

Trend Analysis in Social Tagging: An LIS Perspective

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Aim

The aim of the present study was to identify and categorize social tagging trends and developments as revealed by the analysis of library and information science scholarly and professional literature.

Methods

The abstracts and selected full text of approximately 100 articles were examined to determine the general directions that research and technology are taking in the area. The following databases were searched for relevant content: Library and Information Science Abstracts, Library Literature and Information Science Fulltext, Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts, Academic Search Premier, and Emerald Fulltext.

Main Findings

Technological Innovations and Applications

The analysis revealed various technological trends in the area of social tagging in addition to the application of it to the library OPAC.

1. **Improved searching.** DeliSearch is an “experimental search engine that enables users to search the del.icio.us social bookmarking service, using any del.icio.us links page, or the domains those bookmarks come from, to limit a search” (Caldwell, 2006).
2. **Integration.** The investment of money and time in the integration of folksonomies into the systems of Internet companies (Dye, 2006).
3. **Music discovery.** The application of tagging to the discovery of music selections for iPods through the MyStrands service (Honan, 2006).

4. **Social networks for specific social groups.** Including the development of social networks that mimic Flickr and MySpace for families (Ishizuka, 2006); and the application of social tagging and folksonomy in art museums (Trant, 2006).
5. **Pedagogical and andragogical applications.** Shank (2006), for example, discusses the “collaborative tools teachers can use to facilitate online learning, focusing on blogs, social bookmarking and podcasting,”.
6. **Functionality and interoperability.** Downes argues that “semantic content is more searchable if social network metadata is merged with Semantic Web metadata,” and Fox (2006) explores the “untapped power of technologies such as open URL and link routing” through which librarians might empower patrons “via the use of ‘folksonomies’ ... in conjunction with traditional controlled vocabularies.”
7. **Folksonomies for intranets.** Dogear, an IBM product, is described as an “enterprisewide social bookmarking application” that has “the potential to help reveal the interests and expertise of co-workers in order to solve real-world problems, which can also help foster communities of practice and increase communication” (Fichter, 2006).

Research

The analysis also revealed several disparate trends in the scant academic research currently being conducted in the area of social tagging.

1. **Searching social networks.** People may use MySpace to seek a piece of information that may be held by a friend of a friend; an employee in a large company searches his or her network of colleagues for expertise in a particular subject Kleinberg (2006)
2. **Relating social networks to knowledge management.** Neelameghan (2006) notes that social networks facilitate the acceleration of empowerment, creation of a more level playing field, greater visibility to the needs and aspirations of the community, and utilization of the tacit ‘community knowledge’ for the welfare of the larger society.”

3. **Discovering hidden online social networks.** Tang & Yang (2006) designed a study to “uncover hidden online social networks and to elicit and rate user requirements.” Their study showed that “significant differences of perceptual requirements on regulation and links exist across user roles.”
4. **Using social tagging systems.** Examination of the usage patterns of social tagging systems to predict stable patterns and relates them to imitation and shared knowledge” (Golder & Huberman, 2006).