



# A Study on the Feasibility of Library Creating Knowledge Sharing Network for Humanities Researchers

Chao-chen Chen, Pei-ying Yeh  
Graduate Institute of Library & Information Studies,  
National Taiwan Normal University

[cc4073@ntnu.edu.tw](mailto:cc4073@ntnu.edu.tw)

Presented by Hao-Ren Ke

# Outline

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Research Purposes and Methods
- ▶ Results and Analysis
- ▶ Conclusion and Suggestions



# Introduction

# Social Networking and Scholarly Communication

## ▶ Social networking

- ✿ Traced back to Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) of the 1990s
- ✿ Informal scholarly communication: E-mail, on-line discussion groups...
- ✿ Web 2.0 social networking: blogs, twitter, facebook...

# Asian Studies Collection of NTNU Library

- ▶ Acquired from Dr. Gernot Prunner in 2007
  - ✿ Late Director of the Museum für.Völkerkunde und Vorgeschichte (Hamburg, Germany)
  - ✿ Humanities scholar
- ▶ 18,000 volumes in 14 different languages
- ▶ Coverage
  - ✿ Most are 20th century publications
  - ✿ Some are 19th century publications
  - ✿ A few are rare Nazi manuscripts
- ▶ Tasks
  - ✿ Cataloging
  - ✿ Digitalization
  - ✿ **Creating a knowledge sharing platform for Nazi research**





亞洲研究特藏

Gernot Prunner 私人圖書館藏書

特藏簡介  
館藏特色  
藏書清單

類別	categories	Title	Volume
Part I	<a href="#">古代希臘、羅馬</a> <a href="#">The ancient world</a>	1434	1958
Part II	<a href="#">近東、中東、伊斯蘭世界</a> <a href="#">The near &amp; middle east; The Muslim world</a>	1037	1256
Part III	<a href="#">西亞、中亞 (高加索、西伯利亞、俄羅斯的遠東、蒙古)</a> <a href="#">Western &amp; central Asia (including the Caucasus, Siberia &amp; the Russian far east; Mongolia)</a>	1191	1503
Part IV	<a href="#">印度 (次大陸)、東南亞</a> <a href="#">The Indian: the sub-continent &amp; southeast Asia</a>	3155	3909
Part V	<a href="#">東亞 (中國、日本、韓國、西藏)</a> <a href="#">Eastern Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Tibet)</a>	6296	8097
Part VI	<a href="#">非洲、大洋洲、美洲</a> <a href="#">Africa, Oceania, the Americas</a>	1264	1376
Part VII	<a href="#">參考資料</a> <a href="#">General reference works</a>	259	332
Part VIII	<a href="#">補遺</a>	163	270
	總數	14799	18701



# Research Purposes and Methods

# Research Purposes

- ▶ Investigate humanities researchers' perceptions of Web 2.0
- ▶ Investigate their experiences from using social networking tools
- ▶ Investigate their thoughts regarding the proposed functions of the professional social networking platform for Naxi research



# Research Method

## ▶ Interviews

- ✿ Conducted from October 2008 to April 2009

## ▶ Participants

- ✿ **10 humanities professors**: university teachers or research institute researchers doing research on Naxi culture or ethnic minority groups in Taiwan
- ✿ **10 humanities students**: recommended by their professors as being extensive users of the Internet
  - ▶ 2 undergraduate students, 4 master's students, and 4 doctorate students

# Outline of the Interview

- ▶ Social networking experience and needs
  - ✿ Internet usage background
  - ✿ Web 2.0 concepts
  - ✿ Social networking type
  - ✿ Social networking usage environment
  - ✿ Channels to know social network sites
  - ✿ Level of interaction
  - ✿ Difficulties

# Outline of the Interview (Cont.)

- ▶ Naxi manuscripts social networking function requirements
  - ✿ Interactivity (participating, sharing, voting)
  - ✿ Timeliness (Instant messaging (IM))
  - ✿ Collaborative editing (tagging, editing)
  - ✿ Personalized services (bookmarking, RSS, calendar, personal profile)

# Basic Information on the Interviewed Teachers (Researchers)

Code number	Position	Academic field	Years of teaching experience	Time spent on the Internet (hours/day)	Use of social networking
T01	associate professor	peoples and arts	15	2	✘
T02	professor	historical phonology	45	5	✓
T03	assistant professor	sociolinguistics	10	0.5	✓
T04	professor	phonology	37	2	✓
T05	lecturer	history of Sino-foreign communications	28	1	✘
T06	assistant professor	southwestern China anthropology	0.5	3	✓
T07	associate professor	historical anthropology	12	2	✓
T08	assistant professor	history of southern China	5	3	✓
T09	associate professor	linguistic anthropology	7	1.5	✓
T10	lecturer	Tibeto-Burman languages	15	3	✓

# Basic Information on the Interviewed Students

Code number	Status	Academic field	Time spent on the Internet (hours/day)
S01	Master's student	indigenous culture	6
S02	Undergraduate student	N/A	4
S03	Undergraduate student	N/A	4
S04	Master's student	Song poetry	10
S05	Master's student	philology	6
S06	Master's student	religion and fortune telling	7
S07	Master's student	classic fiction	5
S08	Doctorate	material culture	2
S09	Doctorate	costumes of ethnic minorities in China	1
S10	Doctorate	religion and ethnic minorities	8





# Results and Analysis



# Aspects of the Findings

- ▶ Humanities researchers' perceptions of Web 2.0
- ▶ The interviewees' experience of using social networking
- ▶ An investigation of professional social networking functions

# Humanities researchers' perceptions of Web 2.0

- ▶ Most humanities scholars and students **do not** understand the definition of Web 2.0
  - ✿ Teachers: only three had heard of Web 2.0 (T02, T06, T10), and none were familiar with its definition
  - ✿ Students: five had heard of Web2.0 (S01, S02, S03, S06, S07), but only had a vague concept
    - ▶ Unaware that Wikipedia, YouTube, and Flickr are Web2.0 applications

# Humanities researchers' perceptions of Web2.0 (Cont.)

- ▶ Humanities scholars and students are uncertain about the expertise of the contents of social networking sites and usually do not quote from these sources in academic papers
  - ✿ Teachers: the editing mechanism of web 2.0 is overly open and not of academic value, and thus do not quote information from these sites in their academic papers
  - ✿ Students: follow their teachers

# The interviewees' experience of using social networking

- ▶ BBS and Wikipedia are the most used social networking tools for the interviewees
  - ✿ Teachers: Google search, Wikipedia
    - ▶ Clarify academic concepts and create teaching materials
  - ✿ Students: BBS
    - ▶ Provide diverse information that satisfy all the needs of students



# The interviewees' experience of using social networking (Cont.)

- ▶ Type of social networking sites they use most
  - ✿ Teachers: knowledge-sharing sites
    - ▶ Usually only use communities for academic research purposes
    - ▶ No enough free time to browse other communities
  - ✿ Students: diverse social networking sites
    - ▶ Academic, travel, gourmet, shopping, pets, and photography...

# The interviewees' experience of using social networking (Cont.)

- ▶ Teachers learn about communities through search engines, while students learn about them from peer recommendations
  - ✿ Teachers: learn from Google searches
    - ▶ Do not actively explore the latest Internet services, even when students recommend sites to them
  - ✿ Students: learn from discussion forums, BBS, blog recommendations, and peer recommendations



# The interviewees' experience of using social networking (Cont.)

- ▶ They usually do not actively participate in community discussions
  - ✱ Teachers: Unwilling to interact with other community members
    - ▶ Not used to conducting discussions in an open-ended environment
    - ▶ Browsing for information
  - ✱ Students: passive and careful when interacting in communities
    - ▶ Existing information in the communities is enough to answer the questions of other users
    - ▶ Cautious in making new friends online
    - ▶ Friends online are friends in real life

# The interviewees' experience of using social networking (Cont.)

- ▶ Ideological problem about political issues and discussions conducted in foreign languages are problematic to humanities scholars and students

# An investigation of professional social networking functions

- ▶ The interviewees generally support the establishment of professional communities
  - ✿ Teachers:
    - ▶ Provide professional information, and experience and knowledge sharing
    - ▶ A voting system to decide community experts is not appropriate (academic achievement is important)
  - ✿ Students:
    - ▶ They will occasionally participate the discussion
    - ▶ Voting + academic achievement





# An investigation of professional social networking functions (Cont.)

- ▶ The interviewed humanities scholars and students have never used RSS or community calendars, but are willing to try them

# An investigation of professional social networking functions (Cont.)

- ▶ The interviewed teachers **do not support** the inclusion of instant messaging functions in professional communities while the students **support** these functions
  - ✿ Teachers
    - ▶ Do not have time to engage in conversation
    - ▶ Mostly communicate with their peers through face-to-face meetings and e-mail
  - ✿ Students
    - ▶ Instant messaging and Skype...

# An investigation of professional social networking functions (Cont.)

- ▶ The interviewees suggested that professional communities should have a moderator that has professional knowledge
  - ✿ The Naxi research community should be equipped with Naxi library resources and collaborative editing functions like Wikis
    - ▶ Collaborative editing functions allow users to understand different issues through different perspectives
    - ▶ Editors and moderators must have professional knowledge



# Conclusion and Suggestions

# Conclusion

- ▶ Humanities scholars are not used to actively engaging in academic discussions with people they do not know
- ▶ Humanities students are comparatively more used to participating in communities and using instant messaging software
  - ✿ Different generations have different attitudes toward technology
  - ✿ How can the library provide different services to different generations?
- ▶ Some humanities researchers are not equipped with the language abilities to participate in international research communities



# Conclusion (Cont.)

- ▶ Humanities scholars and students generally indicated skepticism towards the professionalism of online information and do not usually quote from these sources
- ▶ Humanities scholars support the library's decision to promote case study resources on social networking sites and the use of collaborative editing functions to collect information and expertise from professionals
  - ✿ Support RSS, community calendar, but not IM
- ▶ Humanities scholars and students expressed skepticism towards the introduction of an expert voting system established on social networking sites and believe this to be unsuitable for a professional research community

# Suggestions

- ▶ University libraries have to face the challenges posed by the Internet and Google and have to make continual changes and modify their service models to provide more user-friendly services
- ▶ Libraries should actively provide professional interactive services
- ▶ Libraries should also assist humanities scholars in participating in international virtual research communities