

Social Bookmarking Sites: A Review

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Introduction

Social bookmarking tools allow users to store, manage, search, organize, and share their bookmarks online and access them from anywhere. Although these tools have been around since the mid-90s, librarians have not generally embraced them as tools for building information resources. However, these are incredibly useful tools for collaboration and information sharing. Following is a brief description of some of the more popular social bookmarking sites and ways in which librarians are using them to help users navigate the Web.

Features of Social Bookmarking Sites

The table below compares the features of several popular social bookmarking sites. All of the sites listed offer link annotation/notes, RSS feeds based on tags and user names, the ability to make individual links private, and bookmarklets that allow users to add links to their libraries easily. Another resource that provides links to social bookmarking tools is Wikipedia's List of Social Bookmarking Websites [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_bookmarking_websites].

Site	URL	Cost	Export format	Groups	Other useful features
Delicious*	http://www.delicious.com	Free	HTML	no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolbar includes recent bookmarks and provides quick links to frequently used site tools. • Allows users to license bookmark streams under Creative Commons. • API available for programmers.
Diigo	http://www.diigo.com	Tiered pricing, starting with free. See http://www.diigo.com/premium for details. Educator discount.	RSS, CSV, HTML	yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolbar features sticky notes, highlighting, read it later features, as well as Add a Bookmark. API available for programmers.

Barnes: Social Bookmarking Sites

Connotea	http://www.connotea.org	Free	RIS, BibTeX, Endnote, MODS (XML), Word 2007 Bibliography (XML), Plain Text, RSS	yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autofills bibliographic information pulled from resources. Works best with PDFs from scholarly publications. • Imports files from citation management software. • Developed by Nature Publishing. Used chiefly by scientists.
CiteULike	http://www.citeulike.org/	Free, with a Gold option (~\$49/year)	RIS, BibTeX, PDF, RTF, Plain Text	yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autofills bibliographic information pulled from certain scholarly publications. • Imports files from citation management software using BibTeX or RIS format. Also allows formatting of bibliographies as plain text, HTML, or PDF for inserting directly into documents. • Synch CiteULike account to Delicious and Mendeley. • Gold account includes a custom home page, PDF annotation, priority support, no ads, display customizations, extra citation formats. • Used chiefly by scientists.
Pinboard	http://pinboard.in	One-time fee, based on the number of current users (\$9.39 as of July 29, 2011). \$25/year archival account includes a <i>bookmark archiving service and full text searching of the archive.</i>	XML, HTML, JSON	no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both tags and individual links can be private. • Includes Read Later status for items you want to save without filling out a form. The <i>read later bookmarklet</i> adds pages to unread list without prompting for further information. • Configure to <i>automatically mirror</i> public bookmarks from accounts on Delicious, Instapaper, Read It Later, and Google Reader. • Collect and <i>archive tweets</i>, and save every URL in main Twitter stream or Twitter favorites as a bookmark. • Filter RSS feeds with up to three tags by modifying the feed URL.

*Note that the features offered on Delicious are current as of July 29, 2011. Recently Yahoo sold the tool to Avos; according to the Delicious FAQ, the transfer took place in July 2011.

I primarily use Delicious and Diigo, with Pinboard as a backup. I particularly like Pinboard's mirroring function because I know that my Delicious bookmarks are backed up elsewhere

automatically. This was particularly reassuring when the future of Delicious was in doubt. Pinboard's tweet archiving feature is also extremely



useful, especially for links that I retweet from others.

Scholarly researchers may prefer Connotea or CiteULike because they offer the ability to create bibliographies and easily share information with citation management tools like Mendeley and Endnote.

Social Bookmarking and Libraries

Social bookmarking sites are useful for more than storing bookmarks; they are also valuable tools for building lists of topical resources on the fly and sharing those lists with others.

Cooperative tagging involves using a common word or phrase among a group of people who have similar interests. As a form of cooperative collection development, it is an easy way to share relevant content with clients and other librarians. Just pick a tag, recruit volunteers, and start bookmarking.

For example, I participate in P2TagTeam [<http://www.delicious.com/tag/p2tagteam>], a coordinated effort by the Pollution Prevention Information Exchange [<http://www.p2rx.org>] to share resources about environmental sustainability. The ten participants involved in this tagging effort have bookmarked over 900 items! ISTC's Sustainable Electronics Initiative [<http://www.sustainelectronics.illinois.edu>] uses the same technique to share information on Diigo [<http://www.diigo.com/tag/icare>]. Additionally, I contribute to the Special Libraries Association's Environment and Resources Management cooperative tagging effort, where the new bookmarks appear in a box on the wiki's front page [<http://wiki.sla.org/display/SLADERM/ERM+Wiki+Home+Page>].

Another advantage of cooperative tagging is that you can see the resources that other users have identified by browsing the tag and saving

interesting items to your bookmarks. Browsing the P2TagTeam list allows me to locate relevant resources to add to my own bibliographies quickly. Tagging is also useful for building online collections of resources in specific subject areas. I teach workshops in green business and green libraries and have developed extensive bibliographies that I distribute to attendees. Because new information on both of these topics appears almost daily, I include a link to the relevant Delicious tag

[http://delicious.com/tsmom1219/ltls_green_libraries, http://delicious.com/tsmom1219/green_business] on the bibliography, rather than updating the bibliographies themselves.

Since social bookmarking tools automatically create RSS feeds for every tag and for every user, I can also integrate those feeds into web pages. For example, I use tags to populate RSS boxes in the LibGuides I create. See "Getting Started with Social Media: A Guide for Non-profit Organizations and Government Agencies" [<http://uiuc.libguides.com/social-media-for-nonprofits>] for an example.

The "group" feature, offered by Diigo, Connotea, and CiteULike, is another tool that librarians can use to connect with users to discover and share new resources. This feature often includes an e-mail subscription option, which sends a daily digest of new items shared among the group members. This is an excellent way to keep up with new resources on specific topics of interest.

In summary, social bookmarking has changed the way that I identify and share digital resources and has become an effective part of my professional toolbox.