

Chapter 44

Social Bookmarking in Digital Libraries: Intellectual Property Rights Implications

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ABSTRACT

This chapter elucidates the concept of social bookmarking, its benefits in digital libraries as well as the implications of its use on the intellectual property rights of the creators of the bookmarked works. The author concludes that digital libraries can use social bookmarking as a means of increasing access to and sharing of information resources; improve web searching; as well as to enhance collaboration in the creation and use of information. Since social bookmarks are, by and large, public descriptions of and pointers to the original resources, digital libraries do not infringe the intellectual property rights of their creators. Nonetheless, the libraries should watch against copying large volumes of content from the original resource as this may be construed as an intellectual competition with the bookmarked resource. Digital libraries are advised to develop and apply social bookmarking policies to streamline their use of social bookmarks.

INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 is truly a social web. This is largely because it facilitates extensive user participation in the identification, creation, sharing and use of information. Its architecture encourages and facilitates user contribution, collective intelligence, crowdsourcing, remixing and re-use of content, customer-centricity, creation of user communities as well as the empowerment and ownership of content and relationships (Barsky & Purdon, 2006). Web 2.0 is also about democracy; users generating content rather than merely consuming it; open programming enabling everyone to participate; as well as interfaces which make information seeking and use not only easy but also exciting. Web 2.0 has given immense power to the web users. Indeed, it is described as the users' web where they set rules and control content.

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Musser and O'Reilly (2007) identify the primary drivers of Web 2.0 as: 1) globalisation and the need to reach customers worldwide; 2) increased 24/7 connectivity making the Internet an essential part of the basic necessities of life for many people, even in developing countries; 3) growth of the accessibility of the Internet enabling customers to remain connected everywhere they go and to expect services on the move; 4) deepening of digital interactions and transactions in which customers are now not just connected but engaged – contributing content and transacting business; and 5) transformation of the web to become a business facilitator enabling enterprises to reach more clients and generate more revenue. Arakji *et al.* (2009) assert that Web 2.0 users participate and contribute to various types of online communities ranging from posting opinions for discussion groups, providing technical advice, posting ratings for collaborative recommendations, sharing digital files on peer-to-peer networks, and developing code for open source software projects.

According to Bates (2007) the basic assumptions about finding information have changed. She argues that while librarians are accustomed to consulting traditional library resources such as the catalogue, a database or even a book, the younger generations including Generation Xers and Millennials assume that any information they need is available somewhere on the web. She further asserts that these same information consumers consider the Internet to be “collaborative and interactive rather than static”. Consequently, she submits that this attitude should be recognised by information professionals who must now shift their information seeking sphere from the traditional to the context of this Web 2.0 world.

One of the services facilitated by Web 2.0 platforms is social bookmarking. Although it is a relatively recent phenomenon (emerging only in the mid 1990s), it has demonstrated a great potential in enhancing web information management. Its popularity continues to grow by the day because it has provided a new platform for information organisation, discovery and sharing. For a long time search engines, for instance, have relied on three categories of content to describe data. These are page content, link structure and query or click-through log data (Heymann, Koutrika & Garcia-Molina, 2008). Now, however, there is a fourth type of data in the form of user-generated content which has emerged strongly as a source of web page description data. Social bookmarking is one of the services which generate this fourth type of data. Social bookmarking technology allows users to store, organise, and share their documents on various websites thereby giving the users the opportunity to express their own perspectives on information and resources through informal organisational structures (Mu, 2008). Social bookmarking enables users to save links to web documents for later use without having to save the actual documents or the links in the browser. Thus, one's bookmarks are online and can be accessed from any location or device with an Internet connection (Arakji *et al.*, 2009). Wetzker *et al.* (2008) emphasises that the social aspect of these services is derived from the fact that resources (usually web pages) are tagged by the community as a whole and not only by the creator of content alone.

Just like the case is with many emerging concepts, it is not easy to define social bookmarking. Users and scholars define it differently depending on their contexts. For instance, Noll and Meinel (2007) define it as an online service which enables users of web documents to add, annotate, edit, save and share bookmarks of online resources. Barsky and Purdon (2006) define social bookmarking as the process and techniques of classifying resources by the use of informally-assigned and user-defined keywords. They add that using social bookmarking tools, the users are able to collect their favourite resources in an online, open environment from which others are free to access, read and use the same. This enhances the identification, access, use and sharing of valuable information resources. It is the process of organising information, categorising resources using keywords and sharing the information on a public network. Thus, it is a means of navigating the increasingly overloaded web-based information. It is a means of let-

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