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ONLINE DATABASES

Living the Virtual Library Life

By Carol Tenopir

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO FAR these days to hear about the library's role in social networking. Sites such as Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, and Second Life provide a personal, but virtual, library presence to link librarians and library patrons.

American Library Association (ALA) president Loriene Roy is excited about the opportunities these virtual worlds hold for libraries and librarians. She thinks Second Life (SL), peopled by avatars and created by Linden Research Inc., could be a way for librarians to reach each other and maintain social connections, as well as serve continuing education. Roy said her use of "SL reflects my learning style—I need specific tasks and short training sessions to get me to where I need to be."

Academic library applications include orientation sessions for the campus and the library, while public libraries use SL for "book clubs, education events, lectures, classes, and simulations of library services." In an August 9 letter to *USA Today*, Roy enthused how "[u]niversity librarians are using text messaging, instant messaging, and Second Life as everyday...tools to hone students' online research skills."

Online learning rethought

Gerry McKiernan's blog *Social Networking Sites for Engaged Library Services* is a good place to start learning about such sites and services. In an online survey of college and research librarians, McKiernan, sci-tech librarian at Iowa State University, learned that, while 86 percent of respondents have a Facebook profile or other social networking presence, only 15 percent of his respondents report a central library profile (mostly on Facebook or MySpace). Libraries are still finding the best ways to work with social networking in a work-related setting.

San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science, CA, opened a pioneering Second Life LIS campus in May for discussions, lectures, and classes. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign offered a series of "vir-

tual world" continuing education courses on SL for librarians this year and will again next year.

An interactive and free course, "Five Weeks to a Social Library," for 40 librarians worldwide took place this past Feb-

including book review applications such as Books iRead, library guide applications such as LibGuides Librarian, bookmarking applications linking Facebook and del.icio.us, and connections to library reference services and catalogs.

Focus not on the cachet of new technology but to improve service for staff and patrons

ruary and March. All of the content, including archived webcasts, is available on the course web site.

In her *iLibrarian* blog, Ellyssa Kroski, Columbia University reference librarian, recently published "Top 10 FaceBook Apps for Librarians," an impressive range,

Reading to catch up

Several new books help librarians catch up with basic information and recommendations of worthwhile sites. Kroski just wrote *Web 2.0 for Librarians and Information Professionals*, which covers a variety of innovative technologies and gives examples from libraries that are employing blogs, social bookmarks, and more.

Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Library Service by Michael E. Casey and Laura C. Savastinuk (both from Gwinnett County Public Library, Lawrenceville, GA) offers a big-picture look, valuable for administrators, at incorporating new services (also see "Library 2.0: Service for the Next-Generation Library").

Another new book offers a good introduction to social networking applications. *Social Software in Libraries: Building Collaboration, Communication, and Community Online*, by Meredith Farkas, distance learning librarian at Norwich University, VT, provides specific examples that should stimulate ideas for incorporating social software applications in all types of libraries. The freely available companion web site shows sample social software applications in action.

Lest we all get too carried away, Farkas cautions that librarians shouldn't focus on implementing technology "for cachet alone" but "to make librarians' lives easier or to serve patrons better."

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LINK LIST

Five Weeks to a Social Library
www.sociallibraries.com/course

Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Library Service
books.infotoday.com/books/Library20.shtml

Library 2.0: Service for the Next-Generation Library
www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6365200.html

San Jose State Second Life Wiki
slisweb.sjsu.edu/sl

Social Networking Sites for Engaged Library Services
onlinesocialnetworks.blogspot.com

Social Software in Libraries
www.sociallibraries.com

Top 10 Facebook Apps for Librarians
oedb.org/blogs/ilibrarian/2007/top-ten-facebook-apps-for-librarians-part-one

Virtual World Librarianship in Second Life
www.lis.uiuc.edu/programs/cpd/Second_Life.html

Web 2.0 for Librarians and Information Professionals
www.Neal-Schuman.com/db/7/617.html