

5 Minute Guide ...

Social networking sites

What is a social networking site?

More and more, people are turning to the Internet to keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Social networking sites (SNS), make staying involved quicker, easier – and more fun – than ever before. Facebook and MySpace are currently the most popular SNS in North America, but there are many from which to choose. These sites have millions of users, with more signing up everyday.

How do social networking sites work?

Joining is simple: you create a “profile” (you must have a verifiable email address) and you may choose to join a “network”. Your profile is where you provide information that you want to share. A network links you to a specific community – be it your hometown, school or workplace. Once your profile has been created you find people you know, and add them to your “friend” list. In your profile, you can update your status, post items of interest, join groups, download applications, play games, take quizzes and a myriad of other things to spend time on. SNS allow people to stay connected by easily monitoring updates or changes in others’ profiles.

Who uses social networking sites?

More and more people are using these sites. Once attractive mainly to the younger generations, it is not uncommon for parents or even grandparents to be active users! People and groups use SNS for a variety of purposes. For example, politicians set up accounts on Facebook to spread their views and attract followers and bands set up pages on MySpace so fans can find news about their music and latest gigs.

Do social networking sites have drawbacks?

The main drawbacks relate to privacy. While you can protect yourself, you can’t control what others post about you – a growing concern as employers are beginning to search out information about new and potential employees. As there are few barriers to fraudulent usage, there is significant risk of misrepresentation. A user should also monitor the terms of use for SNS - they have been known to change without notice. People have also been known to become addicted, spending so much of their time on these sites that their real lives suffer.

Why are social networking sites useful?

SNS can bring together people from far and wide. You can share stories, start fan clubs, play games, promote your favourite causes, plan events or a myriad of other things. Social networking provides the opportunity to stay in touch with friends, catch up with old ones and “meet” new people with similar interests.

How can libraries use social networking sites?

There are a number of ways that libraries can use SNS. They can create fan clubs, advertise special programmes and events, or highlight parts of the collection such as new items for a specific age group. One of the greatest benefits of taking advantage of new social technology is that it proves that libraries not only know about cutting-edge technology, but aren’t afraid to use it either!



alberta public library
electronic network

did you know?
Cornell University
students created a
primitive social
networking
site in 1994.

Social networking sites

Explore More

Social networking basics

CommonCraft: Social Networking in Plain English (video):
www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking
(Note: May require additional software to run)

Top Ten Reviews: Web Services: Home & Lifestyles: Social Networking Websites
<http://social-networking-websites-review.toptenreviews.com>

About.com: Personal Web Pages: Take a Tour of Social Networking Sites
<http://personalweb.about.com/b/2009/03/11/take-a-tour-of-social-networking-sites.htm>

Social networking safety

Get Net Wise: Risks by Technology: Social Networking Sites
<http://kids.getnetwise.org/safetyguide/technology/socialnetworking>

On Guard Online: Social Networking Sites
www.onguardonline.gov/topics/social-networking-sites.aspx

Social networking libraries

Illinois Library Association: Publications: NetSafe: Social Networking Sites
www.ila.org/netsafe/SocialNetworkingToolkit.pdf

Librarian in Black: 10 Social Networking Tips for Librarians
<http://librarianinblack.typepad.com/librarianinblack/2008/07/ten-social-netw.html>

Do More

Facebook
www.facebook.com

Myspace
www.myspace.com

Wikipedia's List of Social Networking Websites:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites