

A Virtual Vertical File

How Librarians Utilize Pinterest

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Past presidents of ALSC—some of whom have been interviewed recently by ALSC’s Oral History Committee—probably would not be surprised at how much children’s services have changed since the 1940s, when ALA formed a Division for Children and Young People (a precursor name to ALSC).

But what may surprise many is how computers and the Internet have become omnipresent virtual tools to help children’s librarians with everything from selection to services. Social media—and all its iterations and segments—is a huge part of who librarians are and can be today. Here’s a brief, non-scientific look at how some of our colleagues use one of these tools, Pinterest.

Pinterest, the dynamic visual curation tool that gained popularity in 2012, allows users to “pin” or bookmark website images with embedded links onto a virtual board. With 100 million active users, Pinterest is currently the second biggest social networking site after Facebook and is mostly popular with women under the age of 50.¹

Like so many other social networks, there is also an app for mobile use, which makes pinning seamless and easy from device to device. Once uploaded, a pin can be repinned by other users to their own boards, thus creating a virtual trail of fellow pinners. Users may also follow other people’s and organizations’ boards to keep up with their posts. Pinterest is primarily utilized by home users to curate recipes, crafts, and businesses for marketing purposes. Librarians, however, are using Pinterest in a variety of personal and professional ways.

- **Gathering program ideas.** I have several craft boards based on age range, one just for flannel board ideas, literary-themed party ideas, school-age/tween programs, storytime ideas with many links to YouTube videos of fingerplays and songs, STEM/STEAM programs, and a LEGO Club board—my most repinned, and therefore most popular, board. I pin ideas for future LEGO clubs and archive pictures of the LEGO displays we’ve created. Many other librarians echo the usefulness of Pinterest for planning programs. School librarians, in particular, mentioned they created boards to gather ideas for lesson plans. One responder said she used Pinterest to collect Montessori activities for children under 5 and presented them at family learning night, which focused on preparing children for school. Another mentioned that she and a coworker shared password-protected boards to privately bounce program ideas off each other.
- **Highlighting programs and services.** Many librarians use Pinterest to highlight upcoming programs and services. Updating a Pinterest page tends to be easier than updating a library website, to which the librarian may or may not have access. Plus there is already an active online user base, making it easy to reach new patrons/users. One of the librarians I



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spoke with said her library pins all of their program fliers and brochures on a board so patrons can keep up with library programs via Pinterest. She also promotes their community involvement through a “Librarians on a Mission” board. Another librarian uses Pinterest to archive pictures from completed programs and crafts.

- **Creating booklists/book displays.** Pinterest is a great way for the visually inclined to create booklists by subject, theme, age, award, year, or any other category. Many librarians said they found it easier to create their own subject lists in Pinterest rather than searching on a traditional online catalog. Several librarians mentioned linking their pins to the records in the library catalog so patrons could easily place a hold on a specific item. I use Pinterest to keep track of booklists other people have created. Others search Pinterest for inspiration for book displays or to keep track of books for various book clubs. Others use it to organize collection development ideas and future book purchases.
- **Conferences/presentations.** One particularly innovative librarian uses Pinterest to showcase her resources for presentations at conferences; that way other professionals can access her research quickly via a QR code made from the URL of her Pinterest board. Another librarian uses Pinterest to organize her images for PowerPoint presentations. I’ve used Pinterest to collaborate with others on my ALSC committee to prepare ideas for ALA Midwinter and Annual.

- **Create an archive.** As a virtual vertical file, Pinterest can be used as a document management system to manage articles, such as issues in librarianship, for conferences, workshops, or potential blog post ideas. Marge Loch-Wouters, owner of Loch-Works Consulting and Youth Consultant for the Southwest (WI) Library System, said, “I look at each Pinterest board as a file folder into which I put all the good stuff I come across while reading blogs, Twitter links, articles, checking websites, webinars, and more. Also, when I’m ready to design a program, a workshop, a class, a presentation, or write a blog post or do consulting, all my links are saved and ready at my fingertips!”
- **Exhibiting special collections.** Christopher Brown, curator of the Children’s Literature Research Collection at The Free Library of Philadelphia, uses Pinterest as an alternative platform to curate special collections due to its ease of use and browsability and because it provides a tangible way to gather statistics with “likes” and repins. ↵

Reference

1. Maeve Duggan, “The Demographics of Social Media Users,” Pew Research Center, August 19, 2015, www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/19/the-demographics-of-social-media-users.

ALSC 2016 National Institute Re-Imagined

The ALSC Board of Directors voted in April to cancel the 2016 National Institute scheduled for September in Charlotte, N.C. The cancellation was a response to the passage in March of North Carolina’s Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act (House Bill 2), which repealed all GLBT-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinances across the state. The law contradicts the core values, purpose, and diversity work of ALSC and undermines civil rights and the fundamental principles upon which libraries are founded.

Although the Institute is cancelled, ALSC is not cancelling the event’s educational opportunities. A two-day virtual conference is being planned for September 15 and 16, 2016 (same dates as the Institute). The educational content will be presented in live sessions, moderated discussion forums, and a “networking lounge” for spontaneous break-out discussions and networking.

Another educational opportunity will be offered in Atlanta, Georgia, on Friday, January 20, 2017, immediately prior to ALA’s Midwinter Meeting. Planning for this workshop is underway. Activities will include author events similar to those originally slated for the Charlotte Institute. Philip and Erin Stead, Laura Dronzek, and Kevin Henkes, Breakfast for Bill author panelists slated to appear in Charlotte, have committed to joining us in Atlanta.

Further details, as they develop, will be shared on the ALSC Institute website at www.ala.org/alsc/institute.

