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 of information and objects is often termed a “folksonomy,” a classification done by untrained individuals (folks). This is in contrast to the work done by subject specialists using authorized terms (determined by professionals) to create a taxonomy.

Examples of Uses in Libraries

flickr
The University of Maryland is using flickr 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 help categorize them.

According to the flickr website, “You can give your uploads a ‘tag’ or a ‘tags’, which is like a keyword. Tags help you find things which have something in common. You can assign up to 7 tags to each photo or video.” Clicking on any tag on the tag cloud light will show you the pictures with that tag.

LibraryThing
The FamilyResource Center at Akron Children’s Hospital has cataloged their 31,000 volume book collection in LibraryThing. It is available freely on the web at http://www.librarything.com/akronchildrenscenter Center. Under the heading, “Tags,” are the tags for books in the collection. Clicking on the tag “Children’s” will bring this descriptor to a list of books with this descriptor. For each book in the list, they give the comments, and a shared link. The shared link includes tags from other members in LibraryThing, members’ comments and the book description in Amazon as well as a link to the book in Amazon.

http://www.librarything.com/profile/familyresourcecenter

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METHODOLOGY

Online Survey
- Working with MLA headquarters, a random sample of 3,464 out of 3,469 members was selected.
- The survey consisted of 16 questions and was administrated through the SurveyMonkey 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 blur above survey link.
4. Methods such as pen 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

Have Not Used Tagging 54% 47%
Have Used Tagging
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

For the number of respondents who use tagging based in years in the profession, the Pearson chi-square statistic was found to be 6.895 21 = 4. The p-value was 0.042 which is greater than alpha (0.05). Therefore, we cannot reject the null hypothesis: years of experience and use of tagging are independent.

CONCLUSIONS

Roughly half (47%) 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 Flickr. Interestingly, sites developed or promoted for the academic setting (CiteULike and Connotea) were not used as widely. 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 features of tagging will not be realized until a consensus emerges as to which site(s) will be used.