

## **Catalysts, innovation and online engagement @SLNSW**

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### **Abstract**

Innovation is approached in different ways and in different areas within library and information services. In 2011 the State Library of NSW launched the Innovation Project with the aims of expanding social media-based services, and developing and evaluating a service model and structure to support and enable service delivery innovation. This paper describes the experience of introducing the new services and the flexible work model adopted. The project also included building staff capacity for online engagement, building capacity for change through new ways of working together across the organization, building partnerships around the world and capturing social media content as part of the library's digital collecting priorities. Some of the project partnerships include CSIRO Social Media Early Adopters Group, 23 Mobile Things and Wikimedia Australia. Insights and learnings for other library and information services professionals working in the areas of social media and innovation are explored and shared.

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Increasingly people are engaging online (Qualman, 2012) with a variety of social media channels becoming common avenues for communication and communities of interest, presenting a major challenge to libraries to innovate and take service delivery into these environments for clients. The networked environment of social media, provides libraries with “more and different ways of engaging with their users as patterns of research, learning and personal information use change” (Dempsey, 2013). Tablets and smart phones have also increased the opportunity for constant connectivity and the independence of library clients using their own technology (BYOD) as well as ‘content grazing’ across multiple screens (Battersby, 2013). These engaged online communities are a new audience of active cultural participants (Russo and Watkins, 2008), allowing libraries to capitalise on digital literacies and participatory media technologies (Russo, 2011) which facilitate content creation and a new type of engagement through co-creation and participatory cultural experiences. This paper outlines how State Library of New South Wales, a large research library, is responding to these challenges.

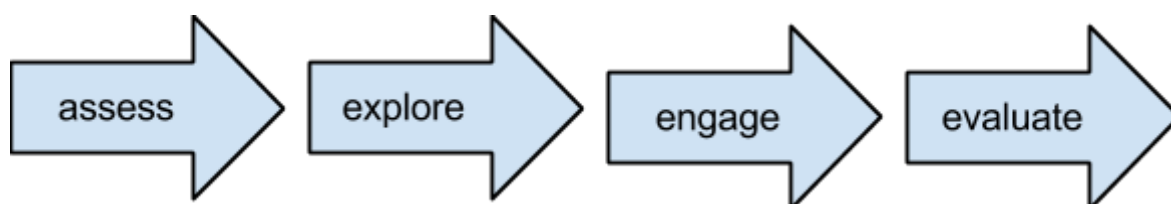
## **Creating space for change and innovation**

Historically, libraries have assimilated technological innovations to deliver services while their mission and goals largely remain constant (Katirikou and Sefertzi, 2000). A vital part of the successful assimilation of new technologies is the ability of library staff to acquire new skills, to anticipate and innovate (Katirikou and Sefertzi, 2000). The culture within organisations can support or stifle innovation, particularly where staff are required to reconceptualise the delivery of library services to clients (Halbert, 2010). There are often technical blocks that prevent or limit access to social media tools in libraries (Tyler, 2012).

For many libraries the advent of web 2.0 technologies presented new opportunities for delivering services and communicating with clients and the community, opportunities that were embraced through “23 things / learning 2.0” style learning and development opportunities for staff (Stephens, 2007). These programs frequently empowered staff to be more open to emerging technologies and explore them, while also requiring a degree of personal change to allow the tools to be incorporated into their work (Stephens and Cheetham, 2011). Mobile technologies are equally disruptive, presenting many “new opportunities of real-time, ubiquitous technology and the augmentation that mediates the physical and digital layers of people networks and urban infrastructures” (Foth, Choi and Satchell, 2011). Opportunities such as these are reshaping models of library service delivery (Murphy, 2010).

In 2011 the State Library of NSW launched the Innovation Project with the aims of expanding social media-based services, and developing and evaluating a service model and structure to support and enable service delivery innovation. The Project includes trialling a number of social media tools, engaging staff through voluntary participation in working groups and then mainstreaming successful pilots into regular services where evaluation demonstrates the tools are effective in delivering Library objectives. Working groups undertake four steps in assessing a tool as fit for library use, exploring the capability of the tool in the context of the risks and constraints involved in representing the library online,

engaging with the online community and understanding the etiquette and memes that apply and evaluating the costs, benefits and potential further uses for the Library.



## **Support for change and innovation**

The Innovation Project was initiated with strong support from key senior staff (Byrne, 2012), and is championed in the organisation by an executive sponsor who chairs the project steering committee, made up of key stakeholders from around the Library. The small project team made up of a project leader and project officer manage a schedule of work that is characterised by monitoring and rapid response to the changing social media environment, conducting a series of staff working groups and progressive integration of social media tools into existing governance, compliance and workflow requirements. The pilot projects for each social media tool are managed within a structure of work packages including a closure report containing the working group evaluation, statistical analysis and recommendations for further application in the Library or an exit strategy from a social media tool.

Staff volunteer to participate in each of the part time working groups (½ day per week over 12 weeks) during which time they learn to represent the Library in online forums and manage the associated risks; to operate a social tool and participate fully in its online community using all features of the tool; operate the tool as an official Library channel and evaluate its effectiveness for Library use. The final stage in each pilot project is managing a transition to business as usual or putting in place an exit strategy, including preparing procedures and training or briefing their peers.

## **A goal to explore and test potential**

Libraries have used social media tools successfully for some time to promote services and events (Fernandez, 2009), however the goal for the working groups is to test if the tools can also be used to deliver library services including improving discovery of collection materials, communication with clients and the community engaged in information seeking activities, and collecting content that represents a sample of the documentary heritage of NSW (SLNSW, 2013a) as it is lived and expressed in public social media conversations. Another equally important goal is to build organisational capability to work with social media, representing the Library online in these fora, developing efficient workflows and procedures, training staff in a transferrable skill set to assess, explore, engage and evaluate a social media tool as an official channel for the Library, including managing risk in the environment.

Working group members are actively engaged in reconceptualising (Halbert, 2010) the Library's service delivery model as they test the potential of a social media tool. They are asked to consider the Library's assets (collections, events, exhibitions, physical spaces, online services and staff expertise) and to test how the social media tools can be used to

connect with the audiences (Visser, 2012). Within the working group, a team problem solving approach is used, learning and sharing discoveries, seeking out other examples to benchmark with and collaboratively designing workflows and procedures. Team members are also actively encouraged to explore the view of the Library's social media channels through mobile devices to deliberately consider the user experience. Team members all contribute to the evaluation of the tools and identify potential applications if a tool is to transition to business as usual.

## **Our experiences**

By August 2013, the Library had engaged 46 staff in four working groups piloting the use of Historypin, Pinterest, Wikipedia and Instagram. Many of the staff had the opportunity to work with colleagues from a variety of areas across the organisation on a project for the first time. The initial assessment phase for a tool includes identifying its popularity with Australian and international audiences, managing any risks associated with the terms of service, copyright, privacy and business record keeping and identifying suitable content for the working group to commence with, drawing on the Library's collections.

- Historypin: 762 historical public domain photographs from the Library's collection were pinned onto the Google maps interface with links back to the Library catalogue. Staff also linked the images together to create 9 tours, 25 themed collections, and several repeat images. 5,849 views of the images at the conclusion of the 12 week pilot was rapidly eclipsed six months later with a total of 20,041 views.
- Pinterest: 1220 images pinned to the Library's account received a total 228 repins, increasing to 1,583 repins six months later. Several accounts were established to cater for particular audiences including druginfo targeting teenagers and their parents and the multicultural unit showcasing Library resources in more than 44 community languages.
- Wikipedia: staff edited 57 existing articles and created 48 new articles in the encyclopedia. More than 280 additional links from Wikipedia to the sl.nsw.gov.au domain were added. The 1813 Crossing of the Blue Mountains article created by Library staff was nominated to "Did You Know" status on the front page of the encyclopedia and received 8,798 hits in 8 hours. Images added to the Wikimedia Commons have been used in articles in other language editions of the encyclopedia and articles created by members of the public, encouraging reuse of these images. Indigenous content contributed included: Australian Aboriginal Sacred Site article improvements; articles created for Douglas Grant; Governor Davey's Proclamation; and a biographical article about Mary Jane Cain. An ongoing relationship with Wikimedia Australia was established, including hosting the first Wikipedian in Residence in an Australian cultural institution.
- Instagram: 10 staff are in the working group, who at the time of writing are contributing photographs to the Library account.
- The Library is actively participating in two other projects within the Innovation Project, (i) monitoring and collecting social media for the collection as part of a scientific trial with CSIRO and (ii) "23 Mobile Things" an online self paced course for library workers designed to support exploration of the potential of mobile technologies in delivering library services, developed in cooperation with a colleague from the Guldborgsund-bibliotekerene public library in Denmark (2013b).

In focus groups at the conclusion of the working groups, the supervisors of the working group participants are also asked to provide feedback. This has been positive and they indicate that staff have adopted the skills in their day-to-day work, in many cases sharing information and skills with colleagues and initiating new services for clients using the tools. Anecdotally, there is also a noticeable level of enthusiasm for participating in the project and being given an opportunity to work with colleagues from other areas, doing something 'fun' and in the opportunity to explore the Library's collections in more depth. Both the amount of collection content available to highlight in social media and the emerging technologies seem to be endless, encouraging the Library to continue to assimilate new technological innovations to deliver services (Katirikou and Sefertzi, 2000). The tools explored to date have all yielded increased numbers of visits to the Library's website and catalogues as indicated by Google Analytics reports and views and interactions in the social media channels themselves continue to grow.

## Capacity building

Trend monitoring is ongoing as social media tools and their associated apps change frequently (eg. ownership, technical upgrades, terms of service, functionality, APIs) and their popularity in the local market also waxes and wanes (Cowling, 2013). Policy gaps have also been identified and the capabilities of social media tools in some cases also influence new policy development. One area that is vital is organisational policy to respond to copyright owner takedown requests.

A broad understanding of digital engagement, representing the Library online and the clients world of BYOD and mobile devices was sought, including providing opportunities for staff to participate in a digital engagement framework workshop (Visser, 2012) and providing access to the self paced *23 Mobile Things* course (2013a). Additional problem solving was needed in identifying appropriate processes for capturing business records in social media channels to meet compliance obligations.

It has become clear that the Library can use social media in four different ways to deliver on organisational objectives:

1. Developing markets (audiences) and promoting Library events, exhibitions, products, collections and services
2. Promoting discovery of library assets (including collections, services, events, exhibitions, online services, physical spaces and staff expertise)
3. Engaging with clients and the community in their preferred channels and online communities (conversation and service delivery) and
4. Collecting social media content for the collection (including social meta data and community created content)

## Evaluating the services

The literature on assessing the service delivery impact and outcomes of using social media in cultural institutions is limited and often specific to one tool or a specific campaign and there appears to be no agreed set of key performance indicators (Finnis, Chan, Clements, 2011). Staff have been required to interpret the reported figures and activity in these online

spaces and to determine what measures of success may be through experimentation and comparisons to other online examples. The measures that have proved useful to date, include:

- Community (eg. followers, friends, FB page likes)
- Activity / approval (likes)
- Engagement / action (RT, share, reblog, remix, reuse)
- Social media artefacts / objects collected and social meta data collected

Working group members have also had opportunities to practice their presentation skills, providing briefings for groups of colleagues and demonstrating the tools in action. The project leader and project officer have both been engaged in presenting about aspects of the projects to a variety of internal and external audiences.

Establishing efficient workflows and documenting procedures and processes is required if tools are to be mainstreamed and operated by multiple staff. A wiki was introduced to the Library primarily to capture this type of documentation as it evolves and has proved to be flexible enough to manage the rapidly evolving social media environment and simple enough for all working group members to be active contributors. In one case procedures were also developed for an external audience, creating Wikipedia articles about newspapers, to be shared with other NSLA library partners.

One of the Library's goals is to increase its renown on a world stage, not surprising for a Library of its size and stature in the research community. There have been several partnerships within the Innovation Project that speak directly to this objective, including working closely with Wikimedia Australia in training and engaging with the Wikipedia community at large; participating in a round two scientific trial with the CSIRO and contributing to an early adopters steering committee; partnering with Jan Holmquist to convert the Danish 23 Mobile Ting course into an English language version known as 23 Mobile Things which has spawned an Australian and New Zealand edition (ANZ 23 Mobile Things) and a German language version (Ger 23 Mobile Things) enabled by a Creative Commons licence.

It has become apparent that all areas of the Library contribute to the success of the Innovation Project activities either through the working groups, the steering committee or expert stakeholder consultations. In exploring and incubating social media pilot projects, the Library was able to use these tools for delivering services in three intersecting and overlapping ways: promoting discovery, online engagement and digital collecting.

### **Discovery:**

- increasing the visibility of Library content through strategic use of social media tools
- creating shareable content and promoting distribution by clients and the community to improve search engine optimisation (Schwartz, 2013)
- promoting library activities, services, events, exhibitions and spaces
- providing means of discovering Library content in popular online spaces
- creating recognisable Library channels in social media spaces (brand awareness)
- creating links back from content in social media channels to Library web presence

## Online engagement:

- Direct customer service answering incoming enquiries (eg. via Facebook, Twitter) including clients who may be onsite but use social media to communicate their needs to staff
- Experimenting with new social media tools to find those that are effective in engaging online communities (including risk management and ROI)
- Sharing learning with stakeholders (eg NSLA partners and NSW public library network)
- Ensuring staff are trained in online engagement, including: representing the Library brand online, media embargoes, moderation and incident response, records management and copyright awareness
- Using social media and collaborative workspaces to support the work of the library with stakeholders

## Digital collecting:

- Gathering social meta data contributed by the public to Library records (Smith-Yoshimura and Holley, 2012) (eg comments contributed to images in Flickr Commons and Historypin)
- Harvesting, indexing and storing social media content as part of the documentary heritage of NSW (NSLA, 2013) (SLNSW, 2013b)
- Client created content (CCC) and crowdsourcing

Discovery, online engagement and digital collecting are common challenges in the industry. The Innovation Project is one of the strategies the State Library of New South Wales is using to develop options for responding to these challenges.

## Conclusion

Emerging technologies, in the form of social media, may continue to impact on the Library environment for many years to come, but it also seems likely they will continue to morph and change and be replaced by new tools rapidly. The transferrable skills of assessing, exploring, engaging and evaluating a social media tool for library purposes should allow Library staff to adapt and to be flexible in identifying the potential of new tools to be fit for purpose and in evaluating the end of life for a tool that is no longer yielding productively for the Library. The tools explored in each pilot project, to date, have transitioned in some form to business as usual activities in the Library. There is increasing awareness of the application of the tools and communication and coordination of these activities is rapidly becoming more distributed throughout the Library. The data considered in each evaluation demonstrates that being active in social media channels is allowing Library staff to engage with clients in these online spaces as well as driving some traffic back to the Library's website, online exhibitions and catalogues.

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