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Social Networking Tools in Volunteer Programs:
An Annotated Bibliography for Program Managers

The following annotated bibliography provides resources for anyone who is currently involved in or planning to be involved in using social networking (Web 2.0) tools to manage volunteer programs in libraries and nonprofit organizations. It was prepared under the guidance of Philip Turner, Vice Provost for Learning Enhancement and Professor in the School of Library and Information Sciences at the University of North Texas, as part of a semester-long project I completed in December 2009.

For assistance incorporating Web 2.0 tools into your volunteer or workplace learning and performance (training) programs, please contact me at paul@paulsignorelli.com.
 --Paul Signorelli

Volunteer Programs – General Overview

Cravens. J. (2009). On Volunteerism & Volunteer Management. Viewed November 19, 2009
   at http://coyotecommunications.com/volunteer/index.html

   Jayne Cravens, whose coyotecommunications.com website has been operating since 1996, continues to compile and provide, free of charge, an extensive library of her own articles examining a variety of issues of interest to those managing volunteer programs in nonprofit, public sector, and other non-commercial agencies. Themes covered by articles on the site or links to other sites include "volunteer engagement/management and volunteerism" and "volunteerism and volunteer engagement-management resources." Specific articles include "Essential/Favorite Resources Regarding Volunteer Management and Volunteerism," "Communicating with Volunteers: Making the Most of Your Options," "Myths About Online Volunteering (Virtual Volunteering)," and "For Nonprofit Organizations: How to Handle Online Criticism." The site also includes a link to her blog (http://blogs.forumer.com/jcravens/), which includes additional resources and information for anyone working with volunteers.

Driggers, P. & Dumas, E. (2002). *Managing Library Volunteers: A Practical Toolkit.* Chicago and London: American Library Association.

Preston Driggers and Eileen Dumas provide a basic and thorough introduction to the basics of working with library volunteers in this American Library Association primer. Beginning with an overview of how volunteer programs are designed and then leading readers through the process of recruiting, training, placing, acknowledging, and, when necessary, disciplining volunteers, they include useful templates for forms, job descriptions, and just about everything else needed by those involved in volunteer program management. Guidance on how to attract, orient, train, and place volunteers in the sort of meaningful positions which develop sustainable, long-lasting relationships between volunteers and the agencies they serve establishes a key element of successful volunteer programs: a sense of collaboration in which both sides benefit, the library develops an additional important source of community support, and legal and ethical issues are anticipated long before an organization reaches the moment when those policies are needed.

Energize, Inc. (2009). Volunteer Management Resource Library. Viewed November 5, 2009 at http://www.energizeinc.com/art.html#skill

Energize, Inc., a Philadelphia-based organization specializing in volunteerism, maintains an online library comprised of articles on volunteer management skill areas, types of volunteers (including children and youth, older volunteers, people with disabilities, and students in service), settings in which volunteers are working, and general topics including the history of volunteerism, benefits of volunteering, and the monetary value of volunteer time. The "online community" section of the site leads to articles including "11 Steps to Success with Social Networking" and "Internet Discussion Groups for Volunteers" as well as to a PDF of Susan Ellis and Jayne Craven's *The Virtual Volunteering Guidebook*. Although the "Library Settings" section has few articles specifically directed to those working in public libraries, the "Introducing the Colorado Libraries Volunteer Managers Council" article from the Summer 1997 issue of *Colorado Libraries* does provide a useful description of how volunteer managers from several libraries in Colorado gathered to create and share resources.

Hager, M.A. & Brudney, J.L. (2004). Balancing Act: The Challenges and Benefits of Volunteers. Retrieved October 8, 2009 at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411125_balancing_act.pdf

This Urban Institute report by Mark Hager and Jeffrey Brudney compares the efforts required to manage a successful volunteer program with the benefits organizations receive from volunteers. Drawing from an initial sample of 3,000 nonprofit organizations in the United States and eventually receiving responses from approximately 1,700 (Hager

& Brudney, p. 13), the researchers conclude that two factors are instrumental in producing results from volunteer programs: using strong management practices such as "screening and matching of volunteers to appropriate assignments" and having a staff member or volunteer devoting "a substantial amount of time" to managing the program (p. 1). The researchers, furthermore, found that organizations did not have to be large to reap benefits from volunteers' efforts: those organizations "with little more than $100,000 in expenditures are hardly distinguishable from (those) with multi-million dollar budgets. Resources are important, but money alone cannot buy benefits from volunteers" (p. 1). They also showed that organizations relying on volunteers to manage volunteer programs were as effective in reaping benefits as organizations with paid volunteer managers; the critical element was having coordinators (paid or unpaid) devote substantial amounts of time to the programs (p. 9).

Social Networking Resources

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. (2006). Learning 2.0: 23 Things. Retrieved January 11, 2010 at http://plcmcl2-things.blogspot.com/

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (formerly the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County) Learning 2.0: 23 Things project, designed to familiarize staff with social networking tools, has been adapted by more than 250 libraries worldwide and remains a great resource for anyone new to these online resources. It can be followed start to finish as a series of lessons or used by topic for those interested in exploring specific aspects of social networking tools. Podcasts support the written exercises; learning modules include sessions about blogging, photos and images, RSS feeds and newsreaders, tagging, wikis, and podcasts; and tools explored include Flickr, Bloglines, LibraryThing, Delicious, Technorati, and YouTube.

Cravens, J. (2006). For Nonprofit Organizations: How to Handle Online Criticism. Retrieved November 6, 2009 at http://www.coyotecommunications.com/outreach/critics.html

For those concerned about using social networking tools and finding themselves subject to criticism on those sites, Jayne Cravens offers a direct and well written guide to how to respond. Among her tips are to respond quickly—she notes that "(a) week or more is not prompt in online community conversations"; earn the trust and respect of volunteers and clients by offering honest responses and acting upon those responses; and take criticisms seriously. An underlying theme in the article is that organizations do not have to accept and retain everything that is posted on the sites they manage. Establishing explicit standards for content and the tenor of comments helps those managing social networking sites maintain vital and vibrant sites which contribute to the building of the communities which are at the heart of social networking.

El-Borno, S. (2007). A Beginner's Guide to Facebook. Retrieved December 6, 2009 from
http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/page7430.cfm

Soha El-Borno, one of the writers on the Wild Apricot social media tools and web
technologies blog (http://www.wildapricot.com/blogs/newsblog/default.aspx) for
nonprofit organizations, provides the perfect introduction to Facebook for those who have
avoided it because they did not know how to start. El-Borno begins with a brief
description of Facebook's origins as a way for students to find each other online;
describes the easy process to be followed in registering for an organizational account; and
includes step-by-step instructions on how to use the service to an organization's
advantage. Screenshots at each of the process help viewers envision how they might
incorporate this popular social networking tool into their work. The concluding section
offers tips on how to maintain privacy within a Facebook account.

Farkas, M. (2007). *Social Software in Libraries: Building Collaboration, Communication, and
Community Online*. New Jersey: Information Today, Inc.

Meredith Farkas, who serves as the Distance Learning Librarian at Norwich University
and is a frequent blogger (http://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/) as well as a
columnist for *American Libraries* magazine, provides a first-rate introduction to social
networking tools for library staff. Her descriptions of how blogs are created and
managed, how RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds can push online information out to
those most interested in receiving it, how wikis can be created and managed to create
online communities, and how social networking can be used to the benefit of libraries and
those they serve should leave those managing library volunteer programs and working
directly with volunteers with plenty of ideas for reaching and engaging volunteers online.
Farkas also offers a useful "primer" for keeping up with social networking tools near the
end of her book and includes a detailed list of websites cited in the text for those who
want to explore online resources.

Safko, L. & Brake, D.K. (2009). *The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools, & Strategies for
Business Success.* Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

Lon Safko and David Brake, in their extensive and highly detailed overview of social
networking tools, take a business approach to the topic which can be useful to those
contemplating the use of social networking tools in library volunteer programs. By
suggesting at the beginning of the book that readers can use the online tools available to
them to "remain relevant, competitive, and alive in your industry" (p. 9), they provide a
framework in which those working with volunteers can consider the social networking
tools available to them. Part 1 describes and explores many of the same tools covered by
Meredith Farkas in *Social Software in Libraries* (please see separate annotation in this
bibliography), while Part 2 includes descriptions of a variety of tools which may be of
use to volunteer managers and others trying to reach current and prospective volunteers
where they are most likely to be found. The final part of the book provides business
strategies for the use of social networking tools and helps readers understand how
successful online communities are formed and maintained.

Wild Apricot. (2009). Get Your Sanity Back: Wild Apricot's Non-profit Technology Blog.
Accessed December 9, 2009 at http://www.wildapricot.com/blogs/newsblog/default.aspx

Get Your Sanity Back, sponsored by the Toronto-based Wild Apricot software company, is promoted as a blog designed "for volunteers, webmasters and administrators of associations and nonprofits"; the content can easily be adapted for use within libraries. Among the most popular postings, according to blog administrators, are "Five Ways non-profits can use Flickr to reach new audiences," "Non-profits should take advantage of RSS," "What is tagging and how non-profits can use it?" and "Now non-profits can use mashups" (http://www.wildapricot.com/blogs/newsblog/about.aspx). Articles posted in November 2009 included "Showcase Your Members' Videos with YouTube Direct," "Facebook Page Not Found in Facebook Search?" and "What Do Twitter Lists Say About Your Brand?" The writing is consistently clear, ample links to other resources are abundant, and trouble-shooting tips are an integral part of the postings.

Examples of Social Networking in Library Volunteer Programs and Projects

Byrne, William. (2009). Library Literacy article on the Blogging Libraries Wiki.
Viewed December 3, 2009 at
http://www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/links/index.php?title=Library_Literacy

Burbank Public Library Literacy Coordinator William Byrne's article on the Blogging Libraries Wiki provides links to libraries and library consortiums using blogs and wikis to communicate with volunteers and to help build a sense of community between the volunteers and the organizations they serve. Among the more developed sites are those maintained by BAYLIT-SF, a literacy consortium in the San Francisco Bay Area which links viewers to individual sites created by the 13 members; the Imperial Valley L.E.A.R.N. wiki with 17 participating contributors listed; the Southern California Library Literacy Network blog which includes links to workshop information and numerous other online resources; and the Tulsa City-County Library wiki, which includes posted newsletters.

Extraordinaries. (2009). About The Extraordinaries. Viewed October 5, 2009 at
http://www.theextraordinaries.org/about.html

The Extraordinaries, a San Francisco-based online global effort to connect volunteers with organizations including libraries through the use of mobile phones, is literally an extraordinary social networking experiment revisioning how volunteers can support organizations from anywhere in the world. By using mobile phones, volunteers are currently supporting picture-tagging efforts for the Library of Congress (http://app.beextra.org/mission/show/missionid/7), a Portuguese visual arts library (The Art Library of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, in Lisbon; http://app.beextra.org/mission/show/missionid/3), a French Public Library (Bibliothèque de Toulouse; http://app.beextra.org/mission/show/missionid/5), and the National Library of New Zealand (http://app.beextra.org/mission/show/missionid/8). Palos Verdes Library

District Director Kathy Gould, in Southern California, is among those expressing interest in exploring how this form of "micro-volunteering" might be of assistance in tagging digital photographs, adding tags and reviews to other items in an online catalog, and providing information to help with library marketing and fundraising projects (http://pvlddirectorsblog.typepad.com/kathy/2009/08/microvolunteering.html).

Friends of the San Francisco Public Library. (2009). Community. Viewed December 1, 2009 at http://www.friendssfpl.org/?Community

The member- and volunteer-supported Friends of the San Francisco Public Library is explicit in its commitment to using and promoting its use of social networking tools to reach volunteers interested in supporting the San Francisco Public Library system. The Community page includes links to the Friends' Facebook, YouTube, Yelp, and Flickr presence. Its YouTube channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/FriendsSFPL#p/u) prominently features a ten-minute introductory video showing the Friends' activities and impact on its community and concludes with information about how those interested n volunteering can contact the organization; uploads on that site include videos showing projects supported by volunteers' efforts. The Facebook page, with over 400 fans, is devoted to promoting library and Friends' activities without overtly promoting volunteerism. The Yelp account features more than a dozen favorable reviews of the volunteer-supported book-selling facility the Friends maintains in San Francisco. A separate link on the Community page leads interested viewers to the "Become a Volunteer" page, which includes an online volunteer application.

Metzer, L. (2009). Volunteer Voyages…Venture into Volunteering blog. Viewed December 3, 2009 at http://wblibraryvolunteers.blogspot.com/

Lisa Metzer, Volunteer Coordinator for the Wells Branch Community Library in Austin, Texas, offers a first-rate example of how libraries can offer a blog for library volunteers and seamlessly integrate that blog with other online resources to reach volunteers with useful information in a timely and personal way. She generally posts at least two entries a month on the blog she maintains; in particularly busy times, she has added as many as seven different items in one month. She includes pictures of volunteers at work, describes the contributions volunteers make, and creates reciprocal links between the blog and the library Facebook account to provide more exposure for volunteers' efforts. The library website volunteer page is also interwoven into the volunteer program's online presence: the page not only leads viewers to the blog, but also has a link to a library-maintained page of photos which honors "our super volunteers who put in 2800 hours in 2008!" The impact is obvious: volunteers finding one of the resources will quickly find their way to other library-produced pages which expedite their movement into the volunteer program.

Monterey Public Library. (2009). Transforming Life After 50: Engaging Volunteers in the
  Library and Community. Viewed November 1, 2009 at
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxZoX6FWnlo&feature=related

> The Monterey Public Library's seven-minute video about its community outreach efforts
> to prospective volunteers in the Baby Boomer group offers an example of how libraries
> are using online resources including YouTube to share information about how they attract
> and work with volunteers. The video mentions the library's commitment to recruitment,
> recognition, and retention of volunteers; addresses ways the library works with other
> community groups to reverse a decline in volunteer activities within its targeted age
> group; reviews how it conducted focus groups to reach out to prospective volunteers; and
> leads viewers to a LibGuides page at http://montereypl.libguides.com/volunteers to
> provide additional information for volunteers, those managing volunteers, and those
> seeking volunteer opportunities.

Project Read, San Francisco Public Library. (2009) Project Read of the San Francisco Public
  Library blog. Viewed December 3, 2009 at http://www.projectreadsf.blogspot.com/

> Project Read, the adult literacy program at the San Francisco Public Library, created the
> library's first blog in January 2006 as a way to quickly and effectively disseminate
> information to the program's volunteer tutors. Postings, which appear on a regular basis
> each month, publicize events; include literacy tips, strategies, and resources for the
> volunteers; and offer news about Project Read meetings and achievements. The blog
> includes links to other sites which support the volunteers' efforts on behalf of the library;
> links to other San Francisco Public Library blogs; and a link to the library catalog. While
> few comments are posted, the site is well used, having attracted nearly 13,000 hits during
> its first four years of operation.

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