Course: Social media for development

Lesson: Introduction to Web 2.0 and social media

Text-only version

The interactive version of this lesson is available free of charge at:

www.imarkgroup.org/coursedescription/W2en.html

In this lesson

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- understand the basic concepts behind Web 2.0, social media for development, and
- identify four main types of social media uses.

INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0" – the term has been around since 2004. What does it really mean today? Is it just a buzz word? Or is it still something important for your work? The term was initially a brand for a tech conference. Then it became marketing hype. But there is something valuable.

Web 2.0 refers to interactive web-based services that help people share information and collaborate online more easily than with earlier tools. Some call it the "read/write" web. It is two-way.

It emphasizes the possibility for many people to share and collaborate, not just the "webmasters" or people with advanced technical skills. Technologist Tim O'Reilly says it is about "harnessing collective intelligence." That is important in development. (**http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html**)

If you have people you need to work with who have access to the internet, Web 2.0 may provide you with tools for all of you to communicate, empower collaboration and create useful networks. **Web 2.0 is primarily a social, rather than a technological evolution**. That's why it's also called "social media."

User generated content and the collaboration between many users are central to the social phenomenon of Web 2.0. We'll use the term "social media" in the rest of this module.

This course will look at how development stakeholders can take advantage of social media to **more effectively network, collaborate and exchange knowledge.**

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is a term that people loosely apply to easy to use web-based tools for content creation (also known as **user generated content**), connecting with people (also known as **social networking**), collaboration and many other forms of people to people interaction. These tools go beyond content, to our connection to that content and to each other.

The key features are that these tools can easily be used by anyone – not just **geeks**![1] More people can use them than ever before. And **we can use them for development to help turn ideas into action**.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

How can social media be useful in development?

What is different from the old shared folders and web repositories we have been using?

Social media makes it *easy* for us to work across four broad areas:

- connecting with other people via social networks;
- collaborating and doing things with other people;
- creating and sharing content; and
- finding, using, curating, organizing and reusing content.

We'll explore these areas and look at some examples of the social media involved in each application.

Social media allow organizations and communities to work with very different sizes and types of groups. They can support **small group communications and collaboration even when they are geographically distributed**. They can also give you potential **access to a massive, international audience and foster actions at a larger, networked scale**.

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[1] **Geek** is a common term for someone who is obsessed with computers, and has achieved a high level of expertise in their chosen area...

As you read the examples offered think about how you might use social media in your work. It is important to know what you want:

- ✖ a small, well connected group? Or

- ✖ exposure and activation of a global audience?

Social media can help you do both, but some tools do one or the other better. Social reporters use internet connected laptops, phones and tablets to send out reports via blogs, podcasts, videos and Tweets. These bits of content are usually aggregated into a website or via a "hashtag."

Today, development practitioners from all over the world share common work and challenges. Yet only a very few can actually get together to talk about their work. Consider how few people can attend a face to face conference. Social media have given rise to ways to help extend participation from face to face events out into the world via the internet with a practice called "**social reporting**", which both broadcasts out what is happening live and brings in the ideas and questions from those online. The importance of sharing knowledge beyond face to face meetings has inspired many organizations to regularly include the role of "social reporter" in planning their events. SDC has documented their learnings about social reporting on their "Learning and Networking" blog (**www.sdc-learningandnetworking-blog.admin.ch/2012/08/08/social-reporting-at-the-gender-face-to-face-%E2%80%93-lessons-learnt/**). They started having consultants to their social reporting and then developed their own internal capacity.

The Rome-based UN agencies have used social reporting at their global Share Fairs. AgKnowledge in Africa has created a resource page (**http://agknowledgeafrica.wikispaces.com/Social+Reporting**) on social reporting.

WHAT IS SOCIAL NETWORKING?

Social media allows us to capture both the power of one person to act and the power of many by helping us connect with one another.

People have been doing this face-to-face forever, in social networks in our communities or families, where individuals are connected through relationships. But we were limited to the people who were

geographically near us, or we had the resources to travel. Now we can connect online. This is called online social networking, or simply **social networking**.

Social networking is the practice of individuals connecting and communicating around a common interest using online tools and social networking sites.

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i   **What is the difference between "Social Networking" and "Social Network Sites?**"

These two terms get used interchangeably at times, but they don't mean the same thing. "Social Networking" is everything we do when we use face to face and social network sites to connect and interact with others. Humans have been doing it for eons. Now we can do it online as well as offline.

"Social networking sites" refers to websites that bring together a variety of tools to help us social network. The basics include individual profiles, the ability to associate with other individuals and groups, sharing of content and updating others of what we are doing/saying/working on.

CONNECTING VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS

The key features of **social networking sites** are three-fold, they allow us to:

1. **create profiles** that tell others about us;
2. share content; and
3. **find people** with common interests or characteristics.

Social networking sites a range of tools to help us do these things, including:

- profiles;
- discussions and comments;
- email and instant messaging;
- labeling or "tagging" tools
- linking tools; and

- content sharing tools.
- social network visualization tools: they these tools show our connections to other people in a picture.;

Some popular examples are

Facebook   (**www.facebook.com/**)

Twitter   (**www.twitter.com/**)

Pinterest   (**www.pinterest.com/**)

Hi5Networks   (**www.hi5networks.com/**)

Myspace   (**www.myspace.com/**) and

LinkedIn   (**www.linkedin.com/**)

 (There are also regional variations. See a list of popular social networks in Africa at:

http://www.oafrica.com/uncategorized/african-social-networks.

Social networking for a cause is also growing, with sites like:

Patientslikeme.com (**www.patientslikeme.com/**);

Idealist.org (**www.idealist.org/**);

Change.org (**www.change.org/**);

Networkforgood.org **(www.networkforgood.org/**); and

TakingITGlobal.org (**www.takingitglobal.org/**).

Some organizations are even launching their own social **networking platforms**, such as Kiva.org

(**www.kiva.org/**) to connect their constituents and meet their mission.

Social networking sites were initially attractive to younger groups, but now they are **attracting people of all ages**.

These sites now account for a significant part of overall Internet traffic and is growing globally. Social networking sites are very popular in South America, India and Asia. Social networking sites are **engaging** for many people because they incorporate more than text. People can share **photos, videos, audio files, links to websites** of interest.

Check out the **List of social networking websites** on Wikipedia which also gives a sense of geographic focus of some of the sites. (**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites**)

Social networking sites often provide tools that support the formation of groups and even support specific social action.

These services can help you **organize and visualize extended networks of people and** groups with similar interests.

Social networking sites use complex databases to establish relationships between people, using descriptive keywords, geographic information, email addresses and other data, provided by individual users. So not only could you find people interested in water issues in Ghana, but you could form a group to talk about and act on those issues. You could then attract more people to your cause and hopefully expand your work. They also offer tools to link to an organizations website, use applications that support geotagging and even interactive games for learning.

EXAMPLE

Somaly Mam Foundation in Facebook
The *Somaly Mam Foundation* wanted to reach more people to raise funds for their work. In addition to having their own website with more extensive information about their activities they opened spaces on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, all linked visibly on their home page.

A "Cause" is a special page that allows non-profits to recruit supporters and engage Facebook users. A small number of organizers started asking their friends to join the cause and to donate. These friends were then asked to send an invitation to their friends.

By actively reaching out to those extended networks, they managed to recruit more than 30,000 members sympathetic to their cause and raise more than US$4,500 from individual donations.For more about options for non profits and NGOs on Facebook, see their page about Non Profits (**www.facebook.com/nonprofits/app_149255468478339**) on Facebook.

SOCIAL NETWORKS' NEW CHALLENGES

Social networking sites represent **new challenges** in terms of communication and resources:

① **People are becoming overloaded and we compete for their attention…**
➡ …due to the easy creation of groups and connections on these sites. Realistically, how many people can we meaningfully connect with? In areas with high internet connectivity, your cause or organization's message might get lost amongst all the other social networks.

② **We face inequality and access challenges to our knowledge sharing…**
➡ …because of the difference in resources available in different parts of the world. The well-connected have access to wide
sources of people and data; while the unconnected do not

③ **Social networks challenge traditional organizational processes…**
➡ …because the users are in control of their participation, not the organization. Social networking sites themselves change much faster than organizations.

COLLABORATING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

While social media tools connect us, they also help us **do things together**. With the use of some of these tools you can **coordinate a remote work group** or **create a channel of communication** with other organizations.

There tools used to be called "**groupware**" because they are designed to help groups with specific features to:

- ✖ plan;
- ✖ do tasks together;
- ✖ share resources;
- ✖ communicate; and
- ✖ create the possibility of joint action or collaboration.

Social media can be used to help us get work done – together! More and more people in development have to work with **people who are scattered around the world**, and these tools help. They are especially helpful with publishing and sharing content and supporting groups.

Working with social media requires more than technology. Teams and groups must establish **working agreements and processes**, as well as have **clear goals and roles**. Without these, social media is often ignored and work doesn't get done. Let's start with the software, then we'll return to the social elements.

EXAMPLE

Social media tools for collaboration are freely available, open source or paid tools for groups to **start collaborating online after a few clicks**. Examples include:

- **collaboration portal software** (**Drupal**, **Joomla**);
- **email lists** (**DGroups**, **Yahoogroups**);
- **project management tools** (**DotProject**, **Basecamp**);
- **wikis** (**MediaWiki**, **PBwiki**) and other tools.

CREATING AND PUBLISHING - USER GENERATED CONTENT

Social media allows people to publish out to the world via the Internet. No longer are traditional media or big, well-resourced organizations the only ones who are creating and disseminating information.

Now you and I can create and publish to the world.

Not only can anyone publish text, but also share **links**, **photos**, **audio** and **video**. So now when we have people with limited ability to read and write, they can use video or audio to share ideas. Content can be uploaded to share and downloaded to use offline in areas of limited connectivity.

We don't need specialized technical skills either. There are many easy to use content creation and sharing tools on the internet that anyone with an internet connection and a computer can use. Some can be used with just a mobile phone!

i | **Creating aggregated knowledge**

Many individuals produce content from their own experience, in order to reach their peers and for self-expression purposes. When they make their knowledge available to others, they can **gain status as experts**, even outside of formal institutions. They can contribute.

The **aggregated knowledge** across a network of users provides a significant value to the collective. Organizations do this as well, both contributing their knowledge and raising awareness of their work.

People use the internet or web enabled mobile phones to create, and upload and link to their text, photos, videos or sound recordings online. They share links (URLs[2]) and web clippings[3] with others and keep a list of bookmarks[4] or interesting sites.

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[2] *URL (Uniform Resource Locator***)** **-** A website address with the name of the server where the site's files are stored, the file's directory path, and its file name. For example: **http://www.imarkgroup.org/**.

[3] *Clipping* is to excerpt a cut from a newspaper or magazine, but it can also apply to collecting pieces of online media, text, images, video and sound.

[4] *Bookmark* - A link to a website already visited, so that the user can return to that website directly, without using a search engine or directory. Most web browsers allow users to save bookmarks on their computers, but they can also be stored in an online social bookmarking service.

All this content can be made accessible to their network of contacts both through specific content sharing tools, and the social networking services we mentioned earlier in this lesson. People can choose to receive content that has been produced or selected by others, via web subscription services powered by new technologies.

> The value here is that content made available on the internet becomes available as a **global public good**, not just a private thing stuck on someone's hard drive on their computer.

FINDING, ORGANIZING AND RE-USING CONTENT

We have seen how people can find others with common interests, create content and collaborate. With all this content available, there needs to be ways to easily **find, organize** and even **re-use this content in creative ways**. Content can be useful to someone else. For example, teachers may search for curricula posted by other teachers, then adapt it to their local context.

There are a number of **key strategies for working with content using social media**. Together, they can be thought of as **content curation**.

There are a number of **key strategies for working with content using social media**. Together, they can be thought of as **content curation**. Social Media Expert Beth Kanter describes it this way:

"*Content curation is the organizing, filtering and "making sense of" information on the web and sharing the very best pieces of content that you've cherry picked with your network. "*

> **Nonprofit technology guru Beth Kanter describes Content Curation** like this:
>
> Content curation is the organizing, filtering and "making sense of" information on the web and sharing the very best pieces of content that you've cherry picked with your network.
> But finding and organizing the information is only half of the task. As Mari Smith points out in this video (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mKJQuREIHw**) about why curation is important and some tools for doing it (**www.socialmediaexaminer.com/8-ways-to-find-great-social-media-content/**). By sharing the information and giving credit to the source where you found the link, you build relationships and a network.
>
> I used to describe this process as "Listening and Engaging" but really like focusing it the process

around a content strategy – makes listening and engaging much more actionable.

CONTENT CURATION

We are familiar with curation in museums. Now we do it out in the world! Wendy Wong helps us visualize different models of curation as developed by Rohit Bhargava.

Aggregation brings relevant things together.

Distillation simplifies to key ideas.

Elevation helps draw attention to something.

Mashup recombines things to create new ideas.

Chronology organizes things historically.

Content curation has become increasingly important because of the huge volume of content now online. We can break content curation into some smaller parts. They include:

Find: Collaborative Searching, Finding and Filtering Content

Organize: Tagging, Rating and Commenting on Content

Share: Publishing, Changing, and Using Content

➡ **Find: Collaborative Searching, Finding and Filtering Content**

In the past there was not enough **content online**. Now we often have the opposite problem. We have sector publications, blogs, wikis, and small messages such as SMS and Tweets from Twitter.

Using a search engine alone is often not enough to **find** the content we need, both because of the volume, and not knowing what content is useful and accurate. So we develop strategies to have others help us (collaborative searching). People use their instant messenger tools, SMS (Short Message Service) on their mobiles or microblogging tools (such as Twitter) to ask their network where to find recommended content.

We use social media tools to use other humans to search, filter and find content together.

Collaborative searching

This may be as simple as asking others how they search, or for leads to good materials they have already found. We may publicly ask for help on social networking sites like Facebook, Google+ or Twitter. For example, on Google+ you can create a "circle" of people you identify with a specific set of knowledge and you can "follow" their postings. We may keep specific lists of experts on our social networking sites.

People use their instant messenger tools, SMS (Short Message Service) on their mobiles or microblogging tools (such as Twitter) to ask their network where to find a certain piece of content. So we use these social media tools to use other humans to search, filter and find.

See a **Survey of Collaborative Web Search Practices** (**research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/people/merrie/papers/collab_search_survey.pdf**)

There are social media tools for collaborative searching and filtering. Examples of such tools include **collaborative search tools**, and tools for **tagging and social bookmarking**, which we'll talk about next. These tools **take advantage of the knowledge of the group** or network, rather than relying on the knowledge of just one individual. They help us find content that is relevant to our work. In the group, we go to people we believe have knowledge in the area we are seeking. In the network, we use the power of many eyes/brains and let the best material surface.

➡ Organize: Tagging, Rating and Commenting on Content

 A **tag is a labeling system**, collaboratively generated and open-ended, that enables Internet users **to organize and categorize content** such as Web pages, online photographs and Web links.

Tagging lets you categorize information online *your* way. So it has value to YOU. But it also can have value to others.

Social bookmarking is the use of a web-based site that stores and shares your tags and the tags of people you know, so you can benefit from their bookmarks as well as your own. Collectively, the tagging allows vast quantities of information to be organized in ways that make sense to diverse people, which is important in development.

The tags allow the same piece of content to be identified in different ways by different people. They also allows us to filter a vast amount of content based on how many people tagged it, with the assumption they found it valuable.

A **hashtag** is a particular kind of tag that emerged from users trying to **organize** their content while using the microblogging tool Twitter (**https://support.twitter.com/articles/49309-what-are-hashtags-symbols**).

They marked their key words, or tags, with a # sign to make it easier to aggregate posts on the same topic. Today, a hashtag is a Twitter mainstream tool and term. You can track hashtags by searching for them, or using a site like **http://hashtags.org/**

Like tagging, **rating and commenting tools allow us to indicate if web content was useful or accurate for us**. **So we organize by prioritizing content that we like or have found useful.**

Rating and commenting tools allow input beyond the traditional 'expert' model. Many people have very good knowledge in communities, for example. Before they did not have a voice to offer their opinion. Now they do. These are incorporated into social media sites.

Examples of rating and commenting tools include **stand alone products,** such as:

- ✖ **polls**;

- ✖ **rating tools –** These tools attach ratings to a piece of web content and aggregate those ratings on a website like Digg (**http://digg.com/**); and

- ✖ **annotation tools -** they attach comments on any webpage regardless if there are built in rating tools or not. Two examples of annotation tools are: Diigo **(www.diigo.com/**) and WebNotes (**www.webnotes.net/**). You can find a list of annotation tools at: **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_annotation**

Rating or ranking features built into other social media include:

- → **comments** and **star ratings** on blogs;
- → the Facebook "Like" button;
- → tools to give "**thumbs up" or "thumbs down"** on content;
- → **moving content** up or down on a page display; or

⇥ making **postings in forums be hidden or disappear** if they receive many negative ratings.

Rating can also "**promote" interesting websites** or news to the top of the main news aggregators such

as **Google News** (**http://news.google.com/**) or the public **Delicious** (**http://delicious.com/**)

(collaborative bookmarking service) page.

➡ **Share: Publishing, Changing, and Using Content**

Once you have found, selected and organized content, you want it to be used. This means used in its

original state, or changed to become useful in your own contexts. Curated content can be broadcast via

newsletters (email or printed), via social media, using **content curation tools**, automatically distributed

via RSS feeds, and widgets that embed the content into your organization's website. A key content

curation strategy is to build it into your daily workflow.

> **Content curation tools**
>
> **Sometimes we want a place to aggregate our curated content.** Examples of these tools include
> Scoop.it (**www.scoop.it/**), Tumblr (**www.tumblr.com/**), and Storify (**http://storify.com/**).
>
> An example is the Scoop.it page on Social Media and Agriculture curated by Courtney
> Breckenridge. When she sees stories about the use of social media in agriculture, she collects
> them into her Scoop.it page. Typically you can install a little tool in your browser toolbar so
> when you see content you want to capture, you just click on that tool.

With web-based content that is made freely available, we can take some content from a site, change it

and make it work in a new way. We call this "mashing up." When we mash up two or more pieces of

music, this is often called "remixing." Sometimes we create completely different things, sometimes we

improve upon the original.

This is how Open Source[5] software itself is created, by making the material available to others and

asking them to share any improvements. This reduces development costs and increases quality by

getting "many talented hands" working on a project.

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[5] ***Open source*** - Refers to computer software for which the source code is freely available.

A group of development agencies can create a workshop on Sustainable Land Use, upload the content to an open source learning platform, and then make it available to any other organization simply by putting it on the web. Others can copy it and better yet, improve upon it.

We have all heard the warning not to reinvent the wheel. But sometimes we need to redesign it to fit a particular context. Many Web 2.0 services allow software developers to create applications which:

- share information between platforms; and
- share content between sites.

That means that two or more services can be integrated and the user's data can be easily transferred between one site and the other. This is important because it has generated many mash-ups[6], combinations of tools and data with unique results.

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES

We've explored what social media is and explored some ideas about how we might use it in development. This suggests a couple of thing:

① There are many **frameworks** for understanding the concept and use of social media. You might find it useful to explore some of the different perspectives.

② If your organization is just starting with social media, consider your **social media strategy** and plan.

Social Media Frameworks help you understand social media in different ways. There are frameworks that divide up the functions, such as the one in this image which talks about "Listen," "Understand," "Engage" and "Measure, React & Respond." People are developing new ideas as the technology evolves. On the internet, search for "social media strategy for non profits" and you will find many resources.

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[6] *Mash-up* - The term mash-up refers to a new breed of Web-based applications created by hackers and programmers to mix at least two different services from disparate, and even competing, Web sites.

People are developing new ideas as the technology evolves. On the internet, search for "social media strategy for non profits" and you will find many resources. For example, this **smashingapps** page **www.smashingapps.com/2011/11/24/34-stunning-infographics-to-understand-the-world-of-social-media.html** shows **infographics about social media.** Here are some resources to explore for **social media strategy and planning**:

▶ If your organization is just learning about social media, check out the Social Media Game **http://social-media-game.wikispaces.com/**. Play it with your staff!

▶ Beth Kanter has many blog posts about the Networked Nonprofit **www.bethkanter.org/category/networked-nonprofit/** and Social Media Policy **www.bethkanter.org/category/social-media-policy/**. You might want to follow her blog.

▶ Check out these slides on the Wired Non Profit **www.slideshare.net/howardgr/the-wired-nonprofit-excerpt** from Howard Greenstein. There are some great worksheets.

SUMMARY

- In the early 2000's, technology started to change: it became easier to interact with other people online and publish information with free, easy to use tools. More people had the ability to connect and collaborate using these tools. We could not only read the web, we could write and create it ourselves.

- Social media can be useful for development work. A strategic use of social media can be incorporated into your organization and your community. Social media can help you to connect and interact with other people, collaborate and do things with others even at great distances, create and share content, and find, use and organize content that is relevant in your work.

- Social networking tools allow you to create groups and connections to other people at an international level. They can also represent challenges in terms of communication and resources.

- Social media tools are more specifically oriented to help a group do things together, such as managing a project or publishing a collective paper.

- Tools for creating, curating, and publishing content on the web helps us make the most of content in our work, especially in a time of potential information overload.

- It is important to think about your social media strategy and policies to coherently use the tools and opportunities.