

Social bookmarking and history teaching

What is social bookmarking?

Social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to store, manage and share bookmarks of web pages on the Internet (rather than on the browser of their own PC or laptop). Users save links to web pages that they want to remember and/or share with others. These bookmarks are usually stored in an individual's profile on the social bookmarking service, which is publicly viewable, although they can be made private or shared with specific groups of people. Most social bookmarking services (popular examples include [Delicious](#) and [Diigo](#)) encourage users to organize their bookmarks using tags rather than putting them into folders.

Social bookmarking in teaching

Social bookmarking can be used in a number of different ways. Most simply, they can be used to create lists of online resources for students to consult on a module (a kind of online bibliography). They can also be deployed to provide students with up-to-date information during a course; for example by collecting and disseminating new pieces of information to students (e.g. news stories) during the course of a module.

Students could also be required to collect and share Internet resources on a module and it has been reported that such approaches can have a positive effect on student engagement and interest (e.g. Derek Bruff, 2012, 'Leveraging Student Interests through Social Bookmarking': <http://www.cirtl.net/node/7769>). Importantly, scholarly and peer-reviewed articles on sites such as JSTOR (www.jstor.org/) and other online system for archiving academic journals can be bookmarked. This means that students can be encouraged to research, find and share reliable sources of online information, and that such exercises are not just about 'playing around' on the Internet. Carefully-guided and 'open' exploration may enable students to develop their digital information literacy and ability to judge between different kinds of sources.

Potentially, social bookmarking is very well aligned with more active pedagogies that require students to explore and construct knowledge for themselves. It requires active engagement from students to find and organise resources. The social aspect of the service means that students can be encouraged to engage in collaborative research: they search individually but share and comment on the resources that their peers have found. Because activities take place in a virtual space using virtual resources reduces pressure on material resources. Finally, the ability to share bookmarks, to annotate and (re)organise information, and to comment on each other's work raises the genuine possibility for the collective discovery and construction of disciplinary knowledge by students in collaboration with each other and the lecturer.

Social bookmarking and History

In History a large number of primary sources are available on the open web. This, together with the accessibility of scholarly articles online, means that students can be encouraged to engage in genuine academic research into reliable primary and secondary sources. A growing number of historians are thus making use of social bookmarking in their modules (for some introductory guidelines see: 'Social bookmarking', Teaching History With Technology: <http://thwt.org/index.php/research/social-bookmarking>). In what follows we offer two examples of the use of social bookmarking in History teaching.

Biography and social bookmarking

Two scholars at the Amherst College of Education (University of Massachusetts) reported the use of social bookmarking techniques to enable students to learn about selecting accurate and

reliable sources on the Internet. ‘Tag bundles’ and ‘Playlists’ were used to build collages of information pertaining to historical figures. Social bookmarking research tools were judged to be a highly useful way to engage students in creating well-rounded biographies of figures from history.

[Robert Maloy and Sharon Edwards, “Tag Bundles, Education Boards, and Internet Playlists: Constructing Historical Biographies Using Social Bookmarking Technologies”, Fall 2012/Spring 2013, *The New England Journal of History*]

Questioning and History

Students in a first year History module at the University of Sheffield were required to conduct independent online research into weekly topics, to ‘tag’ the resources that they had found using a social bookmarking service (Diigo) with a series of descriptive keywords and write a short description of the site, and then to share the resources with their peers. Students then had to pose a question to an online discussion forum in Diigo. Evaluation suggested that these activities had a positive effect on students’ subject knowledge, their research skills, their ability to collaborate, and their ability to ask questions and to direct their learning.

[Jamie Wood, “Helping Students to Become Disciplinary Researchers Using Questioning, Social Bookmarking and Inquiry-Based Learning”, *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 6.1 (2011), pp. 3-26: <http://www.pestlhe.org.uk/index.php/pestlhe/article/view/98>; note that an appendix to the article offers an ‘activity matrix’ of the different tasks that students were asked to complete in class and independent work; further reflections are available here: <http://blogs.ukoln.ac.uk/jisc-sis-landscape/case-studies/lecturer-4/>]

Most popular social bookmarking services

- Top 15 Most Popular Social Bookmarking Websites (in July 2013, from eBizMBA Rank): <http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-bookmarking-websites>

Examples and resources for higher education teaching using social bookmarking services



Twitter
(<https://twitter.com/>)

Mark Sample (2010), ‘A Framework for Teaching with Twitter, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/a-framework-for-teaching-with-twitter/26223>



Diigo
(<https://www.diigo.com/>)

Michael F. Ruffini (2011), ‘Classroom Collaboration Using Social Bookmarking Service Diigo’, *EDUCAUSE Quarterly*

<http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/classroom-collaboration-using-social-bookmarking-service-diigo>



Delicious
(<https://delicious.com/>)

T. M. Farwell and R. D. Waters (2010), ‘Exploring the Use of Social Bookmarking Technology in Education: An Analysis of Students’ Experiences using a Course-specific Delicious.com Account’, *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching* 6.2

http://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no2/waters_0610.htm



Scoop.it!
(<http://www.scoop.it/>)

‘Digital curation and Scoop.it’, *Curtin Teaching and Learning* 32

<http://blogs.curtin.edu.au/cel/1301/issue32/>