The Social Web: For Ourselves and For Our Customers

Social Media: For Ourselves and For Our Customers

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Twitter: #ussc12
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About Me

Brian Kelly:
- UK Web Focus: national advisory post to UK HEIs
- Based at UKOLN ISC at the University of Bath
- Prolific blogger (1,090+ posts since Nov 2006)
- User of social media to support work activities
- Prolific speaker (~380 talks from 1996-2011)
- “Gamekeeper turned poacher”: former IT support / information officer at Loughborough, Liverpool & Leeds IT service departments

UKOLN Innovation Support Centre (ISC):
- Supporting innovation across HE and FE
- Funded by JISC

Contents

- Computing Service culture
- Is ‘Social’ a term to worry us?
- Community & collaboration
- Tools for sharing:
  - Blogs
  - Twitter
- Addressing barriers

Context

- Reduced funding
- User as customer
- Technological developments
- Increasing expectations
- Need to work differently

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"Our needs"

"Business Processes"

“Security”

“Risk analysis”

“Data Protection”

Taken from slide by Wildish & Howell, UCISA CISG 2008

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The IT Crowd

Have you tried rebooting your PC?

It’s not a supported product!

Sorry, Google owns your data!

Sorry, Facebook owns ownership of your firstborn!

Skype will turn your PC into a supernode!

You’re only allowed to connect approved devices to WiFi.

Computer Says No!

Time to ditch this catchphrase.

"Have You Tried Rebooting?"

The IT Crowd

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IT Service Culture

Traditionally the need to:
- Manage scarce resources
- Ensure resources used for ‘scholarly purposes’

But times they are a-changing

Michael Nowlan, TCD

I attended a session of the EUNIS 2005 conference in Manchester entitled ‘IT Services - Help or Hindrance to National IT Development Programmes?’ given by Brian Kelly of UKOLN.

The session opened my eyes about attitudes to technology in university Computer Centres. Brian challenged the basic tenets that I had observed as the Director of Information Systems Services in Trinity College Dublin for the previous 10 years.

Returning back to Trinity the following week, I started to ask my staff questions that had never really been properly considered before:
- Why do we have such a poor email system when Google give away email with a 4GB quota and Trinity 20MB?
- Why do we ban Skype?
- Why do we not allow “unapproved” devices connect to the network?
- Why is the automatic answer to a request “no, but” rather than “yes but”?

Following on the EUNIS paper by Brian, I started to try to change the environment in Trinity from negative to positive and made some successes.

Strictly Forbidden!
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Google search for "outsource IT university"

The Cloud

Accept the Importance of The Cloud

We Must Own The IT Infrastructure!
“The Cloud seems appealing. But you are giving your content to complete strangers and letting them do whatever they want with it!”

We Must Nationalise The Banks!
“Banks seems appealing. But you are giving your money to complete strangers and letting them do whatever they want with it!”

Avoid Pension Schemes!
“Pensions seems appealing. But you are giving your money to complete strangers and letting them do whatever they want with it!”

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What Is Social Media?

Technologies which:
• Distract for teaching, learning & research purposes
• Can be used to bully (including staff)

The Problem With ‘Social’

Does ‘Social’ mean:
• Trivial
• Personal
• Unrelated to academia

Or:
• Collaborative
• Collective
• Team working

Redefining ‘Social’

Social media / Social web:
• Collaborative technologies
• Interactive technologies
which support:
• Social constructivism / social constructionism theories of knowledge:
“individual's learning that takes place because of their interactions in a group”

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Social networks get better as numbers increase (cf telephones) Remember 1-9-90 rule.

Collaboration & IT Services
- JISCMail lists
- UCISA events

Today’s Environment
Today we are seeing:
- Decline in mailing lists
- Better understanding of diversity of needs: (indicating, informing, alerting, sharing, collaborating, critiquing, …)
- Wide variety of social media tools for carrying out diversity of functions (e.g. Twitter for indicating: “About to install Debian. Any1 else done this?”

See posts on The Decline in JISCMail Use Across the Web Management Community and Are Mailing Lists Now Primarily A Broadcast Medium?
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Blogging provides an easy-to-use way of providing public documentation.
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There are many social media services but we can’t ignore Twitter!

A dedicated Twitter client can provide rich filtering.

How have people got the time to read and write long emails?

Rapid Support from Peers

Twitter can provide rapid support from one’s professional learning network (PLN)

To maximise opportunities you need to develop filtering skills (e.g. click ‘Read all’ in Twitter client)

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Social Search

“Know any good pubs in Birmingham?”
Who do you ask:
- Google?
- Your friend, whom you trust?

Invisible Library Support – Now You Can’t Afford Not to be Socials?
“you could start to make frictionless recommendations by influencing the search engine results returned to your patrons”
Tony Hirst, useful.info blog

Understanding Social Media

We need to understand how we use social media in order to identify successful patterns

Growing Your Community

The challenge:
- Developing connections with peers
The opportunity:
- Join Twitter
- Follow others (via Lanyrd page for event)

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Challenges (1)

Concerns:
- "I’m too busy"
  Nonsense! 5 tweets a day?
- "I wouldn’t know what to say"
  First tweet is the hardest.
- "My boss disapproves"
  Is this still the case?
- "Access is blocked"
  Is this still the case?
- "I don’t agree that there are benefits"
  Still need for case studies & evidence

Challenges (2)

- "I’ll get addicted"
  That’s a challenge of success!
- "I can’t keep up with tweets, & blog posts 😞"
- "I want to blog. How do I start?"
- "I can see the merit – but it’s not for me"

Chris Sexton, IT Services Director at Sheffield University and former UCISA chair posts ~3 posts per week over ~5 years.

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Challenges (2)

• "I’ll get addicted”
  That’s a challenge of success!
• "I can’t keep up with tweets, & blog posts &”
  Don’t! It’s a stream for you to dip into and contribute to. Learn when it’s useful to take a dip
• "I want to blog. How do I start?’’
  See UK Web Focus blog & talk
• "I can see the merit – but it’s not for me”
  OK – but don’t block others who wish to do it

UCISA Community of Practice

Community of Practice (from Wikipedia):
  • Group of people who share a craft and/or a profession.
  • Can evolve naturally because of the common interests in a particular area, or can be created specifically with the goal of gaining knowledge related to their field.
  • Through the process of sharing information & experiences with the group that the members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally

UCISA Community of Practice

Social media provides opportunity to develop an effective community of practice:
  • Open sharing of resources, experiences, successes & failures
  • Exploit sectors expertise in IT
  • Ability to inform users of experiences gained
  • Ability to use experiences in personal lives

Keep aspect is culture of openness: a willingness to share, rather than the technologies

[Photo from http://www.flickr.com/photos/mag3737/1914076277/]

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Links to reports, slides, photos, etc. can be added by anyone with Twitter ID: avoids bottlenecks.

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Lanyrd

Why wouldn't you:
- Add your details on Lanyrd for USSC12

Why wouldn't UCISA:
- Use Lanyrd for public-facing information for events?

Outsource IT in Universities

Our University
- Uses IT to support its core business
- IT Services are willing to outsource aspects if that provides business benefits
- IT staff make use of social media and cloud services to support the aims of the university
- IT staff are well-connected with their peers to provide a cost-effective service across the UK HE sector

Conclusions

Social Web:
- Is about communication, community & collaboration
- Can get better as numbers of users reaches critical mass
- Provides diversity of tools for differing requirements and preferences
- Will not go away; will grow!
- Opportunity for IT Services to play a leading role
- Openness fits with transparency agenda

And the Sex in the Library; Screw the Library, Let’s Have Sex in the Chaplaincy and We All Hate BUCS!

Fb groups quickly became defunct

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Questions

Any questions or comments?

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