Adult/YA fiction. Comment: This classic is a free e-book. This author was way ahead of her time in describing race relations. The book gives many insights into today’s US society even though we do not practice the slavery of the 1800s. Good book for discussion of past vs present.

*Very Valentine* and *Brava, Valentine* by Adriana Trigiani

Adult fiction

**Getting Social in a Small Academic Library**

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Libraries of all shapes and sizes are being exhorted to take advantage of the outreach and promotion opportunities available to them for free through the use of social networking. However, to avoid the pitfalls of an unfocused or unsuccessful program most experts agree that you’ll need to first consider: why you want to use social networking, where in the wide, wide web you want to start building your community, who will be responsible for the content, what that content will be, and how the effectiveness of your social media efforts will be measured. This article will examine strategies advocated by business, marketing, and library professionals that may work for you as you develop your own social media program. You may notice that a number of the sources and citations have been updated since my presentation.

When thinking about “why” libraries might consider how social media can help them meet objectives such as outreach to community, maintaining relevance to that community and contributing to their users’ academic/research success. Andy Burkhardt, blogger on Information Tyrannosaur, noted his reasons for taking advantage of social media in an August 2009 post including: more effective communication, particularly with younger patrons who are less and less likely to use email or read print media; the ability to respond to user problems and praise in a timely manner; having a media channel other than print for advertising events and services; understanding users better through the give and take available on social media.

The “where” of social media is, naturally, ever changing and ever expanding; blogs, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter seem to be the most popular social media venues for libraries. Chris Brogan and those who commented on his blog posting provided a gamut of places to share on the web as well as tools to develop content like podcasting software and video editing and hosting software. AnnaLaura Brown, the Social Networking Librarian, predicted the varying ways social media networks and software would affect libraries in 2011 including, among others, mobile applications and QR codes.

In planning the “who” of a social media strategy, libraries should keep in mind public relations expert Priya Ramesh’s warning not to make content development a one-person job, “If you still think social media is the job of that junior most person on your team that also happens to love new technology, I am sorry you have totally missed the social media
opportunity.” Business advisor Ralph Paglia also believes that everyone in an institution has something to contribute to developing social media content, and if you’re working in an academic library that everyone can certainly include students.

When considering “what” in terms of social media content development, libraries might think about their policies in relation to not only content creation but also content curation for their social media programs. What will the policy be for monitoring and perhaps filtering content posted by patrons? Some libraries have chosen to not allow their users to post comments, but that seems to defeat the purpose of social media. Ramesh wrote further in her blog posting for BuzzBin, “The beauty of social media lies in feeling your customers’ pulse in real time and using that valuable feedback to define your future steps.” Think about what content will best further your library’s mission and where will it come from; RSS feeds and list serves can be good sources. Reviews and interviews can provoke interest in that you can mention trends and celebrities that may have a fan base that includes your users. A fact or statistic with a link might get your users clicking, and of course questions are a super way to spur the interaction that is the basis for social media’s usefulness. Keep your postings brief, regular, and geared toward pulling information back from your users as much as pushing out what you’d like them to know.

Perhaps most importantly in all this strategizing is the “how” as in how are you going to assess whether your social media program is successful. If it is, how are you going to use your facts and figures to promote your successes to a board or director? If it isn’t, how are you going to turn it around, and at what point do you decide that your social media involvement is not providing a return on the time and effort expended? Social media manager Corina Mackay noted some key assessment tools for the Social Media Examiner which might help you measure your social media influence such as Klout, TwentyFeet, Crowdbooster, Tweetstats, and My WebCareer. Something as basic as keeping track of the number of your fans or followers can give you some idea of the percentage of your audience that you’re reaching.

So just how do libraries build those “likes,” “followers” and share of voice, the numbers that can at least give you an indication of the percentage of your community you’re reaching? Of course, including links to your social networks on your web pages is an integral part of building a following. Tech Library has done so, but we’re still struggling to grow our numbers. Suggestions for further promoting our Twitter and Facebook accounts have included: make promoting social networks a part of library orientation and instruction, hold contests and giveaways, and include social media links on all promotional materials from the library. Even with our struggles I still believe in the positive difference our social media efforts are making in the understanding of and communication with our community. Perhaps the first question libraries should ask themselves when considering trying out social media applications is not “why,” but “why not?”