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To Pin or not to Pin – Pinterest and copyright

Jenny Morgan and Jacqui Taylor, Leeds Beckett University Library

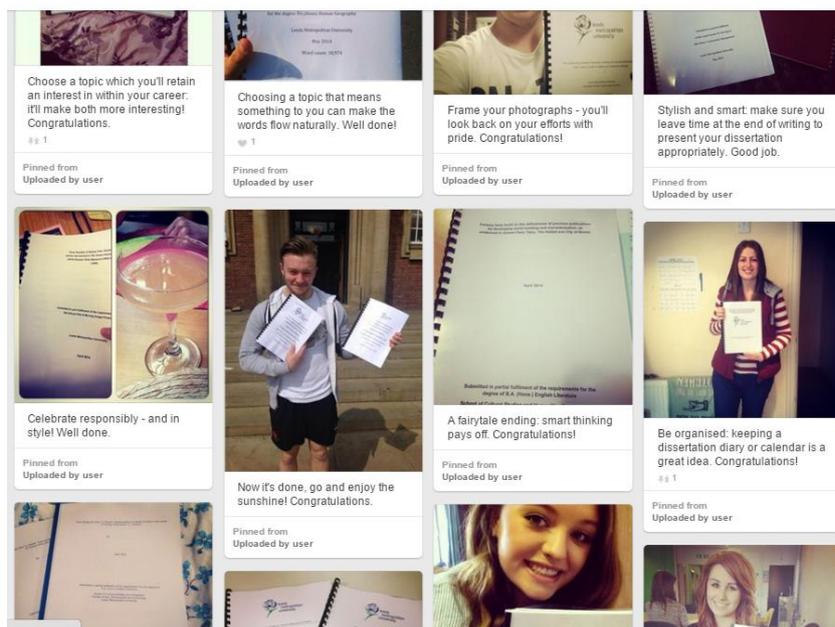
Pinterest? That hot bed of recipes and daft cat pictures? What has that got to do with libraries I hear you (possibly) cry? You may be surprised to discover that many libraries have embraced this virtual pin board to promote services and resources. Since 2012 Leeds Beckett University Library has been part of this trend and has a Pinterest account with (at the last count) 28 boards.

Pinterest, for the uninitiated, is a virtual pin board. Users can upload, save, sort and manage images and videos. It is used by the Library as part of our wider social media strategy. As a tool it is a useful and free alternative to more traditional physical displays. It is also a method of curating information around a particular topic. We have used it to promote resources and services, for example on our study skills and Help in the Library boards. It has also been used to support University wide strategies such as equality and diversity; most notably our use of Pinterest to promote LGBT events was cited as evidence in our University's Stonewall workplace application. We have also created boards to promote employability and the green agenda alongside other areas of interest to the University and wider community. Some of our community boards, for example Film and Welcome to Leeds, have resulted in positive engagement with Leeds based organisations.

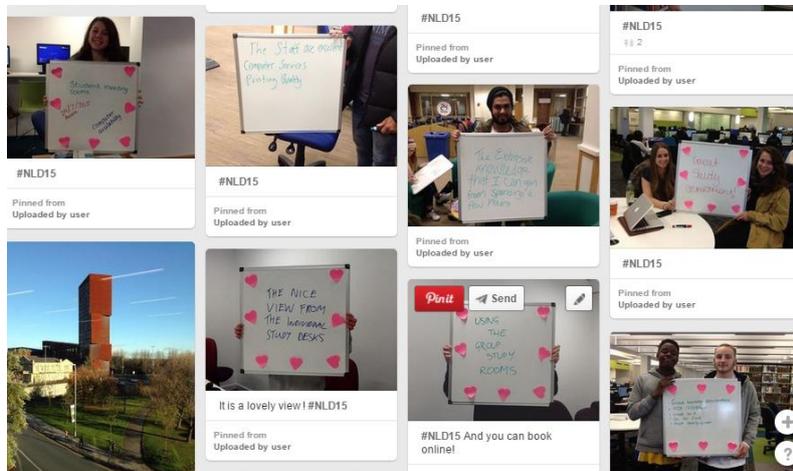
The global nature of Pinterest meant that we get repins and followers from across the world, including USA, India, China and Sweden; revealing that Pinterest is an invaluable outreach and marketing tool beyond our student body. Our average daily impression (number of times our pins showed up in main feeds, board feeds, or in search results) for the last academic year was 368, with average monthly viewers at over 2700 (the number of people who saw our Pins over the last 30 days).

We have found we have some of our greatest engagement when we introduce some form of interaction or student involvement. This was a concept we stumbled across when we created a dissertation success board and encouraged our final year students to send us their "dissertation selfies":

Dissertation Success



This type of interaction and engagement was continued on National Libraries Day 2015 when we toured the campus to ask students and staff about the Library. It combined low tech resources (staff with white boards and pens) with photography and social media. Students were asked to write down what they loved about the library (or alternatively what would make them love it more!) and the results were pinned on the board.



This was a great way of collecting qualitative data around user experience. It was also a very popular board – with average daily impressions at 2484, peaking on National Libraries Day itself at 4484.

Challenges – Pinterest & Copyright

As an image sharing tool Pinterest presents its own challenges with regard to copyright. As a result Leeds Beckett Library has created a framework in which to manage its use and developed processes to help ensure content complies with copyright and image sharing legislation and guidelines.

When you sign up to Pinterest you agree to their copyright policy but as West (2012) notes there are no further reminders about copyright as you add Pins. Pinterest do, however, now provide a code which can be embedded in a website to stop people from pinning images from a site. But the very nature of Pinterest encourages the reuse of images to Pin onto the boards you create. It is very easy to forget all about copyright and just Pin any images that are eye catching, interesting and work for the link you are trying to promote. However, as a Library it is important that we comply with copyright legislation when using Pinterest – although many other users (including other University libraries) choose not to do so. When we initially set up our account we didn't really think about the implications for copyright, however once we began to promote our boards our copyright clearance officer stepped in and identified our errors! It would be great to include images of book covers, art works and interesting pictures from the Internet but by doing so we break copyright law and undermine the work our copyright clearance officer does with our academics in ensuring they adhere to copyright legislation in their teaching and use of resources.

As a result we have had to develop techniques to comply with copyright whilst remaining creative in our use of the medium. We are not alone in this and when researching the topic we found that other Libraries have also gone down this route. (Hansen, Nowlan, & Winter, 2012)

Here are our top tips for being copyright savvy on Pinterest:

- Plan ahead – our social media plan means that the social media team know in advance about what boards need creating or updating
- Identify possible resources for boards
- Identify organisations with their own Pinterest accounts – we will often still ask permission
- Target local organisations to develop positive relationships with them
- Identify organisations with the Pinterest symbol on their web-site – this may mean they are happy for you to Pin. However this does not mean that you can just Pin from this website as although they may have permission to use an image it does not mean that everyone does
- Create “secret” boards – so you have time to check copyright issues before it goes “live”
- Create a standard email to send to organisations to request permission to pin from web-sites. (Our copyright clearance officer helped with this) It is always worth asking as many organisations are happy to let you pin (free promotion for them)
- Our copyright clearance officer now sends out preferred licencing request to publishers, vendors, and eBook and journal suppliers asking for a blanket use of the image to include social media
- Create spread sheets with a list of agreed companies and book covers
- Use your own images with links to relevant information. However there are still some issues with this. A good example being an image we wanted to use of our own photo of the Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red installation at the Tower of London that we were unable to use as it is a temporary exhibition and as such the law is different to a permanent exhibition
- Ask questions like “is image out of copyright?” and know what that means
- Our copyright clearance officer has created a Q & A document about copyright myths this includes information on using our own photographs, repining from Pinterest and copyright free images
- Make use of your copyright expert(s) in the Library

What we have learned

Trial and error means that the Library has learned what works and what doesn't work when it comes to Pinterest. So here are some hints and tips to make interesting and successful boards which can be a fun and alternative method of promoting the Library:

- Download the “Pin it” button from Pinterest so that you can pin from the Internet
- But remember copyright issues!
- Use good quality images
- Don't forget you can also Pin videos and Spotify playlists
- Try to give an informative or amusing title to the board (depending on subject matter)
- Add value to images by including information and links
- Keep content fresh and up-to-date. Check links are working
- Keep focused – try to tie in with library resources/services when possible although try to avoid obvious self- promotion. Make sure it's not just a list of your services/resources. “Hide” your library information Pins within the other Pins
- Consider technical issues –users now need a Pinterest account to view boards and there are some issues with moving pins around on a board

- Use other social media to promote boards and record statistics of each board via Bitly or similar
- Ask multiple staff to create and maintain boards as they can be time-consuming

To sum up, Pinterest is a valuable tool in our suite of social media tools. As (Potter, 2015) notes, communication is about building awareness not just one off messages: “Think of communication as being like tapas! No single dish is that significant on its own, but taken as a whole it's a really nice meal” We can create a board and then use Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to promote it. It also enables us to meet our students in a place many already inhabit, to engage with and promote not just our services but the whole of our University and the wider community.

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