

Collaboration through Communities of Practice in the Digital Age

Fatih Oguz – University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Corrie Marsh – University of Texas -Pan American
Cliff Landis – Georgia State University



Goal

Describe and explain the role of communities of practice (CoPs) as an informal communication mechanism in

- ❖ Initiating
- ❖ Improving
- ❖ Fostering

collaboration in the digital age.

Background

Phenomenon of CoPs has been around ages

Term first introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991)
(studying apprenticeship as a learning model)

Acquisition of knowledge is a social process

**Provide a learning environment through
social participation**

- Engage in joint activities
- Being active in the practice
- Build an identity for the CoP

Characteristics of a CoP

There are three crucial characteristics of a CoP:

1. Domain,
2. Community
3. Practice



1. Domain



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/lesec/91399628>

- Defines a community through a common framework and identity
- Addresses issues related with the community's purpose
- Determines boundaries and guides its members
- Provides members with a direction through which members are connected to the community
- Encourages members to contribute and participate



2. Community

- A group of people who engage in joint learning activities, build relationships, and help each other regularly pursuing their interests in the domain.
 - ❖ Sense of belonging, identity, and commitment
 - ❖ Inter-personal relationships
 - ❖ Trust

3. Practice

- A set of frameworks, tools, ideas, knowledge, and documents a community develops, shares, and maintains
 - The work members do, and their shared understanding and activities
 - Practitioners



Membership

- Although a CoP provides a common domain, members do not necessarily have to possess similar backgrounds, skills, or perspectives.
 - ❖ Common identity.
 - ❖ Participation is voluntary.
 - Core members: 10-15%
 - Active participants: 15-20%
 - Peripheral participants: 60-70%
 - Outsiders

Impact of Social Media & Web 2.0

- Social Media (inc. social-networking sites and Web 2.0) provide tools in promoting knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation.
- Improve richness of the information landscape in terms of communicability and interactivity.
- Social-networking sites not only support preexisting inter-personal offline connections but also play an important role in creating virtual social circles regardless of physical and geographical boundaries.

Social capital

- Common social recourse that facilitates information exchange, knowledge sharing, knowledge construction through continuous interaction
 - built on trust
 - maintained through shared understanding
- CoPs serve as generators of social capital by developing, promoting, and nurturing connections and relationships among practitioners.

Collaboration in Practice

- The Library Society of the World (thelsw.org)
- An informal online community of librarians that formed to provide community and support outside of the confines of the American Library Association (ALA)
- The LSW is established and sustained online (over 90 members)

The LSW: motivation

... were chatting on Twitter one day, complaining about the ALA. My chief complaint was (and still is) that I can't actively participate in the ALA, because it costs too much quickly created a logo and created a wiki. Then I sent out a link to the wiki on Twitter and let word of mouth spread from there (personal communication, August 24, 2008).

The LSW: communication platform

- We saw a need for a grassroots community to work together to support each other professionally, provide point-of-need professional development for each other, and develop social ties together. ...the original community gelled at a time when key social tools online were mature enough to make this kind of blended professional and social interaction effortless. ...the blend of professional and social interaction that has always been a fundamental part of what we do. Take the social element out and we wouldn't have the trust level to lay bare our ignorance and ask "silly" questions. Take the professional element out and it would fall by the wayside as we got busy with our day-to-day jobs. The blend is key (personal communication, August 26, 2008).

The LSW: transformation

- [M]y initial understanding of LSW was that it would be an alternative to other professional organizations. But it's so different from every other professional organization I've been involved with that I think it's unfair to call it an alternative. To me, it's become a new way of communicating with and learning from my colleagues. It's less formal, yes, but I feel like I have richer interactions more frequently because of it.

www.thelsw.org

Members Search

The Library Society of the World

- Home
- Activity
- Members
- Groups
- Forums
- About
- FAQ
- Shovers & Makers



by *laurax*

Vote for the Winner of the LSW Coloring Contest, Round 2!

6:56 pm in [general news](#) by [laurax](#)

Cross-posted at [lis.dom](#).



To start connecting please log in first. You can also [create an account](#).

Username

Password

Remember Me

Log In

Navigation

- [About](#)
- [Advocacy](#)
- [Elevator Pitch](#)
- [Free Professional Development](#)
- [Mission](#)

The Library Society of the World

Shovers & Makers

About

Welcome to the home page for the **Library Society of the World!** By joining the **Society**, you are joining a world-spanning group of library professionals and library advocates, dedicated to furthering the role of librarians, archivists, information professionals, and information educators through communication and collaboration. The **LSW** is about *people*, not *buildings* (although some of us think architecture is sexy). It's about *friendship*, not *organization*. It's about creating and fostering *opportunities*, not building *barriers and divisions*.

dedicated to furthering the role of librarians, archivists, information professionals, and information educators through communication and collaboration.

Joining and part

One day in the L

benefits it gives,

participant to the judge in their case [emphasis mine].

We conducted a long struggle, assuming responsibilities we should not have been made to assume, heartbreakingly alone until the end, taking time out from our studies and our lives to do a job that should not have needed to be done. And we comported ourselves with dignity and grace, on the whole unexpectedly so, and with good hearts and kindness for each other. Confronting an institution apparently and frustratingly designed to depersonalize and block communication, neither humane nor graceful nor responsive, we found flowering within ourselves the presence whose absence we were at heart protesting.

To start connecting please log in first. You can also [create an account](#).

Username

Password

Remember Me

Log In

Navigation

[About](#)

[Advocacy](#)

[Elevator Pitch](#)

[Free Professional Development](#)

[Mission](#)

[Old Members List](#)

[Policies](#)

[Values](#)

The LSW

- Informal interviews with core members indicated that:
 - Responsive motivation
 - Blend of social and professional interaction
 - Over time a new identity has been developed
 - Validates information and provide feedback

Towards a new theory

- Kraut et al. (2010) identified a set theories from various disciplines that can contribute towards a new theory on technology-mediated social participation including:
 - ❖ political science (theories of democracy and voting)
 - ❖ social psychology (biases in group decision-making)
 - ❖ individual psychology (theories about human motivation)

Further Research

- Maher (2010) proposed a set of motivations associated with team collaboration:
 - *Ideology*
 - *Challenge*
 - *Career*
 - *Social*
 - *Fun*
 - *Reward*
 - *Recognition*
 - *Duty*

- Thanks....
- Contact: f_oguz@uncg.edu