

Tips: Personal Branding and Digital Identities for New Librarians

Why Create A Personal Brand?



Findability.

Eventually, someone is going to Google you.

Creating a personal brand helps people to find the *right* you.

Focus

Creating a digital identity helps you to think about how you want to be perceived. What is essential about you that you want others to know?

Connectivity

Maintaining a personal brand helps you stay in touch with current conversations and remain engaged with the profession.

Convergence.

A unified brand can connect the “you” that people meet at conferences to the “you” they find online.

Tips For Creating Your Identity

Have a Plan. Decide ahead of time how you want to be seen: Will you be strictly professional? Will you share personal information? Where do you want people to find you? You can’t always control how your online identity develops, but deciding ahead of time how you want to portray yourself can help keep your image in check. Decide where you want to be found: you don’t have to have a space on every social network available, but you should determine which ones are the most important for your purposes.

Unify Your Branding. Pick a unique user name and use it across all your social spaces. You can use your real name or the name of your blog. Be sure to distinguish yourself from your employer (unless it is your job to promote your place of work). Using your real name will appear more professional, but don’t be afraid to be creative. Remember that your user name is one of the first things people see when they search for you. “Sexybook420” is probably not the best choice.

Tie It All Together. Link all your social spaces to a single homepage. You can use a blog, a static webpage, or a livestreaming service. This helps search engines locate all your social spaces and allows you to “claim” those spaces that are legitimately your own. There are a number of free services online that help you create personal landing pages (see tools below).

Don’t Panic! Creating a personal brand requires a lot of work upfront and continual maintenance. Even if you find yourself spending more time on it than you originally anticipated, don’t be discouraged. It may take a while before any of your hard work pays off, but when it does, it can snowball!

Tips For Maintaining Your Identity

Be Part of the Conversation. Building an online brand requires building a community. Look for other librarians and academics online and start talking! Comment on their blogs, respond to their questions on Twitter, share their content. Don't be obnoxious, but find helpful ways to contribute to the conversation. This will add a human element to your online brand and tells others "hey, I'm not a bot!" Most of all, be gracious. If they share your content, say thank you for the free publicity!

Know What Others Are Saying About You. If you have a blog, use a statistics tool like Google Analytics, Wordpress Stats, or StatCounter to keep track of how people are finding you, where they are coming from, and what is catching their interest. If people are linking to one of your sites, you want to know what they are saying about it. When you're online, links are the main currency of trade. Use services like Google Alerts to track mentions of your user name or the name of your web site.

Stay In Touch. Don't go off the grid for too long. Try to commit to adding or updating content at least once a week. Make sure that people looking for you online know that you're still alive! Others may be more inclined to contact you if they know you check in from time to time. Additionally, checking in will keep you abreast of current conversations and keep you engaged.

Tools for Managing Your Identity

Blog Platforms

Blogger, Wordpress, Tumblr

Lifestreaming

Friendfeed, Posterous, Twitter

Social Networks

Facebook and LinkedIn are the most useful now, but times will change. Go where the conversations are and be part of it!

Homepages

Register a domain, preferably *yourname.com* (or .name, .tel., etc.). If you have the HTML chops, build it yourself or use a CMS like Wordpress or Drupal. There are also many free services that create simple landing pages: e.g. card.ly, Claim ID, flavors.me, and about.me.

Twitter

Twitter deserves its own category. There is no tool more helpful for staying updated and in touch with others and for advertising your personal brand. Many other social tools will allow you to feed you content into your Twitter stream.

Continue the discussion on ALA Connect at <http://connect.ala.org/node/66417>!
Go to: Home » Groups » New Members Discussion Group (ACRL - Association of College & Research Libraries) and click on the "Discussions" tab.