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Technology in Practice. Brand Perception 2.0

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Brand Perception 2.0

Tools for online reputation management

by Meredith Farkas

Many librarians have tried to play a role in educating young adults about developing a presence on social networking sites. They have warned teens that nothing online ever really disappears and that compromising photographs or derogatory posts can impact their future job prospects. Online identity is built upon all of the things we have put online and the things people have posted about us.

Online identity isn't something we should only be concerned about as individuals. Organizations are now looking at how their brands are perceived online through blog posts, tweets, ratings, and other social media posts. Just as a compromising photo on Facebook can cost someone a job, a negative review with a high Google rank can impact an organization's brand.

Google me

Organizations of all types should manage their online identity through their presence in the spaces their clientele frequents and monitoring their online reputation. Do you know what patrons are saying about your library online? Do you know what comes up in search engines under your library's name? If you can find the things people are writing about your library, so can your other patrons. Libraries should actively monitor the online conversations people are having about them, as these conversations can impact their brand.

One basic way to find out what users are saying about your library is through a Google search. People find your library's website this way, and what they find on that first results page may influence their perceptions.

One of the first results when doing a Google search for the University of Ottawa Library in Ontario is the Facebook group "uOttawa Library Sucks,"

which contains dozens of complaints from students and no responses from library staff. While all of the comments are 1-3 years old, the site's high Google rank could give people a negative impression of the library. A Google Alert (google.com/alerts) will send you the latest results that mention your library.

Some people blog or tweet about their library. Using a tool like Google Blog Search (blogsearch.google.com), people can set up alerts to let them know when a post has been written that contains their library's name. Tools like Tweet Scan (tweetscan.com) and Tweet Beep (tweetbeep.com) offer the same functionality for finding Twitter mentions. One site, Social Mention (socialmention.com), allows you to track what people are saying about your organization on blogs, Twitter, social networking sites, traditional media, and more.

Websites where users can rate local

businesses and services are also good places to look for comments about your library. Sites such as Yelp (yelp.com) allow users to rate everything from diners to plumbers to doctors. In geographic areas with a tech-savvy

population, it's likely that libraries will have at least a few reviews. For example, there are 167 reviews for Boston Public Library and eight reviews for Cham-

Library. Many are long and give a great deal of feedback, so visiting the site is not only useful for managing your library's reputation, but for getting valuable input.

What can libraries do when they find negative comments online? They can respond! Most blogs allow comments, Twitter has the @ response feature, and you can post to a Facebook group if you join it. You can even respond directly on Yelp to negative reviews. Responding in a considerate manner will show patrons that library staff takes feedback seriously and wants to improve the library. Actively engaging in constructive conversations online is the best way to promote your brand in a positive way. ■

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They can respond!

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