SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

by

Paula Erickson

An Abstract
of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Education Specialist of Human Services/ Learning Resources
In the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development
University of Central Missouri

October 2013
ABSTRACT

by

Paula Erickson

Social media are a popular way for students to communicate with each other. School librarians are starting to use this popular form of communication to interact with their students. This paper will explore the different social media sites that students use, which ones are their favorites, types of posts that students are most interested in viewing, and the types of posts that students respond to most. This can be used to help school librarians choose which social networking sites to use. The research, conducted in a midsized school district in a suburb of a Midwestern city at the middle and high school level, involved surveying students at these grade levels as well as school librarians in the same city.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Social Networking?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Librarians Use Social Networks</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting Social Media Statistics</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Description</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to the Study</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .................................................................................................29
   Overview..............................................................................................................29
   Student Survey Results ..................................................................................29
   School Librarian Survey Results .................................................................36
   Summary ..........................................................................................................41
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..............................43
   Social Media Sites Used by Students and School Librarians .........................43
   Student Use of Social Media Dictates Frequency and Type of School
   Librarian Posts .............................................................................................43
   Types of Posts Students Want to See and Respond To ...................................44
   Conclusion .......................................................................................................46

WORKS CITED
   Works Cited ......................................................................................................47

APPENDICES
   A. Social Media Survey - Student.................................................................51
   B. Social Media Survey - School Librarian ...................................................53
   C. Student Assent Form ...............................................................................55
   D. Parent/Guardian Consent Form ...............................................................57
   E. Consent Form – School Librarian .............................................................59
   F. Signed Approval Memo ..........................................................................60
CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Social media are digital tools that librarians use to facilitate interactions among users through virtual communities. They allow creating, sharing, and exchanging of ideas and information (Ahlqvist, Back, Halonen, and Heinonen 13). Social media has become a popular way for students and teachers to communicate and interact with each other. Many school librarians have followed suit and are using social media in their libraries. Reasons to use social media in school libraries discussed in this paper include creating a way to interact with students digitally, giving patrons a say in collection development, getting immediate feedback from patrons, promoting school library events, and helping school librarians meet national standards.

School librarians consider the following as they implement a successful social media program: the different social media sites available to use, how to use them, and why they are beneficial to use. This thesis determined what sites are the favorites among students at the school where this research took place. It also determined the type of posts the students are most interested in seeing on social media sites and the types of posts students interact with most. All of these items will help school librarians determine which social networking sites are best for their needs. It will help librarians post information that students want to see to increase interactions with the school librarian. All of these increase support of the library and its programs.

Problem of the Study

This study provides information aimed at those who do not use social media in their school and those who do. For school librarians who are willing to start using social media, several questions are worth considering before beginning. For others who have a social media account for their library, but do not know how to best utilize the account to get patron interactions, this research will show, not only what social networking sites are the most popular
among students, but also the best types of posts to get patron interaction.

**Purpose of the Study**

Social networking websites have been around since 1997 (BRASS 128). Since that time, millions of people have signed on to a variety of social media sites. In more recent years, school librarians have joined the trend. They use the sites to open the doors of communication with their patrons (Solomon 2). School librarians use social media to communicate the arrival of new books, advertise library events, post pictures and videos, promote reading, inform patrons about favorite authors, and publish book trailers. They might even include trailers for movies based on books. The purpose of this study is to help school librarians decide which social networking sites are most popular with students, how to set up those sites, and the type of posts students want to see.

**Research Questions**

1. What social media sites are students and school librarians using?
2. Does the frequency with which students check their social media sites dictate how often school librarians should post to the school library’s social media sites?
3. What types of information do students want to see from the school librarian on social media sites and what types of posts get the most responses?

**Limitations**

The research in this study has some limitations. The research was done in only one school district. This school district is medium in size in a suburban school district in the Midwest. The results may reflect only the views of students and librarians in that school district or a similar district. They are not typical of all students in other school districts. Also research is limited to students ages twelve through nineteen and to librarians who work with those students. It, therefore, does not address the K-6 population or their librarians’ use of social media. One
additional limitation of this study may be the socioeconomic status of the students. Some of the students in this school district may not have the ability to access social media. Districts with a higher or lower percentage of students on free and reduced lunch may yield different results.

**Definition of Terms**

Definitions of terms are included to clarify meaning in relation to social media as used in this thesis.

@ symbol – In Twitter, the @ symbol is used to send a tweet to a specific user. To do this, the @ symbol is placed right in front of the other’s username. This will alert that specific user that the tweet is directed to them (Brown).

Blog - Weblogs (blogs) are websites where an individual or group can publish information freely. Blogs can vary in complexity based on the needs or wants of the individual or group publishing it. They are usually displayed in reverse chronological order (Blood).

Bookmarking – On the Internet, bookmarking is a way to store a website for later use.

Hashtag – In Twitter, the hashtags (#) in a tweet mean the post is referencing a specific person, community, or event (Brown).

Micro-blog – The micro-blog is a smaller version of the traditional blog. It is smaller in both content and file size. The most popular micro-blog is Twitter (Brown).

Network – A network is a social structure made of individuals or organizations that have something in common.

Newsfeed – In Facebook, the updates of other users, events, or advertisements on a user’s Facebook homepage in a continuous stream of posts (“Facebook”).

Patrons – In the context of the library, patrons refer to the people who use the library. This can include students, teachers, parents, or community members.

Post – In social media, a post is the information that is published to the social networking site. It
Social Media

Social Media can be words, pictures, or videos.

Profile – A profile is a computer representation of a user’s public and personal information. It can include things like a picture, location, and description of the organization.

Social media – Social media refer to the digital tools that facilitate interactions among people in virtual communities and networks. They enable creating, sharing, or exchanging information and ideas (Ahlqvist et al. 13).

Social networking – Used in reference to social media, it refers to the interactions among people in virtual communities and networks. It includes creating, sharing, or exchanging information and ideas (Ahlqvist et al. 13).

Tag – In the context of social media, a tag is a way to uniquely identify a person, place, or thing.

Update – In the context of social media, update refers to the change in information. It can refer to changing a profile, creating a new post, or adding new information.

Widget – A widget is a small computer application with limited functionality and intended to be used within a webpage or blog.

**Design of the Study**

The researcher collected previously published information pertaining to social media, social networking, and school libraries. Only a few pieces of literature referred specifically to using social media in school libraries. This is what led to the research study. Permissions were applied for and granted to survey students and school librarians in order to determine what social media sites are most popular with students and what types of posts receive the most feedback or interactions with students. This information can then be used by school librarians to determine what sites they want to establish and what types of posts they publish.

Articles for the literature review were retrieved from Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, and eLibrary. Many of the articles retrieved from the databases
referenced other sources that were then found using a *Google* search or by searching Mid-Continent Public Library’s catalog. Search terms included “social media,” “social networking,” and “school libraries.”

**Summary**

This study includes five chapters related to social media and how it is used in the school library. The next chapter is a review of the literature, specifically what social networks are, how they are used, and how school librarians use them to promote the library. Chapter three will describe the method by which research was conducted. Chapter four will present the findings from the research. Chapter five will answer the research questions presented in this chapter based on the literature and research.
CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Social networking is not a new concept in the minds of students. School librarians are using social media to connect libraries, classrooms, students, and teachers. They use applications like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs (Gavigan 69), and Pinterest (Messner 25). This research will explore what social networking is, the different social networks available, and how librarians can use them with students. The research will also look into who is using social networks and how they are using them.

What is Social Networking?

According to Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison, social networking is defined as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (qtd. in BRASS 127).

Anttiroiko and Savolainen put it simpler when they said social networks are “profile-based hosted services that allow people to create and maintain networks of friends and contacts based on general social interests” (89). Both definitions describe sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Foursquare, Flickr, Goodreads, Shelfari (King “Social Media” 23), and blogs (Coulter and Draper 101). Among these, Facebook is the most popular social networking site among educators (Solomon 13). According to a 2012 Babson survey, fifty-two percent of educators have a Facebook account (Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane 38). As older teachers retire and are replaced by younger teachers, the percent of educators adopting social media is likely to increase (Barack “School” 17).
Background of Social Networking

In the 1990’s, America Online, which was the first application to dominate online access with a dial-up connection, allowed users to send email and chat online (BRASS 127). The first of the modern day social networks, Sixdegrees, came about in 1997. It allowed users to create profiles, invite friends, make groups, and look at other users’ profiles. Sixdegrees went out of business in 2000. The social media site, Friendster, made its debut in 2002. Friendster was based on having a circle of friends who could create a rich community of online users based on common bonds. While Friendster is not currently a popular site in the United States, it is in Asia (128).

As of January 2013, the most popular sites in the United States are LinkedIn (Goble 3), MySpace, Facebook, Twitter (Solomon 13), and YouTube (YouTube). LinkedIn began social networking in 2003. It was designed for businessmen wanting to make connections with other professionals. It is still a popular site that boasts 175 million users. Also in 2003, MySpace launched its site. MySpace features a wealth of music, music videos, and a way to individualize the user profile (Goble 3). It was one of the most successful sites until Facebook launched in 2004 and slowly took over as the dominant social media site (BRASS 128). Facebook allows users to “share updates with group members, have discussions with members, and post upcoming events and photos with the group” (Horn 25). YouTube began in 2005 and is a site that allows users to publish videos and allows users to make comments on the videos (Fitzpatrick). Twitter has gained popularity since its 2006 launch (BRASS 128). Twitter is considered a micro-blog. It is a service where users are limited to 140 character messages (Brown). Pinterest is a newer site that allows users to create virtual bulletin boards and connects people based on the things they like (Messner 25).
Users of Social Media

The first people to use social networking for marketing purposes were businesses (BRASS 127). According to research conducted by researchers at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, the fastest growing companies use Facebook, Twitter, blogs, online video, and MySpace. The biggest percentage use Facebook. They use these social networking sites to communicate to customers, to create brand awareness, and to market their products (130).

In education, Facebook is the most popular social networking site for teachers; however, only twenty-six percent use it in a professional or teaching capacity (Moran et al. 39). Of educators, more school librarians are joining social media than any other group. As of October 2012, seventy percent of school librarians had joined a social networking site. This is a higher percentage than both teachers and administrators. School librarians see the value of using social networking in education (Barack “School” 17). This explains why more and more libraries are expanding their online presence to include social networks (Petit 253). The next sections describe how librarians use social media, how they administer the sites, and how the librarian determines the effectiveness of using social media.

How Librarians Use Social Networks

Using social media offers many advantages to school librarians. This can include how they help students meet national standards for the 21st century learner. This section will address the reasons to use social media. It will also take a look at the advantages of using social networks, the disadvantages, and the obstacles.

Reasons to Use Social Media

School librarians use social networking for many reasons. “Social media creates the opportunity for libraries…to connect, share, and become visible” (qtd. in BRASS 129). Many librarians use social media sites to give patrons a say in collection development. This can be in
the form of a posting or a request for library materials (Petit 253).

When used correctly, social media are not a one-way comment. It provides a bridge between the library and patron that has never existed before. It is expected that the two will interact (Solomon 2). According to Joyce Valenza, “it is essential” that media specialists bridge that gap between patron and library, using social media (qtd. in Barack “Social” 17).

Staying up-to-date with digital technology and communication is another reason for librarians to use social media. It ensures that the librarian does not become obsolete (Barrack “Social” 16). Using social media librarians include resources that allow library services to be accessible across both the Web and mobile devices (BRASS 130). These resources include social media sites because social media allow librarians to ask for and obtain quick feedback from patrons (131). A presence in social media empowers the library user to interact with the librarian in a “spontaneous, direct, and immediate way” (Petit 258). This helps create a stronger connection with the library user (258). Social networking is popular with students. A socially connected librarian opens the doors of communication with students. Social media allows the school librarian to meet students where they enjoy spending time, online (Gavigan 69).

**Advantages to Using Social Media**

The use of social media in school libraries has its advantages. Even though the study conducted by Lindy Brown is specifically about Twitter, many of the advantages mentioned pertain to all social media sites. They are easy, free marketing and public relation tools. They allow the librarian to collaborate with students, staff, and the community. Social networks are efficient at getting the word out about library programs. Social networks extend the reach of a library’s audience. They also allow users to get help from librarians by opening additional lines of communication (Brown). Students who are shy or hesitant to speak out may feel more comfortable contributing their ideas online (Heatley and Lattimer 8).
Another advantage to using social media in school libraries is it allows the school librarian to meet national standards. *Standards for the 21st Century Learner*, published by the American Association of School Librarians, requires students to have relevant technology skills and an understanding of how to gather information ethically. Four specific standards address ways librarians help students meet these standards by using social networking (Gavigan 68). Standard 3.1.2 calls for students to “participate and collaborate as members of a social and intellectual network of learners” (“AASL”). By joining a social network, librarians encourage students to become members of the network. Standard 3.1.4 asks for students to “use technology and other information tools to organize and display knowledge and understanding in ways that others can view, use and assess” (“AASL”). Librarians post information for students to view, use, or evaluate on social networking sites. Standard 4.1.7 wants students to “use social networks and information tools to gather and share information” (“AASL”). Many social networks allow users to search. Students search for information or just view what others, including the school librarian, have shared in their network and then share it with those in their own network. The last standard that social networking helps students meet is standard 4.3.1. This calls for students to “participate in the social exchange of ideas, both electronically and in person” (“AASL”). The nature of social networking allows for the sharing of ideas in a way that is easy for both librarians and students to view.

**Disadvantages and Obstacles to Using Social Media**

Disadvantages and obstacles exist when using social media. Having a social media site allows others to link inappropriate materials to the library site or make inappropriate posts that the librarian and others can see. Social media sites require close monitoring (Hricko 691). Some librarians feel that updating a social media site is just another task that needs to be done or is a waste of time. Brown suggests that carving out a small amount of time each day to monitor their
social media accounts can lessen the feeling of wasted time.

Many librarians are concerned that they will be unable to keep their posts interesting, useful, or informative to their students or community. Asking the users what they would like to see can help add meaning to posts. Librarians are also concerned that they will not be able to keep their announcements short enough to keep the interest of students. Because some sites limit the number of characters allowed in posts, keeping the post within the character limit is easy (Hricko 691). Lindy Brown says that if a post cannot be made within the character limitations, it does not need to be posted.

Concerns about privacy by either the librarians or the administrators are one of the obstacles that librarians face when using social media. Librarians and administrators worry about keeping student’s information private. Posting pictures can be especially tricky. To avoid this problem, never mention students by their full name; and if posting pictures, faces can be blurred (Schmucki, Hood, and Meel).

Librarians might feel like their colleagues do not support their efforts to use social media. Lack of support can be discouraging, especially when standards call for the use of social networks by students. Also, the audience of specific social media sites can be limited; however, Brown suggested that even reaching a few patrons is better than reaching none.

Many school districts state that the Children’s Internet Protection Act requires them to block social media in order to receive federal E-rate funding. This is not true, as long as students are being taught about Internet safety and cyber-bullying and the correct use of social media (Scales 18); however, Schmucki et al. report that a level of frustration still exists when districts block access to social networking sites. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has an official position on this topic (“Position”). The AASL feels that it is the role of the school librarian to be a leader when it comes to using information technologies and instruction. The
school librarian can teach students and staff how to use these sites in a constructive, ethical, and safe manner. Librarians help teach the skills needed to use social media in a manner that meets both state and national standards (Gavigan 68).

How Librarians Administer Social Media Sites

The school librarian plays a role in the administration of social media sites. Setting up the site includes several steps. These steps include setting goals and policies and creating a user profile. There are also several methods of engaging users of the sites that can be implemented using social media, so administering social media sites also includes understanding how to use specific sites.

Setting up a Social Media Site for the Library

To use social media in libraries, King’s research suggests that librarians do at least four things. The first suggestion is to listen. He advises that librarians listen to what is being said about their specific library in particular, but also about libraries in general. To do this, he suggests that librarians set up Google Alerts or if the library is using Twitter, do a Twitter search for the library to see what is being said. The second thing that King suggests librarians do is make a habit of posting to the site. He suggests they post often, gauge how receptive the users are, and adapt from there. King’s third suggestion is to take a team approach when it comes to posting and responding to posts on social media sites. His suggestion is that not one person should be in charge of all communication. It is better if several people watch the activity on the accounts and write posts when possible. King’s last suggestion is to set goals. Having a clear set of goals will help reach the patrons that use social media (“Social Media” 27).

Setting Goals

Setting goals is a major theme in starting up a social networking site, so that the librarian knows what he or she wants to achieve and to be able to gauge if the site is successful or not.
In order to know what the goals need to be, Solomon’s first step is to ask people what social networking sites they use (12). From there, the librarian chooses the social media site or sites to use. Using a smaller number of social networking sites well is better than using more, but less frequently (BRASS 129). Most likely, one of the goals will be to inform as many people as possible by the easiest means necessary. Other goals do not have to be complex, just practical for the library (Solomon 12-13). These could include increasing attendance at library events or programs; providing a better awareness of what is going on in the library; having more people subscribe to library blogs; finding out more about the students, staff, or community that the library serves; or being more aware of what and how other librarians communicate (11).

Social Media Policies

Once goals have been set and the social media sites have been selected, Solomon says the next step is setting up a policy for using the sites. The goal of the policy is to determine how social media helps the librarian achieve his or her goal. Policies should be current and updated often (Fogg Phillips, Baird, and Fogg 4). Solomon suggests including a disclaimer of some sort that states that what the person posts on the site are his or her own thoughts and not that of the district or library. She also suggests a policy be made to advise that nothing confidential is posted. And lastly, she suggests a policy that states that the librarian or person posting should use good judgment in posting to the social media sites (15). Policies are often posted in an Acceptable Use Policy that the school publishes or can be stated on the library website or even the social media site itself.

Setting up the Social Network’s Profile

Once the social media site or sites have been chosen, Solomon suggests setting up the library’s profile. Solomon suggests several general things that can be done to make the site look its best. Most social media sites have a profile that needs to be customized. The profile will give
information about the user to other users. It can include things like a picture, location, and description of the organization. Solomon recommends librarians fill this out as completely as possible (26). When filling this out, it makes sense to choose a profile picture that is appropriate and fitting for the library it represents. Goldsborough suggests that librarians clarify in the profile who the site is for or about. Once the profile is completed, depending on the site or how the librarian sets up the site, ‘friends’ or connections can be added or accepted. If this is the case, caution is advised to make sure these connections are positive and not false profiles.

Goldsborough reminds, more is not always better. Goldsborough also advises to be careful what is communicated through the site. This can include what the librarian or person posting publishes or what others publish to the site. He suggests keeping private items off the site; keep it professional and positive (62).

**Engaging Social Media Users**

Librarians who are the most successful in using social networking are those who are actively engaged with their followers (Petit 255-256). Solomon suggests many ways to engage students, staff, and the community on a social networking site. Some of the most popular things to share on the social media sites are events, awards, extraordinary promotions, new blog posts, new services, and videos (Solomon 35). The key is that people are busy and they want information in the quickest way possible (Solomon 30). Create short informative posts that let people see what is going on behind the scenes, like what new books have been ordered or what projects teachers are working on (28). This allows patrons to participate in conversations as they happen (31). If a person posts a question, be timely in answering it. King even suggests that when posting, let the personality of the person posting come through. This includes not talking in professional jargon, be less formal, and more casual. Social media is not as formal as other forms of communication (29). This can make the library worth following (“Social Media” 24). Some
researchers suggest asking fans or followers for material or book requests (Petit 257). They also suggest sharing information that is troubling to the librarian, explain changes, own up to mistakes (Solomon 29), and talk about specific staff members in a professional way (30). This allows visitors to the site to feel more comfortable. The last piece of advice from researchers is to not abandon the fans. Once the library has fans, friends, or followers, updating the site and communicating regularly ensures they will return (34).

Using Specific Social Media Sites

Each social media site operates differently. Knowing how to navigate the site is a key to using it properly. This section will introduce the basics of using Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Pinterest, YouTube, and others.

Using Facebook

With forty percent of Facebook users between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five, school librarians can take advantage of this popularity and integrate Facebook into the school library setting (Horn 25). However, Facebook, like other social networking sites, requires attention. The librarian will need to set aside time to update it for it to be effective (Jacobson 88). Additionally, Facebook is constantly changing its privacy and safety settings. It is a good idea to stay current on changes to these settings to ensure the safety of both the library profile and that of the other users (Fogg Phillips et al. 6).

According to Laura Horn, there are three main ways to set up a Facebook account for a school library. All three types allow for events to be created, and pictures and videos to be uploaded and shared. The first is to set up a Facebook Group. The group can be made either private or public. If the librarian wants the posts to be seen, the group will be made public. If the librarian wants the group to be more select, like a teen advisory board or a book club, then the group will be private. Facebook groups are a good fit for small groups because there are more
privacy settings. The biggest downside of a Facebook group is that updates do not show up in the user’s newsfeed. They have to go to the group page and check for updates (Horn 25).

The second type of Facebook account is a Facebook Page. This type of setup allows there to be open and transparent interactions between members (Fogg Phillips et al. 11). A Facebook Page allows other users to ‘like’ a page in order to follow the goings on of the organization. This type of account is public. There is no way to accept or decline users from seeing this type of account. This type of site allows the administrator to create events, post photographs, and share videos (Horn 25). This type of site also allows the administrator to write notes, similar to a blog entry (Fogg Phillips et al. 11). All updates and comments made to a Facebook Page show up in the follower’s newsfeed (Horn 25).

The final type of Facebook account is a Facebook Profile. This is the same type of account that the individual user creates. This type of account can be public or private, in which case other users have to be friends of the profile in order to see updates. However there is a lot of flexibility in what is made visible to specific users. This type of account is suggested for teen services librarians, as it creates the highest level of interactivity. However, when librarians are “friends” with students their activity on Facebook shows up in the newsfeed of the library (Horn 25). The newsfeed is the stream of posts or updates from other users (“Facebook”). This can create issues if students post inappropriate items.

Using Twitter

With more than half a billion accounts (“Twitter”), Lindy Brown is certain that the micro-blog, Twitter, should be incorporated into the librarian’s social networking portfolio. She cites many reasons, including its cost (free), and ease of use. Twitter can expand the reach of librarians and create a sense of community. By creating an account, librarians can create posts or “tweets,” follow other users, and establish a list of followers. When the librarian “tweets” or
posts something on Twitter, that post shows up in the newsfeed of its followers (Forrestal 148).

Twitter can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used by librarians to announce events, projects, programs, hours, exhibits, new books, reminders, or as a reference service. Hricko even suggest that it be used for frequently asked questions (687). Students, staff, or community members can post questions, and either the librarian or other members of the community can answer them (688). Twitter differs from Facebook. Posts are limited to 140 characters. Because of this, Twitter can be used for sending out information like an announcement of school events or the arrival of new resources (Marcoux 83).

One of the nicest features of Twitter is the use of the @ symbol and hashtags. The @ symbol is used to send a tweet to a specific user. To do this, the @ symbol is placed right in front of the others username. This will alert that specific user that the tweet is directed to them. The use of hashtags (#) in a tweet means the post is referencing a specific person, community, or event. Again, the hashtag is placed right in front of the person, community or event’s name. Many events set up a hashtag to use while at the event so people either in attendance or not in attendance can follow the goings on of the event. To follow an even, the user can search the event’s hashtag and see all tweets that use that hashtag (Forrestal 147).

As mentioned before, another great feature of Twitter is the ability to search. Users can search for specific information on a topic by using a hashtag and either find what others are saying about that topic or possibly connect to someone that is doing similar research (Hricko 688). Another nice feature of Twitter is the ability to send tweets in the form of instant messages or cell phone texts. This feature allows the librarian to reach many patrons at once (Brown).

Using Blogs

Weblogs (blogs) are unedited websites where an individual or group can publish information freely. Blogs can vary in complexity based on the needs or wants or the individual or
group publishing it (Coulter and Draper 101). Blogs are known as the voice of the Internet (102). According to a Babson survey conducted in 2012, nearly sixty-one percent of educators use blogs for personal or professionally communication or as part of their teaching (Moran et al. 38). Because of this, it is not surprising that librarians use blogs. There are several common themes among blogs in libraries, such as, librarianship, library news, and library services. More specific themes include library marketing, outreach, and book clubs (Coulter and Draper 102).

Blogs have an advantage over other social networking sites. Students, staff, and community members do not have to be fans, followers, or friends of the blog to read its content. Only the URL to the blog is needed. Once it is set up, blogs can also be customized. Widgets can be added to enhance the practicality of the blog. Some popular widgets include Twitter feeds, calendars, and video and image sharing (Horn 26). Blogs are mainly used for sharing experiences and views (Anttiroiko and Savolainen 89); sharing information about books, such as author interviews, book releases, or reviews (Byle 7); and interacting with users via a comment section that all blogs contain (Anttiroiko and Savolainen 93). This interactive piece is what allows blogs to be considered social media.

**Using Pinterest**

Pinterest is a relatively new site. It was launched in 2010 (Notess 45). Kate Messner describes it as a visual bookmarking site (45). However, it is more than just an image-sharing site; it is a way to share web content in a visual way (Notess 45). Librarians can set up different boards or subjects. Each board contains pictures with links to different websites that fall under that board’s category.

There are many ways that librarians use Pinterest. Some ideas of boards for students and staff include favorite books, book trailers, research tools, technology resources, and lesson plans. More specific boards include projects that are going on in school. A board with links to research
Social Media 19

sites for that project are created and shared. The boards can be more general like boards on how the Dewey Decimal system works, tips for using correct punctuation, keyboard shortcuts, and copyright protection (Messner 25).

**Using YouTube**

YouTube is a video sharing site that has been around since 2005 (YouTube). It is the third most visited site on the Internet, behind only Google and Facebook (Fitzpatrick). According to YouTube’s own statistics, YouTube has over 800 million users and over four billion hours of video are watched every month (YouTube).

Because of its popularity, many librarians use YouTube to introduce people to library services and to showcase library events. Students or patrons can subscribe to the library’s YouTube channel and be notified every time a new video is uploaded (King “Social Media” 25). YouTube, like other sites, is interactive in the ability of users to make comments on the site. Users can also like specific videos (King “Statistics” 20).

**Using Other Social Networks**

Other social networks that are being used in the library setting, such as Flickr, Foursquare, Goodreads, and Shelfari. Each site has different functions. Some are focused around books, which have obvious connections to libraries, and some have more general purposes. This section will present the different features and why they are useful to librarians.

Flickr allows users to store and share photographs. It is also used as a visual search engine. With the correct copyright licensing, the pictures stored there can be used in other sites like library blogs or websites. Foursquare is “a places social network.” Once an account is set up, users can check in to this site from different locations. Some businesses use Foursquare to offer incentives for checking in. Librarians could do the same thing. Goodreads is a social network that connects readers. Users view what library staff are reading, their reviews of books they have
read, or see what the librarians want to read. Users also comment on these (King “Social Media” 25). Shelfari is a site that allows users to see what the librarian or staff have read or are currently reading. It can also be used to feature new books in a collection (27).

**Collecting Social Media Statistics**

Collecting statistics from social networking sites is a way to track interactivity. Statistics indicate the level of interest or engagement in a particular post, blog, picture, or video. They track progress toward library goals. Statistics can indicate problems otherwise overlooked (King “Statistics” 19). They gauge what students, staff, and community members like or dislike. Statistics even tell the librarian about the types of users interacting with their sites (20).

Facebook Pages allow the librarian to look at basic statistical information. The number of likes is the most noticeable statistic seen. This is the number of people who receive information about the library in their newsfeed. Weekly, upon request via settings, Facebook sends an email with information that tracks the number of people reached. This is tracking how many friends and friends of friends have seen a status update. The weekly report also sends information on who is talking about the site, called “people talking about this.” This part of the email refers to the number of people who did something on Facebook based on what was posted by the library. The number of posts that the library made can also be tracked as well as the number of comments made by people who like the library page (King “Statistics” 21).

The number of followers on Twitter is the most basic piece of information that librarians can track. According to King, this number should rise if good content is being tweeted. Another statistic that can be tracked is how many people retweet or repost the information that the library posts. When the library is mentioned by someone, this is called “the number of mentions.” This indicates how many people are talking about the library’s Twitter feed. Tracking the number of tweets made by the library each month is another statistic tracked. If the number of retweets or
mentions is low, the number of tweets may need to be increased (“Statistics” 21).

The total number of subscriptions to the library’s YouTube page tells the librarian the number of people who are notified every time a new video is posted. The goal is for this number to go up. The subscriber net change tells the librarian if there is an increase or decrease in the number of subscribers. The number of monthly views tells the librarian what videos are being watched and if any in particular are popular. The librarian will know from this if more videos like that should be made and published. YouTube has a like and dislike button. This is a measure of whether the videos that are posted are looked on as favorable or not. The number of comments on a video can be measured. This is a measure of how well others are engaged in the site (King “Statistics” 20). YouTube has a way to track the number of times a video has been shared or has been added to a person’s favorite videos. Again, this tells the librarian how well the videos posted are liked. Finally, the last statistic to look at is the number of videos that have been posted by the library. If all indications are that the videos are popular and well liked, more videos should be posted (21).

Statistics can also be tracked from other social networking sites. King found that Pinterest tracks only a few items. The most telling is the number of people who are following the library’s Pinterest account or boards. This tells the librarian about those who are following the librarian’s Pinterest activity. Pinterest also reports the statistic of who the library is following, and how many pins have been posted (“Statistics” 21).

Goodreads is also limited in the statistics that can be tracked. King says the only statistic trackable from Goodreads is the number of members. This tells the librarian how many are following what the library staff is reading (“Statistics” 22).

Blogs have a few statistics that can be tracked. Mainly, the number of subscribers, the number of comments, and the number of blog entries are reported (King “Statistics” 21). There
are more social networks that statistics can be pulled from. Depending on the network, each one is a little different. Whatever social network or networks the library chooses, if the librarian knows who, when, and how often the members are looking at information sent out through social media, library users will be better served (19-20).

**Conclusion**

Social media is now a part of main stream society. In order for school librarians to join the social media movement, they investigate what social networking is and which social network will work best for their situation and goals. From there, librarians weigh the benefits and disadvantages and obstacles of using social media. And finally, librarians have a role in social networking and their library. It is their job to determine what that role is.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Research shows that the use of social media are on the rise with school librarians. In order to be successful users of social media, knowing what social media sites are the most used by students helps determine which sites will be most effective for the library to use. School librarians can also learn what types of posts students are most interested in seeing. The researcher has surveyed both students and librarians to determine the best sites for school librarians to use, as well as to determine the type posts students are most interested in viewing.

This chapter describes the methodology of the research conducted for this thesis. It explains the research design, the setting, and the participants. It also provides a description of the data collected and how they were processed and analyzed.

Research Design

The researcher surveyed students to determine social media use. The researcher also surveyed school librarians. This survey (appendix B) asked school librarians if they use social media sites for their school library, which sites they use, how often they post, what sites get the most responses, and what types of posts get the most responses. The surveys were used to determine what social media site or sites are best to use with students at this setting. They also helped determine what types of posts have the greatest impact on students.

Setting

The research was conducted in school districts in a suburb of a Midwestern city. The student survey was conducted in a middle school and high school in the district. Both schools currently have Facebook and Twitter accounts for their school library. The school librarians use these sites to announce library events, give updates on library events, the arrival of new books,
information about popular authors, post book trailers and trailers about movies based on books, and to post pictures of library events. Surveys were administered in computer classes in the middle school and in the high school library. The upper middle school has a population of seven hundred and seventy students in seventh and eighth grade. The high school has a population of one thousand four hundred and eighty-one students in ninth through twelfth grade.

In addition, librarians of other suburban school districts of the same Midwestern city were contacted via email and asked to participate in the survey of librarians. The link to the survey was sent to the librarians in an email. Contact information for the librarians was provided through the local school library association.

Participants

Surveys were taken by three hundred and seventy-three students at a high school and an upper middle school. Students were given a consent form (appendix D) for their parents to sign and a student assent form (appendix C) for them to sign. Students that brought back both forms were allowed to take the survey. The survey provided demographic information as well as information about students’ social media habits.

Of the students surveyed, 48% [N = 180] were female, and 52% [N = 192] were male (chart 1).

Chart 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your gender?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>180, 48% Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193, 52% Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twenty-two percent [N = 83] of the students were in seventh grade, 16% [N = 60] of the students were in eighth grade, 4% [N = 15] of the students were in ninth grade, 24% [N = 89] of the students were in 10th grade, 12% [N = 44] of the students were in eleventh grade, and 22% [N = 82] of the students were in twelfth grade (chart 2).

Chart 2

The students ranged in age from twelve to nineteen. Five percent [N = 20] were twelve years old, 18% [N = 67] were thirteen years old, 14% [N = 54] were fourteen years old, 8% [N = 28] were fifteen years old, 23% [N = 86] were sixteen years old, 16% [N = 59] were seventeen years old, 14% [N = 52] were eighteen years old, and 2% [N = 7] were nineteen years old (chart 3).

Chart 3
The researcher asked middle school and high school librarians in the suburbs of a Midwestern city to take the survey. The introduction of the survey served as the School Librarians Consent form (appendix E). The survey contained a demographic question about grade levels served. More than fifty middle and high school librarians in the suburban Midwestern area were contacted via email. Thirty-eight school librarians took the survey. Fifty-eight percent [N = 22] of the school librarians surveyed work at the middle school level and 42% [N = 16] at the high school level (chart 4).

Chart 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Description**

The research utilized Google Drive, a free, online tool. Two surveys were created using Google Forms, one for the student surveys and one for the school librarian surveys. The survey was used to determine which sites students have an account with, which site they used most often, if they were interested in getting information from the school library, and what type of information they were most interested in getting. The survey can be found in appendix A. The survey also asked students if they know if their school library has a social media site. If they answered yes, they were asked if they follow (‘like’) their school’s social media site. Lastly, the students were asked to identify the types of posts that are most interesting to them.
The school librarian survey asked if they had an account with a social media site, and if so, what site or sites they had professional accounts with. The survey also asked them how often they post information and which sites receive the most responses from students. And lastly, it asked school librarians to select what types of posts received the most responses from students.

**Data Analysis**

Google Drive accumulates responses on Google Forms in a spreadsheet. Data from the student surveys were collected May 10-19, 2013. Data from the school librarian surveys were collected from April 29 to May 5, 2013. After gathering all the responses from students and school librarians, the totals for each item were tabulated. Responses from the student survey were used to determine the percentage of students that had social media accounts and which sites they had accounts with. It also determined which site or sites were most popular among students. The student survey also determined whether or not students knew of the existence of a school library social media site and if they were a member of that site. Lastly, the student survey determined the types of posts students were most interested in viewing from a school library social media site.

Responses from the school librarian survey were used to determine the number of middle school and high school librarians that had an account on a social media website and which site or sites they had accounts with. The survey determined how often school librarians post information to each social media site. The school librarian survey also determined the social media site that received the greatest number of responses from students. Lastly, the survey determined the type of posts that received the greatest number of responses from students.

**Threats to the Study**

As with any research study, there are items that threaten the credibility of the results. This study is no exception. Threats to this study include items like limited questions in the surveys,
the number of students who responded from each grade level, and making assumptions about the
people who respond to social media sites.

The questions on the student and school librarian survey were limited to provided answers only. In the student survey, the respondents are not allowed to provide their own answers as to what they would like to see in a school library social media site. This was true of the school librarian survey as well. School librarians were only allowed to choose items from a list that got the most responses from students. The school librarian survey also did not ask what types of posts school librarians currently post to their social media sites.

Another threat to the study could be that the number of students who took the survey from each grade level was relatively close, with the exception of the 9th graders. The number of students who took the survey in grades, seven, eight, ten, eleven, and twelve were about the same. Having slightly different numbers in each grade was expected. However, far fewer 9th graders took the survey than any other grade level. This could have changed the outcome of the student results in a small way.

The last threat to the study is the assumption about the people that like or follow the school library social media sites. The survey suggests that all these people are students. Because of the nature of social media, anyone could like or follow a school library site. This means that questions that ask school librarians what posts students responded to most could be students or other followers.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter four presents the finding from the research. The responses from Student Survey (appendix A) and the School Librarian Survey (appendix B) are presented. The conclusions and recommendations based on this research will be addressed in chapter five.

Overview

Students were given an online survey to obtain information about which social media sites they have an account with and which site they use most often. The students attended schools where the school library has Facebook and Twitter accounts. Students were asked if they know this and what type of information they would be most interested in seeing through their library’s social media site or sites.

School librarians were given an online survey to determine if they use social media sites for their school library. They were asked which sites they use, how often they post, and what sites get the most responses. They were also asked what types of posts get the most responses.

Student Survey Results

The survey asked the students if they had an account on one of the eight social media websites listed in chart 5. If they did, the survey asked what social media sites they have accounts with. Ninety-three percent [N = 347] of the surveyed students had at least one social media account. Six percent [N = 23] of students did not have a social media account and 1% [N = 3] did not answer, possibly because the survey did not include the option, ‘Other’. Chart 5 shows the number of students who have accounts and which of eight social media sites those accounts were with. Ninety-three percent [N = 322] had an account with Facebook, making it the most popular social media site. This was followed by YouTube with 63% [N = 252] and Twitter with 61% [N = 208]. Of the five remaining sites, Pinterest, was in the middle with 26% [N = 89].
of students having an account. The bottom four most popular sites on the list of eight were blogs at 7% [N = 30], Foursquare at 4% [N = 13], Goodreads at 4% [N = 13], Flickr at 3% [N = 12], and Shelfari at 2% [N = 7].

Chart 5

Of the 322 students that had a Facebook account, 54% [N = 174] check their site every day (chart 6). Twenty-two percent [N = 72] said they checked their site several times a week. Fourteen percent [N = 44] said they checked their site once a week. These findings indicate that 90% [N = 290] of students who have a Facebook account check their Facebook site at least once a week. Finally, 10% [N = 32] of students responded that they only checked their site once a month.

Chart 6
Of the two hundred fifty-two students who had a YouTube account, the majority, 39% \([N = 99]\) checked their site every day (chart 7). Thirty percent \([N = 74]\) of students checked their site several times a week. Twenty percent \([N = 51]\) checked their site once a week. This indicates that 89% \([N = 224]\) of students with accounts check their YouTube site at least once a week. Finally, only 11% \([N = 28]\) of students check their site once a month.

Chart 7

Of the two hundred eight students who had a Twitter account, the majority at 61% \([N = 127]\) reported they check their site every day (chart 8). Eleven percent \([N = 24]\) of students check their site several times a week, with the same percentage for once a week. Combined, these three categories indicate that 84% \([N = 175]\) of students check their Twitter site at least once a week. Sixteen percent \([N = 33]\) of students reported checking their site once a month.

Chart 8
Of the eighty-nine students who had a Pinterest account, 39% [N = 28] checked their Pinterest site everyday (chart 9). This was followed by 29% [N = 26] of students who checked their site several times a week. Sixteen percent [N = 14] of students check their site once a week. Less than the 24% [N = 21] of students checked their site once a month. However, the number of students who checked their Pinterest site at least once a week is still a significant percentage, 72% [N = 64].

Chart 9

Of the thirty students who had a blog, half [N = 15] checked it everyday (chart 10). Ten percent [N = 3] of the students checked it several times a week. The number of students who checked their blog once a week was slightly higher at 17% [N = 5]. When combined, the data indicate that 77% [N = 23] of students check their blog at least once a week. However, 23% [N = 7] of students checked their blog once a month. The researcher did not ask that question about how the blog was used, so these data do not indicate if the students were reading other blogs or checking or writing their own blog.
Of the twelve students who had a Flickr account, more than half, 58%, \([N = 7]\)) use their site every day (chart 11). Sixteen percent \([N = 1]\) use their site several times a week, and 17% \([N = 2]\) use their site once a week. So 84% \([N = 10]\) of students who have a Flickr site use it at least once a week. Seventeen percent \([N = 2]\) students with a Flickr account check it once a month.

Thirteen students had a Foursquare account (chart 12). For these students, 54% \([N = 7]\) used their site everyday. Fifteen percent \([N = 2]\) used it several times a week, 15% used it once a week, and 15%, once a month. When combining the first three categories, 87% \([N = 11]\) of the students use their application at least once a week.
The results for Goodreads were the exact same as with students with Foursquare accounts (chart 13). Fifty-four percent [N = 7] checked their site every day, with 15% [N = 2] checking several times a week, 15% once a week, and 15% once a month. Similarly, 87% [N = 11] of students check their Goodreads site at least once a week.

Finally, for the seven students who had a Shelfari account [N = 7], eighty-six percent [N = 6] of students check their Shelfari site everyday (chart 14), and 14% [N = 1] of students checked it several times a week. This means that 100% [N = 7] of students with a Shelfari account checked it at least several times a week.
The next to last question on the survey asked students about whether or not they knew about their school’s Facebook and Twitter sites (chart 15). Forty-four percent [163] of students know that their school library had a Facebook and Twitter site. This means that 56% [209] did not know that their school library had a Facebook and Twitter site.

Chart 16 reports what type of posts students said they would be most interested in seeing from the school library social media page. One hundred sixty-three students would like to see book or movie trailers. One hundred sixty-one students would like to see videos. One hundred fifty students said they would like to know about new books. Sixty students would like to see...
notices of library events. Fifty-eight students would like to see pictures of library events. Thirty-eight students would like to see information about authors. Thirty-five students would like to see information about reading promotions. Finally, twenty-four indicated they would like to see other information.

Chart 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What types of items would you be most interested in seeing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book or movie trailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Librarian Survey

Results

School librarians who work with students in the middle school or high school research setting were asked to take a brief survey (appendix B) about social media and their school library. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information about if school librarians had any social media accounts for their school library, how often the school librarian posts something on the school library’s social media site or sites, which social media applications get the most responses from students, and the types of posts that get the most student responses. The charts below display the results from the survey. There were thirty-eight school librarians who responded to the survey.

Two questions on the survey asked the school librarians if they had a social media account for their library (chart 17). If they did, the survey asked what social media of the eight
listed they had an account with (chart 18). Of the thirty-eight school librarians surveyed, 34% [N = 13] had a social media account for their school library and 66% [N = 25] did not.

Chart 17

**Do you currently have any social media accounts set up for your school library?**

- Yes: 13 (34%)
- No: 25 (66%)

Of the thirteen school librarians who had a social media account for their school library, 69% [N= 9] had a Twitter account, 54% [N = 7] had a Pinterest account, 46% [N = 6] had a Facebook account, 31% [N = 4] had a Goodreads account, 23% [N = 3] had blogs, 15% [N = 2] had a YouTube account, and 8% [N = 1] had a Shelfari account. None of the school librarians surveyed had a Flickr or Foursquare account for their school library.

Chart 18

**What social media sites does your school library have an account with?**

- Twitter: 9
- Pinterest: 7
- Facebook: 6
- Goodreads: 4
- Blogs: 3
- YouTube: 2
- Shelfari: 1
- Foursquare: 0
- Flickr: 0
Chart 19 reports how often school librarians post to their school library’s social media site. For the six school librarians who maintained a Facebook site for their school library, zero posted every day, zero posted several times a week, two posted once a week, and four posted once a month. For the nine school librarians who maintained a Twitter site for their school library, zero posted every day, three posted several times a week, three posted once a week, and three posted once a month. For the seven school librarians who maintained a Pinterest site for their school library, zero posted every day, one posted several times a week, three posted once a week, and three posted once a month. For the two school librarians who maintained a YouTube site for their school library, zero posted every day, zero posted several times a week, zero posted once a week, and two posted once a month. For the three school librarians who maintained a blog for their school library, one posted every day, zero posted several times a week, one posted once a week, and one posted once a month. For the four school librarians who maintained a Goodreads site for their school library, zero posted every day, zero posted several times a week, two posted once a week, and two posted once a month. The one school librarian who maintained a Shelfari site posted once a month.
Chart 19

How often do you post on...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelfari</th>
<th>Goodreads</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
<th>Pinterest</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 20 reports the type of posts that got the most responses from other users. To be considered a response, the survey specifically asked, “How often do these sites receive responses from other users (likes, comments on, repins, shares, etc…)” (see appendix B). For the school librarians with a Facebook account for their school library, zero said their posts received numerous responses, four said their posts received occasional responses, two said their posts received no responses. For the school librarians with a Twitter account for their school library, zero said their posts received numerous responses, five said their posts received occasional responses, four said their posts received no responses. For the school librarians with a Pinterest account for their school library, zero said that their posts received numerous responses, six said their posts received occasional responses, one said their posts received no response. For the school librarians with a YouTube account for their school library, zero said their posts received numerous responses, one said her posts received occasional responses, one said her posts received no responses. For the school librarians with a blog for their school library, zero said
their posts received numerous responses, three said their posts received occasional responses, zero said their posts received no responses. For the school librarians with a Goodreads account for their school library, one said her posts received numerous responses, one said her posts received occasional responses, two said their posts received no responses. For the school librarians with a Shelfari account for their school library, zero said their posts received numerous posts, zero said their posts received occasional responses, one said their posts received no responses.

Chart 20

The last question asked of school librarians, was which of eight types of posts received the most responses from other users (chart 21). Five school librarians responded that posts with pictures of library events got the most responses. Three of the librarians responded that notices of library events received the most responses. Two school librarians said that posts about books or movies based on books, reading promotions, videos, and new books, received the most responses.
Zero school librarians responded that author news and other types of posts received the most responses from other users.

Chart 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What type of posts receive the most responses from other users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pictures of library events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading promotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the Student Social Media Survey and the School Librarian Social Media Survey. According to the student survey, the top three social media sites listed are Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. These are followed by Pinterest. The bottom four social media sites are Foursquare, Goodreads, Flickr and Shelfari, respectively. The results also found that the majority of students check a social media site at least once a week. Students are most interested in seeing book or movie trailers, videos, and information about new books from their school library social media sites. According to the survey, the majority of school librarians do not have a social media site for their school library. For the ones who do, most have a Twitter account. This is followed by Facebook, Pinterest, and Goodreads. Fewer librarians maintain blogs, YouTube, and Shelfari accounts for their school libraries. Most school librarians post only once a week or once a month to their social media sites. The survey revealed that Twitter, Pinterest, and Facebook got the most responses from other users. The survey also found that the
types of posts that got the most responses from other users were pictures of library events and notices of library events. This was followed by book or movie trailers, reading promotions, videos, and information about new books. Chapter five will present the answers to the research questions posted in chapter 1, conclusions, and recommendations of the researcher based on these research findings and the review of literature.
CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five will answer the research question presented in chapter one based on the
literature review in chapter two and the research findings presented in chapter four. The
following research questions will be answered.

1. What social media sites are students and school librarians using?
2. Does the frequency with which students check their social media sites dictate how often
   school librarians should post to the school library’s social media sites?
3. What types of information do students want to see from the school librarian on social
   media sites and what types of posts get the most responses?

Social Media Sites Used by Students and School Librarians

According to the student surveys, 93% of students have a social media account. The
number of school librarians with school library social media accounts is much lower; with only
34% having an account with the eight social media sites surveyed. The most popular social
media sites are similar among students and school librarians.

The most popular sites among students are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Pinterest,
respectively. Blogs, Foursquare, Goodreads, Flickr, and Shelfari are the least popular sites
among the students of the eight social media sites surveyed. The top three social media sites
school librarians use for their school library are Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, respectively.
This is followed by Goodreads, blogs, YouTube and Shelfari. Establishing a presence on other
social media sites is not a wasted effort. According to Lindy Brown even reaching just one
student is of value.

Student Use of Social Media Dictates Frequency and Type of School Librarian Posts

According to the results from this study, the majority of students are checking their social
media sites at least once a week. Some even check their sites at least once a day. In order to ensure that students see the school library posts as often as they are checking their sites, it is suggested that the school librarian post to the school library social media site or sites at least once a week. This will ensure that the majority of students will see the posts.

According to this survey research, the majority of student users check their social media sites every day. With the exception of Pinterest and YouTube, more than half of the student users of all the social media sites checked their sites daily. The number of students who checked their sites at least weekly is high: 90% of students check their Facebook sites at least once a week. This is the trend for all social media sites. Eighty-five percent of Twitter student users, 76% of Pinterest student users, and 88% of YouTube student users check their sites once a week or more. Even the students who have accounts with the less popular social media sites like blogs, Flickr, Foursquare, Goodreads, and Shelfari check those sites at least once a week. This would suggest that librarians should post to whatever social media site they choose at least once a week in order to reach their students.

According to King, librarians should post several times a day (“Social Media” 27). The habits of the students surveyed leads to a different recommendation. Posting at least once a week is supported by the finding of this research study. With the evidence from the literature review and this study directing school librarians to post to social media sites as least weekly, school librarians are falling behind when it comes to posting to Facebook, YouTube, and Shelfari. Fewer than half of the school librarians surveyed post to these sites on a weekly basis. However, school librarians are posting to Twitter, Pinterest, Blogs, and Goodreads at least once a week.

Types of Posts Students Want to See and Respond To

In order to get students to respond to the posts that school librarians make, school librarians need to know the types of posts students want to see. The student survey offered eight
options for students to pick from. Students were allowed to choose more than one option. The options included the arrival of new books, notice of library events, pictures of library events, videos, reading promotions, author news, book or movie trailers, and other.

The data from the student survey give this description of what students want to see posted from the school library’s social media site. The most popular response was that students want to see book or movie (based on books) trailers. This was followed closely by posts about videos and new books. According to the student survey, the following were less interesting to students: notices of library events, pictures of library events, author news, reading promotions and other. For the librarian just starting to explore the realm of social media, it would appear that focusing on the top three would be wise.

According to the options provided in the school librarian survey, students responded most often to pictures of library events. This was followed by notices of library events. Neither of these was in the top three for the students surveyed. This would suggest that even though students don’t say they are most interested in pictures and notices of library events, they are interested enough to respond more to these. There was a four-way tie for the third most responded items on social media. According to 22% of school librarians, most students responded to posts containing information about new books, videos, reading promotions, and book or movie (based on books) trailers. This four-way tie coincides with what students said they were most interested in seeing. These numbers would suggest that school librarians should post pictures of events and notices of events often as well as the top three items on the student survey.

The biggest obstacle, in terms of school librarians using social media sites, is themselves. According to the student survey, more than half of the students surveyed did not know that their school library had a Facebook and Twitter page. If students do not know that the school library is using social media, the school librarian cannot expect them to interact with their social media
sites. School librarians need to do a better job of publicizing their social media presence. The researcher has several suggestions to increase the number of students that like or follow the school library social media sites. The suggestions include: posting signs advertising the social media sites, have contests for when the sites get a certain number of followers or likes, add notices to the daily announcements at the school, and tell students that visit the library about the social media sites. This should increase the traffic and interactions that each social media site gets.

**Conclusion**

In response to the review of the literature and the analysis of the data collected in this study, I recommend that school librarians create sites on one or more social media applications. I would also suggest that school librarians create sites on at least the most popular student sites. This includes Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Pinterest. Not only do school librarians need to create accounts, they need to post information that students are interested in viewing on a regular basis. I would suggest that school librarians post information to whatever social media site they choose at least several times a week, if not daily. Through the literature and research, it is clear that interacting with students through social media sites can be beneficial.
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APPENDIX A

Social Media Survey - Student
Please respond to each of the following questions in regard to your social media usage.
* Required

What is your gender? *
- Male
- Female

What grade are you in? *
- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

How old are you? *
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19

Do you have an account on a social media website (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, etc.) *
- Yes
- No
What social media websites do you have an account with? Check all that apply

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- Blogs
- Flickr
- Foursquare
- Goodreads
- Shelfari

Indicate on the following grid what best describes your use of the following social media websites? If you do not have an account with the site, please mark N/A. OR if you have an account but never use it, please mark N/A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Every day</th>
<th>Several times a week</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foursquare</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodreads</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelfari</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Did you know that your school library has a Facebook and Twitter account?

- Yes
- No

If you followed your school library’s social media page (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, etc.) what types of items would you be most interested in seeing? Check all that apply

- New books
- Notice of library events
- Pictures of library events
- Videos
- Reading promotions
- Author news
- Book or movie (based on books) trailers
- Other: [ ]
APPENDIX B

Social Media Survey - School Librarians

My name is Paula Erickson. I am a student at the University of Central Missouri. I want to learn about what social media websites librarians are using and the types of posts that get the most responses from other users. The purpose of this study is to help determine the types of social media websites the school librarians are using and also the types of posts that get the best most responses from other users. We are inviting you to participate by answering a few simple survey questions about your social media habits as a school librarian. Surveys are completely anonymous. Once you submit your survey, we will not know which survey is yours. The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of everyday life. The benefit of participating in this study is that the information collected from this study may be used to provide you better school library services. If you have questions about this study please contact me at (816)650-7040. By completing this survey you are agreeing to allow the researcher to use the information you provide in the survey.

* Required

What grade level do you serve? *

- Middle School
- High School

So you currently have any social media accounts set up for your school library? *

- Yes
- No

What social media sites does your school library have an account with? Check all that apply

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- Blogs
- Flickr
- Foursquare
- Goodreads
- Shelfari
How often do you post information on each of the following social media websites? If you do not have an account with the site, please mark N/A. OR if you have an account but not used it in the last 6 months, please mark N/A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Every day</th>
<th>Several times a week</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
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<td>Pinterest</td>
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<td>YouTube</td>
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<td>Blogs</td>
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<td>Flickr</td>
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<td>Foursquare</td>
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<td>Goodreads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelfari</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often do these sites receive responses from other users (likes, comments, repins, shares, etc...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Numerous responses</th>
<th>Occasional responses</th>
<th>No responses</th>
<th>No account</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<td>Shelfari</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What type of posts receive the most responses from other users? Check all that apply

- [ ] New books
- [ ] Notice of library events
- [ ] Pictures of library events
- [ ] Videos
- [ ] Reading promotions
- [ ] Author news
- [ ] Book or movie (based on books) trailers
- [ ] Other: ____________________________
APPENDIX C

Social Media and the School Librarian
Student Assent Form

Parent/Guardian Approval: Your parents or guardian have to say it’s OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too.

Researcher and Research Topic: My name is Paula Erickson. I am a student at the University of Central Missouri. I am trying to learn about what social media websites students are using and the types of posts that students are interested in viewing.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to help determine the types of social media websites the school library will create and also the types of posts that students are most interested in viewing.

Request for Participation: We are inviting you to participate by answering a few simple survey questions about your social media habits. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. Surveys are completely anonymous. Once you submit your survey, we will not know which survey is yours.

Description of Research Method: This study involves completing a short survey. The survey will ask you about your age, grade, and gender. The rest of the survey will ask you about your social media habits. This study will take less than 5 minutes to finish. Please note that we cannot give you your individual results because the data is anonymous.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be anonymous. We will not record your name, student number, or any information that could be used to identify you.

Explanation of Risks: The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of everyday life. Any medical treatments provided if an injury occurs will be at the expense of the participant.

Explanation of Benefits: The benefit of participating in this study is that the information collected from this study may be used to provide you better school library services.

Researcher Contact Information: You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at (660) 543-4621.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.
Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. Paula Erickson has answered all my questions and I know that I can stop being in the study at any time.

____________________________________________
Printed Name of Study Participant

____________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Study Participant       Date

____________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Researcher        Date
APPENDIX D

Social Media and the School Librarian

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Identification of Researchers: My name is Paula Erickson. I am a student at the University of Central Missouri. I am trying to learn about what social media websites students are using and the types of posts that students are interested in viewing.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to help determine the types of social media websites the school library will create and also the types of posts that students are most interested in viewing.

Request for Participation: We are inviting your student to participate by answering a few simple survey questions about their social media habits. It is up to you whether you would like your student to participate. If you decide not to allow your student to participate, he/she will not be penalized in any way. Surveys are completely anonymous. Once your student submits their survey, we will not know which survey is your student.

Exclusions: None.

Description of Research Method: This study involves completing a short survey. The survey will ask about your student’s age, grade, and gender. The rest of the survey will ask about your student’s social media habits. This study will take less than 5 minutes to finish. Please note that we cannot give you your student’s individual results because the data are anonymous.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be anonymous. We will not record your student’s name, student number, or any information that could be used to identify your student.

Explanation of Risks: The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of every day life. Any medical treatments provided if an injury occurs will be at the expense of the participant.

Explanation of Benefits: The benefit of participating in this study is that the information collected from this study may be used to provide better school library services.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Mrs. Erickson. She can be reached at perickson@fortosage.net or at (816) 650-7040. If you have any questions about your student’s rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at (660) 543-4621.

If you would like your student to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

I have read this letter and agree to allow my son/daughter to participate.

Student’s Name (Printed): ________________________________
Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): ________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: ________________________________

Date: ______________
APPENDIX E

Social Media and the School Librarian
Consent Form – School Librarian

**Researcher and Research Topic:** My name is Paula Erickson. I am a student at the University of Central Missouri. I am trying to learn about what social media websites librarians are using and the types of posts that get the most responses from other users.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to help determine the types of social media websites the school librarians are using and also the types of posts that get the best most responses from other users.

**Request for Participation:** We are inviting you to participate by answering a few simple survey questions about your social media habits as a school librarian. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. Surveys are completely anonymous. Once you submit your survey, we will not know which survey is yours.

**Description of Research Method:** This study involves completing a short survey. The survey will ask you about what grade level you serve. The rest of the survey will ask you about your social media habits as a school librarian. This study will take less than 5 minutes to finish. Please note that we cannot give you your individual results because the data is anonymous.

**Privacy:** All of the information we collect will be anonymous. We will not record your name or any information that could be used to identify you.

**Explanation of Risks:** The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of every day life. Any medical treatments provided if an injury occurs will be at the expense of the participant.

**Explanation of Benefits:** The benefit of participating in this study is that the information collected from this study may be used to provide you better school library services.

**Researcher Contact Information:** My telephone number is 816-650-7040. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at (660) 543-4621.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

**Agreement**

By filling out the survey, I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to. Paula Erickson has answered all my questions and I know that I can stop being in the study at any time.
4/11/2013

Paula Erickson
pae28750@ucmo.edu

Dear Paula Erickson,

Your research project, 'Social Media and the School Librarian', was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee on 4/11/2013. This approval is valid through 4/11/2014. Your informed consent is also approved until 4/11/2014.

Please note that you are required to notify the committee in writing of any changes in your research project and that you may not implement changes without prior approval of the committee. You must also notify the committee in writing of any change in the nature or the status of the risks of participating in this research project.

Should any adverse events occur in the course of your research (such as harm to a research participant), you must notify the committee in writing immediately. In the case of any adverse event, you are required to stop the research immediately unless stopping the research would cause more harm to the participants than continuing with it.

At the conclusion of your project, you will need to submit a completed Project Status Form to this office. You must also submit the Project Status Form if you wish to continue your research project beyond its initial expiration date.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the number above.

Sincerely,

Janice Putnam, Ph.D., RN
Associate Dean of The Graduate School
putnam@ucmo.edu