Letter from the Editor-in-Chief: Social Media Apps

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Are there traversable wormholes? It used to be that the first place to look for an answer would be in the school library or an encyclopedia. Today, students would “Google it” or go to Wikipedia for a first glimpse at an answer. These are two of the many applications that have sprung from the World Wide Web. Others that are coming into the classroom are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. According to http://www.internetlivestats.com/ (May 2015) in one second there are 9174 Tweets, 2083 Instagram photos uploaded, 1929 Tumblr posts, 1474 Skype calls, 48789 Google searches, and 100,699 YouTube videos viewed. These are examples of social media apps, or applications.

According to Merriam-Webster (2013), social media are “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)” and the first appearance was in 2004. Standage (2013) argues that social media has a much longer history. Before there was the Web, there were other means to pass along information. As our forms and arenas for communication have changed, there has always been a period of adaption. One of Standage’s (2013) examples was how coffee houses in the 1600’s were viewed as a waste of time and not educational. However, Standage argues that much came out of those coffee houses in the end. While perhaps his arguments might be a stretch, there might be something to be said about the role of social media in education.

As shown in Figure 1, (eMarketer, & American Marketing Association, 2015) one quarter of the world’s population uses social media and it is projected to increase steadily. The most popular of the applications are shown in Figure 2. We notice familiar names like Facebook and Twitter, but there are many others that might not be familiar, especially to university and college instructors.

Technology usage has changed quite a bit since the World Wide Web became public in the early 1990s. In Figures 3 and 4 we indicate, similar to Marrouat (2013), some of the key milestones and entrance of key technologies as the World Wide Web has grown from a tool for sharing physics papers in the 1980’s to the global network it is today. We no longer just share text, but we share audio, images, and video. How can this rich source of information be used effectively in the classroom? We invite our readers to explore this question and report on best practices for using social apps and temporarily drawing students away from their social networks and helping them to navigate the information age.

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Figure 1. The number of social network users (2010-2018 (* forcasted )) (eMarketer, & American Marketing Association, retrieved 2015).

Figure 2. Leading social networks worldwide as of March 2015, ranked by number of active users (in millions) (We Are Social,2015).
A Brief History of Social Media and the Web 1900s

Figure 3. A historical list of social media applications, web sites at the turn of the last century.

References


Merriam-Webster, the definition of Social Media was retrieved on April 3, 2015 from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media


A Brief History of Social Media and the Web 2000s

2000
ipaq Pocket PC
iTunes
Wikipedia
Apple iPod
friendster
last.fm music stream
Dell Axim
Social networking
Bookmarking sites
LinkedIn, Photobucket
del.icio.us, myspace.com
WordPress, Typepad
Skype
Second Life
Facebook
Podcasting
Pandora radio
Vimeo
flickr
Digg
Gmail
Yelp
YouTube
Viddler
twitter
slideshare
Zune
1st hashtag
FriendFeed
Justin.tv
tumblr
Ustream
Scribd
Hulu
Apple iPhone
Mobile Apps
Hootsuite
Spotify
Plurk
foursquare
Posterous
WhatsApp
Sina Weibo
Bing, Google buzz
Pinterest
Instagram
Google+
Snapchat
WeChat
Vimeo
Vine
iTunes Radio
Periscope
Meerkat

Figure 4. A list of social media applications, web sites during the past 15 years.