

West Dunbartonshire Libraries

Social Networking Business Case

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Business Case – Objectives & Scope

This document identifies the business need for the Libraries Section of West Dunbartonshire Council (referred to as West Dunbartonshire Libraries) to utilise a range of Internet-based social networking tools.

It explains the concept of social networking tools and provides an overview of the varied applications of these tools by other library authorities both in the UK and internationally.

In order to address the business need, the document specifies the strategy for the implementation of social networking tools within West Dunbartonshire Libraries, taking into account the recognised risks (whether perceived or real) accordingly. The document will make recommendations to Finance & ICT for their consideration.

Background – Social Networking Tools

Social networking tools have developed from an initial evolution of the Internet, commonly known as Web 2.0. Web 2.0 provided a more multi-media rich experience, greater interactivity and alternative ways of cataloguing & displaying data (such as word/tag clouds). Social networking however focuses on the interactivity element of Web 2.0 and has provided a wide range of tools with which users can communicate and interact.

Social networking tools cover a number of different types of communication, some of which are briefly noted below:

- Full user profiles, with the ability to leave messages (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, BeBo, etc.)
- Document and/or picture storage and display (i.e. Flickr, slideshare, etc.)
- User-generated search engines (i.e. Rollyo, Eurekster Swicki, Google Custom Search, etc.)
- Social bookmarking tools (i.e. del.icio.us, stumbleupon, Furl, etc.)
- Short user-to-user messaging, similar to SMS messaging (i.e. Twitter)
- Virtual worlds (i.e. SecondLife)

While there are too many categories and websites within each category to use them all, businesses and forward-thinking public sector organisations world-wide have latched onto the most commonly used resources in order to connect and communicate with their client bases (and create new ones!). For example, Pepsi and Mattel have built feature-rich online community sites where customers can communicate with each other and staff, enter online contests and even suggest product development ideas. Many companies are using social networking tools on a smaller scale, by utilising existing tools rather than developing in-

house provision. For example, many UK companies have a presence on Facebook, or post messages on Twitter. It is usual that the communication carried out on these tools will engage potential customers, hoping to attract them to the company's main website with the ultimate aim of securing a purchase.

The Office of Communications (Ofcom) released a research document¹ in April 2008 which found that Britain is a nation of consummate social networkers. Almost half of all under-18s online said they were using social networks regularly, equivalent to some 3.8 million children around the country. More than a fifth of adults were also signed up with such services, primarily Facebook, with the highest proportion of activity among 16 to 35-year-olds. This makes the UK second only to Canada, where more than half of adults use such sites.

The public sector have been somewhat slower in taking advantage of social networking tools, but many examples of best practice exist, including:

- Greater Manchester Police: Use Facebook to provide residents with news and allow them to report crimes.
- DirectGov: Launched their own social networking tool, MoneySpeak.
- Blackburn with Darwen Council: Promoting European elections on YouTube.
- Coventry City Council: Providing news and promoting services on Twitter and Facebook.
- Salford City Council: Providing job opportunities via Twitter.
- Manchester Libraries: Offering an online presence in the virtual world, SecondLife.

These examples and many more are available at the digitalgovuk² website.

Social Networking – Library Applications

Libraries have existed as information providers for centuries, and have continually adapted to changes in society and technology in order to fulfil their statutory and important role. Many libraries were at the forefront of the Internet revolution, and went on to develop international standards for cataloguing data, displaying data online, and interoperability of systems. The 'early adopter' stage of social networking and Web 2.0 is now over, and the majority of library services in the UK and abroad have already, or are about to engage with these tools.

¹ 'Social Networking: A quantitative and qualitative research report into attitudes, behaviours and use', Ofcom, 2nd April 2008

² <http://sandbox.dius.gov.uk/digitalgovuk/>

Some case studies are listed below:

- **Edinburgh City Libraries:**
 - Consult with users and announce news & reviews on Twitter
 - Provide photographs for browsing on Flickr
 - Keep users informed with high quality resources listed on delicious
 - Allow users to contribute to their book-group wiki using pbwiki
 - Offer films for users to contribute to and watch via YouTube
 - Provide fuller information on Facebook and MySpace
- **Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS):**
 - Write a blog on library developments using Wordpress
 - Offer an image archive using Flickr
 - Share library and information bookmarks using delicious
 - Post PowerPoint presentations from training sessions on SlideShare
 - Micro-blog news updates on Twitter
 - Provide videos on YouTube
- **Manchester Libraries:**
 - Micro-blog news and consult users on Twitter
 - Provide a virtual library with staff assistance on SecondLife
- **Kirklees Libraries:**
 - Provide an in-house social networking tool, 'Reading Circle', available online, by mobile and on digital TV.
- **Newcastle City Libraries:**
 - Have full library information, updates and consultation on Facebook and Twitter.
 - Provide videos on YouTube.
 - Publish a city library webcam online.
- **Plymouth Libraries:**
 - Share photographs and run competitions on Flickr.
- **National Library of Scotland:**
 - Promote events, news and information on Facebook.
 - Publish several blogs.
 - Post videos and pictures on YouTube and Flickr.

This list is not exhaustive and there are many other excellent examples of library services harnessing social networking tools.

Local Business Need

The significance of Web 2.0 and social networking has long been recognised in West Dunbartonshire Libraries, though for a number of reasons no developments have yet been taken forward. In terms of staff training, three members of staff attended Web 2.0 training during 2008, which was aimed specifically at the libraries sector. Additionally, a further two members of staff have been trained by the Child Exploitation & Online Protection (CEOP) centre in the risks associated with these technologies to young people, and how to educate communities in order to avoid such risks.

The senior management team within the libraries section (Section Head & three Senior Officers) agree that the time is right to develop a presence using social networking tools, following some of the excellent best practice examples already available and previously listed in this document. Given the significant evidence surrounding the high uptake of these resources, and ever-changing expectations of our members, it is felt that providing resources and information online using these tools is a necessary step in order to ensure that our service provision is both of the highest quality, and meets the expectations of our users. It is also anticipated that this development offers an excellent opportunity to engage with traditionally hard to reach groups, who may subsequently take advantage of our range of services on offer.

Strategy for Implementation

The implementation of social networking tools by West Dunbartonshire Libraries should be seen as a pilot project. The project will comprise the following stages:

- **Research** – the first phase will involve the Senior Officer ICT & Learning carrying out research into the range of social networking tools available and identify further examples of best practice. This will require Finance & ICT to unblock the social networking category for my network login.
- **Pilot Implementation** – the second phase will identify which resources West Dunbartonshire Libraries would like to develop, and produce materials for these resources. This will require additional members of staff to have access to this narrower range of websites.
- **Evaluations** – the pilot project will be evaluated and recommendations made to either continue or discontinue development of material using the selected tools. Subsequent periodic evaluations will be required even if the recommendation is made to continue, in order to maintain validity and keep up to date with users habits.

In addition, West Dunbartonshire Libraries will offer awareness raising sessions for young people and adults (specifically parents & guardians) covering the risks of using online

resources and sharing information etc. The training delivered will be the official CEOP training, and will educate people on how to avoid such risks, and report them should any inappropriate behaviour occur.

Recommendations to Finance & ICT

It is recommended to Finance & ICT that West Dunbartonshire Libraries are granted access to the social networking websites as specified in this business case. In the first instance this will be granting access to the social networking category to the Senior Officer ICT & Learning. Subsequently, access will be granted to the smaller number of websites which are selected for use by West Dunbartonshire Libraries, to a small number of staff as specified at that time.

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