

## Review: *The Social Factor: Innovate, Ignite, and Win through Mass Collaboration and Social Networking*

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As collaborative librarians can attest, the ability to successfully work together often depends on tools developed to facilitate communication, such as e-mail or Facebook. Although many librarians use these tools on a regular basis, they may not know how these tools are used by patrons, nor how these tools interact with each other. This work, written by IBM's vice president of Cloud Computing Enablement, seeks to demystify these tools and other social networking applications. Although the work purports to describe "how to choose and implement the right social networking solutions", in reality, it is an introduction to social networking concepts that may help librarians improve information literacy efforts across all patron groups.

The book's twelve chapters cover many of the basic aspects of social networking, including an excellent historical overview of "The Social Age" that delves into the foundations of social networking and includes great milestones of mass communication. The author suggests that the progress of social communication is cyclical. The concept that "information is power" leads to an economy of information, which leads to the standardization of technology, which leads to information overload, which leads to a need to regulate the amount of information, which leads back to the concept that "information is power."

Subsequent chapters describe individual tools and how businesses may use these tools to improve internal and external communications. Each chapter includes a summary, appropriate tables, and relevant definitions. Also included are case studies. The endnotes at the end of the book create a chapter-by-chapter un-annotated

bibliography. A general index at the end also provides limited assistance.

Though this book is written for a business market, experienced librarians will find familiar descriptions of wikis, blogs, Second Life, and other core social networking concepts. Savvy librarians who are trying to convince a library board or director to invest in a catalog overlay that allows social tagging may find some useful information in Chapter 5, "Tagging and Social Clouds", that considers the author's thoughts on patron search habits and the benefits of having an expert sift information to combat "information overload" (pp. 72-77). Similarly, a librarian who is considering developing social networking services may glean tips from the description in Chapter 10, "Innovation and Technology Adoption Process" (pp. 164-173).

Other librarians may find the author's inclusion of cloud computing (Chapter 6) and open source software (Chapter 8) extremely useful. Although these two topics may not traditionally be included in the "social networking" canon, the author includes them here because they help business communities restructure communication and improve collaboration.

Librarians who are discussing the future of libraries may also be interested in the author's thoughts about the future of social networking and how the interaction between users and technology may impact things like product development and marketing (pp. 203-215).

The strength of this work lies in its broad overview of social networking tools as well as its concrete examples of those tools in action. Unfortunately, though, the author heavily relies upon her own experiences at IBM to create those concrete examples, and neglects or doesn't fully describe some other products such as Skype, virtual meetings and DiamondTouch.



Despite its shortcomings, however, this book provides a solid foundation for a reader who is new to social networking or simply wants a broad overview of tools that may be available to facilitate team collaboration. Although the social networking landscape has changed since this book was first published, the author's solid reasoning, vivid descriptions, and fundamental concepts remain true. This work would be a useful text for librarians who are trying to describe information literacy concepts to patrons and for librarians who are rethinking the use of social network software in their work environments.