Using Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter for your career

Abstract: This chapter focuses on three social networking sites: Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, providing an overview of the features of each site. It describes how you can set up a professional profile on each site to support your library career; and it identifies the key features that differentiate each site and provides some context to enable professionals to choose the best site(s) for their particular career purpose(s). The chapter also provides a list of tips and some dos and don'ts for Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter so that you can use them more effectively.

Key words: career, Web 2.0, LIS professionals, librarians, social networking sites, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter.

In this chapter I continue on from the social networking theme in Chapter 2 and expand on three major social networking sites: Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. I describe their strengths and particular features, and why they could be incorporated into your career thinking. And I explain how each has its own particular use for professional ventures. However, this will not be an exhaustive account; reference will be made in future chapters to the three sites, as they have applications in marketing, networking, mentoring and professional development.

Facebook

You have probably read in the press about employees being sacked or disgraced after their employer found a revealing photo or some other incriminating evidence about the employee on Facebook. Some employers are now strategically screening prospective job candidates by searching them out on Facebook, so you need to be wary of this, while appreciating how it can be used to your advantage.

I spoke in Chapter 2 about the rapid growth of Facebook, which is astounding, considering the network has been around for just six years. It may be useful to reflect on where this global Facebook network came from, and who is behind it. Facebook was started in 2004, by the then Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg. It was initially called 'thefacebook.com', and the intention was to emulate the printed student yearbooks, that were called 'facebooks', which included the names and photographs of every Harvard undergraduate. From Harvard, the network spread to other Ivy League universities, and in 2006 Facebook was extended to anyone with e-mail. Developers were invited to contribute in 2007 and they started writing applications for Facebook, providing such things as games, gift giving, and photo sharing. With the proliferation of new Facebook applications the network evolved to become what it is today.

Here are some impressive Facebook facts as of mid-2010:

- Facebook is the world's largest social network;
- it has over 400 million members, and membership is rising by 5 per cent a month;
- 20 per cent of people on the Internet are on Facebook;
- 'Facebook' is the most searched term on search engines;
- 50 per cent of members log in each day, spending on average one hour per day;

- three-quarters of members are outside the United States;
- 25 per cent of members access the network via a mobile device;
- the average member has 130 friends.

Facebook is like an internet within the Internet: it is a closed network of 'friends' that has all the characteristics of a casual, online meeting place. Non-members need to join the network if they wish, for example, to view a Facebook member's photos. But few of us consider the power the network wields and the commercial imperative driving it, although some of the news reports about identity threats, misuse of personal data and stalking have sounded warning bells. Despite the bad press, many libraries and librarians are actively using this social network, so we need to understand how it works.

Librarian awareness of Facebook

When Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis (2007) surveyed librarians, many of the respondents were not aware of the possibility that, in addition to being a social site, Facebook could be both a professional meeting place and a potential source of networking. For example, many professionals are now using this social networking site to establish connections with old friends and colleagues, and most professional library organisations, publishers and library suppliers have a presence on Facebook. As the following section shows, Facebook is more than just a communication mechanism.

Library activity on Facebook

Facebook provides additional functionality that enables you to set up 'groups' and 'pages'. Facebook groups and Facebook

pages are similar to websites and provide an online environment where you can add contact information, events, promotions, news, photos and videos. However, you need to be a member of Facebook to join a group or access a Facebook page. This is one way Facebook attracts new members. Some examples of library and librarian activity on Facebook are:

■ professional associations and interest group pages;

■ library groups and pages;

■ publishers' and library suppliers' groups and pages;

■ catalogue and database search applications, for example JSTOR, WorldCat and Pubmed;

■ online chat within Facebook (could be used for library e-reference).

Through the many Facebook applications, a library's presence can be integrated with other Web 2.0 applications, thus extending and amplifying its Facebook presence. New features are being added to Facebook all the time to facilitate cross-linking with other social networking sites. For example, Facebook now uses social plug-ins that appear on other websites and social networking sites. For this feature Facebook uses the 'thumbs-up' symbol, so you can register your interest in something on another site and then it will appear as a status update in your Facebook newsfeed, visible to all your Facebook friends. All of this increased linking boosts Facebook usage and makes its online activity more visible. This applies equally to the profile your library has and also your individual profile, which I will look at now.

How can librarians use Facebook?

You have seen how social networking sites offer enormous potential for fostering community and sharing of interests.

Now I want you to realise that by using Facebook you can perform a range of professional activities, such as:

- setting up and joining professional groups;
- collaborating with colleagues who are on Facebook;
- chatting with online colleagues in real time;
- sharing event photos, videos, blog posts and news;
- linking other Web 2.0 applications into your Facebook.

But does this come at a price in terms of our privacy?

Facebook and privacy

Privacy has been a major concern for Facebook users ever since the network's beginning in 2004. Facebook does have privacy settings; however, many Facebook users are unaware of the standard default settings and that they can change these settings when they join the network. This is not surprising because over the past few years there have been numerous changes to privacy settings, and the average user does not keep abreast of these changes. As a consequence, users do not lock down their personal information.

One breach-of-privacy allegation against Facebook is that the company uses members' private information. For example, unprivatised personal photos may be used for other purposes, such as to advertise merchandise to members' Facebook friends.

Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, is on the record as saying (in effect) that the age of privacy is dead and that privacy social norms were evolving (Kirkpatrick 2010). There is some truth in this: the Web 2.0 era of openness and sharing is pushing the envelope on privacy, and public attitudes are changing – especially in younger generations; however, a significant number of people guard their privacy jealously (Chapter 5 on privacy will explore this important topic in more detail).

Because of lack of privacy and other Orwellian issues to do with the power of the Facebook network, such as the difficulty of deleting accounts, there has been a backlash against Facebook. On 31 May 2010 a cohort of users declared official 'quit Facebook day' and went to great lengths to delete their accounts and withdraw from the network. However, Facebook statistics show that more users joined than left the network on that day, so the overall effect of the backlash was minimal. However, the 'quit Facebook day' movement refocused people's attention on the network's image and privacy issues.

Privacy is just one of many tensions in Web 2.0, reflecting our desire to participate and share in the openness of the online environment, and our counteracting fear that this is a risky undertaking.

Facebook and employers

As mentioned above, Facebook was not established as a professional network. The reason most people join it is for the social and entertainment aspects: communicating with family and friends, uploading photos, sharing links and videos, playing online games. So what is its advantage for career development? We have seen above that library groups and associations are using Facebook and shaping it to their needs. There are potential implications for job seekers too.

Potential employers may be able to find you on Facebook. At this stage, Facebook profiles are not retrieved via Google or other search engines. Therefore, employers would need to be a Facebook member and use the Facebook member search facility to find you on Facebook. In this way, you could be found, although given the size of the network now, the potential for mistaken identity is real. Therefore, if you wish

your professional image to be found, you need to professionalise your Facebook profile.

Even if you are not currently looking for employment, you should aim to build a positive, professional looking profile on Facebook. And no matter how savvy you are, you should not assume that your activities on Facebook will be private, so it is best to follow the guidelines below on how to set up your LIS professional Facebook profile. If you are totally new to Facebook their help pages guide you through the process of registering, entering your e-mail, name and password and finding friends. The relevant pages are:

- Facebook Help Center: *http://www.facebook.com/help/*
- Facebook Getting Started: *http://www.facebook.com/help/?guide*
- Facebook Profile set-up: *http://www.facebook.com/help/?guide=set_up_profile*

Facebook tips

Remember that your profile is your 'landing page' on Facebook, where even those who are not your existing 'friends' may find you. If someone searches for your name within Facebook, this is where they will land. Make sure you put a professional looking photo of yourself there, as nothing looks worse than a blank profile image on Facebook. How much the public and those not on your friends list can see of your profile will depend on how you restrict your privacy. For example, you could try to restrict access to your photos. However, as we have seen above, these privacy adjustments are tricky to master and Facebook keeps changing the rules. It is probably safer to assume that all of your profile is available and plan accordingly.

Here are some ideas on creating a professional looking Facebook profile:

- set up a profile that is authentic, includes your interests, hobbies and qualifications and a professional looking profile photo;
- think about your audience, assume that an employer may find you on Facebook and put yourself in their shoes;
- assume that all your information and photos are publicly accessible;
- add links to your professional development activities, and your other sites (your blog or website);
- control your privacy settings and do not assume the default privacy settings are sufficient;
- take ownership and responsibility of your profile and keep it up to date.

To sum up: there are professional uses for Facebook. It has merit as a site to showcase a positive work-related profile and as a place for making professional LIS contacts. However, you need to be mindful that Facebook's *raison d'être* is as a casual and non-professional meeting place. Arguably, a far better professional network is the much smaller business and professional networking site, LinkedIn.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn has been likened to a business version of Facebook. It is an online network for professionals showcasing their work-related capabilities and connections. Like Facebook, it is a network centred on your individual profile, which can be accessed by other members of the site. A limited LinkedIn profile can also be made available as a public search, which

can be retrieved by search engines, such as Google. LinkedIn lacks the frivolity and fun aspect of Facebook, as it is a purpose-built professional online network. The other characteristic of LinkedIn worth noting is that because it is indexed on Google, a well constructed LinkedIn profile can reach out to a global network of LIS professionals. You are much more discoverable on LinkedIn than on Facebook and many employers now use LinkedIn to find suitable persons to fill positions. But quite apart from its usefulness for job seeking, LinkedIn is a valuable site for networking with colleagues within and without the LIS area.

LinkedIn was established in 2003, with the network headquarters located in California. Although smaller than Facebook, it is growing in size and influence in the business world. By 2004 it had reached 1 million members; then, by October 2009, according to the LinkedIn blog, the network had 50 million users worldwide and was growing at the rate of about one new member per second.

Some impressive LinkedIn facts as of mid-2010 (source LinkedIn blog):

- LinkedIn has over 70 million members;
- network members are found in over 200 countries;
- LinkedIn has about 4 million members in the UK;
- LinkedIn has around 1 million members in Australia;
- 80 per cent of companies in the United States use LinkedIn to find staff;
- all Fortune 500 company executives are LinkedIn members.

There are several levels of LinkedIn accounts:

- the free, basic LinkedIn account, which is adequate for an individual professional;

■ three levels of premium business LinkedIn accounts, which have additional features such as greater tools for networking, finding contacts and communicating.

Businesses are now creating profiles and placing jobs on LinkedIn, which means you can find out more about a particular organisation and check them out. Furthermore, job opportunities will be suggested to you by the system, depending on what keywords you have included in your profile. I will discuss some ways to maximise your profile below.

LinkedIn uses the tag line *Relationships Matter,* which is apt because it is a most useful network for visibly marketing the work of professionals, helping them to make contacts and build relationships. Like other social networking sites, LinkedIn gives you the power to connect with your friends and with your friends' friends. This lays out a web of connections to people who may be personal friends, colleagues, or potential employers. If you work to develop your network, LinkedIn offers a myriad of possibilities. My recommendation would be to make LinkedIn one of the key Web 2.0 tools in your career development kit.

When would you get started on using this network? Many students are now starting out with building a LinkedIn presence while still completing their courses, so it is never too early. If you are new to LinkedIn, start by setting up a profile and, as with Facebook, this is the landing page where other LinkedIn members will find you. There is a public version of your profile which you can opt to make available. Do this, as this is the public profile that will be found via Google, as mentioned above. Newcomers to LinkedIn should look through the videos and help pages on the website. The relevant pages that will help you to get started are:

- LinkedIn Learning Center: *http://learn.linkedin.com/*
- LinkedIn Profile Help: *http://learn.linkedin.com/profiles/overview/*
- LinkedIn Blog: *http://blog.linkedin.com/*

LinkedIn headline and summary paragraph

Start setting up your profile by writing a headline, which includes your current position and the name of your current employer. Then write a good summary paragraph about yourself. The summary paragraph should emphasise what you are doing now in your current job and what you can do. It is here you put your best foot forward, so include information here that will interest prospective employers, such as any projects you are working on, and your key capabilities. Remember that you can update and change your profile summary to reflect new directions or new emphases. When writing your summary, add some pertinent keywords relating to your work interests, as this will help employers to find you via the LinkedIn search. There is an example of a LinkedIn profile in Figure 3.1.

LinkedIn adding connections

The LinkedIn site suggests that you accept connections only to people you know personally. However, you are not obliged to follow this advice because some social networking gurus disagree with LinkedIn's recommendation on this point. Who to add as connections will depend on where you are in your career journey. LIS students or early-career professionals may wish to add fellow or former student colleagues,

Figure 3.1 LinkedIn profile
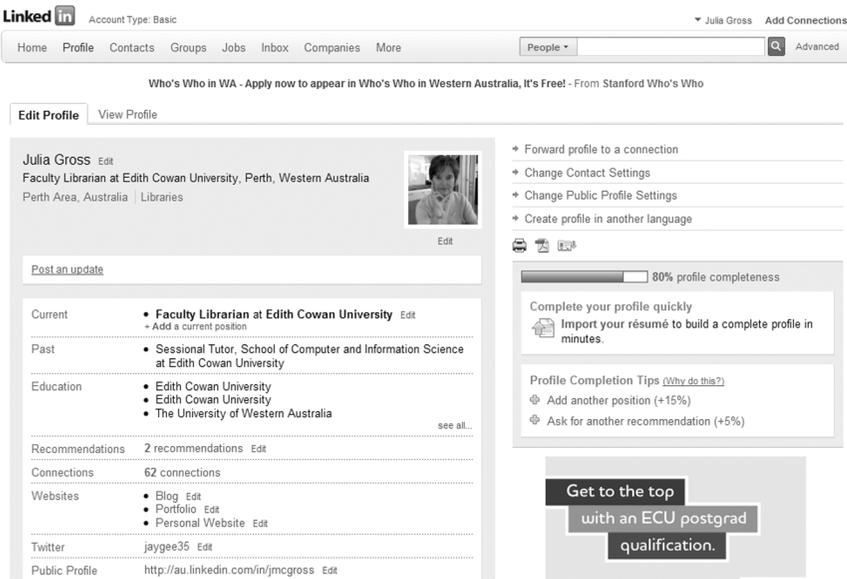
other early-career colleagues, tutors or lecturers or library managers. Established LIS professionals may wish to branch out more widely to add professional contacts outside their immediate work area and outside the profession at large. Start with a few and then check to see who these people have connections with. The power of social networking is to build up a network based on your contacts' contacts, as I have discussed.

Seeking recommendations on LinkedIn

Get some strong recommendations from your manager, or professional contacts to round out your profile. Ask them to identify your strengths and abilities.

Add links and Web 2.0 applications

Add a link into your profile to any of your other Web 2.0 applications, such as your website, if you have one. Also add RSS feeds from your blog and your SlideShare presentations (I will be covering RSS and SlideShare in future chapters). There are some purpose-built LinkedIn applications that help you do this. Look for 'Applications' and 'Blog link' on the profile page. You can also link in your Twitter feed, if you have a professional related Twitter account; I recommend that you maintain the professional context of LinkedIn and *not add all* the Twitter feed, which can detract from LinkedIn's professionalism. However, with the Twitter LinkedIn integration you can feed *some* of your Twitter tweets into LinkedIn by setting up this integration and giving your tweets the hash tag #in. There is more about Twitter hash tags below. Twitter is often used more as a casual network, and blurs contexts, as I will discuss below.

Join some LinkedIn LIS groups

There are quite a number of librarian groups on LinkedIn, so it makes good career sense to join one or two of these groups and start contributing to the conversations. To find LinkedIn library groups, you need to do a search for library or librarians under the Groups function. Some library groups I have come across are:

- LinkedIn American Library Association (ALA) Group page;
- LinkedIn LIS Career Options Group page (subgroup of LinkedIn ALA);
- LinkedIn CILIP: the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Group page.

LinkedIn tips

The above pointers will get you started on exploiting the professional potential of LinkedIn. Some further words of advice for rounding out your LinkedIn profile are to:

■ Write your LinkedIn profile keeping a present or future employer firmly in mind.

■ Add a professional looking profile photo.

■ Include your education, capabilities, experience and qualifications.

■ Include your professional associations, affiliations, and any awards.

■ Add links to your blog or website, if you have one.

■ Adjust your privacy settings and plan to keep most of your LinkedIn profile public.

■ Take responsibility for your profile, keep it up to date and check regularly for new features in LinkedIn.

■ Think long term and start early to build your network of contacts.

There are some excellent books, guides and blog posts on how to use LinkedIn for business and professional purposes. For example, Guy Kawasaki (2007) has some tips on ways to use your LinkedIn profile. I have listed some of these books and web links in the reference list at the end of this chapter. I will return to LinkedIn in future chapters. It is an important Web 2.0 social network to help with two cornerstones of LIS career development: networking and marketing.

Twitter

Twitter is a popular social networking site for microblogging. The premise behind Twitter is that network members post

brief messages in response to the hypothetical question: 'What's happening?' Twitter has been called the SMS of the Internet because its 140-character post limitation matches the limitation of an SMS or text message.

As a social networking site, Twitter operates quite differently from Facebook and LinkedIn. With Twitter you first set up a profile and then start to build some connections among fellow members. The brief postings you send via Twitter are known as 'tweets'. All your tweets are visible to the public network unless you change the default settings to restrict access. However, the majority of users keep their tweets on open access. You can subscribe to other members' tweets and 'follow' them. Twitter can be accessed from an online wired, networked computer or from a mobile device.

If you feel that the whole idea behind Twitter sounds rather frivolous or pointless, you are not alone. It is probably the most misunderstood social network, and this misunderstanding is probably what divides people into those who 'get it' and those who do not. I admit to having been a Twitter sceptic at one stage, but now I find it to be an incredibly simple, yet powerful tool for communication, networking and information sharing. However, it is certainly not the case that once you try Twitter you will become a devotee. Many new users abandon Twitter because they are not willing or patient enough to build a critical mass of contacts. I estimate you need to follow about 50 to 100 people to fully exploit Twitter.

As with other social networking software, Twitter's growth has been outstanding in recent years. Twitter has a speed and immediacy unmatched by other social networks and it can emulate the quick flow of IM (Instant Messenger) when several parties are online and communicating at the same time.

Here are some Twitter stats in mid-2010:

- growth in the year 2009–10 was 1,400 per cent;
- 5,000 tweets per day in 2007;
- 300,000 tweets per day in 2008;
- 35 million tweets per day by the end of 2009;
- 50 million tweets per day by mid-2010 – an average of 600 tweets per second, with 10–15 million active users.

How does Twitter work?

If you want to give Twitter a try, start by going to the main website: *www.twitter.com* and establishing a free account. To do this you need to provide your name, e-mail address, a unique user name and then read the terms of agreement and privacy statement. It is helpful for your online identity to choose a username the same as, or similar to your other Web 2.0 social networks. However, sometimes you will find your name has already been taken, so have a back-up option. Add a brief statement about yourself, giving your areas of interest and including a link to your blog, website or any other online profile you may have. This is important in establishing your credentials on Twitter so that potential followers can check you out. If they like what they see they may decide to follow you. Include a professional-looking photo or avatar image. Then you are ready to start sending out some tweets.

Look around among your first few contacts for people to follow. Knowing who to follow is difficult at first, so finding a Twitter mentor may be helpful. Many bloggers place their Twitter feeds on their blogs, so that is a good way to find and follow experts in the field. The more contacts you add, the more the momentum picks up and the full potential of Twitter is revealed. It is quite acceptable to lurk for a while and listen in to conversations until you get the hang of

Twitter. But remember: it is a two-way conversation and *your* contribution is important.

Phil Bradley (2009) and Sue Waters (2010) each offer some useful Twitter getting-started hints for librarians and educators. (See the links at the end of this chapter.)

Twitter terminology

Having knowledge of the Twitter terminology will help you communicate more confidently when you start out. The terminology includes terms, abbreviations and conventions, such as:

- following – someone you are following (i.e. subscribing to their Twitter feed);
- followers – those who are following you (subscribing to your Twitter feed);
- @ – the code that identifies the individual Twitter member's name;
- RT – retweet another's tweet (retweet is done if you support another's tweet, some users clarify that this is not an endorsement);
- DM – a direct private message to a follower, like a short, private 140 character e-mail;
- # – a hash tag or type of keyword to identify the topic of your tweet, which can be searched;
- trending – the current hot topics on Twitter.

Most people use one of the Twitter clients (Twitter-specific programs) such as TweetDeck, HootSuite or Echofon, rather than the 'native interface' of the Twitter homepage. There are other Twitter clients for mobile devices such as Twitter for iPhone and Twitter for Blackberry. Twitter clients provide useful functionality that helps you organise your contacts into lists and keep track of Twitter activity during the day. See the screen of the Tweetdeck Twitter client in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2   Tweetdeck, the Twitter client

Twitter and privacy

According to the Harvard business blog, in 2009 more data was being generated by individuals than in the entire history of mankind up to 2008. However, whereas social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, are free to join, there is a catch: the social media platform providers welcome us in because they can profit from our data. What we contribute on Facebook and Twitter is being data mined, so the less private we are the more data we make available to the data miners.

How does Twitter rate on the privacy issue? More than any other social networking site, Twitter blurs the lines

between the private and the public self. We can choose to tweet privately to our friends and contacts alone, but few choose this option. All Twitter feeds are now being picked up by Google, Bing and Yahoo! Keep this in mind and think before you post a message. Colleagues or employers can read your tweets if they do a Google search for your name.

How might librarians use Twitter?

Twitter has applications for all areas of library career development: personal marketing networking, professional development and learning. Librarians around the world are already active users of Twitter. If you are willing to suspend your disbelief and give Twitter a try, you are likely to find it to be a very useful Web 2.0 tool. For example, LIS conferences are encouraging live tweeting and some presenters are incorporating a live Twitter stream into their presentations as a new way to engage with the conference audience. That way the offsite audience can also engage with conference activities.

In future chapters I will further explore the professional uses of Twitter and how it can amplify all of your Web 2.0 activity. Also I will also focus on privacy and Twitter in Chapter 5.

Twitter tips

I use Twitter as a professional learning and networking tool and some of my tips for the effective use of this site for your career are:

- choose your username, photo or avatar to reflect your professional image;
- add a brief biography to reflect your professional self;

- put a link on your Twitter profile to your blog or website, so that potential followers can check you out;

- start posting and look around for professional LIS people to follow;

- think before you post and assume all postings are being transmitted widely;

- be collegial and join in the conversations.

Finally, with all three networks, what you should consider is when to use them and how they fit in with your career goals. In future chapters I will address all these questions and suggest how the networks can be applied to your marketing, networking and professional development.

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Useful weblinks

Carruthers, Kate. Digital revolution not going away: *http://katecarruthers.com/blog/2010/06/digital-revolution-not-going-away/*

Dority, Kim. LinkedIn: Everything I ever wanted to tell you, but was too shy/modest/embarrassed to say. *http://www.liscareer.com/dority_linkedin.htm*

Facebook home: *www.facebook.com*

Facebook and privacy: *http://techcrunch.com/2010/06/07/privacy-facebook-visitors/*

Harvard business blog: *http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/now-new-next/2009/05/the-social-data-revolution.html*

Kawasaki, Guy. Facebook privacy: *http://techcrunch.com/2010/06/07/privacy-facebook-visitors/*

LinkedIn home: *http://www.linkedin.com/nhome/*

Twitter home: *http://twitter.com/*

Twitter and privacy: *http://twitter.com/privacy*

Twitter stats: *http://blog.twitter.com/2010/02/measuring-tweets.html*