INTEGRATING CONTENT COMMUNITIES INTO YOUR LIBRARY

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Abstract: The way we use technology is changing. More and more people are searching online not only for information, but also to connect with other people, and this is driving new software applications. These new applications can help libraries to connect with users and to create new services.

Introduction

Most people have developed ways of organizing the information in their life. Be it all the cell biology books on the same shelf or all the lab chemicals in alphabetical order, it is usually by some kind of categorization scheme. Libraries, and others, have developed their own schemas which include controlled vocabularies, such as L.C. subject headings; taxonomies, such as Linnaean taxonomy; and ontologies, such as the Dublin Core. Tagging in only one more way of categorizing information. Tagging is a way to use free text to mark, store and retrieve tailor-made subject headings to personalize online searching from a web account. It is not a browser bookmark. It allows a person to bookmark a webpage by entering the URL and giving it a brief description by using the words most relevant to the person doing the tagging. It helps users find the pages again using their own terms, not controlled vocabulary terms. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project 28 percent of all users are tagging documents.

While formal classifications are generated by some authoritative body and attempt to create some order. The web is not orderly. Tags can be seen as a way of using key words to help organize the portion of the web that a person accessed in a way that makes sense to them.

Folksonomies are aggregations or clusters of tags created by using the most frequently used tags by the users of information. They become a kind of user-generated taxonomy.

By aggregating the most popular tags, Tag clouds can be formed. These visual representations show the most popular tags using varying font sizes, color, and boldness of the type and display the pattern of how tags relate to one another.

Tagging Clouds **Folksonomies** Blogs **Wikis**
Podcasts **Collaboration** Networking Participation
Searching Browsing
Research **Relevance Ranking** **Storage**
Archiving **Retrieval**

Collaboration may begin with a tag. Tagging sites support knowledge sharing and offer additional ways of collaborating.

Advantages of Tags and Folksonomies

- Tagging is quick and simple. There is no consulting a thesaurus or subject-heading list. The word that first comes to mind is the one that is used.
- Tags help a person organize the web in a way that makes the most sense to them by using the terms they use. They can assign several words to express or make the concept relevant to themselves. Thus tags can improve the findability of an item for that person.
- Since tagging is done on a website, your tags can be accessed from any computer, not just the one on your desk.
- Instead of storing a URL in a single folder, as with bookmarks, many different terms can be used to identify a single URL.
- Folksonomies may help develop a tagging vocabulary around specific topics when one can see which tags are being used by others interested in the same topic.
- Lack of controlled vocabulary can be used to develop lists for groups using the same terminology they use
- Much like the serendipity of scanning the bookshelves and finding other books on a topic, checking what others have tagged can lead to discovering additional information on a topic.
- Emerging fields of interest may be identified by the use of new words as tags.

Disadvantages of Tags and Folksonomies

- Since they use natural language, tags can be ambiguous. Common words, like "fish", can return results for a person named fish, a recipe for fish, or a particular fish. There can be multiple meanings for the same word in English, not to mention the same word used in various languages to mean different things.
- In most sites tags must be a single word.
- Singular and plural forms can be used and not linked together. Likewise variant spellings, such as armoured or armored can cause poor retrieval of information.

- The level of specificity can be different depending on who assigned the tag. So while one researcher might think of the order Siluriformes, the class Actinopterygi or the species *callichthys* depending on their need.
- Many different terms can be used for the same concept. When tagging living organisms, one user might use the common name and another the scientific name.
- Folksonomies can be dominated by a particular way of thinking and so the local names can be overwhelmed.
- Some people fear there will be a deliberate misuse of tags to generate interest in a particular website.
- Because tags have personal meanings, they may not be meaningful to anyone else, such "lab party."

Conclusion

With the advent of tagging and folksonomies, the use of bookmarking such as that available on browsers will become less popular. The advantage of tagging URLs with several terms and sharing that metadata with colleagues widens the horizon of possibilities of collaboration, peer reviewing, and co-editing. Building a new taxonomy this way provides a flexible tool to better define new terms that are entering a discipline or culture. The act of "synonym building" on-the-fly empowers researchers to look at their work in flexible paradigms. The example sites attest to the perceived promise of tagging to provide an easy, flexible, and timely, tool to help categorize research terms as well as popular culture. Taxonomies are very valuable but the comparable economics of using tagging in anticipation of a more formal taxonomy may be the future.

Examples of Tagging Sites:

Del.icio.us (http://del.icio.us) is probably the most popular of the tagging sites. The sites are displayed with your bookmarks first, then the most popular of everyone's bookmarks. This site can be used to develop resource lists. Libraries can even give a group of patrons the user name and password and let them contribute to developing lists.

Library Thing (http://www.librarything.com) while many people find this useful for organizing their own collections, it is useful for building communities of people interested in the same topics or themes.

Digg (http://www.digg.com) started out as a technology oriented tagging site. It has expanded to include science, news, business and just about every topic.

CiteULike (http://CiteULike.com) is aimed at academics to allow them to organise citations to scholarly papers. While originally you could only link to specific websites, you can now link any site and include thumbnails of book jackets from Amazon.com.

C**onnotea (http://www.connotea.org)** was created by the Nature publishing group and is for "researchers, clinicians and scientists." An advantage to Connotea is that it has the ability to automatically collect the metadata from some websites, such as PubMed, Nature.com and Amazon.com.

Technorati (http://www.technorati.com) was created to tag blogs. You can find the most relevant information in blogs, photos, and audio and video files.

Squidoo (http://www.squidoo.com) allows users to create a "lens" which in which they share their knowledge on a particular topic by providing pointers to blogs, photos, webpages, videos, etc.

PennTags (http://tags.library.upenn.edu) are an example of a library encouraging its users to assign tags to catalogued items. Putting the catalog and tags together will allow structure and connections made by others who are using those resources.

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