

A Study on the feasibility of creating knowledge sharing networks for Humanity Researchers

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Back in the days of web 1.0, users could only receive information. Now, with web 2.0, interactive social websites allow people to express thought and take part in discussions. These social networks can gather and process information and have been used widely in various fields in recent years. According the survey of the Research Information Network and the Consortium of Research Libraries about researchers' use of academic libraries and their services, they found that researchers are adopting social networking technologies very fast and that so far they have done so on their own: the library has effectively been bypassed.

In 2007, National Taiwan Normal University acquired a special "Asian Studies" collection from Dr. Gernot Prunner, late Director of the Museum für. Völkerkunde und Vorgeschichte (Hamburg, Germany). Dr. Prunner was a humanities scholar who had great interest in Asian culture and the east-Asian people. He dedicated his life to researching Asian culture and arts, and collecting books and manuscripts of different Asian countries. The 18,000 volumes of his collection were in 14 different languages totally, most of which are 20th century publications (1900-2003), some are 19th century publications and a few are rare Nazi manuscripts. This makes this collection valuable and important for humanity researchers.

Apart from cataloging collection for searching, digitization of this collection is also undergoing in the hopes of creating a knowledge sharing platform. However, are humanity scholars willing to participate in social networks? Are social networks an acceptable platform for the sharing of professional knowledge for humanity scholars? The study aims to discuss humanity scholars' experiences and acceptance of using social networks. Our results are expected to help the future establishments of digital collection websites for Asian studies.

Interviews with ten humanities professors and ten humanities students were conducted for this study. The results showed that:

1. Five humanities professors have never participated in any social network. Their reasons are lack of time and suspicions of the accuracy of information

in social networks. Five professors have had online network experience, mostly with Wikipedia. One has experience of viewing a friend's photos on Flickr; one has heard of Flickr but never used it; the other professors have no idea what Flickr is.

2. Most students have used Wikipedia but some were warned about the accuracy of materials on Wikipedia. In addition, Facebook is a social networking platform that all students have used, but not on a regular basis.
3. Both professors and students use networks to browse for information. None are editors for Wikipedia. Professors are more reluctant toward sharing field research data or personal photos through social networks, and think that tagging is irrelevant to research and thus not worth using.
4. Academic platforms are often used to express personal views of controversial issues that have nothing to do with their academic expertise, such as political views. This often makes researchers unwilling to participate in such social networks.
5. The language barrier is a common obstacle for participating international networks.
6. All the researchers feel online networks unnecessary when the professional social network has only few members, for communication via telephone or e-mails is more effective.