

# A Decade of Facebook

## Can We Still Be Friends?

Annette Lamb and Larry Johnson

**D**oes Facebook still have relevance in a world dominated by Tweets? Will teens continue to use a network where their grandparents “like” their photos? Is it worth the time to establish a Facebook presence for your school library?

While some media pundits have declared Facebook dead, others are just starting to explore the potential of this long-lasting social network. Mark Zuckerberg, along with fellow Harvard University students, launched the social networking service in February 2004. Although it was originally designed for college students, teens quickly found the high school version that appeared in 2005. Ultimately, Facebook left other social networks like Myspace in the dust. Currently, 80 percent of teens use social networking sites (Madden et al., 2013).

### A DOZEN REASONS TO JUMP IN

Let's explore a dozen reasons why now might be a great time to jump into Facebook.

### WIDESPREAD ADOPTION

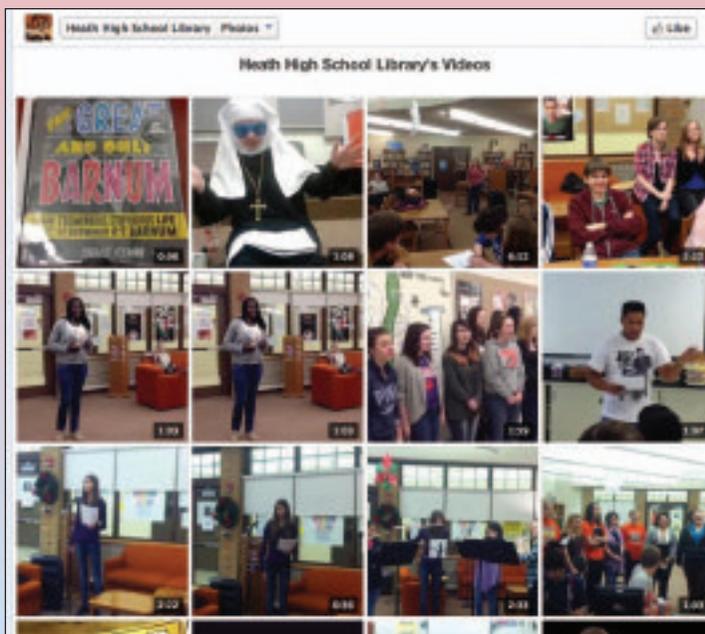
While Facebook isn't as popular as it once was with teens, most young people continue to maintain accounts. Because it's an easy way for friends and families to maintain contact, many teens have slimmed back their “friends” list to include only those that they check in on regularly. If your library can get on that list, it's likely that teens will see your postings.

Gunn High School Library is a great example of a school that has publicized its Facebook page. With nearly one thousand “likes,” it reaches many teachers, families, and students with news and information. For example, the page was used to promote new opportunities, like their freshly painted green-screen walls in the

study rooms and flipcam circulation service.

### EASE OF USE

Uploading promotional materials, linking to interesting resources, and sharing images and videos are quick and easy with Facebook's intuitive interface. The Heath High School Library uploaded videos related to a library event.



Heath High School Library's videos.

### QUICK CONNECTIONS

Think of Facebook as just one of many social media tools in the library's bag of tricks. Many sharing sites, such as Flickr and YouTube, allow users to automatically post status updates on Facebook.

Many librarians are connecting Facebook with Twitter. If you work in a school with a large African American community, you'll find that 39 percent of your teens use Twitter. While only 24 percent of all teens are Twitter users, its use has grown steadily over the past few years (Madden et al., 2013).

Instagram is another social media tool used by many students. Use it to post interesting photos and ask questions. For instance, you might show photos of antique tools and ask how they were used. You could ask where in the world a particular photo was taken. Or you could post a historical photo of a local building and ask students to find it and post the matching “now” photo.

### LIBRARY INVOLVEMENT

Over the past decade, teens have become much more comfortable sharing information on social media sites. Students are increasingly willing to post photos, videos, and interests on Facebook. Use online contests, intriguing questions, and other engaging ac-



## JUNIOR FICTION

## OUR CANADIAN GIRL

Carter, Anne Laurel. **A Hornbook Christmas.** (Elizabeth: Book Three, Nova Scotia, 1762). Penguin Canada, 2005. 104p. \$8.99 Trade pb. 978-0-143-05011-7. Grades 4-6. When Elizabeth discovers Mathilde can't read, she starts secret reading classes for her, but when another friend decides to help, things don't go well. Will their Christmas surprise be done in time?

Ellis, Deborah. **Keeley and the Mountain.** (Keeley: Book Three, Alberta, 1902). Penguin Canada, 2006. 120p. \$8.99 Trade pb. 978-0-143-05561-7. Grades 4-6. When Keeley and her coal miner dad settle in Frank, all Keeley wants is to become a newspaper reporter, until the mountain collapses on the mine. Now, all she wants is for her dad to be alive.

Kacer, Kathy. **Open Your Doors.** (Margit: Book Three, Toronto, 1947). Penguin Canada, 2006. 96p. \$8.99 Trade pb. 978-0-143-05009-4. Grades 4-6. When Canada opens their borders to 1,000 Jewish war orphans, Margit believes her family should adopt one. How can she convince her parents to share their home, time and money with another child?

Taylor, Cora. **Autumn Alone.** (Angelique: Book Three, Saskatchewan, 1870) Penguin Canada, 2005. 120p. \$8.99 Trade pb. 978-0-143-05008-7. Grades 4-6. Angelique is disappointed to miss the annual buffalo hunt until her pregnant mother falls and hurts herself, teaching Angelique that danger and excitement can be anywhere.

Wilson, Budge. **Patricia's Secret.** (Izzie: Book Three, Nova Scotia, 1942). Penguin Canada, 2005. 104p. \$8.99 Trade pb. 978-0-143-05007-0. Grades 4-6. When Izzie's family moves to Woodbridge, her mom works at the sugar refinery while her dad's at sea, leaving Izzie and her little brother to deal with wartime life's uncertainties, hardships, and worries about their dad.

tivities to encourage active participation. West Brook High School Library held a Facebook contest to encourage people to "like" the library page. They gave away three iTunes gift cards as prizes. Ateneo High School Library sponsored a Spooky Story Contest connecting their Facebook page with the school website.



Ateneo High School Library Spooky Story Contest.

## LOCATIONS ARE HOT

Many smartphones and tablets have built-in GPS and location-tracking features. Recently, location information has become popular with teens through tools like FourSquare. According to Madden and colleagues (2013), 16 percent of teens automatically include their location in Facebook posts. Many more signal their locations to friends and parents on individual posts. Turn your library, media center, or learning/information commons into the place to hang out by encouraging the use of locations in your library.

## FORM TEEN PARENT LIBRARY CONNECTIONS

Think about the benefits of involving both teens and their parents to the school library Facebook page. Seven in ten teens

are Facebook friends with their parents (Madden et al., 2013). By seeing the same Facebook postings, it's possible to double the impact of your online promotions. You may be able to convince parents to talk with their teens about library offerings and activities.

## MESSAGE STUDENTS

Many teens prefer to use Facebook's messaging system rather than e-mail for communication. In addition to your Facebook status updates, think about focused messages that you could send to a particular segment of your audience, such as teen book clubs, advisory groups, or teachers.

## CONNECT SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Use Facebook as a way to connect the school and public libraries in your area. For instance, the Oak Park and River Forest High School Library Facebook page promoted a Teen Read Week program at the public library.



Facebook connects school and public libraries.

## SPREAD OUT THE WORK

Facebook is a great way to involve staff, teachers, parents, and students in spreading the word about the library. It's possible to add trusted individuals as Facebook page administrators. These people can post status uploads, photos, videos, and other items to draw interest. They can also help keep track of conversations and respond to inquiries. These Facebook helpers can become important advocates for your library.

## IDENTIFY STUDENT INTERESTS

Facebook isn't just about sharing ideas; it's also essential to listen to participants. By asking meaningful questions and carefully monitoring students' reactions, you can learn a great deal about the wants, needs, and desires of your current and potential library users. Use the Facebook page to address complaints and try out suggestions from users. You can even conduct polls and surveys from your Facebook page.

## JUDGE IMPACT

It's sometimes difficult to know whether your library is having an impact. Circulation statistics, surveys, and interviews are commonly used to help librarians measure the success of the program. Facebook has built-in tools that help visualize impact. It's easy to count the number of comments and "likes" a page or status update receives. When people register for a Facebook Event, you have an immediate count of potential participants. For instance, the New Canaan High School Library page posts book club events.



New Canaan High School Library book club events.

## INCREASE VISIBILITY

By sharing quality content and igniting interesting conversations, you can quickly gain visibility in your school. The more you interact on Facebook, the more your posts will be seen. However, before you jump in, think about how you'd like the library to be perceived. Is it a source of information, instructional, and/or inspira-

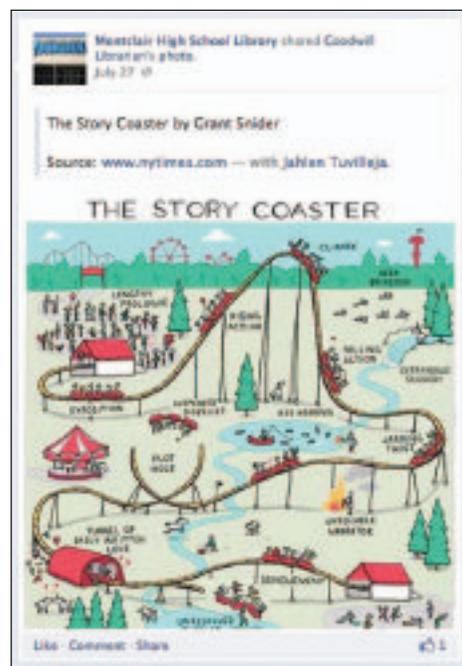
tion? What kinds of content and conversations will convey this mission?

## FACEBOOK CONTENT

Staff, parents, and students need a reason to read your status updates and visit your library page. Think about the many ways Facebook can be used to reach beyond the walls of your library.

**Focus on Images.** Keep in mind that visuals attract attention. Use photographs, infographics, comics, or other graphic representations to attract followers. For example, a Wordle or Tagxedo word cloud draws interest and is great for guessing contests.

You don't need to do all the work yourself. The Montclair High School Library reposts interesting library-related visuals found on other library pages. When you use the Share option in Facebook, credit is automatically given to the page where the image was posted. However, keep in mind that this image may have been shared many times. When possible, cite the original creator.



Montclair High School Library shared an image and also provided credit with their link

**Start Conversations.** Think about ways to engage participants on a regular basis. Rather than simply announcing an event,

ask a question or encourage readers to post their thoughts. Ask about a favorite movie, television show, or book. By using a status update as a conversation starter, passive readers become active participants on your Facebook page. For instance, New Trier High School Library asked readers to explore images of some of the most unusual libraries in the world and write about which one was their favorite.



New Trier High School Library uses Facebook to start conversations.

**Promote Library Events.** Whether posting event announcements or sharing photos of events, use Facebook to communicate with users about your programming. The Facebook Events option is an effective way to spur interest in face-to-face activities such as a book fair, poetry slam, or book club.



Heath High School Library Facebook Event page.



## JUNIOR FICTION

### TROUBLE AHEAD

Egbert, Charles F. D. **The Story of Princess Olivia.** Bunker Hill, 2013.

144p. \$14.95. 978-1-59373-147-2.

Grades 4-6. Princess Olivia, helped by a hoop snake and Prince Dropoffsky, defeats Count Carlos Maximillian von Dusseldorf and his mischievous minion, saves the kingdom, and ends up with a much-longed-for little sister.

Kelly, Katie. **Melonhead and the We-Fix-It Company.** Delacourt, 2013.

224p. \$14.99. 978-0-385-74165-1. Grades

4-6. When eleven-year-old Adam and his buddy, Sam, get together, disaster is sure to follow, especially when they try to make money to pay for repairs to a family heirloom they accidentally damaged.

Pennypacker, Sara. **Summer of the Gypsy Moths.** Balzer & Bray, 2013. 275p.

\$6.99 Trade pb. 978-0-061-96422-0.

Grades 4-6. Stella loves living with Great-Aunt Louise while her mom "finds herself," but her treasured household routine is disturbed when Louise takes in Angel, a prickly foster child. Then tragedy strikes and the girls learn what family really means.

Rhodes, Jewell Parker. **Sugar.** Little, Brown, 2013. 276p. \$16.99. 978-0-316-04305-2. Grades 4-7. Sugar's name is sweet, but her life working on a Louisiana sugar cane plantation isn't. She's free, but she's also an orphan, confused by life after the Civil War. Billy's white, Beau's Chinese--why can't they all be friends?

Weissman, Elissa Brent. **The Short Seller.**

Atheneum, 2013. 256p. \$15.99. Grades 4-7. 978-1-4424-5255-8. When Lindy's illness grounds her, her dad teaches her about the stock market and gives her access to his online trading account and \$100 to practice. She's good--really good! And there's a lot more money in Dad's account . . .

**Promote Library Services.** From e-book reader circulation to after-school study groups, use Facebook to let students and faculty know about the services you offer. Avon Middle/High School Library uses Facebook to promote their online book order and delivery service.



Avon Middle/High School Library service announcement.

**Share Books.** Post a book cover and short review of what you've been reading. Keep your remarks to a couple of engaging sentences. Rather than simply posting a book review or trailer, get students to talk about their favorite desserts, love of dystopian literature, or personal fitness tips. Connect these conversations with cookbooks, new fiction, and works of nonfiction.

**Post Pathfinders.** Track what students are studying in their classes and post useful pathfinders to assist youth with research. The Newton North High School Library Learning Commons posted a pathfinder for students doing research on Spanish-speaking countries.

Ask users to recommend other materials that could be added to list of resources. Also think about out-of-school topics, such as pathfinders about finding summer jobs or buying a used car.

**Provide Tips.** From posting a how-to guide for using the new photocopier to sharing test preparation ideas, Facebook is a great way to distribute tip sheets, how-to guides, and other informational resources. Encourage users to comment about their experiences using the new library iPads or taking the SAT.



Moreau Catholic High School Library links to tips for citing social media.

**Upload Video Tutorials.** Create very short instructional videos to address common problems, such as downloading e-books or using electronic databases. Share these on Facebook as a way to promote the resources as well as provide basic instruction.

**Promote Your Blog.** Many school librarians maintain a website and a blog, but they are often overlooked by students. Use your Facebook page to promote blog entries. The Mira Costa High School Library uses this approach. They share blog entries such as a library orientation video, electronic databases, and news items on their Facebook page.



The librarian promotes blog entries on the Facebook page.

### FACEBOOK CAUTIONS

Although there are many reasons for using Facebook in your library, teacher librarians

need to be cautious. Before jumping in, be sure to check the school's acceptable use policies. Also check on any restrictions on in-school use of smartphones and other student devices.

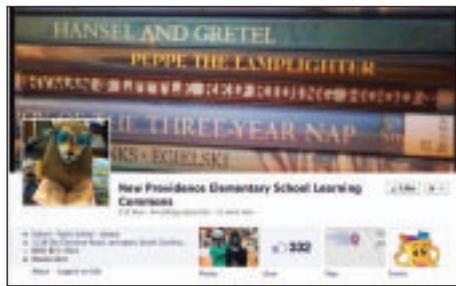
Many teens are annoyed by the personal and social "drama" found on Facebook and feel pressured by the associated social expectations. Some teens are concerned about maintaining and managing their online reputation. Use the library page as a way to model positive uses of social networks. Fleming County High School Library Media Center uses Facebook to promote events, such as a book fair.



Fleming County High School Library Media Center book fair reminder.

Keep in mind that Facebook is restricted to people aged thirteen and older. Some of the sidebar advertising may be inappropriate for youth. Be vigilant by watching for potential problems and concerns. Encourage students to be attentive to their privacy settings.

Many younger students are online with their parents. Design elementary and middle school library Facebook pages with the parent-child relationship in mind. The New Providence Elementary School Learning Commons Facebook page features kindergarten reading activities, an online newsletter, and library challenges.



New Providence Elementary School Learning Commons features activities for parents and children.

## FACEBOOK IN YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARY

Begin by creating your own Facebook account and spend some time getting to know the system. Explore other school library Facebook pages for lots of ideas. Do a Google search for [site:facebook.com](http://facebook.com) "high school library" for thousands of examples or search Facebook for any of the schools in this article.

Next, create a page for your library. Make an attractive banner and icon for the top of the page. Rather than posting a photo showing an empty library, be creative. Think about what will attract teens.

The banner for J. Frank Dobie High School Library page is literally eye catching.

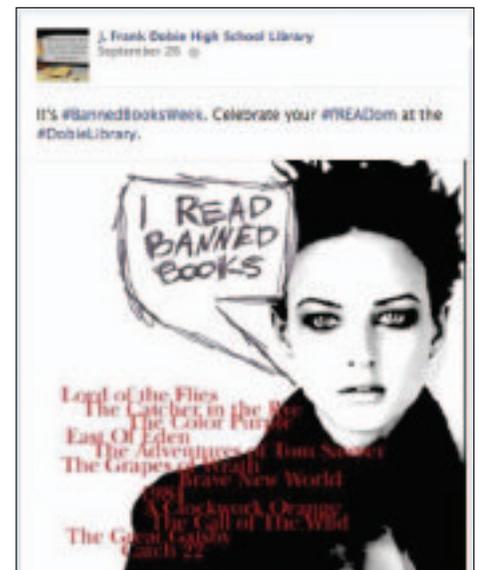


The J. Frank Dobie High School Library page Facebook banner.

Spread the word. Look for ways to publicize your Facebook page. When doing booktalks or classroom instruction, share the URL. Use random giveaways as an incentive to "like" the page.

Use special features to draw interest. Hashtags are the latest addition to Facebook. They are used to turn topics into clickable links in posts on your page. To make a hashtag, write # (the number sign) along with a topic or phrase written as one word. Add this to a post such as "Let's cel-

brate Banned Book Week! #bannedbook-week." When people click the hashtag, they'll see posts that share the hashtag.



#BannedBooksWeek is an example of a hashtag used in Facebook.

Although in some areas practically all students have their own smartphones, this isn't the case everywhere. Think about whether your library users have access to the technology necessary to participate.

Rather than thinking of Facebook as a replacement for your school library website, think of it as a companion. Keep in mind that you don't need to use Facebook for everything. You can connect the images you post at Flickr and the videos you publish at YouTube to your Facebook page through status updates.

If you tried using Facebook in your library a few years ago without success, it's time to try again. With the popularity of smartphones and an increasing number of Facebook users, the technology is maturing and ready to be your "friend."

## RESOURCE

Madden, M., Lenhart, A., Cortesi, S., Gasser, U., Duggan, M., Smith, A., & Beaton, M. (2013). *Teens, Social Media, and Privacy*. PewResearchCenter. Available: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teens-Social-Media-And-Privacy.aspx>

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