INTRODUCTION & MOTIVATION

Researchers have pointed out the connection and collaboration strengths of social media that help communities interact. Previous research, such as 2collab survey, show that many researchers believe social applications will have a major influence on the future of research. According to the CIBER 2010 survey results, researchers use social media to support several phase of research process: including identifying research opportunities and disseminating findings. Thus, understanding how scholars use social media in their research process is significant to understand how scholars are gathering / disseminating information and how social media influences their research practices.

Research Questions

- How are natural scientists using social media in their research process?
- What are the reasons of use and non-use of social media?

Why Natural Scientists? The first to embrace electronic resources and tools, and push for open collaborative spaces. (Hara et al., 2003)

Methodology

- Semi-Structured Interviews: 12 questions, 30 min - 60 min
- Duke, UNC, NCSU (Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physics)
- Ph.D. students and Post-Docs (5 participants)
- E-mail recruitment: listserv & individual

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Collaboration

Provide the opportunity to collaborate with partners that they may not have had the opportunity to in the past

Collaboration?

“Typically not through Facebook, through a phone conversation or an email and discuss possible future collaborations.” Participant 3

Disseminating Information

“When using social networking sites or social media in general, a lot of times it’s to get word out for your particular paper publication.” Participant 3

Informal Peer Review

“It also gives as much as the comments on results and conclusion, before it gets published ... that's really helpful, in a research context.” Participant 2

Content in Social Media

“Depending on what’s the opinion, it’s hard to find in traditional journal articles.”

“Especially with blogs there are a lot of people writing things and they are not the experts in those fields….that maybe incorrect but it kind of has a snowball effect.”

Participant 2

Participant 4

What’s more important is PEOPLE as an information source. e.g. Subscribe blog recommened by other credible scientists, follow twitter who are connected to people you already follow...

Citing Social Media?

“They are constantly changing. You can’t trust it. They're not static. The point of the citation is to cite a specific fact or piece of information at your research... If that fact is changing, it’s useless. There’s no point in citing it.” Participant 1

Information Leak?

“Someone can then steal from you and reproduce in advance in a way that they can publish before you do.” Participant 1

Networking

“I've used both twitter and blogs to meet other scientists that are committed to outreach, and doing different types of research.”

Participant 2

Networking?

“...a way of networking is by discussing people's research and work at academic conferences.”

Participant 1

Tracking Information

1) Get information about what other researchers are doing
2) Catch-up information through Facebook Fan page
3) Find new information and keep them up to date
4) Be able to quickly access to different sources

Not tracking?

1) Lack of content & useful sources
2) Information overload

“I think its also a disadvantage because you end up almost overloaded at times... trying to sift through...projects.” Participant 4

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- Understand new forms of information flow & information seeking behavior as social media becomes a more significant part of the research process
- Need for curating social media as a part of research activities

References