OCLC

Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World

A Report to the OCLC Membership

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Introduction

The new Web is a very different thing. It is a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter.

—From *Time*, "Time's Person of the Year: You," by Lev Grossman, Dec. 13, 2006

I wrote in the introduction of our last landscape report, *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources* (2005), that the report "didn't challenge as much as it confirmed" what we knew about library use, the library brand and the ever-growing appetite for Internet information services. The *Perceptions* study confirmed our belief that "Googling" and Internet search engines had gone from fads to phenomena to infrastructure, and that libraries had to reach out to users on the Internet—not wait, or hope, for users to find the library in the rapidly expanding universe of digital information resources. With "books" as the dominant perception (brand) of libraries, users were comfortable with the occasional trip to the library to find a book of interest, but were more than comfortable substituting a visit to Yahoo! or MSN or Google for a visit to the library to get quick access to digital information. And information consumers were confident that what they found on the Internet was as credible and as trustworthy as information obtained from a library.

Eighteen months later, the story is in many ways the same. Users remain confident and comfortable with Internet information resources and libraries are still seen primarily as a source of books. No surprise—and no retreat.

But of this report, *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World*, I must say that our research doesn't "confirm as much as it challenges" us to think about the Internet beyond "the search." What comes next? What will information access and library services look like on an Internet that has moved beyond simple search, beyond corporate Web sites, past the library Web site, and beyond the blog? What is it that motivates, even inspires, millions of users to spend hours online, not searching for information, but creating information, building content and establishing online communities? What drives users to not only contribute information, but to contribute "themselves," creating detailed personal profiles on social sites and sharing that information to establish new relationships with hundreds of new virtual friends? No longer accurately defined as "information consumers," Internet users are becoming "information producers" and will soon be the primary authors, producers and architects of information on the World Wide Web.

In less than 24 months, social sites like MySpace, Mixi, Facebook and YouTube have built a new "social Web," connecting communities of hundreds of millions of users,

across much of the industrialized world. In June 2007, the world's top three social sites (YouTube, MySpace, Facebook) attracted more than 350 million people to their Web sites, according to comScore. And, in September 2007, five of Alexa's global top ten Web sites were categorized as "social Web sites," a classification that did not appear in our survey results when we last reviewed the information landscape in 2005.

We know relatively little about what these emerging social Web communities will mean for the future of the Internet or the possibilities they hold for library services on the Internet. So it was an easy decision to select exploration of online social spaces as the primary area of research for this latest scan of the information landscape. What was a bit more challenging was to settle on the relevant aspects of social spaces to study. Much has already been researched and written about the top social sites like YouTube and MySpace, their founders and financiers. And from what we observed on the surface, it appeared that much of what is happening on social sites is unrelated to education or to library services. Many information professionals I spoke with about our plans to study social networking saw little merit, educational or otherwise, in what is happening on these sites. This piqued our interest. So we decided to construct a study that explored the social networking attitudes and habits of both end users and librarians.

Our study explores four primary areas:

1) User practices and preferences on their favorite social spaces

2) User attitudes about sharing and receiving information on social spaces, commercial sites and library sites

3) Information privacy; what matters and what doesn't

4) Librarian social networking practices and preferences; their views on privacy, policy and the potential of social networks for libraries

We were pleased to again partner with Harris Interactive to conduct our online surveys. We surveyed over 6,100 users, ages 14 to 84 from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. While we surveyed users in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States for previous reports, we were excited to expand our studies and learn more about online attitudes and practices in Germany, France and Japan for the first time. We conducted these surveys in German, French and Japanese. We also polled 382 U.S. library directors. Unfortunately, the lack of an available online research pool of library directors outside the United States limited our survey to U.S. directors, a shortcoming we hope to reverse in future reports.

The report begins with a review of "Our Digital Lives" in 2007. Use of standard Internet services (e-mail, search, online banking, etc.) is now widespread and strikingly uniform across age groups, geographies and communities (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) in the six countries surveyed. In fact, our findings suggest that it is no longer very interesting to differentiate the habits of experienced (digital natives) and novice (digital immigrants) Internet users. Nearly 90% of Internet users in the geographies surveyed have been online four years or more and a quarter of users have been online for a decade. The Internet is now familiar territory, and users are looking for "what's next."

We review the origins of social networking in "Our Social Spaces" and explore the use of social networking and social media sites across the six countries. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the online population surveyed have used a social networking site in the last 12 months. We review users' top motivations for selecting social sites, what information they share, why they share, who they share with and why they leave.
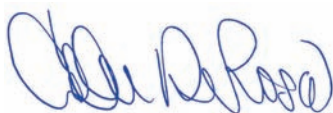
Much of our research concentrated on learning more about user attitudes regarding privacy and trust online. In "Privacy, Security and Trust," we explore social sites and how user privacy and participation practices on these sites differ from participation on commercial sites and library sites. We report concerns, and lack of concern, about Internet privacy and security in general. What does information privacy mean to users, and are their views changing? What are the implications for library services and the promise of privacy?

Today, the term **social networking** *is being used in new ways, but the concepts behind it—sharing content, collaborating with others and creating community—are not new.*

In the chapter "U.S. Library Directors," we compare and contrast U.S. librarian online habits and attitudes with habits and attitudes of the U.S. general public. Our survey finds that while librarians are using the same Internet resources as the general online population (often at higher rates), their practices and attitudes about sharing, privacy and trust differ substantially from the populations they serve.

We asked both users and library directors to share their thoughts about the potential of combining the benefits of social spaces with the offerings of their libraries in "Libraries and Social Networking." What could social space(s) tailored for library users, maybe largely built by library users, look like? Can/should the library provide new services via social spaces that foster collaboration, community and trust across the information landscape?

And finally, in-depth interviews with information services professionals across a broad spectrum of the community were conducted to gain personal insights into social networking, trust and privacy online. These early adopters of social networking have been working collaboratively on the Web for many years, and they shared with us both the practical and theoretical issues at stake. Selections from over 200 pages of interviews can be found in "Beyond the Numbers."

So what will come next? What will information access and library services look like on an Internet that has moved beyond simple search, beyond corporate Web sites, beyond the blog and beyond the traditional library Web site? We hope the findings challenge our views of the role of "social" networks in the future of libraries. We also hope that the user viewpoints revealed in the survey guide us as we build policies and practices affecting access, privacy, sharing and participation to serve users who are now both borrowers, and builders, of information in our networked world.

Cathy De Rosa
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Methodology

OCLC commissioned Harris Interactive, Inc. to field a blind study targeting two primary audiences: the general public in six countries and library directors in the United States. Harris drew a sample for the general public survey from the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) panel and from members of online research panels managed by Harris partner vendors. OCLC supplied Harris with a random sample of U.S. library directors.

A total of 6,545 respondents were surveyed between December 7, 2006 and February 7, 2007. Respondents were 14 years or older.

The online survey for the general public was open to panelists in Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The survey was conducted in English in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. The survey was conducted in French in France, German in Germany and Japanese in Japan.
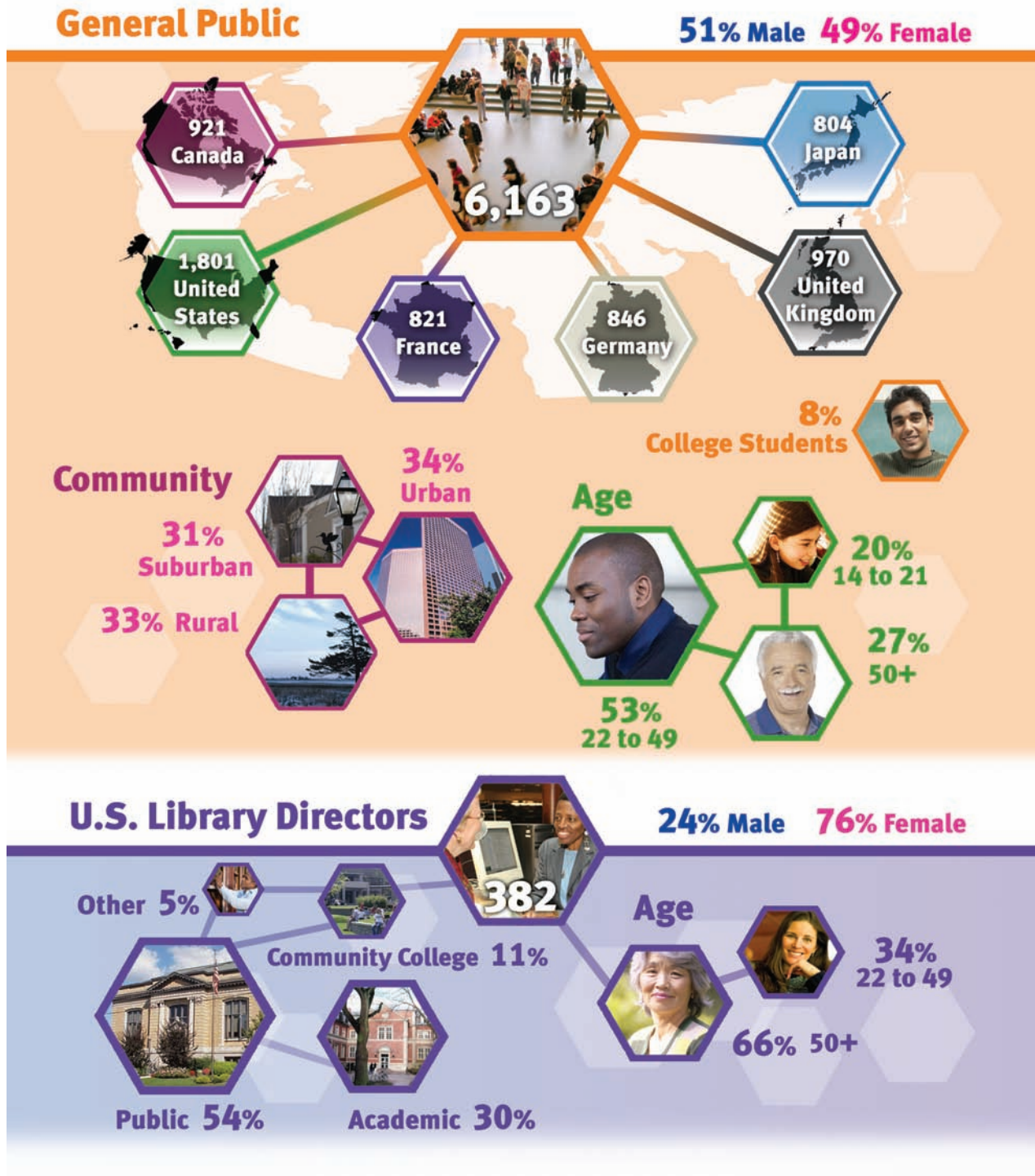
Harris used the HPOL for Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States samples and executed samples from vendor partners in France, Germany and Japan. A total of 6,163 members of the general public in the six countries completed the survey. The following table shows the total general public respondents by country, age and gender. Survey respondents were age 14 or older in Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Due to local parental permission laws for surveys in France and Germany, the youngest age of survey participants was 15 years of age.

Total General Public Respondents
By Gender, Age and Country

	Total General Public	Canada	United States	Japan	France	Germany	United Kingdom
Total Respondents	6,163	921	1,801	804	821	846	970
Age							
14/15 to 21	20%	15%	21%	27%	14%	17%	10%
22 to 49	53%	51%	49%	54%	68%	62%	51%
50+	27%	34%	30%	19%	18%	21%	39%
Gender							
Male	51%	48%	49%	54%	53%	52%	55%
Female	49%	52%	51%	46%	47%	48%	45%

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

General Public

51% Male   49% Female

6,163

- **921** Canada
- **1,801** United States
- **821** France
- **846** Germany
- **970** United Kingdom
- **804** Japan
- **970** United Kingdom

8% College Students

Community
- **34%** Urban
- **31%** Suburban
- **33%** Rural

Age
- **20%** 14 to 21
- **27%** 50+
- **53%** 22 to 49

U.S. Library Directors

24% Male   76% Female

382

- Other **5%**
- Community College **11%**
- Public **54%**
- Academic **30%**

Age
- **34%** 22 to 49
- **66%** 50+

Statistical margin of error +/− 1.3% at the 95% confidence level for the general public survey.
Age, gender, education and income data are representative of the online population for the general public.
Statistical margin of error +/− 5% at the 95% confidence level for the U.S. library director survey.
Library director data have not been weighted.

OCLC surveyed U.S. library directors as a separate sample audience. Harris Interactive mailed 4,000 postcards to U.S. library directors inviting participation in the survey. Each invitation included the online survey URL and unique log-in information to verify each respondent's completion. The online survey consisted of the same questions as administered to the general public with additional questions relevant to library professionals. In total, 382 library directors from academic, public, community college, K–12 school and special libraries completed the survey online.

The collected general public survey data have an overall statistical margin of error of +/− 1.3% at the 95% confidence level for the online population in the countries surveyed. The online population may or may not represent the general population of each country surveyed. The collected librarian survey data have an overall statistical margin of error of +/− 5% at the 95% confidence level for the U.S. online population.

Based on statistics from www.internetworldstats.com, the following table shows the percentage of residents in the countries surveyed who have Internet access (the online population). The table also provides Internet access growth over the last seven years.

Internet Users from Internet World Stats

	Canada	United States	Japan	France	Germany	United Kingdom
Population (2007 est.)	32,440,970	301,967,681	128,644,345	61,350,009	82,509,367	60,363,602
Internet users	22,000,000	210,575,287	86,300,000	32,925,953	50,426,117	37,600,000
Penetration of Internet access in 2007 (% of population)	67.8%	69.7%	67.1%	53.7%	61.1%	62.3%
User growth (2000–2007)	73.2%	120.8%	83.3%	287.4%	110.1%	144.2%

Table content is based on data at www.internetworldstats.com, accessed September 24, 2007 from data last updated June 30, 2007.

The table below details how often respondents visited the library in person or online in the last 12 months. Respondents were then asked to identify the library that they use primarily (e.g., public, college/university, community college, school, corporate, other) and were asked to answer all library-related questions with that library in mind.

Library Visits in the Last 12 Months
By Country

	Total General Public	Canada	United States	Japan	France	Germany	United Kingdom
Daily	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Weekly	9%	12%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
Monthly	13%	12%	14%	11%	16%	11%	12%
Several times a year	26%	26%	32%	17%	19%	17%	24%
Once a year	7%	7%	7%	6%	4%	7%	9%
I have not been to a library and/or library Web site in the last 12 months but have visited in the past	27%	31%	28%	18%	23%	36%	35%
I have never been to the library and/or library Web site	17%	10%	7%	40%	29%	22%	11%

Source: *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World,* OCLC, 2007, question 855.

All general public survey data were weighted demographically to be representative of each country's online population. Question wording may introduce some error or bias into opinion poll findings.

Percentages in data tables may not total 100 percent due to rounding or question format. Respondents were sometimes asked to select all responses that may apply or were not required to answer the question.

A total of 83 questions were included in the survey. The survey included a series of branching questions such that a participant's response to a question could lead to a series of follow-up questions. The survey also asked open-ended questions to ensure that respondents had the opportunity to provide input in their own words. This report includes samples of the verbatim comments.

The survey results included 29,000 verbatim responses to 19 questions. Over 14,000 survey responses to seven questions were categorized by the OCLC Market Research team and presented in the report as tag clouds. Tag clouds are visual representations of data that present the most frequently expressed opinions in relatively larger font text and less frequently expressed opinions in smaller font text. Verbatim responses from questions are also presented in the margins of selected sections of the report. All verbatim comments are presented as entered by survey respondents, including spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors.

The OCLC market research team analyzed and summarized survey results to produce this report. The team performed correlation and regression analyses on several interrelated questions to elicit additional information from the data.

OCLC market research staff conducted interviews with information professionals and researchers who represent academic, public and special libraries and commercial organizations. OCLC staff also conducted three focus group sessions with graduate and undergraduate university students, and members of the general public. Focus group participants included staff from Rafiel's Signature Salon, a hair salon in Columbus, Ohio, U.S., and undergraduate students and graduate students at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario Canada. The participants discussed their use of social networking tools and the roles such tools play in their lives. Their views are incorporated into the report.

Terms

Social Networking Sites: Web sites primarily designed to facilitate interaction between users who share interests, attitudes and activities, such as Facebook, Mixi and MySpace.

Social Media Sites: Web sites that allow individuals to share content they have created, such as YouTube (video sharing) and Flickr (photo sharing). While interaction occurs on social media sites, the primary purpose of the site is to publish and share content.

Commercial Sites: Web sites used for browsing and purchasing goods and services.