also:

C. Albanesius, 'Facebook turns site into a democracy: in addition to "poking" former classmates and updating your status update with what you had for lunch today, Facebook will now allow you to vote on the site's terms of service. The company even created the equivalent of a Bill of Rights', *PC magazine*, 26 February 2009, see http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2341820,00.asp (accessed 7 May 2009)

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J. E. Vascellaro, 'Facebook performs about-face on data', *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 February 2009

M. Zuckerberg, 'On Facebook, people own and control their information', 16 February 2009, at http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=54434097130 (accessed 17 February 2009)

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5   University of Warwick library Facebook page, 2007, at http://www.facebook.com/pages/Coventry-United-Kingdom/University-Of-Warwick-Library/6168162503 (accessed 23 April 2009)

6   Facebook, 'Terms of use', 2008, at http://www.facebook.com/terms.php (accessed 31 March 2009)

7   M. Zuckerberg, 'Governing the Facebook service in an open and transparent way', 2009, at http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=56566967130 (accessed 23 April 2009)

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9   Albanesius, 'Deleted from Facebook?'

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php?post=56566967130 (accesssed 23 April 2009)

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12   K. Widdows, 'Feeding your blogs to your Facebook public profile wall', 2009, at http://kwiddows.blogspot.com/2009/04/feeding-your-blogs-to-your-facebook.html (accessed 23 April 2009)