

Curation Platforms

Abstract

In chapter 8 of Library Technology Reports (vol. 50, no. 7), “Social Media Curation,” the authors highlight the various affordances of curation platforms by organizing them in the following categories: real-time curation, hybrid curation, digital content management systems and tools, news updates, learning playlists and dashboards, social bookmarking and note archiving, academic social research, and media curation.

Curation platforms are multiplying in a way that almost mirrors the information flood they were designed to remedy. They come in a variety of flavors.

Librarians tend to choose their curation platforms for a variety of reasons, including the affordances of the platform, their comfort level with the tools, and the concentration of community members inhabiting the space.

The librarians we spoke to used more than one tool in their curation efforts. One tool might be used for collecting or staging content, perhaps as an in-box. Another might be used for search and discovery, as a source of current awareness. Yet another might be used for publishing or sharing with a specific audience.

Nearly all of these platforms offer bookmarklets or browser extensions to facilitate clipping, scooping, pinning, bookmarking, etc., when you are not actually on the platform. Most offer communities or networks and allow members to follow other members to facilitate discovery. Many allow for collaborative upkeep. Metrics provided by these sites allow libraries to monitor, track, and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

It is common for curation tools to allow for varying

levels of privacy or sharing. Most offer tagging and annotation features to enable searching and sharing. Many also offer mobile apps to allow discovery and sharing beyond the desktop or laptop.

Because curation efforts in many of these spaces continue to grow, it is worth noting that many users opt not to reinvent the wheel. They may use the efforts of another community member as a starting point or share it as-is with their own communities.

This list is not exhaustive or comprehensive. It includes some of the popular tools mentioned in our interviews and on our survey.

Note: Most of these platforms are available in both free and premium versions. We describe the free versions. Premium versions offer additional features relating to branding, customization, privacy, and level of participation.

Note also that, while we attempted to classify these tools for convenience, they tend to resist sorting and often offer features that would put them into more than one of our categories.

Real-Time Curation

These platforms rely on continual flow of real-time feeds, news, and socially generated content.

- **Bundlr** (<http://bundlr.com>), similar to Pinterest, allows users (clippers) to log in with Facebook, Twitter, or Google and create and share topic pages of photos, text clips, videos, tweets, code snippets, and documents. You may opt to find, follow, and collaborate on the Bundles of friends and colleagues. Bundles are easily shared and embedded and may be resorted by date and view.

- **Curata** (www.curata.com), aimed at business, allows users to “find, curate, share and analyze content on specific issues or topics in order to establish thought leadership, own industry conversations and drive qualified web traffic.”¹¹
- **Digg** (<http://digg.com>) sends users e-mails with a handful of top stories and videos as the Daily Digg.
- **Flipboard** (<https://flipboard.com>) allows users to combine articles, photos, videos, and music from across the web to create attractive “glossy” magazines with the FlipIt bookmarklet or app. The Flipboard Editor (editor.flipboard.com) now offers a dashboard for editing, rearranging, and sharing.
- **Google+ Communities** (<https://plus.google.com/communities>) offers organized public or private spaces for special interest communities to share links and engage in discussion.
- **Paper.li** (<http://paper.li>) is probably the easiest strategy for creating a media-rich newspaper of tweets, feeds, and hashtags to deliver current awareness content to a community. Curators harvest content from Twitter usernames, Twitter hashtags, Twitter lists, keywords on Facebook, Twitter or Google+, RSS feeds, and Google+ users. It is also beautifully searchable. The Newsstand (<http://paper.li/newsstand>) allows you to discover papers and curators. Results are listed by relevance, with number of views displayed as a metric of influence. If you are interested in a paper, you may subscribe or embed your selected papers.
- **Pearltrees** (www.pearltrees.com) offers a community for visually sharing resources, built on creating networks (or *trees*) of interlinked *pearls* that display and burst open like interactive mind maps. Mouse over a pearltree to see its number of pearls and hits and the name of the curator or curation team. Trees may be linked to; shared on Facebook, Twitter, and Google+; or embedded. Users may pearl by e-mail. The Pearler allows users to turn web pages into pearls.
- **Pinterest** (<http://pinterest.com>) allows users to organize and display visual content, or *pins*, as collections in the form of pin boards. Pinners gather infographics, maps, photographs, and book covers. Pins, or the items shared on the boards, may be annotated. Hashtags added within annotations are searchable. Users may create collaborative boards if they first follow each other. Pinterest encourages its users to respect intellectual property when pinning (<http://pinterest.com/about/copyright>). Users create images using tools like Recitethis.com to create visuals for pinning items that are nonvisual.
- **Scoop.it** (<http://scoop.it>) is one of the most popular and fastest growing tools for curating an online magazine and delivering current awareness

content. Scoop.it requires regular care and feeding. Curators select and discard and may choose to annotate automatic scoop feeds managed by keywords. Used as a search tool, Scoop.it allows a search or a browse of trending, featured, and popular scoops. Though users can search without registration, registered users may follow topics they are interested in and suggest content to other curators.

- **Storify** (<http://storify.com>) allows users to build dynamic, coherent narratives, or social stories, around aggregated social media content. Search for, drag and drop, and reorder relevant elements from Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, and more, and add headlines, introductions, and text to any story. Easily edit or delete elements and embed stories.
- **Themeefy** (<http://themeefy.com>) allows users to archive web content, as well as their own content, and to publish their *Themes* as personalized magazines that display as slideshows. Themeefy publications may be linked to, bookmarked, followed, and embedded.
- **Tumblr** (<http://tumblr.com>) is a microblogging platform that allows users to pull together posts using text, photos, quotes, links, music, and videos from a browser to share with the Tumblr community.
- **TweetedTimes** (<http://tweetedtimes.com>) allows users to create real-time thematic newspapers by aggregating news in Twitter streams and ranking them by popularity among friends.

Hybrid Curation

These platforms rely on both real-time feeds and curation of more static selected content. They offer more traditional archival, pathfinder, or learning management system approaches.

- **Blogs** are commonly used as curation tools. Some blogs serve as library home pages. Librarians use blogs to share thematic content, annotated booklists, and resource round-ups, and often include widgets with media and newsfeeds.
- **edshelf** (<https://edshelf.com>) allows users to create virtual shelves from among its juried directory of websites, mobile apps, and desktop programs. Resources are rated, reviewed, and annotated by parents and teachers. Users may embed their own shelves or the shelves of others.
- **eduClipper** (<https://educlipper.net>) is a Pinterest-like site designed for education. It offers features for creating assignments and portfolios. Users may clip PDFs, Google Drive files, slides, images, and videos to their boards. eduClipper offers a variety

of class management tools. Videos may be played directly from boards.

- **LiveBinders** (<http://livebinders.com>) offers a three-ring binder metaphor approach to gathering and organizing websites, documents, narrative, media, and more. LiveBinders's search results display with a five-star user rating system and number of views. Once a useful binder is discovered, users can embed it nearly anywhere.
- **Medium** (<https://medium.com>) is an attractive, collaborative, web-based editor that allows its community to “share ideas and stories that are longer than 140 characters and not just for friends.”²² The platform encourages sharing “little stories to make your day better” as well as “manifestos that change the world.”²³
- **Mightybell** (<https://mightybell.com>) offers networked spaces for conversation around curated content.
- **Only2Clicks** (www.only2clicks.com) allows users to aggregate and annotate thumbnails of related websites and organize those lists in tabs.
- **RebelMouse** (<https://www.rebelmouse.com>) offers an aggregated view of what users are reading, writing, and curating across their digital channels. For individuals and organizations, it presents a kind of curated home page or dynamic business card.
- **Smartifico** (<http://smartifico.com>) is a content and research platform that utilizes context from user-entered paragraphs to gather feeds and links from across the web, creating constantly updated knowledge boards that are embeddable into online course rooms, blogs, or any other platform.
- **Sqworl** (<http://sqworl.com>) is a very simple tool for gathering together annotated thumbnails to visualize and share bookmarks. Users can search the community, share Sqworls on social networks, and choose to follow the Sqworl groups of others.
- **Wikis**, or collaborative, easily edited websites, are capable of including all types of embedded media. Wikis are used by many librarians, especially our school library respondents, as curation platforms.

Digital Content Management Systems and Tools

These systems are built for digital library collection building.

- **Archive-It** (<https://archive-it.org>) is a subscription-based platform, built at the Internet Archive, that offers curators at museums, state archives, NGOs, large public libraries, universities, and museums a user-friendly platform for “collecting and accessing cultural heritage on the web.”²⁴
- **ArchivesSpace** (<http://archivesspace.org>), “built

for archives by archivists, . . . is the open source archives information management application”²⁵ and community that offers librarians a platform for describing, managing, and providing web access to an institution’s archival collections. It updates and incorporates the best features of its forerunners, the Archivists’ Toolkit and Archon. An annual membership fee supports continued development.

- **CONTENTdm** (www.contentdm.org), OCLC’s digital management collection software, allows organizations to create, manage, and share digital collections—handling local history archives, newspapers, books, maps, slide libraries, or audio and video.
- **Drupal** (<https://drupal.org>) is an open-source content management platform and community used and built by millions globally. It offers support and collections of customizable themes and modules to facilitate use.
- **LibGuides** (<http://libguides.com>) is a subscription tool used by librarians all over the globe. Users create guides using pages, tabs and subtabs, columns, and boxes that can accommodate content of all sorts. Even if you are not a LibGuides subscriber, you can search and benefit from the Springshare community’s shared resources. Members may ask to use existing members’ guides as templates.
- **Omeka** (<http://omeka.org>) is a free, web-based, open-source content management system for developing digital collections and exhibits and for helping communities build archives using the Dublin Core metadata standard. It offers a variety of themes and the ability to tag and to create and mash-up pages with embedded social media, as well as social network sharing features.
- **PTFS ArchivalWare** (www.ptfs.com/archivalware) allows organizations to store, search, retrieve, browse, and manage a diverse set of content and digital objects within one web-based, file-type-agnostic system.

For News Updates

These are personalized, automated newsfeeds based on interests you share.

- **Feedly** (<http://feedly.com>) is a sharable newsfeed aggregator available as a desktop, cloud, or mobile platform.
- **Google Alerts** (www.google.com/alerts) allows users to set up e-mail updates based on specified queries, frequency, language, and region to stay up-to-date with news, blogs, video, discussion, and books.
- **LinkedIn Pulse** (<https://www.pulse.me>), the professional, customizable news update service, allows

users to discover and share professional stories.

- **News.me** (www.news.me) pushes relevant news to your in-box in a display with publisher, headline, photo, and comments as a briefing by automatically analyzing links shared by your friends.
- **Reddit** (<http://reddit.com>) is an open-source community in which members submit content and can vote “up” or “down” to organize posts and determine their relative hotness on the site. Content entries are organized by interest areas into “subreddits,” organized by teams of volunteers.
- **Swayy** (www.swayy.co) is a personalized content discovery platform that allows you to select and share relevant content with your audience across social networks.
- **Tagboard** (<https://tagboard.com>) aggregates hashtags from Twitter, Facebook, Vine, Google+, and Instagram on a visual mosaic.
- **Twitter** (<https://twitter.com>) is a microblogging platform also used by many as a tool for personal curation and discovery. Hashtag searches and lists gather news, links, media, and other content relating to affinity groups or topics. Hashtags offer an opportunity to curate conference conversations and amplify live events. Twitter widgets (<https://twitter.com/settings/widgets>) and tools like TweetDeck (<https://tweetdeck.twitter.com>) organize hashtag feeds into columns and facilitate search. Tools like Twitterfall, Visible Tweets, Twitterwally, and TweetBeam allow for the attractive display of tweets at conferences or for search.
- **StumbleUpon** (www.stumbleupon.com) allows users to vote on liked pages. StumbleUpon then shares more pages that meet user interests based on the recommendations of people followed and others with shared interests.
- **Vellum** (<http://vellum.nytlabs.com/mylinks>) is a *New York Times* experiment that creates a reading layer over your Twitter feed and flips it. Vellum focuses on shared content, treating shared links, with their full titles and descriptions as primary, and tweeted commentary as secondary. Links are ranked by how often they are shared by those you follow on Twitter.

Learning Playlists and Dashboards

These tools present usable resources for students (of all ages and subjects), allowing the curator to offer context and to select, sort, and sequence for specific communities and allowing students themselves to manage their own information worlds.

- **BlendSpace** (<http://blendspace.com>) gathers tiles from a variety of web and media elements to curate knowledge or present an embeddable start page.

- **Gibbon** (<https://gibbon.co>) allows users to collect and share articles, links, books, and videos or paths of resources in a learning flow.
- **Learnist** (<https://learni.st>), similar to Pinterest, allows people to curate content like blog posts, images, music, video, e-book content, and podcasts and to annotate and sequence them to build lessons. Learnings invite comments and may be shared on social networks.
- **LessonPaths** (www.lessonpaths.com) allows users to create annotated, step-by-step playlists of websites, uploaded files, videos, articles, and more. Playlists may be created individually or collaboratively and embedded.
- **List.ly** (<http://list.ly>) offers the opportunity to independently or collaboratively create lists (like the top ten educational tools or the fifteen worst dance videos). Lists may be embedded, tagged, crowd-ranked, and shared on a variety of social media platforms. Items from another person’s list may be added to your own.
- **Netvibes** (www.netvibes.com) is a dashboard publishing platform or start page built on web widgets. The Netvibes Ecosystem (<http://eco.netvibes.com>) allows users to quickly add content to their pages and tabs.
- **Symbaloo** (www.symbaloo.com) or **Symbaloo EDU** (www.symbalooedu.com) allows users to gather their favorite websites into webmixes—grids of little tiles—and to collect various webmixes under a system of tabs. A Symbaloo Bookmarklet is available for handy posting.
- **Tildee** (www.tildee.com) allows users to create and share step-by-step tutorials using their own narrative and curated media.
- **ZEEF** (<https://zeef.com>) is a curated and categorized link directory. In a more commercial approach, links are ranked by Experts, who earn commissions based on quality metrics.

Social Bookmarking and Note Archiving

- **Delicious** (<https://delicious.com>) allows users to create, organize, and share collections of links or bookmarks. Users tag and use tag bundles to facilitate finding. The Discover area presents community-picked links based on your interests.
- **Diigo** (<https://www.diigo.com>) allows users to individually or collaboratively bookmark and annotate links, pages, notes, and media to be accessed anywhere. Users’ highlights, sticky notes, and screenshots may be automatically added to their libraries. Tags make bookmarks searchable.
- **Evernote** (<http://evernote.com>) is a platform for curating and archiving notes. Notes, which may be

a combination of text, websites, images, and voice memos, may be sorted into folders, annotated, tagged, searched, and exported as notebooks.

- **Instapaper** (<https://www.instapaper.com>) allows users to archive the web content they encounter—articles, stories, posts, videos, and e-mails—for later reading. The “send to Instapaper” bookmarklet or mobile app facilitates saving and sharing and converts mixed content into an attractive, uncluttered document that can be read across devices.
- **OneTab** (www.one-tab.com) is a Chrome extension that converts open browser tabs into a list that can be saved as a website and later restored and revisited.

Academic Social Research

These tools are designed around shared scholarship for the academic community.

- **Mendeley** (www.mendeley.com) is a free reference manager and academic social network for organizing; collaborating on papers, notes, and annotations; and discovering research. The software may be used to read and annotate PDFs, automatically generate bibliographies, and import papers from other research software.
- **ResearchGate** (www.researchgate.net) is a platform for the academic science community to share research, find collaborators and coauthors, and open conversations with fellow scholars. Metrics are available for scholars’ work.
- **ScholarSphere** (<https://scholarsphere.psu.edu>), Penn State University’s secure repository service, allows its community to share their papers, presentations, publications, and data sets in one space as durable, citable items.
- **Zotero** (<https://www.zotero.org>) automatically senses content in your web browser, allowing you to extract bibliographic information and add sources to a personal library. The platform makes it easy to store references and export them as formatted citations. Groups encourage researchers to collaborate on projects and to discover others who share their research interests.

Media Curation

Multimedia

- **ThingLink** (www.thinglink.com) lets the user create interactive images that embed curated media. Simple drag-and-drop uploading of the desired image makes this process easy for even the youngest curators. Then, with single clicks, YouTube videos, SoundCloud sounds, text, links, polls, and

more can be embedded within the image. Interactive images created in ThingLink can be shared and embedded into any other platform.

Video

- **YouTube** (<https://www.youtube.com>) is a huge, global community for the curation, discovery, and distribution of originally created and archival video. Users may comment on, link to, and embed the content of others and create playlists. YouTube offers a variety of tools for creation and editing as well as detailed analytics. Many libraries have YouTube channels devoted to content for their communities. Creators may select privacy settings as well as licenses under which content may be downloaded or reshared.
- **Vimeo** (<https://vimeo.com>), founded by a group of filmmakers who wanted to share their work, has grown to be a major curation and discovery space for video. Vimeo offers a number of creation and learning tools. Many libraries have Vimeo channels devoted to content for their communities. Creators may select privacy settings as well as licenses under which content may be downloaded or reshared.

Images

- **Flickr** (<https://www.flickr.com>), the huge, global online photo management and sharing platform, offers strategies for searching, sorting, organizing, and sharing photos and short videos. Media may be organized into galleries, sets, slideshows, albums, maps, and photobooks. Users may create groups, comment, or like media. Creators may select privacy settings as well as licenses under which content may be downloaded or reshared.
- **Picasa** (<http://picasa.google.com>), now owned by Google, allows users to organize, edit, and share photos and tag them using Google+.
- **Instagram** (<http://instagram.com>), available as an Apple app and through Google Play, allows users to shoot photos, add filters, and share in an Instagram gallery that invites follows, likes, comments, or embeds.

Presentations

- **SlideShare** (www.slideshare.net) is a huge global platform, now owned by LinkedIn, that allows users to upload and share, search, and browse presentations, infographics, documents, videos, PDFs, and webinars. Creators may select privacy settings as well as licenses under which content may be downloaded or reshared.
- **AuthorStream** (www.authorstream.com) offers a platform for sharing, browsing, and searching for

presentations on the web. Users may create channels, tag and annotate, and view analytics for their presentations. Creators may select privacy settings as well as licenses under which content may be downloaded or reshared.

Sounds

- **SoundCloud** (<https://soundcloud.com>) is a global online audio distribution platform that allows users to create, upload, and share originally recorded sounds either privately or publicly.

Notes

1. “About Curata,” accessed July 7, 2014, www.curata.com/about_us.
2. “Welcome to Medium,” accessed July 7, 2014, <https://medium.com/about/9e53ca408c48>.
3. Ibid.
4. Archive-it home page, accessed July 7, 2014, <https://archive-it.org>.
5. “About Us,” ArchivesSpace home page, accessed July 7, 2014, <http://archivesspace.org>.