Medical Librarians’ Uses and Perceptions of Social Tagging (poster)

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Medical Librarians’ Uses and Perceptions of Social Tagging
Cecile Bianco, MLS, Pharm D

WHAT IS SOCIAL TAGGING?
A phenomenon where people make up their own keywords to describe websites for discovery and retrieval. The resulting list of tags is a Folksonomy, a classification used by untrained individuals. This is in contrast to the work done by subject specialists using authorized terms (determined by professional) to create a taxonomy.

Examples of Uses in Libraries

fllickr
The University of Maryland is using Fllickr to organize the photos of the Library. They are organized into collections and within each collection has one or more tags. Each picture has been given one or more tags by the user that helps categorize them.

METHODLOGY

Online Survey
- Working with MLA headquarters, a random sample of 348 out of 3,440 members was selected.
- The survey consisted of 15 questions and was administra-
- ted through the Survey Monkey website.
- The sample included members who had email addresses and were not on the opt out list.

Getting Users to Answer the Survey

According to Dillman, there are ways to reduce nonresponse:

1. Multiple contacts: e.g. “in a few days you will receive my survey, please fill it out...
2. Small monetary token given with the survey (a chance to win some token prize was considered instead).
3. Interesting and compelling reasons given in the blurp above survey link
4. Methods such as pin numbers to control who answers the survey and that they do it only once. SurveyMonkey technology does this for you.
5. Use mixed mode survey (so those who don’t respond to email get a paper one).

RESULTS

Percent of the 156 Respondents that used Tagging

Number of Respondents Using Popular Tagging Sites

Number of Respondents Who Use Tagging Based on Years in the Profession

CONCLUSIONS

Roughly half (49%) of the medical librarians have used social tagging. The sites that were most commonly used were the most well-known sites, Del.icio.us and Fllickr. Interestingly, sites developed or promoted for the academic setting (ChemEd and CourseWeb) were not included. A greater percentage of those respondents with more recent MLS degrees use tagging. However, this trend was not statistically significant. With so many social tagging sites to choose from, the collective intelligence feature of tagging will not be realized until a consensus emerges as to which site(s) will be used.