

SMU LIBRARY BLOG

<http://smulibraryblog.blogspot.com/>



Introduction

For some time prior to setting up the blog in July 2010, we had considered using Web 2.0 technology to promote the library services and resources at Swansea Metropolitan University, and also to keep apace with other Higher Education libraries (and others!) using the technology to reach out to their customers.

Within my role of Deputy Head of Library & Learning Resources at SMU, I have responsibility for marketing, and in liaison with the Head of LLRs decided that a blog would probably work best for us initially. We had previously thought about and discussed other social networking options such as Facebook, Twitter etc. but felt that a blog would work well for us in practice and hopefully capture our target customers' imagination. I'd looked at other Welsh HE Libraries' social networking sites to inform us as to 'who was using what', and I also looked further afield for inspiration and particularly liked Queen Margaret University Learning Resources Centre's blog. It had also been

interesting to attend the *Libraries for Life* HE Marketing meetings to help gauge use and perceived benefits first-hand from colleagues within Wales.

Lastly, articles I'd read in *Y Ddolen* (Spring/Summer 2010) written by Andrew Eynon on his experience of putting together a blog and *Panlibus Magazine* (Summer 2010) on Effective 2.0 Library Service gave me the motivation to sit down at my PC and get things moving!

Objectives & Target Audience

Our main reason for setting up the blog was primarily to promote the services and resources of our University libraries. As well as reaching our current students and staff, it would be a wonderful opportunity to market ourselves to everybody - including potential students and external users. The use of social networking sites has exploded in recent years, and we felt our customers were exactly the right demographic to target in this manner.

Budget

As we are operating in financially constrictive times, the beauty of the blog is that it hasn't cost us anything, apart from staff time. Having done some research looking at various blog software providers, I was impressed with what was freely available from *Google* at *Blogger.com* and with permission from SMU management have used that.

Promotional Activities

After initially setting up the blog in July 2010, I emailed staff & students at SMU to make them aware of our new promotional tool and how they would benefit by becoming our blog followers! The librarians have also promoted it to new students at induction, at various internal and external meetings as well as to individuals. Lastly, we also have the facility to promote it within our three libraries on a daily basis visually via LCD TVs.

Valentine's Day blog promotion – case study

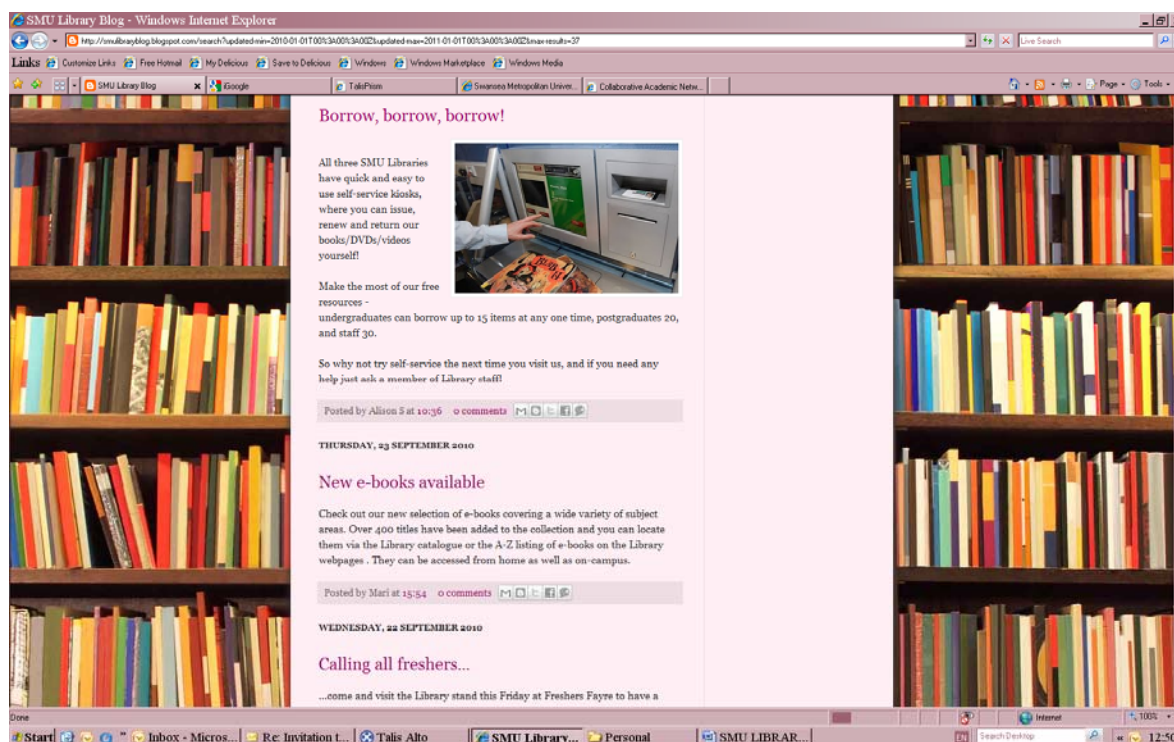
We had decided to put the blog in the spotlight this month, taking advantage of Valentine's Day as a marketing opportunity and asking our customers to tell us what they love about their SMU Library. We asked for responses via the blog only, to raise its profile as well as collecting some valuable feedback in the process. As an additional incentive we offered a 'prize' of a Waterstones gift voucher and Thornton's chocolates to one lucky (randomly-picked) responder! We marketed the promotion via email to SMU staff & students, also via the library webpages news section, Blackboard, and our internal staff academic network (iCAN). Additionally, we had a prominent display at each of our three libraries and put up posters within departments. Lastly, we tied this promotion in with the Welsh Libraries Festival *'Fancy That'* campaign and using some of their promotional material. The response has been really encouraging with a mixture of very positive comments received, and responders (both anonymous and named) getting into the spirit of the competition. Additionally, the number of people following us has risen almost 25% compared to before the promotion, which is a very satisfying outcome.

Use of the Blog

Since we set up the blog last July, we have used it in a variety of ways i.e.:

- ~ To promote new and existing resources i.e. e-books & databases
- ~ To promote services i.e. self-service kiosks & quiet study spaces
- ~ Informally to break down barriers/misconceptions between staff & customers, i.e. *'A Day in the Life of a SMU Librarian'*
- ~ To post interesting 'quotes for the day' & facts
- ~ To promote internal & external campaigns i.e. 'Save our Libraries' day held nationally on Saturday 5th February
- ~ To raise awareness of our attendance at events such as Freshers Fayre & International Students' welcome event, both held annually
- ~ To ask for feedback & comments

Although I initially set up and have overall control of the blog, I have also added colleagues as bloggers to work together in partnership to create a more dynamic and interesting site.



Feedback & Evaluation

Students and staff have provided feedback via the blog itself which has been both interesting and gratifying. Other feedback has been received through word of mouth, and includes positive comments from within other areas of the University. A member of our academic staff has set us up with a link to the blog from the homepage of our SMU online collaborative academic network, iCAN and the same has been done from our VLE, Blackboard. In the future we will continue to promote our blog as widely as possible, and in doing so our library resources and services at the same time.

From my perspective I find it a worthwhile use of the time I allocate to marketing and a quick, effective and also enjoyable way of communicating to the wider world. We are going to continue to develop the blog as stated above, and because we feel it has been so successful have decided that our next web 2.0 marketing step is to develop a SMU Library Facebook site also. Having recently attended the excellent HE Marketing day, that has spurred me on to making it a priority to set it up and run both marketing tools side by side.

So finally, please take a look at our blog, and the innovating ways in which we are using it to reach out to our staff, students and the wider world! Thank you.

Alison Scanlon, February 2011.