

5th Global Information Village Plaza – MySpace, OurSpace: Social Networking in the International Arena

Moderators:

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Presenters: ASIS&T members, especially SIG/III and SIG/BWP members, and conference attendees

Building on the success of the previous 2002-2006 Global Information Village Plazas, the 2007 Plaza maintains its successful interactive symposium format, allowing ASIS&T members an opportunity to express their personal views about the challenges and opportunities that the information society represents in their personal and professional lives.

The discussion will focus on social networking websites, a part of the “Web 2.0” phenomenon which may be generally defined as personal webpages generated through a social networking service such as MySpace. The Plaza will look specifically at social networking services from different countries and how their characteristics and use change according to the country or culture in which they are situated. For example, in different cultures these services may be more or less representative of a personal voice, may encourage or discourage commenting on and discussing a thought, and may encourage or discourage networking with strangers.

This topic relates specifically to the theme of this year’s Annual Meeting – Social Computing and Information Science – in that social networking websites and services are and will continue to become a major vehicle for information sharing between people. Such sharing of information is informed by social and

cultural worldviews, thus the characteristics and uses of information (and the social networking services conveying that information) are of interest to LIS professionals in that they serve socioculturally diverse groups of patrons who maintain different instruments for receiving information.

This year’s Global Information Village Plaza will continue to use the SIG-III blog to facilitate discussion on the Plaza topic. This online interactive forum will be reachable by any professional, thereby allowing ASIS&T to expand its circle of interaction and offering the information professional community around the globe who will be unable to attend the 2007 Annual Meeting an opportunity to contribute their thoughts on social networking in the international arena.

SIG-III will partner with SIG-BWP to present this interactive discussion.

Introduction

While there exist many expert sources of information on the varied aspects of the “information society,” the opportunities for the lay professional public to debate the implications of this society on their personal and professional lives are much less available. The Global Information Village Plaza (now in its fifth year) seeks to fill this gap. It offers an opportunity for all ASIS&T members and information professionals at large to share opinions and consider these implications in an informal setting. It allows the community of information professionals to examine their own views -, as opposed to institutional, corporate or other predetermined and politically correct ones.

This session of the Global Information Village Plaza will facilitate candid yet engaging discourse on social networking websites and services, particularly their individual characteristics and uses as informed by cultural context. Particular social networking services that will be discussed include but are not limited to Mixi (Japanese), Bebo (British), and Facebook and MySpace (both from the U.S.). Foreign versions of the U.S.-based sites, such as MySpace France, will also be discussed, as will cultural exchanges that occur between social; networkers of different cultures or nationalities.

The Plaza will provide an open forum for conference attendees as well as posters to the Global Information Village Plaza section of the SIG-III blog to discuss questions and aspects of foreign and U.S.-based social networking platforms. These discussions will include such questions as how do users in different countries use

social networking services differently? What specific cultural differences are there between foreign and U.S.-Based services? How does social networking impact information sharing? How will a better understanding of how users worldwide use social networking services to share information be beneficial to LIS professionals?

The blog will reflect these broad categories of discussion, and will allow blog posters to discuss these issues in the context of librarianship or another professional information service, and/or in a personal context. Pending moderator approval, blog posters will also be allowed to post their own topics and/or questions about social networking.

SIG-III will partner with SIG-BWP to present this interactive discussion.

Before the Annual Meeting

BLOG:

Discussion of the Plaza topic will be facilitated through the SIG-III blog, accessible via the SIG-III website. It will be monitored by the SIG-III Blog administrator (Aaron Bowen) with assistance from Plaza co-moderator Amanda Wilson. Based upon the questions posed in the introduction, the moderators will post several short questions and discussions of social networking in the international arena to get blog conversation going. The moderators will regularly update the blog with additional thoughts about social networking services in developing vs. developed nations; as they are used by practitioners vs. scholars or by students vs. seasoned scholars; or as they are used for professional vs. personal uses.

PRE-CONFERENCE DISCUSSION:

A call for participation in the blog discussions will be issued on all ASIS&T listservs and possibly other professional lists around the world, as far as possible. Webpages inviting contributions to the blog will also be created on social networking services themselves. Special efforts will be made with a view to obtain input from all SIGs of ASIS&T input about into the relevant themes by posting a note to individual SIG listservs in addition to the call issued on the main ASIS&T listserv. Both personal contributions and position statements from the SIG as a whole are welcome.

People will be asked to post to the blog a short position statement or response to an ongoing discussion concerning their views and perceptions of social networking, how they use social networking services, its value as an information sharing mechanism, cultural exchanges they may have had through a social networking service and/or cultural divides they may have encountered, and their perceptions of how social

networking changes by culture. They will also have the opportunity to discuss aspects of the study of social networking, such as what is new and challenging about examining social networking, what should be investigated and how what individuals, information services and professional societies should do in order to deepen the discussion on social networking and propose research and action agendas.

At the Annual Meeting

During the session at the Annual Meeting posters will be placed on the walls around the room, each listing three to four the aspects of social networking discussed on the blog as well as recurring themes that emerged from the blog discussion. There will be a table in front of each poster with a discussion facilitator facilitating live discussion with Plaza attendees on the topics addressed by the the corresponding poster. Participants will be able to move around the room and will be able to join these informal discussion groups corresponding to the posters.

After 20 to 25 minutes, individual discussions will stop. One of the two moderators will ask each discussion facilitator in turn for a summary of the ideas generated by the discussion groups. The other moderator will post the ideas presented by each facilitator to the blog using a laptop with a WiFi connection. This laptop will be hooked up to a projector allowing the whole room to see the new blog posts as they are added.

The floor will be opened for further general discussion. The moderators will post summary points from this discussion to the blog as the discussion progresses.

After the Annual Meeting

The blog discussion will be kept running for two months after the meeting for further commentary. A summary of the Plaza and the blog discussion will be published in the SIG-III Newsletter.