

Teens & Social Networking in School & Public Libraries:

A Toolkit for Librarians & Library Workers

updated and expanded June 2009

Created by:



For more than 50 years, YALSA has been the world leader in recommending reading listening and viewing for teens.

50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
1.800.545.2433 x4390
yalsa@ala.org

Table of Contents

Information to share with community members:

How Online Social Networking Facilitates Learning in Schools & Libraries..... 2

Resources for librarians & library workers:

Tips for Talking with Legislators About Social Networking..... 4

Educating the Community about Online Social Networking..... 5

Educating Teens about Online Social Networking..... 7

Additional Resources about Online Social Networking..... 9

How Online Social Networking Facilitates Learning in Schools & Libraries:

What are social networking technologies? They are software that enables people to connect, collaborate and form virtual communities via the computer and/or Internet. Social networking web sites are those that provide this opportunity to interact via interactive web applications. Sites that allow visitors to send emails, post comments, build web content and/or take part in live audio or video chats are all considered to be social networking sites. These kinds of sites have come to be collectively referred to as “Web 2.0” and allow users to interact and participate in a way was previously possible.

Social networking technologies have many positive uses in schools and libraries. They are an ideal environment for teens to share what they are learning or to build something together online. The nature of the medium allows teens to receive feedback from librarians, teachers, peers, parents, and others. Social networking technologies create a sense of community (as do the physical library and school) and in this way are already aligned with the services and programs at the library and/or school.

Schools and libraries are working to integrate positive uses of social networking into their classrooms, programs, and services. By integrating social networking technologies into educational environments, teens have the opportunity to learn from adults how to be safe and smart when participating in online social networks. They also learn a valuable life skill, as these social networking technologies are tools for communication that are widely used in colleges and in the workplace. Here are a few examples of how teens are being introduced to the positive uses of social networking technologies:

- A school uses blogging software to publish its newspaper. The blog format allows for timely publication and the ability to make updates easily. This format also allows for comments from readers and easy navigation to archived stories. Publication costs are minimal (no color print costs!) and there is no limit to the length of the paper, allowing for more student participation. See <http://waylandstudentpress.com/>
- An author creates a blog or Twitter account as a way to reflect on the reading and writing experience. Teens who enjoy the author’s work keep up on what the author is writing and thinking through the blog. The author blog is used as a research source and as a way to communicate with the author about books, reading, and writing. See <http://www.twitter.com/barrylyga> and <http://halseanderson.livejournal.com/>
- A school librarian works with teachers to encourage student reading. As a means of getting students actively involved in their own reading, the librarian creates a VoiceThread where

Literacy & Social Networking

Social networking tools give teens meaningful ways to use and improve reading and writing skills. All social networking software requires teens to read and write. Reading and writing skills are used when a teen:

- creates a profile on a social networking site;
- posts or comments on a blog;
- writes about an idea on Twitter;
- adds or edits content on a wiki;
- searches for social content; or
- consults peers online as a part of research

This is why these technologies are referred to as the “read/write web.”

Developmental Assets & Social Networking

When schools and libraries help teens use social networking tools safely and smartly, they also help teens meet their developmental assets as defined by the Search Institute (<http://www.search-institute.org>). When teens:

- Learn how to use blogs, wikis, Facebook and MySpace within an educational context they learn about **boundaries and expectations**.
- Are able to use social networking tools in learning they have a **commitment to learning**.
- Have the opportunity to communicate with peers, experts, authors, etc. via online social networking they develop **social & cultural competence**.
- Work with adults and peers on developing social network sites and teaching others how to use these sites they are **empowered**.
- Have a voice in the future of the school or the library they gain a sense of **personal identity** and value.
- See how librarians and teachers use social networks they are presented with **positive role models**.

students discuss books in which they are interested. See <http://voicethread.com/share/164125/>

- A public library creates a Facebook Fan page as a way to connect with teens ages 14 and older. The page includes information on programs and services at the library in which teens can take part. Teens who are not traditional library users learn about and use the library through the Facebook Fan page because they are familiar and comfortable with the technology. Teens make the library one of their Facebook friends and then are reminded of the library whenever they log onto their space. See <http://tinyurl.com/l2a67e>
- A public library works with its Teen Advisory Groups to create video reviews of favorite books, movies, and games and posts them on YouTube. As a result teens get a chance to articulate what they like and don't like about materials and have a chance to express their views to a global audience <http://www.nypl.org/books/sta2009/>
- A student creates a MySpace site for an author she needs to study. As she gathers information, she enters it into the writer's MySpace profile. She uses the blog function to post stories or poems she analyzes. Before long, other MySpace authors and poets (some real, some not) befriend her author. They comment on what is written and lead the student to more resources. The student has to adopt the persona of her author and imagine what the author's responses might actually be. See <http://tinyurl.com/2zah77>
- A library creates a Facebook application so teens are able to search the library's catalog from within their own Facebook profile page. This enables teens to quickly and easily access library content and brings the library to the teen in the place where she feels comfortable already. See <http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=2353074921>
- A high school creates a social network via Ning as a way to create a space for teens to connect with each other, faculty, and administration. See <http://rcarams.ning.com/>
- A teacher uses Google Docs for a writing assignment so that students can easily access their documents from outside of the classroom and collaborate with classmates on their writing. See http://www.google.com/educators/p_docs.html
- Teens take lyrics from a favorite song and paste them into Wordle. They then get to analyze the language used in the song and consider what the repetition and use of words implies about the lyric's meaning. See http://www.wordle.net/gallery/wrdl/262858/Stairway_to_Heaven

Tips for Talking with Legislators about Social Networking

Even though librarians are respected members of the community, the competition for the attention and time of elected officials is great, as is the competition for funding. It is important that librarians reach out to elected officials and educate them about the needs of libraries and library patrons.

1. Communicate via phone, fax or in person. If you're hoping to meet with a legislator in person, set up an appointment in advance. (By the way, don't be disappointed if you end up communicating with someone from the legislator's staff.)
2. Be polite, respectful, professional and friendly.
3. Introduce yourself, identify your job title and state your purpose.
4. Stick to the point: communicate ONE message—the benefits of social networking for teens.
5. Use specific examples from your own work with teens to illustrate your point. If you're meeting the legislator in person, you might even be able to take a well-spoken teen and/or parent with you who can talk about the benefits of social networking.
6. Ask for action. For example, ask the legislator to vote against any legislation that attempts to restrict or ban social networking sites in libraries. Or ask the legislator to support any legislation that supports social networking and Internet access, like the E-rate.
7. Offer to provide additional information about social networking. Take such materials with you if you're meeting the legislator in person.
8. Listen carefully and courteously.
9. Invite the legislator to visit your library. Provide a calendar of events.
10. Remember to say "thank you."

Before You Visit

Do your homework. Find out what legislation is pending and be aware of what it says and where the person you are going to talk to stands on the issues related to social networking.

Gather personal stories relating to the issue from your teen library patrons and their parents to share with the legislator.

Visit or contact your legislator as soon as you hear about pending legislation.

Find out about legislation on the ALA web site at
<http://capwiz.com/ala/home/>

Find out about federal social networking legislation at Open Congress www.opencongress.org.

Educating the Community about Online Social Networking

In the media there are many examples of how social networking has played a dangerous role in teen lives. However, positive examples of how this technology supports teen literacy skills and developmental growth are not always so readily accessed. For that reason, librarians should play an active role in educating parents, teachers and other members of the community about the positive benefits of social networking in teen lives. The following examples of how you can educate your community provide a starting point. When planning, be sure to enlist your Teen Advisory Group (TAG), teens that spend time in your library, or teens in the community to help you plan and implement the ideas suggested below.

- Convert online resource guides and pathfinders to a wiki format so that students and teachers can collaborate on these resources. Wikis give users of information the chance to add their own ideas about tools and resources that are found to be useful in the research process.
- Create and distribute brochures and post information online about what your library is already doing to ensure that children and teens are safe online. Include information about Internet filters and Internet Acceptable Use Policies that your library has.
- Invite parents and educators to a workshop where they can learn about a variety of social networking tools. In the workshop have librarians and teachers discuss how these tools are being integrated positively in the classroom and library. Have teens with well-designed Facebook and MySpace profiles, YouTube content, and Flickr pages, etc. demonstrate the positive ways they use social networking tools.
- Host Do-It-Yourself Days for adults to learn how to use Social Networking sites and tools successfully. After an introduction about what social networking is, and why it's an important part of a teen's life, teens from your TAG could work with adults on using the tools in a way that enhances their own lives. Teens might show adults how to set up: a blog that showcases a hobby or special interest, a MySpace or Facebook space to keep in touch with friends, a Flickr account so they can share family photos, an IM account to conduct live chats with family members overseas, etc.
- Create an online demo or class that gives adults the chance to test out and discuss social networking technologies at their leisure and in a somewhat anonymous setting. Make the demo available from your library's web site. Use your TAG group to help develop the demo.

If Social Networking Legislation Was Enacted

There are many sites currently used by adults and teens that would be blocked in schools and libraries if legislation prohibiting access to social networking sites was instituted. These include:

- Photo sharing sites like Flickr.com, which patrons use to share photos with family members who are far away.
- Health-related sites like PsychCentral.com, which allow users to get important medical questions answered during live chat sessions.
- Educational sites like LegalGuru.com, which allows users to get free legal advice.
- Library reference sites, where patrons can get questions answered via instant messaging that use AOL, Yahoo, or other commercial services.

- Use social networking technologies as an access point for your library's services. Create a MySpace or Facebook space as a place for adults and teens to learn about programs and materials. Set up a blog where adults and teens read about what's going on in the library and can add comments about programs, materials and so on. Develop a booklist wiki where adults and teens can add titles of books on specific themes.

Social Networking Defined

The following definitions of social networking tools should help you explain to your community what it is all about.

Blog: a web page where you can write journal entries, reviews, articles and more. Blog authors can allow readers to post their own comments. No web design knowledge is needed to create a blog.

Microblog: a blog that is made up of short posts usually only of 140 characters or less.

Podcasts: audio files available for download via subscription, so you can automatically download it to a computer or MP3 player (like an iPod).

RSS: a way for subscribers to automatically receive information from blogs, online newspapers and podcasts.

Social Networking: in the online world this refers to the ability to connect with people through websites and other technologies, like Facebook and discussion boards.

Tagging: refers to the ability to add subject-headings to content in order to organize information in a meaningful way and to connect to others that tag similar content in the same way.

Virtual worlds: allow for real-time communication & collaboration with people from all over the world. Each person in a virtual world uses an avatar as a virtual representation of herself.

Wiki: a collaborative space for developing web content. No web design knowledge is needed to create a wiki.

- Inform—perhaps via an audio or video podcast—educators, parents and community members about how social networking tools allow for schools and libraries to integrate technology in meaningful ways, with and for teens, at low (or no) cost. Information could include overviews of the technologies, interviews with teens about their use of technology, interviews with experts in technology and teen development who discuss how the technologies support teen growth and literacy development, and so on.
- Create and distribute an information sheet for adults which provides information about the positive aspects of social networking as well as Internet safety tips and that includes annotated lists of resources. You can also post the information on your library's website, blog, wiki, Facebook, or MySpace page.
- Sponsor a scholarly presentation, or series of presentations, for local educators and concerned adults by experts in the field of developmental assets, teen print literacies in the world of technology, and social networking. Ask speakers to focus directly on how social networking technologies have positive benefits for teens.
- Create your own social network with Ning – <http://www.ning.com>. Invite teens, parents, school faculty and administrators to join the network as a

way to learn how the tools work and to discuss issues related to social networking in teen (and adult) lives.

- Host an evening that focuses on how social networking is being used in higher education and business. Invite faculty from a local college or university to talk about how they use social networking technologies with students to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Invite business leaders to talk about what social networking technologies their employees must know how to use in order to be successful in their jobs.

Educating Teens about Online Social Networking

You can help teens use social networking technologies successfully and safely by sponsoring programs and services that focus on these technologies. The following examples are available to help you get started. Show these examples to your Teen Advisory Group (TAG) and see which one(s) they feel are important to offer in your community. Have your TAG help plan and carry out the event(s). Remember that social networking sites often have minimum age requirements and be sure to honor those.

- Offer a class to teach teens how to use the blogging site, wordpress.com. As teens set up their blog you can facilitate a discussion about Internet safety issues, the importance of guarding against identity theft, online etiquette, etc.
- Host Do-It-Yourself Days for teens where they learn about a variety of social networking technologies. You might have a day for photo-sharing technologies, another day for bookmarking sites, another day for friend building, and so on. During each of the sessions you can talk with teens about how to make decisions about safe use of these technologies.
- Work with teens to produce audio and video podcasts on topics of interest. They might review media and books, talk about what's going on in the community, book talk, etc. As a part of the podcast process, have teens write outlines of the content they want to cover and talk with them about whom they want to make the podcast available to.

Some Social Networking Sites

delicious

www.delicious.com

Combines bookmarking and tagging; allows users to network with others in order to keep track of what is being bookmarked by those with similar interests

Flickr

www.flickr.com

A photo-sharing site that allows users to tag images

MySpace & Facebook

www.myspace.com

www.facebook.com

Users build their space on the Web and then invite others to be their friends

Twitter

Write short messages to inform others of ideas and content.

YouTube

www.youtube.com

A video site that allows users to post and tag videos.

VoiceThread

<http://www.voicethread.com>

Create presentations that give others a chance to comment and interact.

Wikipedia

www.wikipedia.org

An encyclopedia in which content is created

Authors Using MySpace

Rachel Cohn

www.myspace.com/rachel_cohn

Cecil Castellucci

www.myspace.com/cecilseaskull

Sara Dessen

www.myspace.com/sarahdessen

Melissa de la Cruz

www.myspace.com/melissadelacruz

David Levithan

www.myspace.com/davidlevithan

Brian Sloan

www.myspace.com/bmsloan

Authors using Twitter

Robin Benway

<http://twitter.com/robinbenway>

Coe Booth

<http://twitter.com/coebooth>

Neil Gaiman

<http://twitter.com/neilhimsel>

Barry Lyga

<http://twitter.com/barrylyga>

Melissa Walker

<http://twitter.com/MelissacWalker>

Scott Westerfeld

<http://twitter.com/scottwesterfeld>

- Have teens create delicious accounts for collecting resources they can use in school research. The teens can network with classmates and peers in delicious in order to learn about resources their peers have uncovered that support learning on a particular topic. Use delicious networking as a jumping off point for a discussion of evaluating information quality.
- Use Flickr as a platform for creative writing exercises with teens. Upload your own, or teens', photos to Flickr and then have teens tell a story with the photos through captions that they add.
- Invite a technology expert in to talk with teens about how social networking tools work.
- Give teens the chance to connect with favorite authors, artists, musicians, and so on via MySpace, Twitter, Facebook and personal blogs. Teens can search for the spaces and

- With teens create a library book and media wiki as a means for recommending resources to library patrons. Train teens on how to update the content of the wiki and talk about how to evaluate the quality of information in wikis and other types of resources.
- Take photos at the library and have teens upload and tag them on Flickr or another photo-sharing site. As a part of the uploading and tagging process, discuss safety and privacy concerns with teens and decide whether or not the photos should be private or public. As they tag the photos, ask them to consider what the best ways are to describe content in order for friends or the public (if the photos are made public) to find them.
- Work with teens to create a wiki, podcast or web page about Internet safety aimed at children. Post the completed resource on your library's Web site.

Tools to Use to Get Started with Social Networking

Animoto

Create high-quality videos from teen photos at Animoto, <http://www.animoto.com>

Blogging

Set up blogs with a free service like Blogger.com, <http://www.blogger.com> or Word Press, <http://www.wordpress.com>

Wikis

Setup a wiki with a free tool such as Wikispaces, <http://www.wikispaces.com> or PBWorks, <http://www.pbworks.com>

blogs using common searching tools and then comment on the blogs and sites of those with whom they connect.

- Build a library MySpace or Facebook Fan page with teens. Have teens meet to plan the space, including what it should look like and include. Work with them to build the site, and develop guidelines for blogging, commenting, and making friends on the site. As a part of this project, talk with teens about how to decide whether or not to accept those who want to friend them on MySpace or Facebook. Add value to your MySpace or Facebook presence through links to online safety and library resources. Make it possible for teens to add your catalog search on their MySpace or Facebook accounts.

Additional Resources about Online Social Networking & Libraries

FOR LIBRARIANS & EDUCATORS:

American Library Association (ALA) Wikis

ALA hosts an array of wikis that focus on technology in libraries in general and with teens specifically. These include:

- YALSA – <http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa>
- Teen Tech Week - http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa/index.php/Teen_Tech_Week

Enhancing Child Safety and Online Technologies

<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/pubrelease/isttf/>

The final report of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force highlights how socio-economic conditions have an impact on safe use of technology by children and teens.

Ito, Mizuko. **Kids Informal Learning with Digital Media**. Catherine & John D MacArthur Foundation, 2008.

<http://digitalyouth.ischool.berkeley.edu/report>

A report following a three-year study that focuses on how young people use digital media for learning, information gathering, and content creation.

NeverEnding Search

<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/blog/1340000334.html>

The blog of high school library media specialist, Joyce Valenza, which frequently covers teens and social networking.

Palfrey, John. **Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Native**. Basic Books, 2008.

A look at challenges and positive ramifications of technology use by digital natives.

Pew Internet in American Life Project - Teens

<http://pewinternet.org/topics/Teens.aspx>

The Pew Internet in American Life Project frequently releases reports on teen use of technology.

Richardson, Will. **Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for the Classroom**. 2nd Edition, Corwin Press, 2008

Richardson explains how and why social networking can be used in the library and classroom.

30 Positive Uses of Social Networking

http://www.leonline.com/yalsa/positive_uses.pdf

Ideas from librarians about how social networking can be integrated into schools and libraries successfully. Use these ideas to educate your colleagues, peers, and government officials about how social networking plays a positive role in teen lives.

Tapping into MySpace Minds

<http://www.stevehargadon.com/2007/01/tapping-into-myspace-minds-with-chris.html>

Steve Hargadon talks with Chris O'Neal about the impact of social networking on education.

Tapscott, Dan. **Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World.**

McGraw-Hill, 2008.

Tapscott looks at what the world is like for those that have grown up with technology as a part of their daily lives.

YALSA Blog

<http://yalsa.ala.org/blog>

The YALSA blog often includes posts about social networking and teens.

FOR TEENS:

That's Not Cool

<http://www.thatsnotcool.com/>

Your cell phone, IM, and social networks are all a digital extension of who you are. When someone you're with pressures you or disrespects you in those places, that's not cool.

Social Networking Sites: Safety Tips for Tweens and Teens

www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec14.htm

A short and useful list of reminders for staying safe on social networking sites (and online in general). Includes a list of resources for finding out more.

FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS:

Family Online Safety Institute

<http://www.fosi.org/cms/>

Identifies and promotes best practices of technology.

GetNetWise

<http://www.getnetwise.org/>

Sponsored by the Internet Education Foundation, GetNetWise provides resources and information to help educate adults young people's privacy and safety online.

SafeTeens.com

<http://www.safeteens.com/>

A site with information about how to keep teens safe online includes blog posts on topics of current interest as well as links to helpful resources.

FOR EVERYONE:

iSAFE

www.isafe.org

Provides resources about Internet safety. There's a different section of the site for: parents, educators, kids & teens, and law enforcement. There are free online tutorials for young people and adults as well as printable newsletters and other resources.

NetSmartz

www.netsmartz.org.

Provides resources about Internet safety. There's a different section of the site for: parents, educators, kids, teens, press and law enforcement. Maintained by the national Center for Missing & Exploited Children.