

Social Book Marking

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What is Social Book Marking?

Social Book Marking is the art of assigning keywords (called tag clouds) to organise your collection of web based bookmarks, categorising your content and effectively building your own classification system. Unlike regular cataloguing or metadata systems tag clouds can change as the content changes as there is no authoritative control over the data. To create a collection of social bookmarks, you register with a social bookmarking site, which lets you store bookmarks, add tags of your choice, and designate individual bookmarks as public or private. Some sites periodically verify that bookmarks still work, notifying users when a URL no longer functions.

Fact 1: Bookmarking on the web

Social Book Marking is about saving the location of something – usually a bookmark, but can be a reference from an online source or a picture or a list of personal goals, etc – into a space which is publicly viewable within a database. The usernames are public (although not always meaningful) so that everyone knows who listed a particular item. Bookmarking, on the other hand, is the practice of saving the address of a Web site you wish to visit in the future on your computer.

Fact 2: Flat, multiple term tagging

For every item loaded a number of tags or keywords are assigned to aid retrieval and discovery. Some of these are suggested by the various systems and others are at the discretion of the registered user. The terms that you use to tag are more about remembering what you categorised as something rather than any authority or accuracy. On the one hand, this ensures that all languages are included reflecting social, cultural and political needs because it is based on what the community sees as relevant key terms. However, others see that this lack of control over the data results in lack of recall, as it will not bring everything of interest or control over broader, narrower and related terms.

Fact 3: Everything is linkable in Social Book Marking

When users add tags (i.e. keywords) additional information is also recorded. This includes source, author and date. It is this automatic data collection that takes social bookmarking beyond being just a bookmark tool. There are often (depending on the service) extra linking options to be able to link to openURLs or DOIs (digital object identifiers) to help aid resource discovery. You can also use Social Book Marking tools to create RSS feeds for selected resources added to these social book marking tools so that your users discover resources from their own library resources, but within their own space.

Fact 4: Social Book Marking aids Resource Discovery

When you search a social book marking site you can see how many others have used a tag and search for all resources that have been assigned that tag. The [tags](#) help to improve [search engines](#)' effectiveness because content is categorised using a familiar, accessible, and shared vocabulary. In this way, the community of users over time will develop a unique structure of keywords to define resources—something that has come to be known as a “folksonomy.”

The tags can be used in reverse for resource discovery as well. Rather than matching keywords you choose in advance you can let them lead you towards what seems popular.

You don't have to be registered to retrieve information. As a visitor to social book marking sites you can search for resources by keyword, person, or popularity and see the public bookmarks, tags, and classification schemes that registered users have created and saved.

Fact 5: Social Book Marking aids social connecting

Since social book marking services indicate who created each bookmark and provide access to that person's other bookmarked resources, you can easily make social connections with others interested in just about any topic. Using this type of tool for research lets you take advantage of the insights of others to find information related to the topic you are researching, even in areas that aren't obviously connected to the primary topic. If you are looking for information about binge drinking, for example, you might find that other users saw a connection between binge drinking and house prices, taking you in new, potentially valuable directions. These kinds of tools also encourage users to keep coming back, because the folksonomy and the collections of resources are constantly changing.

Fact 6: There are several Social Book Marking Managers

There are several organisations which provide software for this activity. For some, though, the downside of the software is that it is yet another location which has to be maintained and updated! Activities range from news to photo sharing to events, personal goals and academic works.

Such services include but are not restricted to:

- <http://del.icio.us/>
- <http://www.shadows.com/>
- <http://www.clipmarks.com/>
- <http://www.connotea.org/>
- <http://www.citeulike.org/>
- <http://www.furl.net>
- <http://www.listible.com/list/social-bookmarking-sites>
- <http://www.flickr.com/>
- <http://lights.com/pickalink/bookmarks>
- <http://www.corante.com/many>
- <http://myweb2.search.yahoo.com>
- <http://philb.com/iwantto/share.htm>

The technology behind social bookmarking is not complex, which means the threshold to participate is low, both for Web sites offering such services, and for you, the user.

Fact 7: Search engines locate social bookmarks and social networking weblogs

Several search engines are moving into the social book-marking arena. Technorati tracks materials from flickr, del.icio.us and furl. Yahoo has sharemyweb, which enables you to search results with others. Pages are similar to normal Yahoo, but with an extra option for saving links that can be shared in the "community". You can also amend, add notes, tag, share and archive. There are also several blog services dedicated to social networking and social software, including <http://www.socialnetworking-weblog.com> and <http://socialsoftware.webloginc.com>

Fact 8: Social Book Marking still means evaluate, evaluate, evaluate

The key fact is that social book marking is done by amateurs. There is no authority controlling how resources are organised and tagged. This can lead to inconsistent or otherwise poor use of tags. For example, if a user saves a bookmark for a site with information about binge drinking, but only tags the site with the term "binge drinking" and not also with "alcohol" or perhaps "mental health problems", that resource might never be found by someone looking for information about the effect of increased alcohol consumption on health. Because social book marking reflects the values of the community of users, there is a risk of presenting a skewed view of the value of any particular topic. For example, users might assign pejorative tags to certain resources.