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Nebraska Libraries Using Social Software

By Marcia L. Dority Baker

Do you remember what you were doing in 2003 or 2004? The evolution of technology during the past decade is amazing to review. Think about how quickly social software incorporated into our day-to-day lives; it's become part of our jobs, libraries and relationships. It's not only physical technology (hardware) that has morphed; the social software has changed as well. In 2003, the social sites LinkedIn and MySpace were born and Nokia released a cell phone with a camera. For those interested, Facebook launched in 2005 and Apple released the first iPhone in 2007 – how time flies.

A conversation with a library colleague on using LibGuides sparked the idea to survey Nebraska Library Association (NLA) members to check the pulse on Nebraska libraries using social software. According to the Mashable website, "Social Software" is defined as the interactive tools used to communicate. My curiosity piqued, I emailed a brief (six questions) survey in March 2013, *Nebraska Libraries Using Social Software*, to the NLA membership. The survey asked: (1) What type of library do you work in? (2) Is your library using social software? (3) Does your library have a website? (4) What social software is your library using? (5) For what reasons does your library use social software? (6) How long has your library used social media? The intent was to determine the types of social software used by Nebraska libraries and how long Nebraska libraries have participated in social software platforms.

Thank you fellow Nebraska librarians and library staff for your quick reply to this survey! The survey was emailed to approximately 950 NLA members. Question 1 recorded 97 total responses from librarians at: public libraries (46 responses), academic libraries (31 responses), school libraries (9 responses), other libraries (6 responses) and special/institutional libraries (5 responses). According to Question 2, a majority of respondents (86 responses) affirmed that their library uses social software to communicate. One interesting response as the "not sure" option: two people responded that they were unsure if their library uses social software. This response may demonstrate libraries should communicate better with library staff, users, and the board of trustees, the technology or social software the library uses or subscribes to.

It can be assumed most Nebraska libraries have a website providing access to the library catalog, contact information, library hours, databases or programming details. Yet depending on the type of library, a website may not be a suitable option; some special or institutional libraries use an internal library website for staff only, or small libraries may be considered a department providing service to a larger organization. Question 3, "does your library have a website," found a small percent (5%) of Nebraska libraries do not have a website. As information professionals, it is important we acknowledge that certain technologies may not be relevant for all libraries or users.

Question 4 found the most popular social software options used by Nebraska libraries are: Facebook (78 responses), blogs (39 responses), Twitter (37 responses), Pinterest (33 responses), and LibGuides (30 responses). Pinterest is a newer social media site allowing

users to “pin” photos, objects and things of interest to their board. Libraries use it to collect local history, photos, promote library events, create new book lists or gather summer reading ideas. Since this survey was sent to all NLA members, not just an individual library’s technology staff or librarian, the responses represent only a cross section of use.

If your library is new to Facebook, check out NLA’s Facebook page or other Nebraska libraries with Facebook fan pages for great examples of how libraries of all type connect with users. Don’t forget about the Nebraska Library Commission (NLC), which can help libraries wanting to blog with WordPress. According to the LibGuides Community Site, 24 Nebraska libraries subscribe to LibGuides with a total of 1,312 published guides! For librarians interested in learning more about LibGuides, I recommend reviewing the LibGuides Community website to see a current list of Nebraska libraries using LibGuides to connect with users. Links to all the guides and the academic, public and school librarians who created them are a quick way to talk shop and learn more about LibGuides.

Nebraska libraries continue to use e-newsletters (26 responses) to interact with customers in a written format, while YouTube (22 responses) and Flickr (15 responses) allow our libraries to share media content in creative visual ways. The Nebraska Library Association has used Flickr since 2007 to host photos of Nebraska libraries, customers, librarians, and staff using libraries to celebrate National Library Week or to share NLA fall conference photos. Nebraska libraries use several other social software options such as Foursquare (6 responses), wikis (18 responses) and LinkedIn (5 responses) as they fit the culture of their library, providing another avenue to connect with users.

Nebraska libraries of all type use social software to communicate (83 responses) and connect with users (77 responses). The strong response to Question 5 demonstrates that Nebraska librarians and library staff realize the communication potential of social software platforms, using a variety of options to promote, market (67 responses) and engage with library customers. See the entire list of social software options from Question 4 for ideas for your library. Interestingly, social software use seems to be more of an external communication option than internal. Based on the survey results, the least important reasons for social media use include: networking with peer libraries (30 responses), for workflow or library function such as sharing work documents via Google Docs or scheduling with Google Calendar (24 responses) or because the library director or administration wanted to (11 responses). The date Nebraska libraries began using social software varies by library: Question 6 found some libraries started within the last year (6 responses), many have used social software from one to five years (57 total responses), with most libraries using some form of social software for five-plus years (26 responses).

If you or your library, are interested in trying a social software option (**go for it**) or a different way to engage users, the wealth of knowledge and expertise displayed by librarians within our state is great. Check out what other academic, public, school or special libraries are using, or see the list of library with websites from Question 3 for an

idea of who responded to the survey. Attend a spring meeting or fall conference presentation on a new or emerging social software option. Register for an online class or webinar. Read books, blog and websites by librarians from ALA or the library group or section appropriate to your library type. As information professionals, we have the skills necessary to find and analyze information. Nebraska is a friendly state full of librarians and library staff eager to help you-the-librarian, and your library connect with users both inside and outside of the library building.

Resources:

Dowd, N., Evangelist, M., & Silberman, J. (2010). *Bit-sized marketing: Realistic solutions for the overworked librarian*. Chicago, IL: ALA Publications.

Gould, M. (2009). *The library PR handbook*. Chicago, IL: ALA Publications.

Kroski, Ellyssa. (2012, January 18). 5 ways to use Pinterest in your library. Retrieved from <http://oedb.org/blogs/ilibrarian/2012/5-ways-to-use-pinterest-in-your-library/>

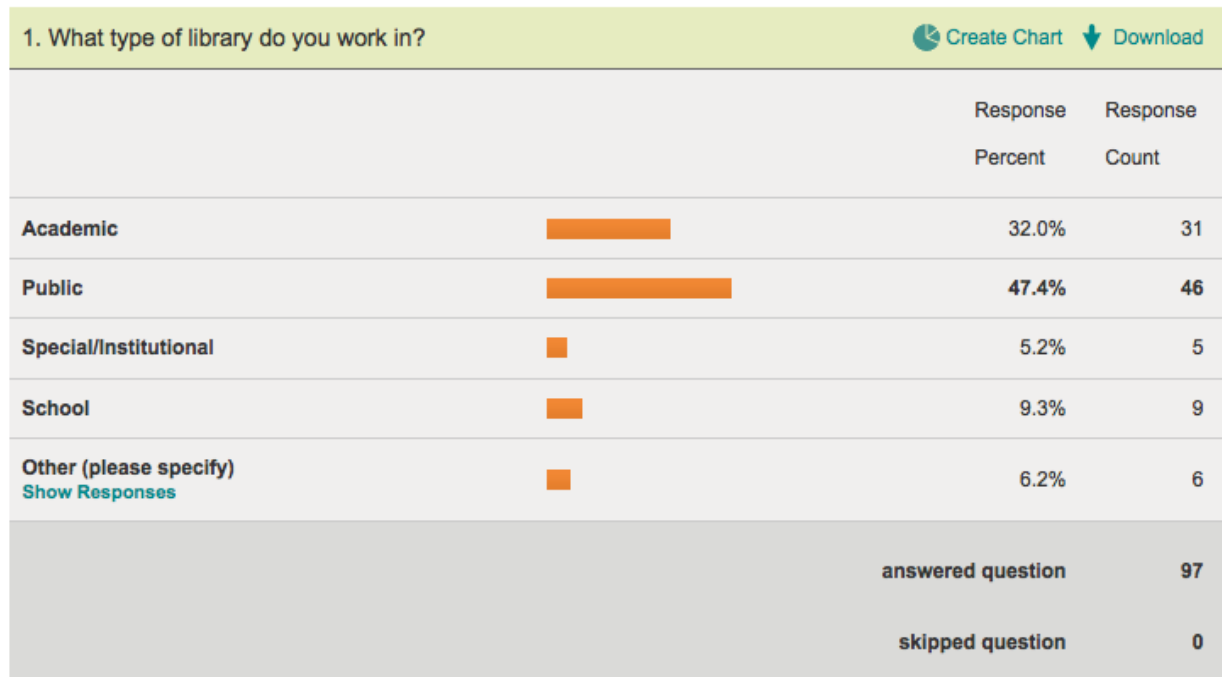
Mashable. (2013, March 26) "Social Software definition." Retrieved from <http://mashable.com/category/social-software/>

Solomon, L. (2013) *The librarian's nitty-gritty guide to social media*. Chicago, IL: ALA Publications.

Springshare. (2013, March 26) "Nebraska" LibGuides Community listing. Retrieved from <http://libguides.com/community.php?m=i&ref=www.libguides.com>

— Published in *Nebraska Libraries*, May 2013

Nebraska Libraries Using Social Software: A Survey



Other responses:

Board member

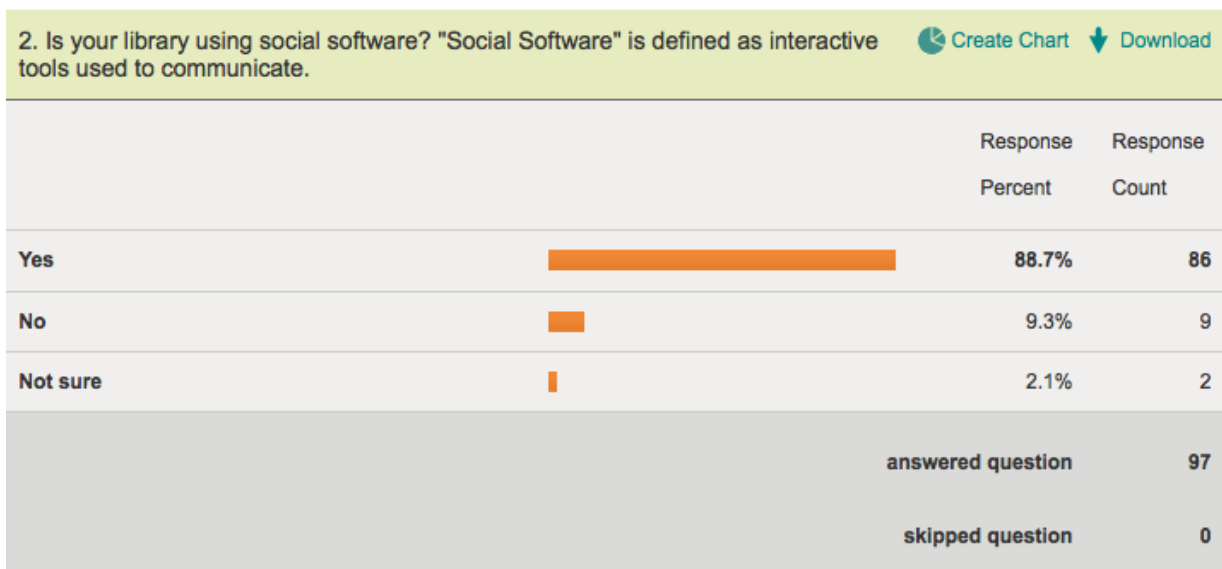
University - school library program

government

Non-profit corporation under the Nebraska Library Commission



high school

Serve on the Library Board



3. Does your library have a website?

[Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		94.8%	91
No		5.2%	5
		Library Website URL: Show Responses	61
		answered question	96
		skipped question	1

Library Website URL Responses:

http://morton-jamespubliclibrary.com	http://www.unomaha.edu/libraryed/
http://www.gips.org/wasmer/media-center	Libraries.ne.gov/scribner
Wwww.rlibrary.org	http://www.southsiouxcity.org/department/?fDD=11-0
libraries.ne.gov/dodge	www.nebraskahistory.org
www.gretnapubliclibrary.org	www.chadronpubliclibrary.com
http://nlc.nebraska.gov	http://www.bellevue.edu/services/library.aspx
waverlylibrary.org	http://www.lb8.uscourts.gov/
http://lms.lps.org/	www.fairburylibrary.org
www.creighton.edu/law/library	www.omahalibrary.org
ci.north-platte.ne.us/library	part of the Doane College site
www.wahoo.ne.us	Brokenbowlibrary.net
ralstonlibrary.org	www.lincolnlibraries.org
http://www.creighton.edu/law/library	http://www.bellevue.edu/services/library.aspx
http://ci.norfolk.ne.us/library	http://libraries.ne.gov/rockcounty
http://www.bellevuelibrary.org/	http://www.graceuniversity.edu/academics/library/
www.kearneycats.com	
Wwww.mpcclibraries.notlong.com	www.columbusne.us/library

www.wilsonpubliclibrary.com

www.cccneb.edu

libraries.unl.edu

<http://follett.paplv.esu3.org/common/servlet/presentationhomeform.do?l2m=Home&tm=Home&l2m=Home>

<http://www.northeast.edu/Library-Resources/>

<http://www.ops.org/high/northwest/ACADEMICS/Library/tabid/429/Default.aspx>

nlc.nebraska.gov/tbbs

<http://kearneylib.org>

www.sewardlibrary.org

<https://sites.google.com/a/nsdtitans.org/hslibrary/>

www.omahalibrary.org

cityoflavista.org/library

omahalibrary.org

<http://libraries.ne.gov/nels>

[Http://wp.lps.org/lms](http://wp.lps.org/lms)

<http://wp.lps.org/medialne>

www.kearneylib.org

<http://library.unk.edu>

<http://www.southsiouxcity.org/department/?fDD=11-0>

www.yorklib.org

<http://lib.unk.edu/>

<http://www.bellevue.edu/services/library.aspx>

www.omahalibrary.org

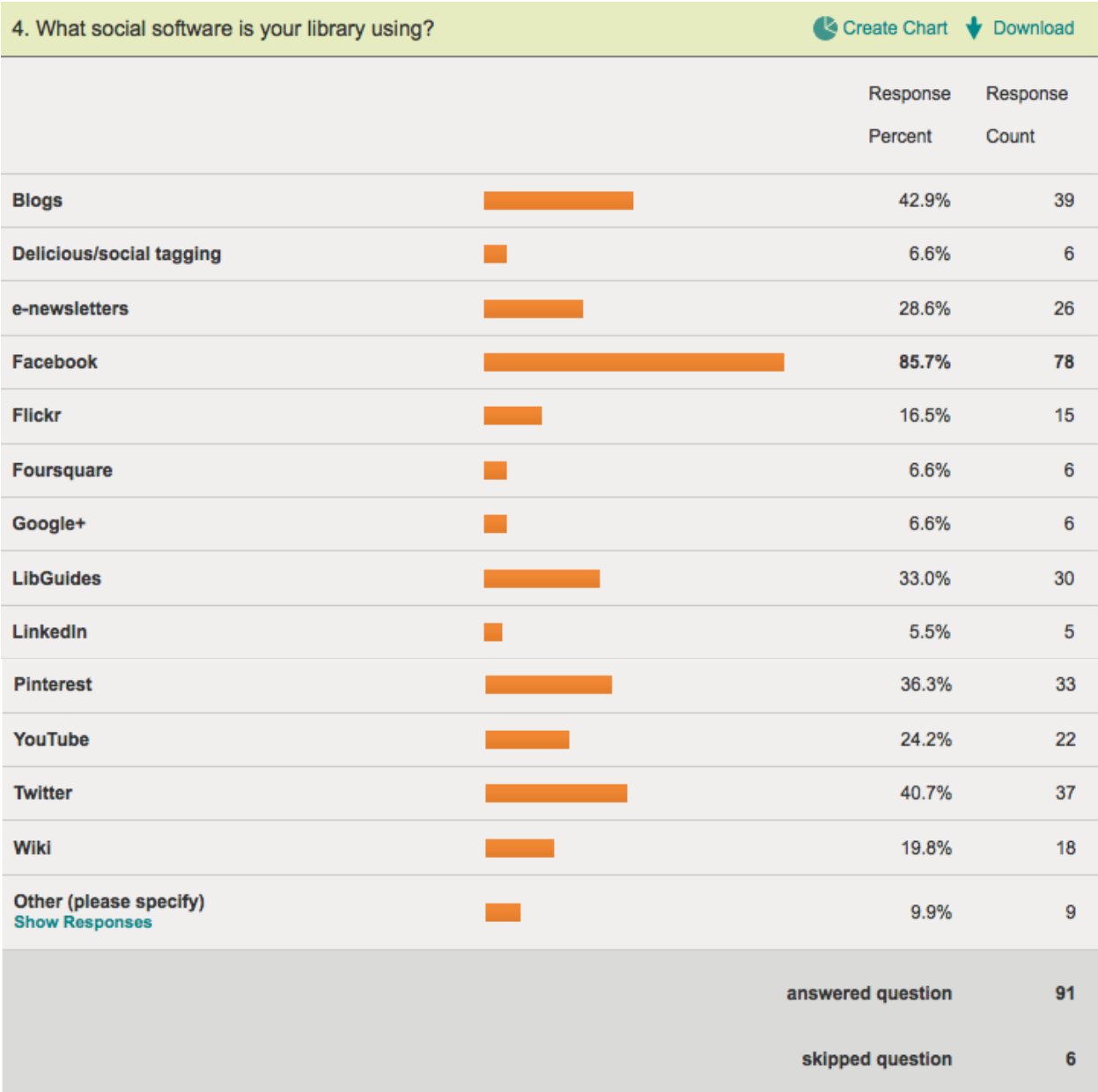
libraries.ne.gov/centralcity/

sumplibrary.org

<http://www.bellevue.edu/services/library.aspx>

We currently have a page on the city government website, which is undergoing a massive redesign (but we do know that the library page receives the most traffic out of all the departments).

<http://hastings.lib.ne.us>



Other Responses:

none

SocialCast

IM, Chat

Google docs, Docushae

E-mail

camtasia

Reminder-Nebraska History Library is a Division of the Nebraska State Historical Society-website and all other social software represents the entire agency.

Our city just approved the use of these, but, once again, they are "city" accounts. We do not have social media accounts just for our library. We have to share with the other departments and have everything approved.

not using social software

5. For what reasons does your library use social software?

[Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Communication		93.3%	83
Marketing opportunities		75.3%	67
For online presence		71.9%	64
Connect/engage with users		86.5%	77
Network with peer libraries		33.7%	30
Workflow, library function		27.0%	24
Because our director/administration wanted to		12.4%	11
		Other (please specify) Show Responses	5
		answered question	89
		skipped question	8

Other Responses:

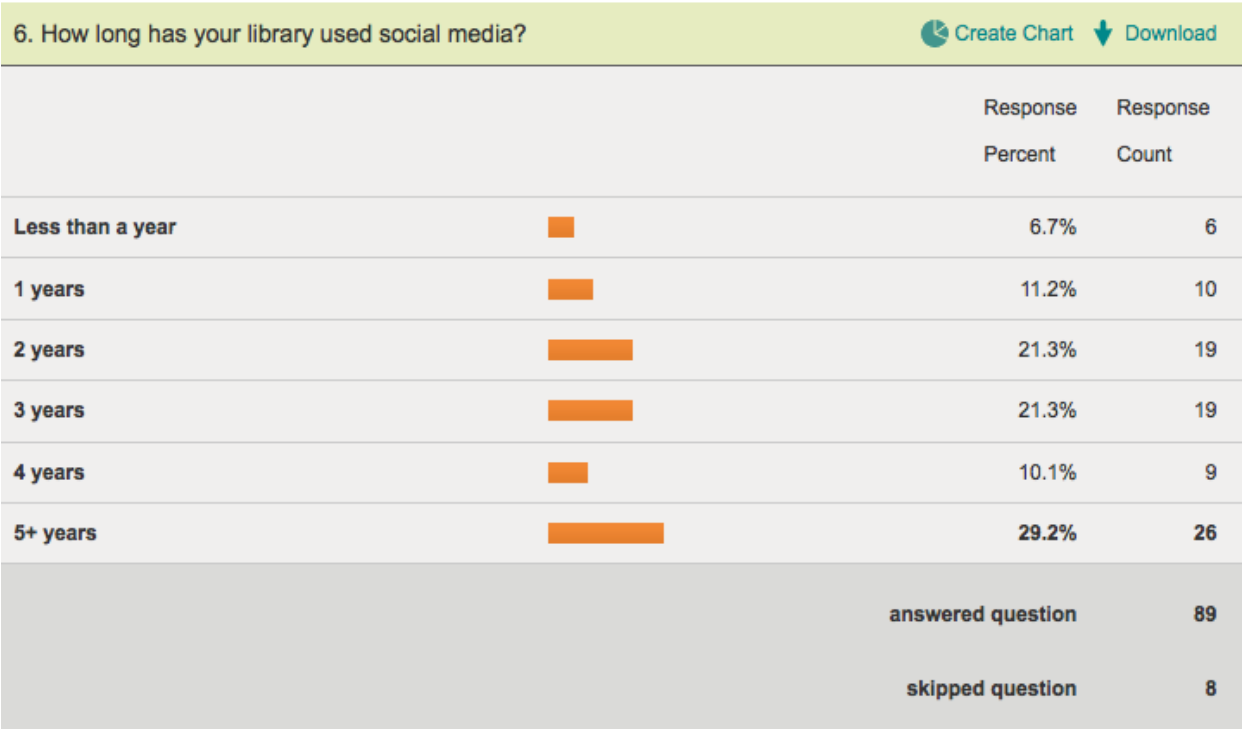
na

not using social software, nobody has time to set it up

Instruction and Self-Help Research Guidance

Instruction on database use

social media is run by the city so library participation is at the city's discretion.



Survey available at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q89JYVL>

Survey created by Marcia Dority Baker and emailed to NLA membership on 3/08/13 with 97 total responses received as of 3/22/13.