Against the Grain

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Technology Left Behind

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Technology Left Behind — Pinning in the Library

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Pinterest (*www.pinterest.com*) is one of the fastest-growing social media networks on the Internet. Self-described as a place to "organize and share all the beautiful things you find on the Web," Pinterest acts as a virtual pin board, enabling users to "pin" Websites, images, articles, and other online content that they want to remember, refer to, or save for later. (*http://pinterest.com/about/*) Think of a bulletin board with push pins or your refrigerator with magnets, but entirely virtual and infinitely tidier. Users can create as many boards as they like, customizing them to suit their own interests and purposes.

Founded in 2009 by **Ben Silbermann**, a former Google employee, Pinterest has taken off in terms of popularity. In January of this year, Pinterest had more than 11 million unique users, more than double the number of users in November 2011. However, similar to the early days of Facebook and Twitter, the company has yet to generate a profit.

At this time, access to Pinterest is by invitation only, but obtaining an invite is not onerous. You can request an invite directly from Pinterest — the turnaround time is only a few days — or you can get an invite from a current Pinterest user.

To facilitate the pinning of content, Pinterest offers the "Pin It" tool (*http://pinterest.com/about/goodies/#pinmarklet*), which integrates with Web browsers. Once the tool is installed, users can pin content from anywhere on the Web simply by clicking on the "Pin It" button in their browser. When pinning something Pinterest grabs the URL and adds it to the pin, allowing users to link back to the original item and also give credit to the original creator. Users may choose to follow other Pinterest users, so that when they log into the service, they can see what their friends have recently pinned, much like the News Feed feature on Facebook. Pinterest also offers an app for iPhones, as well as "Follow" and "Pin It" buttons for Websites that want to encourage users to follow them and pin their content on Pinterest.

The majority of Pinterest users are female, and browsing the recent pins on the site is a lot like leafing through the pages of a women's magazine. Common uses of the Pinterest pin boards include collecting ideas for home decorating, planning a wedding, crafting, and recipes. I use my own Pinterest account to save my bookmarks, such as the blogs I read, Websites I visit on a regular basis, recipes I like, as well as online content my children use regularly.

Individuals aren't the only ones using Pinterest, though. Many companies and organizations have realized that Pinterest is an avenue for promoting their goods, and they actively work to build robust groups of followers. Companies such as **Lowe's**, **Old Navy**, and **HGTV** all have Pinterest profiles. The retailers **Land's End** and **Whole Foods** both use the "Pin It" button on their Websites, making it easy for customers to pin and share content from their Websites.

Among the organizations, companies, and institutions using Pinterest are a wide variety of libraries. Examples include the **Richmond Public Library**, **UC Davis Law Library**, **Union College Library**, **UVa Library**, **Bennett** (Elementary School) **Library**, and the **U.S. National Archives**, just to name a very few. The ways in which libraries are using Pinterest are as varied as the libraries themselves. **Richmond Public Library** has a boards devoted to ongoing library renovations, pictures of famous people reading, and favorite books about food, whereas the **Bennett Library** has created boards for **iPad** Apps, SMART Board tools, and technology integration.

My own library established a Pinterest account earlier this year. (*http://pinterest.com/furmanlibraries/*) **Robyn Andrews**, a member of the Circulation Department at the **Furman University Libraries**, set up our account and updates it on a weekly basis. **Andrews** decided to create the account after observing the large number of **Furman** faculty and students using Pinterest. "Everyone was on there. Our students. Our student workers. And other libraries were beginning to create pin boards," said **Andrews**. In the beginning, she used the **Furman Libraries'** pin boards to highlight and keep track of the books on our Kindles. "We do not put the books purchased for the Kindles in our catalog, and putting them in Pinterest was an easy way to list them all in one place," explained **Andrews**. Since then, she has created boards that highlight any displays that are put up in the library, special events held on campus, new leisure books, pictures of the main library and branches, and interesting book covers. For all of the materials that are pinned on the boards, **Andrews** adds links to the library catalog, enabling patrons to see if the item is available for check out. At this time, the **Furman Libraries** has 17 pin boards and 64 followers. Many of the followers are **Furman** patrons, and some are other libraries.

In addition to the wide variety of libraries, several library-related vendors and publishers have a presence on Pinterest. *School Library Journal*, **Duke University Press**, and **EBSCO Publishing** all have Pinterest accounts. **EBSCO** has pinned information on a couple of their green initiatives and has a board devoted to library resources; *School Library Journal* has created boards for eBooks, authors, cool libraries, and more; and **Duke University Press** uses its account to highlight new releases and specific subject areas.

Any discussion of Pinterest and its use by libraries needs to include some mention of copyright and intellectual property issues. Included in Pinterest's original Terms of Use was a statement indicating that, by accessing and using the Pinterest service, users gave Pinterest the right to sell any content they pinned. This presented a problem for users that were pinning content they had not created themselves.

In response to concerns as to whether or not users were violating copyright by pinning content belonging to others, the company sent out an email to users on March 23rd of this year announcing changes to the Pinterest Terms of Use. The new Terms of Use went into effect on April 6, 2012 and specifically eliminated language about selling content. Pinterest's new terms ask that users abide by the rules of Pin Etiquette (*http://pinterest.com/about/etiquette/*) and the Acceptable Use Policy (*http://pinterest.com/about/use/*).

In accordance with the Pinterest Terms of Use, users agree that any content they post will not violate the rights of a third party. In addition, the rules of Pin Etiquette ask that users credit the sources of the content they pin. If you find a pin that is not credited appropriately, you are asked to leave a comment for the original pinner so that he or she can update the source for the pin. Pinterest has crafted policies for both copyright and trademark. (*http://pinterest.com/about/copyright/*) The company provides a simple form for reporting copyright infringement, and it will remove pins if the owner of the content objects to its use on Pinterest. Pinterest reserves the right to disable the accounts of users that repeatedly infringe on the intellectual property rights or copyrights of others.

For content owners that do not want their original material or images to be pinned and shared, Pinterest provides a small snippet of code that can be added to the head of any Web page. (*http://pinterest.com/about/help/*) Once in place, the coding will prevent Pinterest users from pinning the content of the Website.

The highly visual nature of Pinterest makes it very different from other social networking services like Facebook and Twitter. In a March 2012 issue of *Maclean's*, **Chris Sorenson** had this to say: "Whereas Facebook is largely about people and their personal information, Pinterest is mostly about things, including products — whether it's an expensive pair of shoes or a perfectly prepared meal." User profiles on Pinterest provide only a sentence or two about the user, if that. The users themselves are largely anonymous, letting the boards and the content that is pinned take center stage.

This unique medium offers libraries the opportunity to advertise their materials and services in an extremely visual manner, without having to populate a lengthy profile with details and descriptions. The time involved in set up and maintenance of a Pinterest account is minimal, and the visual nature makes it easy for patrons to process and share quickly and efficiently. Libraries would be well-served by exploring the possible ways in which Pinterest can promote their services and connect them with their patrons.

can be easily corrupted) and using a local computer to retrieve the data from the drive, which often causes a lag. But take along the USB drive back-up anyway, just in case of an Internet failure.

Many people also use **Dropbox** (*www.dropbox.com*). To use **Dropbox**, software must be downloaded to one's local harddrive. Their software supports Windows, Mac OSX, and Linux. Free storage includes up to 2GB. With referrals, users can up their free storage to 8GB. I have not personally used **Dropbox**, but my Internet-savvy Aunt Lori loves it.

Temporary Storage

Sometimes you need to send a large file to someone, and you don't want to use a USB drive or burn a CD/DVD. Instead, **YouSendIt** (*https://www.yousendit.com/*) allows you to upload large files so that someone else can download it elsewhere. At present, files up to 100MB can be sent for free. To send whole folders, simply zip the folder into a single file and send it as one item. You then specify the email addresses for the recipient(s). If you're worried about the recipients getting marketing messages from **YouSendIt**, simply send the file to yourself and then forward it privately from your own email account. **YouSendIt** notifies the recipients (which can include yourself) of the link when it's ready to download the file and the time frame for which the file will be available — currently ten days.

Apple Mobile Device Storage

Apple recently launched a "free" cloud storage service for users of their mobile devices: mainly **iPhones** and **iPads**. I put "free" in quotes because you have to buy a data plan through (currently) **AT&T** or **T-Mobile** to even use these mobile devices. But **Apple** provides free storage to back up and sync your mobile device(s) to one another and/or to your home computer.

Currently, **iCloud** offers the first 5GB of cloud storage free, which can be accessed directly from an application on the mobile device or through a Website. This service is brand new with the October release of iOS5, **Apple's** new operating system made exclusively for their mobile devices. I am as yet unaware of any equivalents for other mobile devices outside of **Apple** products.

To sum up, why use free cloud storage? Because it's free! It's also serviced for you: harddrive crashed and burned? Laptop sto-

len? Not a problem if your data lives in cloud storage servers. Not computer savvy? Professionals monitor, update, and maintain the servers for you. Your information can be transferred from old servers to new servers and from old formats to new formats with no effort (or even awareness) on your part. Best of all, you can access cloud storage from absolutely anywhere. All you need is an Internet-enabled device and an Internet connection.

Finally, cloud storage takes away the synchronization factor. Own a laptop for work, a desktop for home, an iPhone for the go, and an iPad for meetings? (Yes, I'm a Mac person, sorry.) Without cloud storage, we have to manually transfer data from one device to another to keep them up-to-date with each other. With cloud storage, there's no such problem since everything you need is centralized online and you simply access and change it from wherever you are. This means no more carrying a USB drive around to transfer that important report to whichever computer you happen to be using at the time.

On the other hand, if the Internet access or data network you're using goes down, it's lights out. But the bigger these networks get, the more redundancies and failsafes the companies add to prevent this from happening. When it does happen, outages are usually for only a short time. Even power outages aren't a problem if you keep your mobile devices fully charged and use G3/G4 data services instead of local wireless networks.

So, overall, Cloud Storage is a wonderful thing that keeps getting better and cheaper. And, if you play your cards right, you can even get it for free.

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things, blanket acceptance of everything new is not good (when I ate my first deep-fried scorpions I was jokingly told I was safe as long as I didn't eat more than seven or eight at a time). But being open to every new thing is only meaningful if it meaningfully contributes to one's goals. In my view, measures like "user convenience" and setting goals on the basis of user needs analysis are among the best ways of deciding what to do.

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