Libraries and Social Networking

"To continue to be vital to society, libraries must adopt new objectives. In particular, they must strive to participate with individuals in their cultural activities; passive, depersonalized service is no longer enough."

—Frederick Kilgour, "Evolving, Computerizing, Personalizing," in *American Libraries,* February 1972

6%

of the total general public would be extremely or very likely **to describe their collection on a library social site.**

5%

would share **photos/videos** *on a library social site.*

The general public respondents surveyed do not currently see a role for libraries in their new social networked world.

The general public respondents do not see a role for libraries in constructing social sites, and most would not be very likely to contribute content, self-publish or join discussion groups if a library were to offer these services. Interest in participating in activities on a library-hosted social networking site was low among respondents. Most activities evaluated garnered the interest of less than 10% of the total general public who indicated they would be either *extremely* or *very likely* to participate.

This general level of disinterest held very constant across countries surveyed. French respondents would be the most likely to use library social networking services, although the likelihood level was still quite low.

Of most interest to respondents was the ability to be notified of new items of interest. Again, French respondents would be the most likely to use this service, at roughly a quarter of respondents.

In large part, this lack of interest or excitement may be a result of relatively few examples of library "social" services. For respondents who saw a social networking role for libraries, "book clubs" was their top recommendation.

Like the general public, U.S. library directors do not see a role for social networking in libraries. Just 14% see it as the library's role to build social networking sites for their communities. A few pioneers see some potential. And a few libraries are beginning to participate in social networking in a variety of ways and for different purposes. This chapter concludes with a few examples.
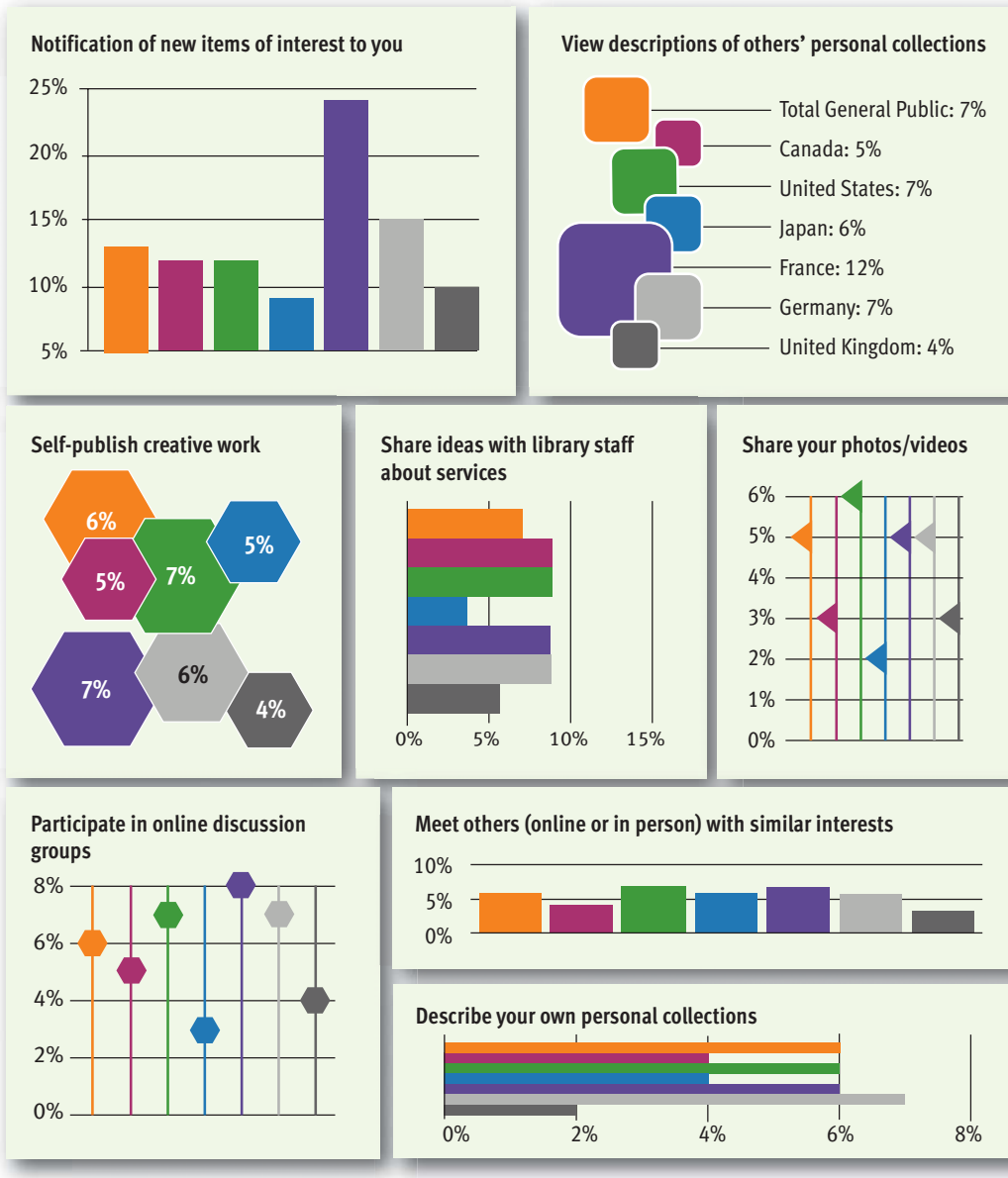
Participating in Library-Hosted Social Networking Activities
by Country

How likely would you be to participate in each of the following activities on a social networking/community site if built by your library?

Base: Respondents who have used a library in person or online.

Note: The chart shows the *extremely likely* and *very likely* responses.

■ Total General Public ■ Canada ■ United States ■ Japan ■ France ■ Germany ■ United Kingdom

Notification of new items of interest to you

View descriptions of others' personal collections

Total General Public: 7%
Canada: 5%
United States: 7%
Japan: 6%
France: 12%
Germany: 7%
United Kingdom: 4%

Self-publish creative work

6% 5% 7% 5% 7% 6% 4%

Share ideas with library staff about services

Share your photos/videos

Participate in online discussion groups

Meet others (online or in person) with similar interests

Describe your own personal collections

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007, question 1096.

Library directors were also asked to predict how likely the public would be to participate in library-hosted social networking activities. Their estimations are labeled as "Total U.S. Library Directors: Estimation of Users' Views" when presented in the chart.

Although at relatively low levels, library directors felt the public would be very likely to participate in most activities at a higher rate than the U.S. general public actually reported. About twice as many library directors felt the public would be *extremely* or *very likely* to get notification of new items that are of interest and to share ideas with the library staff about services. Both of these notification activities are offered by most traditional Internet services and are closely related to customer service.

While library directors overestimated the public's interest in notification services, they fairly accurately estimated the public's low appetite for sharing and publication services—services offered by social networking and social media sites.

## Participating in Library-Hosted Social Networking Activities
By U.S. General Public and Library Directors' Estimation of Users' Views

How likely would you be to participate in each of the following activities on a social networking/community site if built by your library?

How likely do you feel the public would be to participate in each of the following activities on a social networking/community site if built by your library?

Base: Respondents who have used a library in person or online.

Note: The chart shows the *extremely likely* and *very likely* responses.
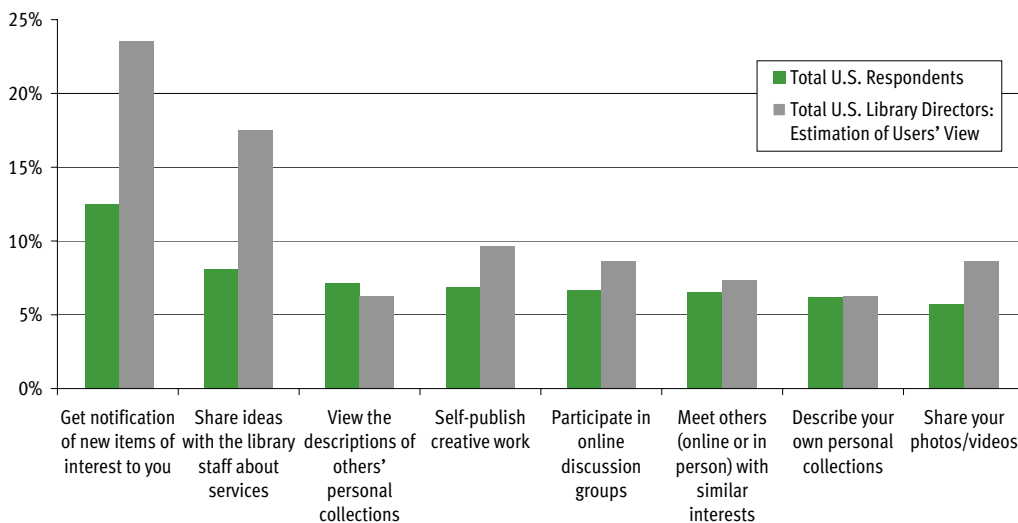
Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007, questions 1096 and 1206.

When the general public respondents were asked if they thought it was the role of the library to build social networking sites for their community, responses were split between "no" and "not sure."

Just 13% of total general public respondents indicated "yes," it should be the role of the library to build a social networking site for its community.

Although the use of social networking is highest among respondents in the U.S. across all countries surveyed (37% vs. 28% of total general public), they were least likely (9%) to say "yes" that building these spaces is the library's role, and most likely (57%) to say "no."

German respondents were most likely, at 22%, to see a role for libraries and social networking. The majority of respondents in Japan were unsure about the role of libraries and social networking.

Role of the Library to Build a Social Site
By Country

Do you think it should be the library's role to build social networking sites for your community?

Base: Respondents who have used a library in person or online.

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007, question 1100.

At
22%,
German respondents were most likely to say **libraries should build social networking sites** *for their communities.*
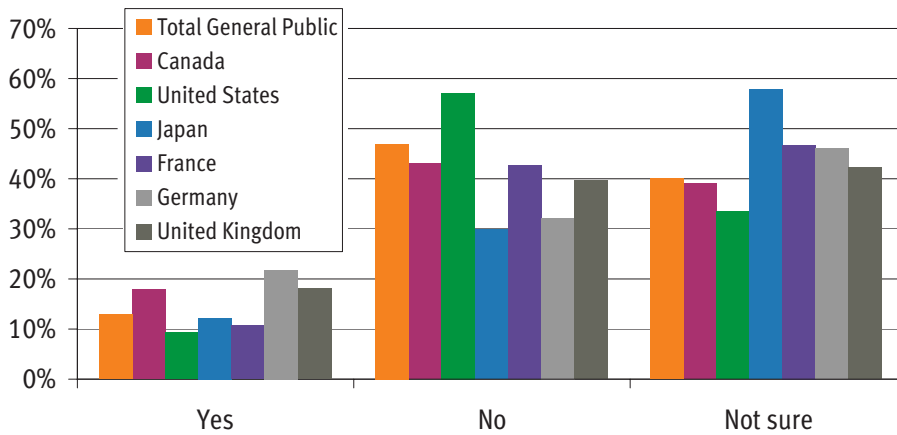
The library is there to be **a place where you can borrow books** *and sometimes use computers, not for people's social lives.*

15-year-old from the United Kingdom

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World*, OCLC, 2007, question 1113, "Why do you think that it should not be the library's role to build social networking sites in your community?"

Views across U.S. age groups were consistent with survey totals. The majority of U.S. respondents of all ages do not see a role for social networking sites in libraries.

Although slightly more positive than the U.S. general public, less than 20% of U.S. library directors see a role for social networks in libraries. Younger library directors are only slightly more likely than their age 50+ colleagues to suggest that it is the library's role.
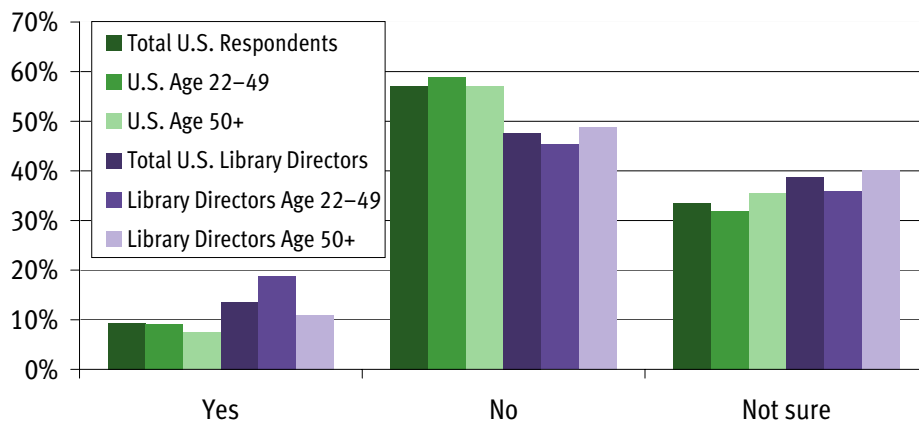
Role of the Library to Build a Social Site
By U.S. Library Directors and U.S. General Public

Do you think it should be the library's role to build
social networking sites for your community?

Base: For U.S. respondents, those who have used a library in person or online.

Legend:
- Total U.S. Respondents
- U.S. Age 22–49
- U.S. Age 50+
- Total U.S. Library Directors
- Library Directors Age 22–49
- Library Directors Age 50+

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007, questions 1100 and 1210.

There should definately be chatrooms where you can discuss anything, roleplay, or simply have a random conversation, **not just for discussing books or specific topics.**

14-year-old from Canada

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World*, OCLC, 2007, question 1112, "Please describe the top two most interesting activities that could be included in a library's social networking/community site."
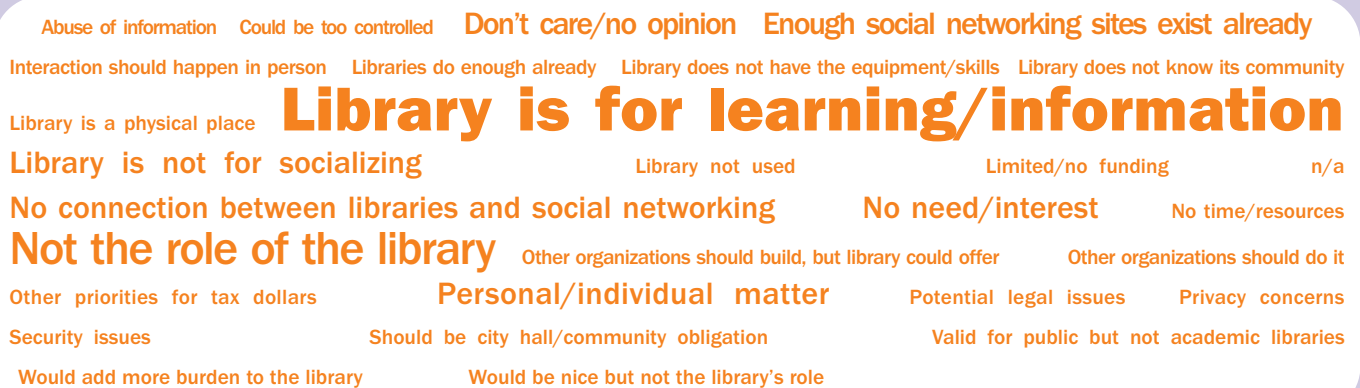
Why social networking is *not* the library's role

The total general public and U.S. library directors surveyed do not currently see a role for libraries in building social networking spaces. Both groups believe that the library is for learning/information and do not see the connection with social networking and libraries. The general public saw social networks as personal/individual spaces and noted concerns about the library not knowing its community and issues of the library potentially exercising too much control. Librarians feel there are enough social networking sites existing already. Not unexpectedly, librarians also voice concerns about funding and resources.

The total general public

Why don't you think it should be the library's role to build social networking sites for your community?

Base: Respondents who do not think it should be the role of the library to build a social networking site.

Abuse of information   Could be too controlled   Don't care/no opinion   Enough social networking sites exist already

Interaction should happen in person   Libraries do enough already   Library does not have the equipment/skills   Library does not know its community

Library is a physical place   **Library is for learning/information**

Library is not for socializing   Library not used   Limited/no funding   n/a

No connection between libraries and social networking   No need/interest   No time/resources

Not the role of the library   Other organizations should build, but library could offer   Other organizations should do it

Other priorities for tax dollars   Personal/individual matter   Potential legal issues   Privacy concerns

Security issues   Should be city hall/community obligation   Valid for public but not academic libraries

Would add more burden to the library   Would be nice but not the library's role

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World*, OCLC, 2007, question 1113.

- Library is for learning/information (25%)
- Not the role of the library/librarian (16%)
- Personal/individual matter (7%)
- Library is not for socializing (7%)
- Don't care/no opinion (7%)

U.S. Library Directors

Why don't you think it should be the library's role to build social networking sites for your community?

Base: Library directors who do not think it should be the role of the library to build a social networking site.

Abuse of information   Against library's policies   Enough social networking sites exist already

Library is for learning/information   Library provides means to access existing sites

Library sponsors book clubs   Limited/no funding   No need/interest   No time/resources

Not the role of the library   Other organizations should do this

Other priorities for tax dollars   Personal/individual matter   Potential legal issues   Privacy concerns

Tried and didn't work   Valid for public but not academic libraries   Valid for public or larger academic libraries

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World*, OCLC, 2007, question 1212.

- Not the role of the library/librarian (30%)
- Enough social networking sites exist already (16%)
- Library is for learning/information (14%)
- No time/resources (9%)

Top social networking services a library could provide

Book clubs were the social services that the majority of the total general public surveyed would like to see their libraries adopt. Activities around books were cited in 17% of suggestions. As of September 2007, MySpace has over 195 groups with "book club" in the name.

U.S. librarians view potential opportunities for using social networking very similarly to the general public and view book clubs as the service with the highest potential.

The total general public

Please describe the top two most interesting activities that could be included
in a library's social networking/community site.
Base: Respondents who think it should be the role of the library to build a social networking site.

Book clubs   Book reviews/recommendations   Book swap/sale   **Book/article lists**
Circulation   **Community events**   **Discussion groups**
Education services   **Hobbies**   Homework help   Internet sites   Library collection   **Library information**
Library services   **Local information**   Meeting people   Physical library suggestions   Research   Searching
Sharing interests   Sharing music/videos/photos   **Support groups**   **Topic information**   Writing   Youth activities

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007, question 1112.

- Book clubs (17%)
- Discussion groups (13%)

U.S. Library Directors

Please describe the top two most interesting activities that could be included
in a library's social networking/community site.
Base: Library directors who think it should be the role of the library to build a social networking site.

Blog/wiki   **Book clubs**   Book recommendations   **Book reviews**
Community events   Discussion groups   Education services
Hobbies   **Library services**   Local information   Reading lists/tags   Research
Sharing interests   **Support groups**   **Writing**   Youth activities

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007, question 1211.

- Book clubs (15%)
- Community events (15%)

How a Few Pioneering Libraries are Using Social Networking

While nearly half (48%) of U.S. library directors feel it is not the libraries' role to create social networking sites and while most are not optimistic about users' likelihood to participate in social networking activities, a few libraries are experimenting with and piloting social networking and social media projects. Several of these early projects are content-focused, utilizing social media tools. Librarians are using del.icio.us tags to provide more intuitive links into their online catalogs. Some libraries are posting instructional and "day-in-the-life" videos to YouTube. And, as we identified earlier in the report, librarians are blogging. As of September 2007, Technorati, a catalog of Web site blogs, listed 10,004 blogs about "library" or "librarian."

Several libraries are also experimenting with MySpace, Facebook and other social networking sites. Social networking tools are providing libraries and museums with new opportunities to engage users and establish interactive Web communities. These library social networks are starting ongoing, online conversations—often an online forum for community building. Discussions among these Web audiences involve sharing materials, programs and exhibits and provide users with opportunities to learn about the library's online and physical building programs. A few examples follow:

The Social Catalog: Ann Arbor District Library—SOPAC

Using open-source code from Drupal, the Ann Arbor District Library (Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.) has added personal tagging, ratings and reviews to its online public access catalog. The library revamped its Web site to create a highly personalized space where users can make comments, post blog entries and sign up for RSS feeds, including feeds for holds and checkouts.

www.flickr.com/photos/jblyberg/sets/72157594489472951/
www.aadl.org/catalog

My Exhibits: Brooklyn Museum—Building an online community with social networking tools

Using BlipTV, podcasts, Flickr and MySpace, the Brooklyn Museum (Brooklyn, New York, U.S.) provided interactive exhibit experiences online to extend its reach and advance its mission. In one project, the online community established the first archive of local street artists by uploading digital images to the museum. In another, the museum created an online gallery of drawings using a virtual spray can, marker, pencil and pen. The museum discovered that social software furthers the goals of both the exhibition and institution and are as valuable as any wall label or text panel, as noted in a paper by Nicole J. Caruth and Shelley Bernstein at Museums and the Web 2007.

www.flickr.com/groups/brooklynmuseum/discuss/72157594192198447/
www.flickr.com/groups/visualstory/discuss/72157594356288683

There are

10,004

blogs about libraries or librarians.

Technorati, September 2007

**Open Library: University of Kentucky—
Reaching users with MySpace**

The University of Kentucky Libraries (Lexington, Kentucky, U.S.) work hard to reach students in a variety of ways: open houses, flyers, campus or community events. Today that effort includes a profile on MySpace, and the library is seeing a steady growth in the number of students who become "friends" of the library online. The library's online profile includes contact information, tips for using the library and other items of interest, such as advice for new students. The library also has included sketches of the future Information Commons, a collection of banners on display in the library and a fun photo album of librarians on vacation. The library says that as students increasingly use these social networks—some log on and remain there all day—having a library presence makes sense. It is a high visibility arena and participation is cheap and easy, according to an article in the *Kentucky Librarian,* Fall 2006 issue.

http://www.myspace.com/uklibraries

Teen Space: Denver Public Library—Helping teens overcome library anxiety

The library is not always seen as the "cool" place to be for teenagers. But the Denver Public Library (DPL) (Denver, Colorado, U.S.) is giving this demographic a new idea of what the library is by using social networking tools that resonate with teens. When a library survey showed that teens' favorite Web site was MySpace, DPL established a hip profile and began promoting not only library services but fun activities for teens. These activities include a YouTube video contest on "How I Have Fun at the Library" (the winner gets an MP3 player); user-contributed reviews (submissions earn chances to win an iPod Shuffle); a bookmark design contest for the summer reading program; and a Flickr account for teen photos. Traffic to the library's teen Web site has increased 41% since the launch of its MySpace account.

www.myspace.com/denver_evolver
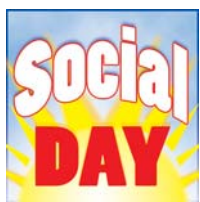
**Social Day: St. Joseph County Public Library—
"Day-in-the-life" video**

Library staffers Dale Kerkman, Bob Lewandowski, Michael Stephens and Adam Tarwacki created a "day-in-the-life" video set to the tune of Madonna's "Ray of Light" for the library's staff in-service day at the St. Joseph County Public Library (South Bend, Indiana, U.S.). The video details a day in the life of a thriving public library system. As of September 2007, the video had garnered more than 34,600 views on YouTube and more than 77 links to the video on other blogs, according to a search on Technorati.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrtYdFV_Eak

**Social PA System: Vancouver and
Niagara-On-The-Lake Libraries—Promoting to friends**

The Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada) and Niagara-On-The-Lake (Ontario, Canada) public libraries are using MySpace to promote events, provide links into their catalogs and other systems, and connect with users through announcements, contact information and public messages.

www.myspace.com/vancouverpubliclibrary
www.myspace.com/notlpl

Virtual Tour: British Library's YouTube video

The British Library (London, U.K.) hired Tim Campbell, winner of the BBC's *The Apprentice,* to host an Internet video explaining what is offered to visitors and information seekers. The video, *From Bones to Bytes,* goes through the specialized materials available at the library and on its Web site, including special collections, business resources and user classes. The library posted the video to YouTube and hosts it on its own site.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7O_oyuAY2tE

SecondLibrary: Info Island

The Alliance Library System (East Peoria, Illinois, U.S.) and OPAL (Online Programming for All Libraries, www.opal-online.org/) have teamed up to create a library-specific space in the virtual world of Second Life. Their mission is to extend current programs into the online virtual world. Info Island is the name of the area in Second Life they have devoted to their projects, which include a genealogy research center, a library gallery, a performance center, "Mystery Manor," a science center and a science fiction/fantasy center.

Blog: http://infoisland.org
SLURL: secondlife://Info%20Island/89/122/33

2.0-It-Your-Self: Library 2.0 Ning Space

Ning (www.ning.com) is a service that provides features and tools that allow users to create their own social networks. Libraries are among the many organizations using these new social software tools. For example, the Library 2.0 Ning page, created by Bill Drew, librarian at Tompkins-Cortland Community College Library (Dryden, New York, U.S.) allows librarians interested in discussing "2.0" trends in library and information services to share group blog posts, photos, videos and forum discussions. The site also provides space to introduce oneself as a new member, and post resources, announcements and conference information. Previous discussions can be found via full-text search or through tags. As of September 2007, the Library 2.0 Ning space supports 2,282 members and 13 groups of 20 or more people, and was the third Google listing for the search term "library 2.0."

http://library20.ning.com