Connecting with the Library of Congress:
Social Media Technologies

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Abstract

The Library of Congress Web site has so much content covering so many different subjects it is hard to know where to begin if you are just browsing. Why not begin by using the social media content that the Library of Congress offers to engage the public? It includes blogs, Facebook, Flickr, mobile applications, podcasts, RSS feeds and Email subscriptions, Twitter, and video and Web casts. This paper contains many links to Library of Congress Web 2.0 technologies.
Introduction

Where would you go if you wanted to research a question on international law, listen to audio interviews of slave narratives, watch film clips of Theodore Roosevelt, view collections of rare baseball cards, listen to a 1939 recording of Clarence Chambers whistling the "Flat-Foot Blues," or register a copyright? The Library of Congress’ Web site. The site is a densely packed treasure trove of information, images, videos, recordings, maps and more. (O’Neill, 2010).

About

In 2009, I interned at the Library of Congress in the European Reading Room. During the time I was there I made a list of facts about the Library that I found to be the most interesting. Here are some of them: The Library of Congress (LC) is the largest library in the world. The Library of Congress is the oldest cultural institution in the United States. It is the single most comprehensive collection of human expression ever collected. It is the most comprehensive repository of the world’s knowledge in almost all languages. It is the only library in the world that collects worldwide. Its philosophy for collecting builds on Thomas Jefferson’s wide-ranging personal library. The Library of Congress is the world’s preeminent reservoir of knowledge.

Mission

http://www.loc.gov/about/mission.html

“The Library's mission is to support the Congress in fulfilling its constitutional duties and to further the progress of knowledge and creativity for the benefit of the American people.” (Library of Congress, 2011).

Web 2.0

Connecting with the Library: http://www.loc.gov/homepage/connect.html
This link shows the many ways one can connect with the Library of Congress social media technologies. The “Connecting with the Library” (n.d.) page states, “The Library of Congress is using social media technologies and Web sites to engage the public with Library news, events, acquisitions and exhibits. They are also sharing selected historic content from their collections (where no copyright restrictions exist).”

**Blogs**


From a 2007 article, *Entering the Blogosphere: Library Launches Blog on 207th Birthday*:

The Library of Congress turned 207 years old on April 24, 2007, but with the addition of its first-ever public blog to its award-winning Web site, it has never looked younger. Long a pioneer and leading provider of online content, with a Web site that makes 22 million digital items available at the click of a mouse and receives 5 billion hits per year, the Library of Congress launched the blog at www.loc.gov/blog/.

"The Library of Congress has been in the vanguard of providing a wealth of knowledge in digital form, so it is fitting that it would be among the first federal agencies to join the blogosphere," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington.

The Library of Congress has several blogs to subscribe to via RSS Feeds or E-mail including:

**Library of Congress Blog**

LC Description: Musings on the unsurpassed collections and activities at the Library of Congress, the nation's oldest federal cultural institution, and a peek behind-the-scenes from a Library insider.

**Inside Adams Blog**

LC Description: The blog from the Science, Technology, and Business Division will share the Library's collections, events, guides, and other happenings relative to science and business.
In the Muse Blog

LC Description: The Performing Arts Blog will showcase treasures in the Music Division's collections of Music, Theater and Dance, from works of the great masters to long forgotten slices of our musical heritage. This blog will also highlight events in the Library's concert series in the Coolidge Auditorium.

In Custodia Legis Blog

LC Description: In Custodia Legis is Latin for in the custody of the law. One role of the Law Library of Congress is to be a custodian of law and legislation. As part of this, our team of bloggers covers current legal trends, collecting for the largest law library in the world, a British perspective, a perspective from New Zealand, legislative developments in THOMAS, and cultural intelligence and the law.

There is even a longer list available to find RSS Feeds and Email Subscriptions, which you can search by categories. You can click here to see other opportunities: http://www.loc.gov/rss/.

Categories:
- General News
- Site Updates
- Events
- For Librarians
- For Teachers
- Young Readers
- Collections
- Preservation
- Copyright
- Digital Preservation
- Folklife
- Hispanic Division
- Legal
- Music Division
- Journalism
- Poetry
- Science
- Veterans History
- Visual Resources

Facebook

http://www.facebook.com/libraryofcongress

Currently LC has 36,611 friends on Facebook. It appeared to me that LC mostly uses its Facebook page to promote events.

On The LC Facebook page under “Likes and Interests” it says it “likes” the following:

- National Digital Information Infrastructure & Preservation Program:
  http://www.facebook.com/libraryofcongress#!/digitalpreservation

Mission: The Library of Congress NDIIPP is implementing a national strategy to collect, preserve and make available significant digital content, especially information that is created in digital form only, for current and future generations. (Library of Congress, 2011).

- Global Legal Information Network:
Mission:
GLIN's mission is to promote the rule of law within and among nations and to encourage mutual understanding among peoples with differing legal heritages. (Library of Congress, 2011).

GLIN encourages its members to make the texts of their laws freely available to the public. The following countries and institutions have granted permission to provide access to the texts of their laws/legal materials through GLIN:

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- American Folklife Center:

About:
The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress includes one of the largest ethnographic archives in the world, and preserves and presents folklife through research, archival preservation, public programs, and training. (Library of Congress, 2011).

- Law Library of Congress:

About:
The mission of The Law Library of Congress, the national law library, is to make its resources available to Members of Congress, the Supreme Court, other branches of the U.S. Government, and the global legal community. (Library of Congress, 2011).

- Books and Beyond:

About:
Public talks at the Library of Congress by authors of recently published books, sponsored by
the Center for the Book. (Library of Congress).

**Flickr**


In 2008, the Library of Congress partnered with Flickr, a popular online photo sharing site, in an effort to enhance sharing its “vast trove of historical photographs’ and to invite feedback from the public. “The real magic comes when the power of the Flickr community takes over, we want people to tag, comment and make notes on the images, just like any other Flickr photo. For instance, many photos are missing key caption information such as where the photo was taken and who is pictured. If such information is collected via Flickr members, it can potentially enhance the quality of the bibliographic records for the images,” say Matt Raymond, LC’s Communications Director.

- [http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr_pilot.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr_pilot.html)

This link to LC’s Prints and Photographs division describes more about the public outreach project to identify photographs with little or no captions. By 2009, approximately 3,000 copyright cleared images were evaluated in order to add tags to the photographs over nine months. Each day 35 more images were added. Of those, LC created 500 new tags with input provided by the public.

**Mobile Applications**


Description from itunes: “The Library of Congress is the world's largest library and the largest body of knowledge under a single roof. Whether you're onsite, at home, in a classroom or elsewhere, this app will give you a virtual tour that mirrors the Library of
Congress Experience, an award-winning group of exhibitions and features that has drawn record numbers of visitors.” (itunes, 2011).

Peter Scott’s Library Blog states, “In an ongoing effort to make its digital educational, historical and cultural resources available to Web users across a broad spectrum of platforms, LC launched "The Library of Congress on iTunes U." The Library’s iTunes U site includes historical videos from the Library’s moving-image collections, and audio podcasts, and classroom and educational materials, including courses from the Catalogers’ Learning Workshop.

Podcasts

http://www.loc.gov/podcasts/

LC Description: Download these programs and discover the treasures of the Library through its expert curators, and special guests including authors, musicians, scholars and scientists. It is free to download LC podcasts on itunes. There are featured series of podcasts including Slave Narratives, National Book Festival speakers, digital preservation efforts and more.

During my time as an intern, I listened to some of the slave narratives that were recorded in the 1940s. They were fascinating. More recently I learned about LC’s interviews of Freedom Riders from the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. I will look for those interviews soon. They will be a combination of oral history interviews and podcasts.

RSS Feeds and Email Subscriptions

http://www.loc.gov/rss/

LC Description: Get timely updates on news, events, new content and more from the Library and many of its divisions (including Music, Poetry, Folklife, Copyright, Law and more), via either RSS feeds or regular email alerts. LC offers several RSS feeds for use in an
RSS reader or RSS-enabled Web browser. Library feeds consist of headline, brief summary, and a link that leads back to the Library's Web site for more information.

In February 2011, I subscribed to receive the following LC email updates from a long list of choices. Here are the headings I selected:

- Library of Congress blogs
- New Webcasts
- Music Division Concerts and Events
- Music Division News
- Upcoming Events
- Preservation News
- Digital Preservation
- Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers
- News from the Prints & Photographs Division
- Library of Congress Classification Weekly Lists
- Library of Congress Subject Headings Weekly Lists

The list was quite extensive and there were many more choices to pick from. To date, I have received about 42 emails from LC, they are mostly related to LC events. The site also, interestingly enough, linked to other U.S. government agency Web sites for e-mail subscription updates, including NASA, and the National Science Foundation.

**Twitter**

[http://twitter.com/librarycongress](http://twitter.com/librarycongress)

Twitter users post more than 50 million tweets per day.

In April, 2010 Microblogging site Twitter and Library of Congress made national news when it was announced that Twitter would donate billions of “tweets” to the Library of Congress. “That means the tweets you’ve tweeted since 2006 are now part of the largest
library on earth. And researchers may go sifting through those 140-character-maximum posts for a glimpse at contemporary life.” (Dooley, 2010).

"This information provides detailed evidence about how technology-based social networks form and evolve over time," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "The collection also documents a remarkable range of social trends." (Dooley, 2010).

**Videos and Webcasts**


LC Description: Streaming video presentations on all sorts of subject, from book talks by authors, scientific breakthroughs in preservation, and historical footage from the dawn of film.

More Audio, Video Resources at the Library:

- [Motion Pictures in American Memory](http://www.loc.gov/collections/motion-pictures-in-american-memory)
- [Motion Picture, Television Reading Room](http://www.loc.gov/rr/motionpictures/)
- [Sound Online Inventory and Catalog (SONIC)](http://www.loc.gov/rr/sound/)
- [Sound Recordings from the Library Shop](http://www.loc.gov/rr/sound/shop/)
- [South Asian Literary Recordings](http://www.loc.gov/rr/southasian/)

**Youtube**

The Library of Congress Youtube Channel: [http://www.youtube.com/libraryofcongress](http://www.youtube.com/libraryofcongress)

Currently LC has 8,390 subscribers on their Youtube Channel

According to the Library of Congress Web site (2011), “LC is the steward of the world’s largest collection of audiovisual materials (some 6 million films, broadcasts and sound recordings).” Its Youtube Channel includes over 100 videos, including: “Westinghouse” industrial films from 1904, and the earliest movies made by Thomas Edison, including the first moving image ever made, a sneeze by a man named Fred Ott.
April 2009 commentary from the Library of Congress on becoming part of Youtube:

http://www.loc.gov/blog/2009/04/youtube-and-now-we-do-too/?nbsp

- Hidden Treasures at the Library of Congress
  http://www.youtube.com/user/LibraryOfCongress#g/c/42D0969AF3AB263A

About: The Library partnered with the History Channel to produce a series of over 20 video vignettes called, “This Week’s Hidden Treasures.” Each three-minute video highlights an item in the collections, with its story told by a Library of Congress curator.

Wikipedia Partnership (Online Access):


Digital Reference

http://www.loc.gov/library/digitalreference.html

- Ask a Librarian http://www.loc.gov/rr/askalib/

“Ask a Librarian” receives 50 to 60 to over 100 questions daily and over 4,000 inquires monthly. It uses is a Question Point software product (product of OCLC-LC was in the early part of development, but is now just a customer). LC has 22 different profiles (many are the reading rooms). Legislative questions are assigned to a librarian who is a subject specialist on a Question Point tool called “Thomas”. Most of the library staff are subject specialists, therefore, researchers can still contact a librarian directly by email if they already have a relationship with him or her. Each librarian has their own account, and the 26 profiles are linked in a consortium. There are also unassigned questions that librarians can claim.

Software has “refer to” “Email partner” “global network”-which allows librarians to forward
questions they cannot answer to another librarian who may know the answer. Some reading
rooms have online chat capabilities. Each reading room is like freestanding libraries in a lot
of ways.


This digital reference service spends two hour a day Monday through Friday from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM EST providing reference services.

More resources:

- Copyright Help
- Donations of Library Materials
- Duplication Services
- Guides and Bibliographies
- Research and Reference Services

**Online Catalog**

Lots of questions to “Ask the Librarian” are about the catalog. When researchers see the icon “Electronic Resources Available” they think (and ask), “Why can’t I get the full text”? The “Links” are often Chapters within the book or provide more information from the publisher, or other bibliographic information, not necessarily a link to an electronic record. Sometimes users do not understand what the catalog is/is not. It is hard, if not impossible to search the catalog to find what has been digitized.

**Other Cool Resources at the Library of Congress:**

- American Memory [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html) provides free, open access to historic maps, photos, documents, audio and video.
• Virtual Reference Shelf-Selected online resources for Research:
  http://www.loc.gov/rr/askalib/virtualref.html

• Prints and Photographs Online Catalog: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/pphome.html

• Digital Collections and Services: http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html
  A way for remote researchers to get their hands on information from afar. Digitizing means that the collection can be re-purposed for teachers-they now have access to primary materials and a national collection. Digitizing is part of a public service that the library provides.

LC has asked itself-What is critical to selecting the 1.2 M items it has digitized?

Everything is currently listed by subject/topic. Since LC has limited resources they select the gems of the collection and what researchers request most. Sometimes items are so fragile they cannot be digitized. Another consideration is what formats work best—Prints & Photographs and Geography & Maps division were quick to respond to digital access and embraced it right away.

• LC Databases and E-Resources-list: http://eresources.loc.gov/

• LC Databases and E-Resources (FREE/Open Access):
  http://eresources.loc.gov/search~S9/m?SEARCH=Free

Conclusion

The Library of Congress Web site has so much content covering so many different subjects it is hard to know where to begin if you are just browsing. Consider using the social media content that the Library of Congress offers to enjoy the “densely packed treasure trove” of information, images, videos, recordings, maps and more on a regular basis.

(O’Neill, 2010).
References


