

Chapter 10

From Information Literacy to Scholarly Identity: Effective Pedagogical Strategies for Social Bookmarking

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative research teaches students critical knowledge management skills, whether they are undergraduates learning the basics of Web research or advanced scholars defining their own knowledge domains. Instructors can benefit from practical examples and strategies to initiate social bookmarking activities. This chapter provides best practice examples for effective pedagogical applications of social bookmarking in undergraduate and graduate courses as well as insights into how these activities change the way students think and learn.

INTRODUCTION

Collecting and organizing references to scholarly resources has always been one of the staples of academic work. As more and more resources are available online, saving or bookmarking links to websites has become part of this practice. Earlier Web technologies allowed users to aggregate and categorize their own bookmarks, but this was an individual activity and did not provide an easy method for sharing the resources and their categorization with others. Today, “Web 2.0 tools harness the

collective intelligence of the Web, and by tapping into that intelligence, make the services better and more powerful” (Gordon-Murnane, 2006, p. 29). Because of the collaborative and social characteristics of Web 2.0 tools, the practice of collecting references to scholarly resources has advanced into social bookmarking, which is defined as “the practice of saving bookmarks to a public web site and ‘tagging’ them with keywords” (Lomas, 2005). Websites such as Blackboard Scholar, Delicious, Connotea, Diigo, Furl, CiteULike, and many others not only allow users to save and store bookmarks, but also provide methods for classifying or add-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60566-729-4.ch010

ing “tags” along with annotated descriptions for future identification and retrieval. Because social bookmarking websites are public, visitors may search the sites by the identifying tags that others have already provided. This is particularly useful when trying to share online resources for scholarly collaboration.

The 2007 Horizon Report includes social bookmarking in “user-created content” with a time-to-adoption horizon of one year or less. However, the Report also states that “we face a significant challenge as we seek to marshal these techniques in the service of education” (The New Media, 2007, p. 9). There has been much talk about social bookmarking, particularly its use in research communities for collaboratively finding and tagging Web resources so that they can be searched and reused. But how is social bookmarking being used effectively in teaching? What are the best pedagogical practices? Can the needs of many different kinds of learners who have various levels of research skills be met with the same technology?

Research shows that students learn more when they are actively engaged and have a sense of ownership over the course materials and their own learning processes. Yet instructors are generally reluctant to give up control of course content, and they often lack the skills to effectively integrate social learning activities and collaborative, dynamic content generation into their teaching environments. Social bookmarking can provide a bridge for this gap (both generational and technical) by offering an easy-to-use, engaging tool for managing Web-based resources on course topics, with minimal implementation costs or barriers. An added bonus is that social bookmarking overlaps with instructors’ research motivations (many are probably already using this technology in their own research communities), appealing to instructors’ desires to include their own scholarly worlds in their teaching. The outcome can be dynamic course resource management and the opportunity for students to learn valuable information analysis

and research skills while collaboratively contributing to a body of learning materials. This vision will become a reality more readily if instructors have good examples and pedagogical strategies that are applicable to courses and students at different levels.

This chapter provides real-world examples that demonstrate different pedagogical models for social bookmarking. The examples demonstrate the use of social bookmarking in undergraduate and graduate courses. They are applicable in community college and university courses, hybrid and fully online courses, and in many different disciplines. Each example includes assessment of student engagement, information literacy, research abilities, and the quality of students’ bibliographies and knowledge management skills. Instructors who use these strategies in their own courses are more likely to have a positive experience with social bookmarking and cross the bridge to pedagogical innovations and expanding active learning opportunities for their students.

BACKGROUND

Social bookmarking has recently emerged within the scholarly literature and is primarily found within three areas: social bookmarking usage, tagging and folksonomy, and educational uses. The majority of references to social bookmarking identify usage and typical practice and are often provided by librarians interested in how users are tagging resources (i.e., Hargadon, 2007; Richardson, 2007; Trexler, 2007). Gordon-Murnane (2006) examined several Web 2.0 tools and identified various features of social bookmarking: “keeping found things found, sharing collaboration, vertical search, discovery/serendipity, and portability/mobility (multiple access points)” (p. 29). She further identified noticeable strengths such as community creation, searchable tags and folksonomies, and tagged content with mobility. Weaknesses considered were the lack of a standard

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