Trends and Issues in Virtual Communities

Dave Provost

LIS 674-31: Issues in Virtual Communities

Dr. Anthony Chow

July 11, 2021

Abstract

Virtual communities are an important complement to in-person, “actual” communities, and libraries must participate thoughtfully and intentionally on social media platforms so that they can be valuable members of these virtual communities. Librarians and other information professionals can and should learn from their own experiences on social media, as well as familiarizing themselves with the current trends and issues that exist in virtual communities. Effective strategies already exist to maximize social interactions, and libraries should implement them, as well as think creatively and boldly about possible future roles for libraries in these spaces.

Keywords:

virtual community, social media, social networking, library, libraries

Trends and Issues in Virtual Communities

Providing a satisfactory definition of either "virtual" or "community" seems like an insurmountable challenge, and when the two terms are combined, the task becomes exponentially harder. It is also important to understand that as information professionals, we will be asked to consider the concept of "virtual community" from multiple perspectives. As scholars, it behooves us to find a rigorous definition that stands up to some amount of debate, and that allows us to find, analyze, and even perform research into the topic. As professionals, we need to consider the concept from a more utilitarian perspective. We will need to measure, prioritize, and allocate resources to our library's virtual community, most likely separately from what we might call our "actual community". As librarians, we will need to assist and educate our patrons on how to join and participate in our virtual community (and maybe in virtual communities in general) and so a definition that is practical and understandable by the widest audience will be important. This results in a Venn diagram of definitions, largely overlapping, but differing slightly, in important ways.

Constance Elise Porter provides a scholarly definition that is both rigorous and inclusive: "an aggregation of individuals or business partners who interact around a shared interest, where the interaction is at least partially supported and/or mediated by technology and guided by some protocols or norms." (Porter, 2004) It is crucial that we consider virtual communities where not all of the interaction among the members is electronic. A virtual community will almost certainly include some level of face-to-face interaction, especially in a transactional environment like a library. Additionally, the idea that virtual community interactions are governed by some sort of rules is essential. This is what will enable us as librarians to build and sustain healthy communities. We are already familiar with this concept, of course, in the actual community that

is our library. We expect patrons to not be disruptive, and to check out materials according to our rules, and to return them on time. Similarly, we should expect our virtual community members to be respectful of one another (and our staff) and to refrain from disrupting our virtual activities as well.

Our professional definition will vary depending on the needs of our particular institutions. Whether it is as narrow as a single public library Facebook group or as broad as a full suite of websites and apps linking a community of distance learning students to their university's academic library, the key is to clearly set the specific expectations and responsibilities of each staff member so that virtual community duties can be accounted for as part of their workload. Initially, the demand might be low as the library begins it's social media presence, but the institution must be ready to put additional resources in place as the virtual community (or communities) grow. (Fiander, 2012)

Practically, we need to consider that our patrons may have very different definitions of what a virtual community is from us and from each other. They may not even accept the idea of a virtual community, insisting that community requires face-to-face communication, and may resist interacting with the library electronically at all. For this reason, it is important that any virtual communities that the library participates in must define itself as a community, early and often, and should provide an easy way for members to learn (and be reminded of) community norms. A linked document on the library's profile page, or in a pinned Tweet would be a good place for such a document.

My personal experiences with virtual communities began well before concepts of virtual community and social media were formulated. I was a participant on several subject-specific

forums in the early 2000s (linguistics, photo editing, etc). A notable example was a vocabulary and wordplay forum that grew from a "Word A Day" email list. Membership in the forum was completely open, and it operated with no moderation. Nevertheless, the community had significant protocols and norms, including a number of games and puzzles and at least one international meetup of members. The forum is still operating, but the real breakup of the community was when a member joined that refused to follow established norms, and was disrespectful and cruel to other members. Moderators were added, members were banned, and many of the original participants, myself included, moved on to other online spaces.

My next virtual community was a general interest forum called MetaFilter. It is fairly well-known in the world of virtual communities as it has been in operation since 1999 and it has maintained a relatively high level of discussion by using a small team of paid moderators (Silva et al., 2009). I joined MetaFilter in 2005, and am still an active reader and participant. One interesting protocol that MetaFilter maintains is that, unlike most forums and social media platforms, there is a one-time fee to join MetaFilter. Established early in the site's existence, new users must pay five dollars and wait several days before they have posting privileges. This fee is not intended as revenue generation (in fact, any user for whom the fee presents a financial burden can easily ask for a waiver) but rather as a way to improve the community. The idea is that the fee discourages hasty, intemperate participation from new visitors who might not feel invested in the community, but it is not so high a burden that it will drive off people who find the community interesting and valuable (O'Keefe, 2014). Far from being a strictly virtual community, MetaFilter has become a fully hybrid community, with holiday gift exchanges, collaborative music and art projects, and frequent in-person meetups: some local and informal,

some larger-scale, drawing people from across the globe, on the site's 20th anniversary, for example.

I was also an early adopter of Facebook. I joined some time shortly after the site became open to the public in 2006 (Facebook, 2006) and quickly "friended" high school and college classmates, enjoying the ability to reconnect with them, a new concept for those of us that grew up in a pre-Internet world. I continued to expand my network as quickly as I could - the more the merrier, it seemed. Family members, coworkers, friends from MetaFilter, huge public groups with funny names, like "I Will Go Slightly Out of My Way To Step On A Crunchy-Looking Leaf". At the time, it felt like the best way to participate in social media was to cast as wide a net as possible. As time went on, however, that approach made Facebook less and less appealing. I didn't have much in common with my classmates, and I felt limited in what I could and couldn't share, knowing that everyone from my old boss to my stepmother would see it. As the politics of the 2010s heated up, Facebook became even less pleasant. Antivax second cousins, birther childhood friends, and racist in-laws meant that almost every time I opened the site (or the app) I either had to get in an argument I could win, or bite my tongue and let misinformation and hatred stand.

Because of that, I turned mostly to Twitter. Partly because they didn't seem to use it, and partly because I was more hesitant about whom to follow, my Twitter feed was full of people that I liked, who said things I wanted to hear. In addition, because of Twitter's character limits and strict chronological feed, even if there was a post I disagreed with, it was easier to ignore. Additionally, I followed and was followed by a number of my closest friends from MetaFilter - some local, some international - which has created a comfortable and friendly circle of friends. None of us have massive followings, so we can have little private conversations amongst each

other without even resorting to direct messages. I also love the "real-time" nature of Twitter. When any major event is happening (be it a natural disaster or an important sporting event), I can rely on at least some subset of my Twitter feed to be watching along and commenting, providing important information that I might not come across by myself.

I participate in my virtual communities daily, checking Twitter on a regular basis throughout the day, and reading MetaFilter occasionally. I tend to be more of a reader and less of a participant in the virtual communities I am a member of, but this is in line with how I behave in "actual" communities as well, so it makes sense. I think a lot of people belong to virtual communities in this way - as "read only" members rather than active participants. Forums and BBSes had a word for this: lurker. It was expected that new members would spend some period of time learning the norms of the virtual community by "lurking" before beginning to participate. Today, this sort of probationary period is not expected, perhaps because the norms of online participation are becoming familiar enough that we all are expected to know them as a part of growing up, in the same way that we learn the norms of our "actual" communities.

My close family has social media preferences and practices that are quite different from my own. My wife prefers the Instagram platform. She maintains several accounts: her personal account, an account for her home baking business, and one in the name of one of our cats. Her personal account features photos of us and her extended family, when they are able to gather, having fun and celebrating milestones. She uses her business account to promote her cake decorating services, with pictures of the cakes she has made. This account also interacts with other bakers and cake makers that she follows, liking and commenting on their creations as well. Her account for our cat is a humorous account: she posts photos of him (and our other cats) in his "voice," as if he is the operator of the account. For example, when we recently had to give him a

shave due to his getting into some sticky substance, she posted a picture of him looking glum and noting that the account would be on hiatus as he recovered from a traumatic haircut experience.

My daughter uses primarily TikTok and YouTube to stay abreast of the latest news and occurrences in the world of Korean pop music - Kpop. She notes that both platforms allow her to follow, like, and comment on videos of her favorite bands and idols in a way that doesn't feel intimidating. When I discussed it with her recently, she explained that commenting on a YouTube video or TikTok clip makes her feel like she is cheering on her favorites from the audience, while replying to a Tweet feels like getting up on stage alongside the performer and interacting directly with them.

My mother, on the other hand, almost completely eschews social media. Her only concession was recently joining Facebook so that she could see pictures of her grandchildren more easily. Even so, she joined under an alias and spent a significant period of time without interacting with posts in any way. Only in the last few weeks has she started to like and - very occasionally - comment on a favorite photo.

There is a huge range of ways to use social media and belong to virtual communities - the four ways typified by my family represent only a fraction of the possibilities. An important message here for librarians and libraries hoping to create and maintain virtual communities is to remember that not everyone uses the same social media platforms in the same way that you do. Allowing patrons to have the kind of experience they prefer will be essential to building a wide-ranging, robust community.

Trends & Issues

The beginning of virtual communities can be traced to the earliest networked computers. ARPANET and other early networks included provisions for users to send messages to one another, the precursors to today's email. Usenet was an early public discussion forum that offered users the ability to see each other's messages and replies, on a huge number of subjects, from computing to culture. The concept trickled down to the general public with the creation of bulletin board systems, or BBSes. These were central servers that allowed remote computers to dial in via modem and access shared files, discussion forums, and more. As the demand for these sorts of services grew, several corporate entities arose to offer network services to subscribers. Networks like the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (the WELL), AmericaOnLine (AOL), and CompuServe offered somewhat more refined and user-friendly interfaces to the types of discussion groups early Internet users were beginning to expect (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

In the 1990s, companies like Classmates and SixDegrees began to explore the concept of connecting internet users to people they know, or knew, but neither captured the full potential of social networking. The first modern social network could be Friendster, founded in 2002, which placed a high degree of importance on a select circle of friends. Quickly followed by Myspace, which was innovative by allowing users to greatly customize their profile page and exhibit their preferences and creativity (Shah, 2016). The giant of social media - Facebook - began at Harvard University in 2004, and by the late 2000s became the world's dominant platform. The most recent trend in social media is for networks that focus on private communication. WeChat and WhatsApp are messaging platforms that have emerged, largely outside the US, as rivals to Facebook's dominance (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019).

The ability to connect with almost anyone in the world via social media and create a virtual community is a powerful one, and like all powerful abilities, it has the potential for both good and bad. The good part of virtual communities is the unprecedented potential for building connections with others, but the bad part is that these same communities can serve to alienate us when turned against us.

When it comes to connection, marginalized groups have seized on the opportunity provided by social media to enhance and extend their ability to broaden their social networks in ways that privileged groups do not. (Gonzales, 2017) Social media can provide material support as well, in the form of crowdfunding (Gonzales et al., 2018) and offer ways to develop advocacy (Blackwell et al., 2016). Especially for members of marginalized communities that do not live in an environment that allows for a strong "actual" community, the possibility to connect to people who share their experiences and concerns online is reason enough to justify the existence of social media.

Beyond the vitally important service of creating virtual communities for minority groups, social media allows for the development of all sorts of other communities that might not be feasible in the real world. People who live in major metropolitan areas can generally rely on finding a club or group for any of their interests, but this is not the case for everyone. Many times, it is easier to find a virtual community. Facebook itself promotes this feature in its recent "More Together" advertising campaign (O'Brien, 2019) that features dads, motorheads, sci-fi fans, dancers of all body types, and Deaf basketball players. Certainly some of those groups could be found in even small cities and towns, but the near-global reach of social media provides infinitely more opportunities.

The ease of connection with others has its dark side, unfortunately. When people post to social media, they are not simply documenting their life impartially, they are creating a thoroughly considered and carefully crafted identity (Zhao et al., 2008). Yet when we examine the social media accounts of our friends, colleagues, and idols and contrast them with our own lives, we find ourselves wanting. The writer Anne Lamott beseeches us to "try not to compare your insides to someone else's outsides," (Lamott, 2017) but this kind of "upward social comparison" can adversely affect our mental health (Warrender & Milne, 2020).

Even more serious is the potential that a virtual community brings for harassment, stalking and abuse. Connection with others is the purpose of social media, but as is the case with any time people connect, negative interactions are always possible. The Pew Research Center has found that 41% of Americans have experienced harassment online, with 75% of them reporting that the abuse happened on social media platforms. Members of marginalized groups, like Black, latinx, and LGBTQ individuals report greater levels of harassment. Women report harassment slightly less than men, but are three times more likely to report that the experience was extremely upsetting (Vogels, 2021). Willard (2007) posits that the conceptual distance between harasser and victim may be a reason for online bullying. The aggressor feels less visible, even if they are using an account under their own name, and they are not able to see the direct effects of their behavior on the victim. In reality, the effects can be severely damaging, from anger and depression to social anxiety and suicide (Watts et al., 2017).

Libraries of all kinds are still navigating how to use social media and create virtual communities, but some are making strides and developing unique strategies. The University of Liverpool Library (@LivUniLibrary) has adopted a voice that embraces the wry British sense of humor in order to engage patrons and make them more likely to pay attention to the Library's

Tweets. “The team has tweeted about missing staplers, the library's uncomfortable temperature settings and flirting among patrons. A particularly popular tweet reminded students not to place half-eaten sandwiches on shelves, helping kick off the #shelfwich hashtag.” (Reardon, 2019)

The University of Missouri Veterinary Medicine Library (@ZalkLibrary) has a vibrant Twitter presence as well. They post about a wide range of topics of interest to the larger university community, from athletics to mental health. They also frequently retweet other university accounts, as well as other accounts relevant to their specialty (like the American Museum of Natural History). Most importantly, they frequently tweet (and retweet) about research going on in the veterinary medicine community, especially research at the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine that they serve. This encourages engagement between the library and the researchers that use the library most often.

My employer, the NC State University Libraries, is also at the forefront of social media usage. One innovative example is the Libraries’ use of a “Snapchat Scavenger Hunt” for orientations. Students are grouped into teams and can use either provided iPads or their personal devices to photograph a list of places and things around the library and send the photos to a dedicated Libraries account (A. Burke et al., 2013). This program both orients new students to the Libraries, as well as acculturates them to interacting with the Libraries on social media. Further, the Libraries can repost the best submissions from the students, which promotes the Libraries as a “fun” account that interacts with its followers (A. Burke et al., 2013).

Partly because of the harassment and abuse that are possible on public social media platforms, one important trend in social media is the rise of private groups and networks. In some cases, these groups are ad-hoc and utilize existing private messaging systems. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook offer functionality to send direct messages among groups that will only be

seen by invited members of the group. Even group text messages offer simple, persistent, and most importantly private communication among a limited set of members. More formally, web-based services like Slack and Discord offer invitation-only discussion forums. Originally developed for workplaces (Slack) and video gamers (Discord), these services are gaining wider distribution among users desiring both connection and safety. Discord in particular is attempting to move beyond its gaming roots and has rebranded as "Your place to talk" (Pierce, 2020). A similar, though less popular option for semi-private networks is Mastodon. A largely Twitter-like experience, Mastodon allows users to create their own private networks (or "instances") which can then be joined together (of "federated") by the administrators of each instance, as desired. Instances that do not uphold desired standards of behavior amongst their members can be "de-federated" en masse (Farokhmanesh, 2017).

The other looming possibility for bringing some level of control to currently wide-open social networks is governmental regulation. The events leading up to the election and inauguration of President Joe Biden in 2020 and 2021, including Twitter banning the accounts of outgoing President Donald Trump have given rise to discussions around the power that private social media companies have over the global virtual community, and whether or not governmental oversight is required (Siripurapu & Merrow, 2021).

Conclusion & Recommendations

Libraries must use social media to market their services and resources. The vast majority of Americans get information from the Internet, and of those that use the Internet, more than half of them use social media for this purpose. (Shearer, 2021) When combined with the ease of generating social media content, it would be irresponsible to ignore this tool. A perennial complaint of librarians and library staff is that it is hard to get the word out about all the things

that the library offers. Social media offers numerous opportunities for doing just that. Not only can the library post information about upcoming events or timely books or new programs, but the people that see these posts can easily share them and re-post them, exponentially expanding the reach of each post. The New York Public Libraries were able to create a 35% increase in monthly library card signups using a targeted social media campaign (Dankowski, 2013). Not every library has the cache or reach of the NYPL, but that kind of impact can't be ignored. Libraries can learn how best to do this from the research and experimentation that marketers and advertisers already know. The rule of thumb is that only 20% of social media interactions should be blatantly promotional. The other 80% should be natural friendly and collegial interaction. This 80/20 rule ensures that the library's followers will be engaged and responsive when those marketing messages come around (*How to Use the 80/20 Rule to Conquer Social Media Marketing*, 2017).

However, if libraries only use social media to promote themselves, they will be failing to take advantage of the community-building aspect that is unique to social media. We have already discussed the ways social media provides opportunities for marginalized groups and niche interests to form communities they would not be able to form otherwise, and the same could be said for a library's patrons. The Montana State University Library was able to increase the size of its virtual community by 366 percent, and increase interactions between the library and the community by 275 by intentionally shifting from a one directional broadcast mentality to a two-way communication-rich strategy over the course of one year (Young & Rossmann, 2015). If the library can create interactions between the library and its patrons, instead of just broadcasting information at them, it can begin to leverage those connections in many ways.

One way to leverage those connections for the greater good is to consciously position the library within a larger virtual community and provide connections to and from that community to its patrons. This service is already provided within libraries, typically by offering access to e-government (S. Burke & Boggs, 2015) or by including a social worker on staff (Hines, 2017). Again, by focusing on the strengths of social media, the library can build connections to the social media presence of other local, state and federal organizations. Libraries can highlight online programs or services that it knows will be of interest to its virtual community, re-post or otherwise share posts from those other organizations, and can direct patron questions directly to social or governmental organizations that can help. This additional serves as a way to build the virtual community, instead of just using social media as an advertising tool.

The practical tasks of maintaining a social media presence for a library are not particularly challenging or taxing. Especially with organizational tools like Hootsuite and others, the scheduling and posting can be automated. The complicated part of leading social media comes in the interaction. If, as we noted above, we want to create two-way communication and interaction, someone must be doing that interacting. The ideal scenario would be to have a team that shares in the responsibility for posting and replying. This spreads the workload in order to free up staff members to complete the rest of their work duties, but also spreads it across the clock, so responses aren't limited to Monday through Friday from 9 to 5. It also allows for staff members to bring their own skills and interests to the task (Blunt, 2017). Finally, having a team gives you the opportunity to bring a range of diverse voices to your social media accounts, which helps them connect with all of your patrons.

The greater challenge is how to control or moderate the discussions and interactions that will necessarily come with an active virtual community. Libraries struggle every day with how

best to enforce standards of behavior within the actual library. For example, do we ask patrons with body odor to leave because they are disturbing others, or do we allow people who have odor-based disabilities or simply choose different standards of cleanliness to use the library like everyone else? (Lazakis, 2020) An online environment has the potential for even greater challenges. Facebook recently reached a settlement with former and current moderators, acknowledging that the violent, racist and otherwise offensive material they were forced to examine could cause post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental illness. (Newton, 2020) There is no ready solution to this problem. One way to minimize the challenge is, as suggested above, to make the expectations and consequences clear from the beginning, but libraries will have to dedicate some significant portion of their social media resources to moderation.

Libraries need to begin participating in and contributing to existing virtual communities, through thoughtful and strategic use of social media. It is useful for outreach and marketing, and offers the potential for strengthening connections between the library and its community, as well as between other community organizations and participants. This requires little to no additional resources for most libraries, as smaller libraries will have more modest social media presences.

Thinking more transformatively, and looking further to the future, in the same way that libraries offer an alternative to for-profit bookstores and video streaming services, what if we were to offer an alternative way to connect with other members and organizations in their community? Librarians are already used to making fraught decisions about what content is worthy of inclusion through the concept of collection management, and we are trained in how to maintain a careful balance between children's storytime and silent reading in the same physical space. Already overworked and underpaid, it would not be feasible to add moderating an online community to the duties of the average library staff. Certainly communities and organizations

would have to commit significant additional resources to the concept, which does seem unlikely in the current environment. Perhaps as citizens become more uncomfortable with the power of corporations to control the discourse, there will be demand for a more impartial social network. Libraries could even use their existing experience with consortial organization and resource sharing to find ways to link their own local networks into a cooperative and collaborative national and global virtual community.

References

Blackwell, L., Hardy, J., Ammari, T., Veinot, T., Lampe, C., & Schoenebeck, S. (2016). LGBT Parents and Social Media: Advocacy, Privacy, and Disclosure during Shifting Social Movements. In *Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 610–622). Association for Computing Machinery. https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858342

Blunt, W. (2017, June 23). *The Essential Roles and Responsibilities of Your Social Media Team*. FlypChart. https://flypchart.co/social-media-team/

Burke, A., Lai, A., & Rogers, A. (2013). The North Carolina State University Libraries' Mobile Scavenger Hunt: A Case Study. In C. Harmon & M. Messina (Eds.), *Mobile Library Services: Best Practices* (pp. 65–78). Scarecrow Press.

Burke, S., & Boggs, E. M. (2015). E-Government in Public Libraries. *Public Libraries Online*, *54*(2). http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2015/06/e-government-in-public-libraries/

Dankowski, T. (2013, July 16). Library 2.0: The effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool for libraries in educational institutions—Michael J. Jones, Morgan Harvey, 2019. *American Libraries*. https://journals-sagepub-com.prox.lib.ncsu.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0961000616668959

Edosomwan, S., Prakasan, S. K., Kouame, D., Watson, J., & Seymour, T. (2011). The History of Social Media and its Impact on Business. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, *16*(3).

Facebook. (2006, September 26). Facebook Expansion Enables More People to Connect with Friends in a Trusted Environment. *About Facebook*. https://about.fb.com/news/2006/09/facebook-expansion-enables-more-people-to-connect-with-friends-in-a-trusted-environment/

Farokhmanesh, M. (2017, April 7). *A beginner's guide to Mastodon, the hot new open-source Twitter clone*. The Verge. https://www.theverge.com/2017/4/7/15183128/mastodon-open-source-twitter-clone-how-to-use

Fiander, D. J. (2012). Social media for academic libraries. In *Social Media for Academics* (pp. 193–210).

Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-84334-681-4.50011-6

Gonzales, A. L. (2017). Disadvantaged Minorities' Use of the Internet to Expand Their Social Networks. *Communication Research*, *44*(4), 467–486. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214565925

Gonzales, A. L., Kwon, E. Y., Lynch, T., & Fritz, N. (2018). "Better everyone should know our business than we lose our house": Costs and benefits of medical crowdfunding for support, privacy, and identity. *New Media & Society*, *20*(2), 641–658. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816667723

Hines, S. (2017). Connecting Individuals with Social Services: The Academic Library's Role. *Collaborative Librarianship*, *9*(2). https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol9/iss2/8

How to Use the 80/20 Rule to Conquer Social Media Marketing. (2017, September 13). VirTasktic. https://www.virtasktic.com/clueless-social-media-marketing/

Lamott, A. (2017, April). *12 truths I learned from life and writing*. https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_lamott_12_truths_i_learned_from_life_and_writing

Lazakis, N. (2020). *"It Is A Non-Negotiable Order": Public Libraries' Body Odor Bans and the Ableist Politics of Purity*. *6*, 30.

Newton, C. (2020, May 12). *Facebook will pay $52 million in settlement with moderators who developed PTSD on the job*. The Verge. https://www.theverge.com/2020/5/12/21255870/facebook-content-moderator-settlement-scola-ptsd-mental-health

O'Brien, K. (2019, May 4). *Facebook highlights redesigned Groups feature with 'More Together' campaign*. The Drum. https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/05/04/facebook-highlights-redesigned-groups-feature-with-more-together-campaign

O'Keefe, P. (2014, October 16). Online Community MetaFilter Charges $5 for New Accounts. *ManagingCommunities.Com*. https://www.managingcommunities.com/2014/10/16/online-community-metafilter-charges-5-for-

new-accounts/

Ortiz-Ospina, E. (2019, September 18). *The rise of social media*. Our World in Data. https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media

Pierce, D. (2020, October 29). *How Discord (somewhat accidentally) invented the future of the internet*. Protocol — The People, Power and Politics of Tech. https://www.protocol.com/discord

Porter, C. E. (2004). A Typology of Virtual Communities: A Multi-Disciplinary Foundation for Future Research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *10*(1), 00–00. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2004.tb00228.x

Reardon, M. (2019, April 11). *Libraries and social media: Not your grandma's library*. CNET. https://www.cnet.com/news/libraries-lean-on-twitter-facebook-and-instagram-to-reel-you-in/

Shah, S. (2016, May 14). *The History of Social Media*. Digital Trends. https://www.digitaltrends.com/features/the-history-of-social-networking/

Shearer, E. (2021, January 12). 86% of Americans get news online from smartphone, computer or tablet. *Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/12/more-than-eight-in-ten-americans-get-news-from-digital-devices/

Silva, L., Goel, L., & Mousavidin, E. (2009). Exploring the dynamics of blog communities: The case of MetaFilter. *Information Systems Journal*, *19*(1), 55–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2575.2008.00304.x

Siripurapu, A., & Merrow, W. (2021, February 9). *How Countries Regulate Online Speech*. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/social-media-and-online-speech-how-should-countries-regulate-tech-giants

Vogels, E. A. (2021). The State of Online Harassment. *Pew Research Center*.

Warrender, D., & Milne, R. (2020). How use of social media and social comparison affect mental health. *Nursing Times*, *116*(3), 56–59.

https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/mental-health/how-use-of-social-media-and-social-comparison-affect-mental-health-24-02-2020/

Watts, L. K., Wagner, J., Velasquez, B., & Behrens, P. I. (2017). Cyberbullying in higher education: A literature review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *69*, 268–274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.12.038

Willard, N. (2007). *Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats*. https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/School-Safety/Safe-and-Supportive-Learning/Anti-Harassment-Intimidation-and-Bullying-Resource/Educator-s-Guide-Cyber-Safety.pdf.aspx

Young, S. W. H., & Rossmann, D. (2015). Building Library Community Through Social Media. *Information Technology and Libraries*, *34*(1), 20–37. https://doi.org/10.6017/ital.v34i1.5625

Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *24*(5), 1816–1836. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2008.02.012