

Flickr

Part 1: Using Flickr in Libraries

Flickr (www.flickr.com) is an image-hosting online community, which has captured a great deal of attention from image enthusiasts, photographers, and technologists. Levy and Stone in the recent *Newsweek* cover story on social software reported:

At its first release two years ago, Flickr is in some ways the ultimate user-centric site—its customers even helped shape the direction of the company as it moved from an online game to an instant-messaging service with pictures to what it is now—a way for people to upload their photos and share them with the entire community of users. This small shift from previous online photo sites, which stored your pictures in the hope that you'd order prints, changed everything. What was once the digital equivalent of a shoebox became a vibrant community built around photos and a vast collaborative effort to produce an infinite scrapbook.¹

Flickr can pull you in, mesmerize you, and suddenly, hours will have passed as you click through the various images, clusters and “most interesting” shots in every subject—or tag—imaginable. Registered users can comment on photos, create image “pools” and users around a central theme, and actually select favorite pictures. Tagging is paramount as well:

Because tagging is so flexible, when others see interesting tags they sometimes apply them to their own photos or even try to take pictures that will fit those categories. For instance, the

existence of a Flickr tag “squared circle” leads members to look for such patterns in their surroundings, and take pictures when they perceive them. Users will often form “groups” to share their art (in this case, “squared circle,” now with 3,500 members and more than 26,000 pics).²

Finally, a Mention of Money

All of the tools I've discussed in this issue of *LTR* offer absolutely free set-up options; WordPress, Trillian, MediaWiki are all free applications. With Flickr, however, this could be the one time that you should consider spending the fee to become a *Pro* member. For twenty-five dollars per year, Pro members get up to two gigabytes of picture storage. Because of the benefits Flickr can provide to libraries, in my opinion, it's twenty-five bucks well spent.

Once again, some cutting-edge librarians found their way to Flickr and established their own sites—pools related to all things library and librarian; groups that posted images of librarians' desks; and some libraries actually registered their own Pro accounts.

One benefit of storing images at Flickr is the easy ability to place the images in blogs (by clicking the *Blog This* button) or into any Web page via a code generator, which offers a choice of image sizes and either a straightforward `` tag or code that allows a click through to the Flickr site.

Another benefit of using Flickr and tagging photos with your library's name and location—it gets you found in the great pool of all of the photos in Flickr. Maybe someone is searching Flickr for his or her hometown, discovers images of the local library, and learns of services or programs this individual didn't know about? Participating in this type of social-software community is relatively inex-

pensive, can offer presence, and it's fun! Other features:

- Flickr allows you to set privacy levels and access.
- You can select other Flickr users as *contacts* and subscribe to feeds of their images.
- You can configure Flickr to accept uploads via e-mail from a computer or from a cell phone.
- You can use a Creative Commons license, or you can copyright your photos
- Images can be grouped into sets that tell a story of an event or happening.
- Notes can be added to sections of images by your contacts.

Because Flickr opened its API (application programming interface), Web resources abound to take advantage of mashing up images in fun and interesting ways. For example, many librarians created their own trading card with *flagrant disregard's* (fd's) trading-card generator (<http://flagrantdisregard.com/flickr>).

Beyond the fun involved, some library trainers use a Flickr account to share photos of their sessions as well as to create promotional pieces to announce upcoming training sessions. For example, using fd's Flickr toys you could create inspirational posters, billboards, magazine covers, and trading cards for your classes, and post them online and in printed versions.

Printed trading cards or posters that you can order from the Flickr site might come in to play as well, as part of games and exercises in class. There are no limits to what you can do with Flickr and Flickr toys!

Part 2: Ten Ways to Use Flickr in Libraries

Need some proof to sell the expenditure to your director or administration? Not sure what to do with a Flickr account? Take a look at the following examples of libraries driving traffic to their services—meeting library users and potential library users where they *already are* playing online:

1. Murder by the Book, Images of the library murder mystery, www.flickr.com/photos/theloudlibrarian/sets/1282646
2. Glimpse of the University Library's Programming in the '70s, www.flickr.com/photos/tuttlibrary/122698090
3. Library Storytime Van, www.flickr.com/photos/michaelcasey/34936045/
4. A Gaming Exhibition at SJCPL, www.flickr.com/photos/sjcpl/72803425
5. The Library Holiday Ornament at Rutland Free Library, www.flickr.com/photos/librarian/71797059

fd's Flickr Toys

<http://flagrantdisregard.com/flickr>

The Librarian's Trading Card Pool

www.flickr.com/groups/librariancards

Librarian in Black's Librarian Trading Card

www.flickr.com/photos/librarianinblack/110354918

6. Images of an Author Signing, www.flickr.com/photos/56776598@N00/67477349/
7. "Dare to Read" Library Book Displays, <http://jclreaderscorner.blogspot.com/2005/10/dare-to-read-shawnee-library-book.html>
8. Promoting and Sharing a Conference, www.flickr.com/photos/njla/sets/72057594129281429
9. Showing people your building, www.flickr.com/photos/thomasfordmemoriallibrary/15016199 (see appendix 3)
10. Harry Potter Day!, www.flickr.com/photos/60582448@N00/27984592



Figure 22: The Librarian in Black's Trading Card, www.flickr.com/photos/librarianinblack/110354918

In addition, Flickr slide shows can be embedded in library Web sites; RSS is available from users, pools, comments, tags, and more. Prints and posters can be ordered from the site, and some libraries are actually using Flickr to store the images for their wiki-based procedural manuals.

"10 More Reasons to Use Flickr in Your Library"

http://tametheweb.com/2006/05/10_more_reasons_to_use_flickr_1.html

"Rock On Westmont PL & Flickr! (Updated!)"

http://tametheweb.com/2006/06/rock_on_westmont_pl_flickr.html

Part 3: Five Hints for Using Flickr in Libraries

1. **Allow Flickr access on library computers.** I caught a mention of this on a mailing list as I was finishing this chapter. Make sure, if you filter, that Flickr is not blocked. Folks may want to access their images or upload from your library.
2. **Tag! Note! Comment!** Tag your images. Use tags that make sense for you or that others are using. Look around for what folks in your town are tagging. Watch your tag cloud grow (see appendix 4)! Use notes and link parts of the images back to your library site or

catalog. Comment on other people's images and find other libraries and comment on their images. Get a dialogue going in Flickr space about libraries and library services. Look for images of your library in other photostreams to see what people might be saying about your library.

3. **Create a useful profile in Flickr for your library.** Staff members at Gwinnett County Public Library (Gwinnett County, Georgia) include the library's contact information, mission, vision, and URL! This truly gets the library's presence out in the social strata of Flickr (see appendix 5)!
4. **Tell stories!** Build image sets of photos and images that showcase your library's innovative programs; embed slide shows in the library blog; and find ways to tell your library's story via images (see appendix 6).
5. **Flickr makes the library human.** The power of images is strong. Combining images, some Web 2.0 slickness, and the ingenuity of librarians, it is easy to put a human face on the library's online presence. Combine Flickr with your library's blog and engage your users in conversations that use words *and* images.

Notes

1. Steven Levy and Brad Stone, "The New Wisdom of the Web," *Newsweek* (April 3, 2006), www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12015774/site/newsweek/ (accessed May 31, 2006).
2. Ibid.

Appendix 3:

Thomas Ford Memorial Library's Flickr photos,
www.flickr.com/photos/thomasfordmemoriallibrary

flickr
Learn More Sign Up! Explore -

You aren't signed in Sign In Help

SEARCH

thomas ford memorial library's photos
Sets Tags Archives Favorites Profile

Timothy or Notes of an Abject Reptile
Timothy or Notes of an Abject Reptile
John Kinsler

Aaron with His Book Display

book sale and teen bake sale!
17 photos

Daisy at the Library

Appendix 4:

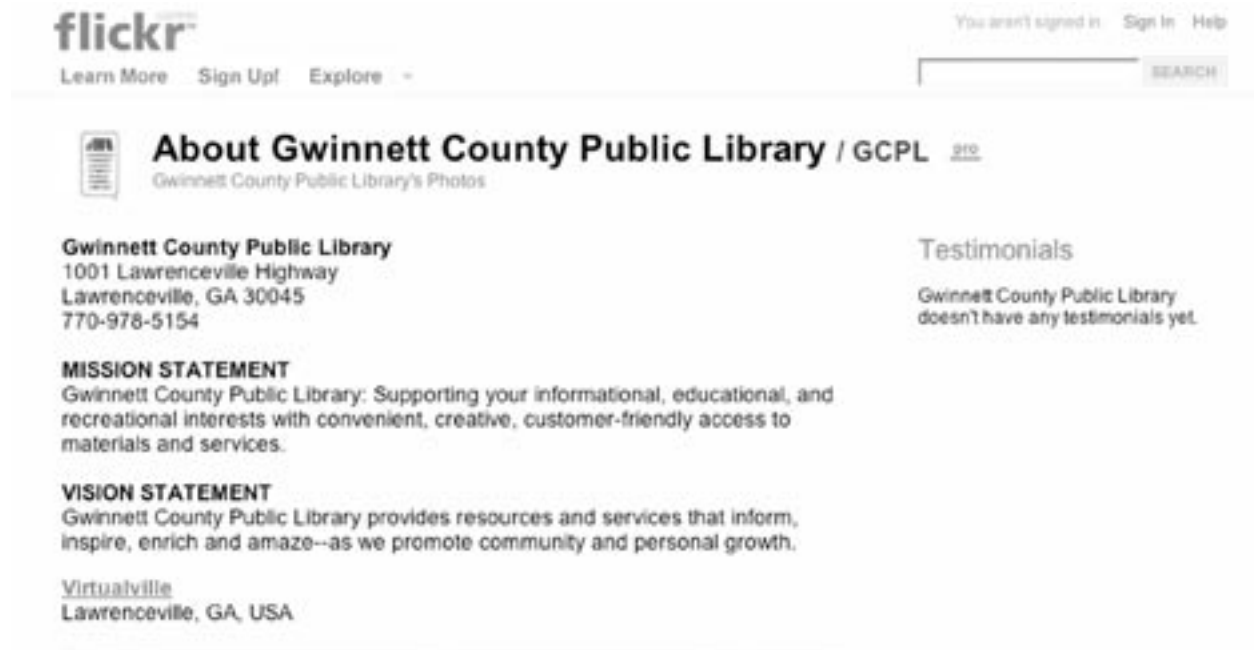
Detail of Colorado College's Tutt Library Tag Cloud

Colorado College Tutt Library's photos / Tags

1900s 1960s 1970s 1980s 1990s 19thc academic accident arabianights architect banner book books boxes cake cal2005 campus cardcatalog carrells cascade caseyteen charlie chas coburn coffee coffeecart collection college colorado coloradocollege coloradosprings conference copier cups darwin darwinday2006 deathtech demonstration demonstrator discipline dishes drawing drill drillteam eans exhibition exterior faculty faculty fall fdsflickrtoys football geek halloween05 helicopter holiday2005 i05 im interior iug2006 keypunch krydya labels lewisclark librarian librarians librariansandlibrarians librarianslibrarians library libraryprogramcommittee libslibs lisa madras menu midcenturymodern model monteney moving night pacificuniversity parade party periodicals pikespeak plans portland poster pr precisionbooktruckdrillteam presentation president publicrelations rachel railway ranganathan read rebecca reference reminder rescue robin saucers sirbad specialcollections spoons stacks staff stairs statue steve stpatricksdays student students studying symmetry tiger tradingcard train trees tutt tuttlibrary typing winter witch women zine zines

Appendix 5:

GCPL's information cited on the library's Flickr account



The screenshot shows the Flickr profile page for Gwinnett County Public Library / GCPL. The page includes the Flickr logo, navigation links (Learn More, Sign Up!, Explore), and a search bar. The profile name is "About Gwinnett County Public Library / GCPL" with a link to the profile. Below the name is the address: "Gwinnett County Public Library, 1001 Lawrenceville Highway, Lawrenceville, GA 30045, 770-978-5154". There is a "MISSION STATEMENT" section, a "VISION STATEMENT" section, and a "Testimonials" section which states "Gwinnett County Public Library doesn't have any testimonials yet." The location is listed as "Virtualville, Lawrenceville, GA, USA".

Appendix 6:

Rock the Shelves at GCPL, Photo by Michael Casey



The screenshot shows a Flickr photo page titled "Band Night" by Michael Casey. The photo is a black and white image of a band performing on stage. The page includes the Flickr logo, navigation links, and a search bar. The photo is dated "Updated on July 23, 2006 by Michael Casey". There is a "Rock the Shelves: Band Night 2005 (Set)" link with a thumbnail showing 52 photos. Below the photo, there is a caption: "Typhoid Mary. First Annual Band Night at the library". The page also lists other pools the photo belongs to: "Black and White (Pool)", "FlickrCentral (Pool)", "Canon DSLR user group (Pool)", and "social documentary photographers (Pool)".