Social bookmarking (SB) services are potentially useful for sharing Internet resources between groups of students. The social aspect of SB means that students can be encouraged to engage in both individual and collaborative research and the ability to share bookmarks, to annotate and (re)organise information, and to comment on each other’s work, raising the possibility of the collective discovery and construction of disciplinary knowledge by students in collaboration with each other and the tutor. There have been a number of instances of their use in learning contexts (Grieco, 2007; Taibi et al., 2007; Puspitasari et al., 2007 & Saeed and Yang, 2008). However, more studies are needed to explain how this technology can be adopted in different educational contexts.

This paper compares two projects that adopted SB technology in different educational contexts at the same institution, a large, research-intensive university in the north of England. Questionnaires, interviews and action research were the main research methods used in those two studies. The two studies are as follows:

- The first project was conducted with a group of mostly international postgraduate taught students in the Department of Information Studies. The study was divided into two stages: in the first stage students had the choice of using the SB tool, Diigo (www.diigo.com) which was introduced to them through one practical session at the beginning of the semester. The majority of students joined the group created by the researcher. However most of them were only passive users, or “lurkers”. Accordingly, social bookmarking adoption was modified in the second study by integrating it further into the module by using it in teaching sessions and making its use part of assessed work. Students’ use of SB was not as expected. Many factors were found to be restraining the students’ effective use of the tool.

- The second study involved two first year seminars in the History Department. Students were asked to engage in weekly unassessed activities on diigo, including: locating and bookmarking online resources (primary and secondary sources), adding highlights and sticky-notes and then posting a question based on their research to the discussion forum in Diigo. The resources, questions and other information in Diigo then fed into discussions and activities in the seminars.

The paper draws the following conclusions which have emerged across the two studies:

- SB literacy. The lack of knowledge of how to use social bookmarking was found to be a barrier preventing students from effectively using it in their learning. Contrary to the impression given by apologists for web2.0, many social software sites are not understood by young people. Based on
applying the use of the tool in two different contexts (undergraduate – postgraduate) and different categories of students (international – British), we suggest that in order for students to use such a new technology, teachers need to fully explain how and why to use such a technology before incorporating it into module assignments.

- **SB costs and risks.** As identified by University of Edinburgh (2008) reliance on third party sites in teaching incurs a number of costs and risks, as addition to the cost of training students in their use, such as time organizing authentication, intrusive advertising and lack of control over functionality.

- **SB pedagogy.** Adopting an appropriate teaching pedagogy, such as inquiry-based learning (IBL), as in the second study, was found to be effective in terms of motivating students to use the tool effectively in their learning.

- **SB alternatives.** The use of other technologies was found to be inhibiting students’ use of SB technology in the classroom. This was partly because students had other tools that enabled them to easily manage and share bookmarks.

**References**


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