Jennifer Lee
Liaison Librarian, Chemistry, Mathematics & Statistics, Environmental Design

# Social Web & Communication Tools:
# Social Bookmarking, Instant Messaging, Weblogs and RSS Feeds

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Tools for Web collaboration are increasing and range from one-to-many tools that allow sharing of personal links to one-to-one communications tools such as instant messaging. What are some of these tools and how might they be applied to library settings?

**Connecting People and Information**

## Social Bookmarking — Connotea — CiteULike

**What?**
- "Shared lists of user-created Internet bookmarks" (Wikipedia, May 22, 2006)
- Store personal list of bookmarks online
- Bookmarks can be viewed by anyone, or made private
- *Tagging*: giving descriptive terms (*tags*) to the bookmark
- *Folksonomy*: the whole of a group of tags
- Tags and users have been *syndicated* into RSS feeds

**Who?** Researchers and students

**Why?**
- Identify those with similar research interests; potential collaboration
- Information seeking & popularity factor: how many others have bookmarked the same paper? Who is using the same tags?
- Can create lists of e-readings for research groups, classes, etc. to access
- Convenience: accessible from anywhere with Internet access

**How?**
- Create an account at connotea.org or citeulike.org
- Go to Web page/article, etc. of interest
- Click on bookmarklet to add URL (provided to you after you register)
- Add tags, comments

**Connotea.org (from Nature Pub. Group, still experimental):**
- *More Signal, Less Noise*: made for academics
  - Saves bibliographic information
- Recognizes many scientific journals and websites (PubMed, e-prints, …)
- Import/export references in RIS format - works with desktop reference management software
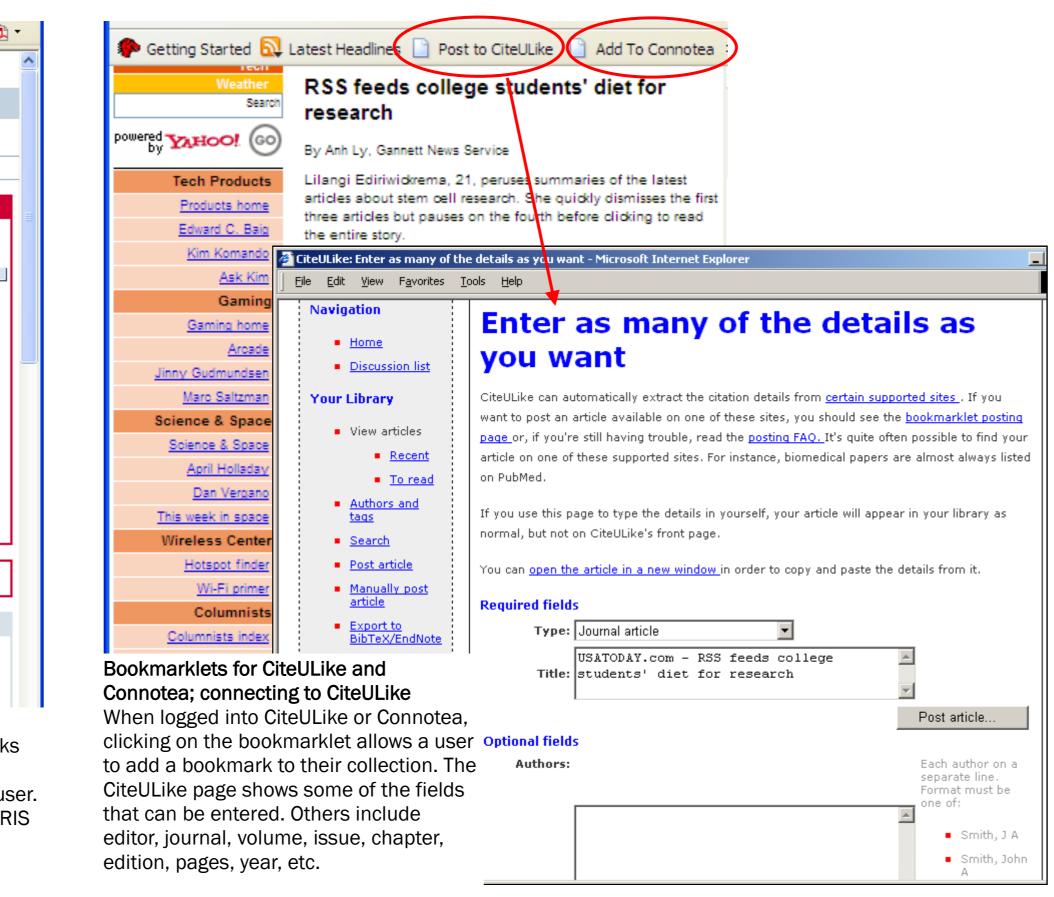- Works with standards (e.g. DOIs, OpenURL)
- Create groups

**CiteULike.org:**
- Similar, but also: export into EndNote, or BibTeX to build bibliography
- Watchlist: list of bookmarks within CiteULike that match your criteria

Link to bookmarks w/ "blog" as a tag

Basic Connotea page for the tag *blog*.
Left side shows other users who have used the same tag: clicking on the user brings back that user's bookmarks tagged with *blog*.
Middle shows a bookmark entry with article title, *Smarter …*, user who bookmarked it, and the tags given by the user.
Right side shows bookmarks within Connotea, including creating groups, remarks about tags, importing and exporting RIS files. *Related tags* shows terminology with which users have tagged the same bookmarks.

**RSS feeds college students' diet for research**

**Enter as many of the details as you want**

Bookmarklets for CiteULike and Connotea; connecting to CiteULike
When logged into CiteULike or Connotea, clicking on the bookmarklet allows a user to add a bookmark to their collection. The CiteULike page shows some of the fields that can be entered. Others include editor, journal, volume, issue, chapter, edition, pages, year, etc.

**Conclusion:** Though not widely used in academia, these tools are becoming popular. As they gain critical mass, they could become destinations for knowledge-sharing or information-seekers looking for the knowledge of a combined group of experts. While perhaps not directly related to libraries, social bookmarking in academia is something to be aware of, if not for its possible role in changing information-seeking, then as a new tool for information management.

## Weblogs

**What?**
- A.K.A. blogs: Similar to online diaries with chronological entries
- Entries can link to Web pages, other blogs, etc.
- Entries are archived, can be keyword indexed
- Entries can be commented upon; comments are archived with entries
- Usually updated irregularly, though frequently (~ once per month or more)
- Can be *syndicated* into RSS feeds

**Who?** Instructors/librarians and students

**Why?**
*Instructors/librarians:*
- Within a department – can create a group blog for knowledge-sharing and management tool, decreasing email, e.g. reference blog for discussing desk issues (Reichardt and Harder 2005)
- Adjunct to instruction – for discussion, communication
- Communication tool for new acquisitions, library news
- Less formal space for discussing academic issues
*Students:*
- Group workspace, course content journaling, portfolios
- Librarians can monitor student blog workspaces, or be members, offering help or suggestions as necessary

**How?**
- Get blogging software, e.g. register at Blogger.com (free, online)
- Name your new blog (it must be unique)
- Add content by adding *new posts*. Blogger.com has a WYSIWYG editor
- Add members to your group under *Settings* to enable them to post. They must also register

Choose from many templates

**CHEMISTRY LIBRARY NEWS**

Administrative and public sides of a blogger.com blog
Admin (left screen): Each entry is listed in reverse-chronological order and can be edited, deleted, or kept as a draft. The public face of the blog can be changed in the template section.
Public (right screen): The blog itself lists the title of the blog, *Chemistry Library News* near the top. Entries are posted in reverse chronological order, with dates on the left, *Trial for Science Backfiles.* Archived entry titles are listed on the right, near the bottom of the screen. Clicking on the links goes to the page for the entry.

**Conclusion:** Blogs are an easy way to communicate to many via the Web. Compared to editing a Web page, entries are relatively easy to post and can be contributed by more than one person. In a library setting, a blog can be used within a department; archiving makes messages retrievable. Blogs can also be used to communicate news to users, or as an instruction page after a session.

Cited Reference
Reichardt R, Harder G. 2005. Weblogs: their use and application in science and technology libraries. Science & Technology Libraries 25(3): 105-116.

## Instant Messaging (IM) — Google talk

**What?**
- One-to-one real-time computer-based "**conversations**" via text boxes
- IM application indicates when *buddies* are online, idle, offline, etc.
- IM application notifies user of incoming messages
- Interaction feels similar to conversation in the same physical space
- *Trillian*: Allows many IM accounts to be displayed in one window
- *meebo*: Allows several IM accounts to be displayed; allows Web access to IM accounts

**Who?** Instructors/librarians and students

**Why?**
*Instructors/librarians:*
- Offers increased availability
- Alternative to set office hours, email, phone or desk reference: we all have phone numbers, why not IM accounts?
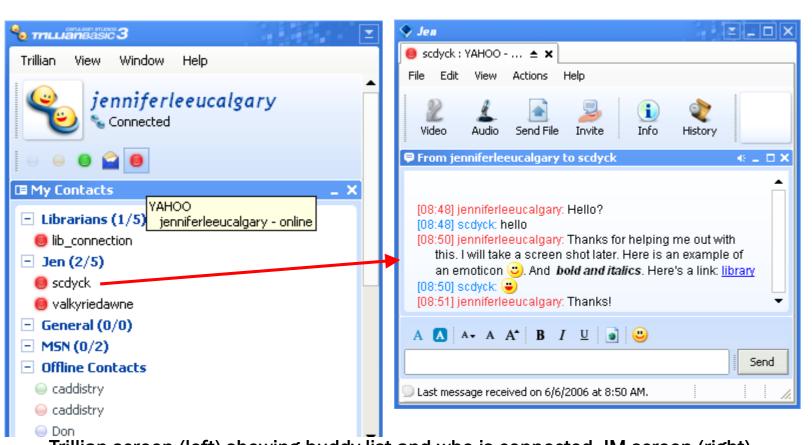- *Trillian*: makes it unnecessary to load any IM programs onto your machine
- *meebo*: accessible from anywhere with an Internet connection
- Interoffice communication
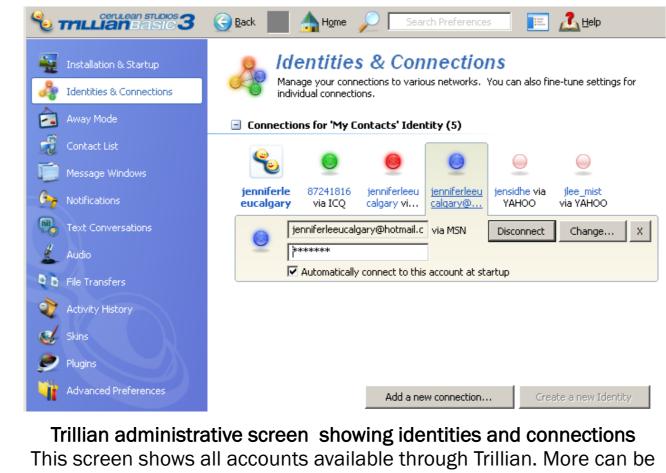*Students:*
- Social tool among peers
- May be more comfortable communicating with IM because of perceived distance and therefore safety

**How?**
- You will still need IM accounts from various providers. Trillian has direct connections to register for new accounts. Popular ones include AOL's Instant Messenger (AIM), ICQ, Microsoft's MSN Messenger, IRC (Internet Relay Chat), Yahoo! and GoogleTalk
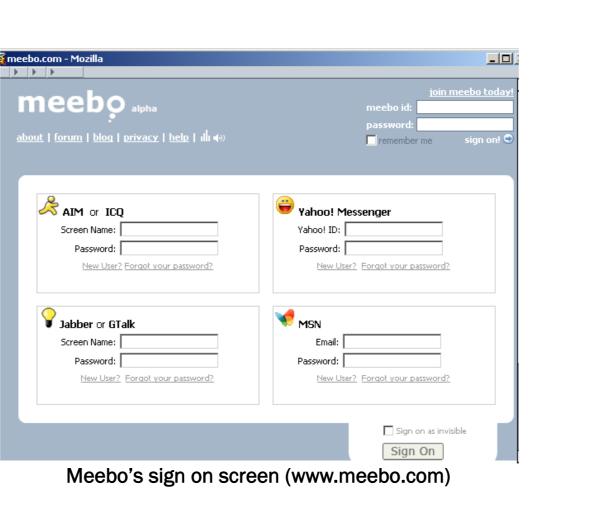- Give others your account name to add to their buddy list

Trillian screen (left) showing buddy list and who is connected. IM screen (right)
Trillian allows buddies to be placed into different categories. It also shows which buddy is subscribed to which provider (red for Yahoo!, blue for MSN, etc.)
Clicking on a buddy who is online opens up a screen (right). Typed text is chronological and indicates who typed what. Most IM programs allow basic text editing, emoticons and URLs.

**Identities & Connections**

Trillian administrative screen showing identities and connections
This screen shows all accounts available through Trillian. More can be added; if you do not have an account through a provider, register directly via Trillian.

**meebo**

Meebo's sign on screen (www.meebo.com)

**Conclusion:** IM is another option for communicating with users one-on-one that is more immediate than email yet less intrusive than phone. Trillian and meebo consolidate many IM accounts into one access point, making accounts easier to keep track of. Widespread social use among students means it is potentially student-friendly for reference. One drawback is the need to add your account name to a "buddy list" - which students may be reluctant to do.

## RSS Feeds — XML — RSS

**What?**
- *Automatic Web surfing*: RSS feeds send new information when they are updated
  - *Feeds* can be TOCs, news, search results from databases, blog entries…
- You'll need: an RSS aggregator or reader, and feeds of interest

**Who?**
For: Researchers and students
From: Journals, electronic indexes, bloggers
  - ACS, RSC, AIP, IoP BioMed Central, Cambridge Journals, Cell Press, Engineering Village 2, INSPEC, Nature, Sage, Science, …

**Why?**
- Current awareness – many publishers are providing this option
- "Pull" technology: no need to provide personal information to subscribe to feeds, therefore no spam
- Decreases email

**How?**
- Get an RSS aggregator, e.g. register at Bloglines.com (free, online)
- Find a feed, usually indicated by orange RSS or XML buttons, but also may indicate "subscribe" or similar
- Right-click to copy the shortcut/link
- Go to Bloglines and add the link as a feed
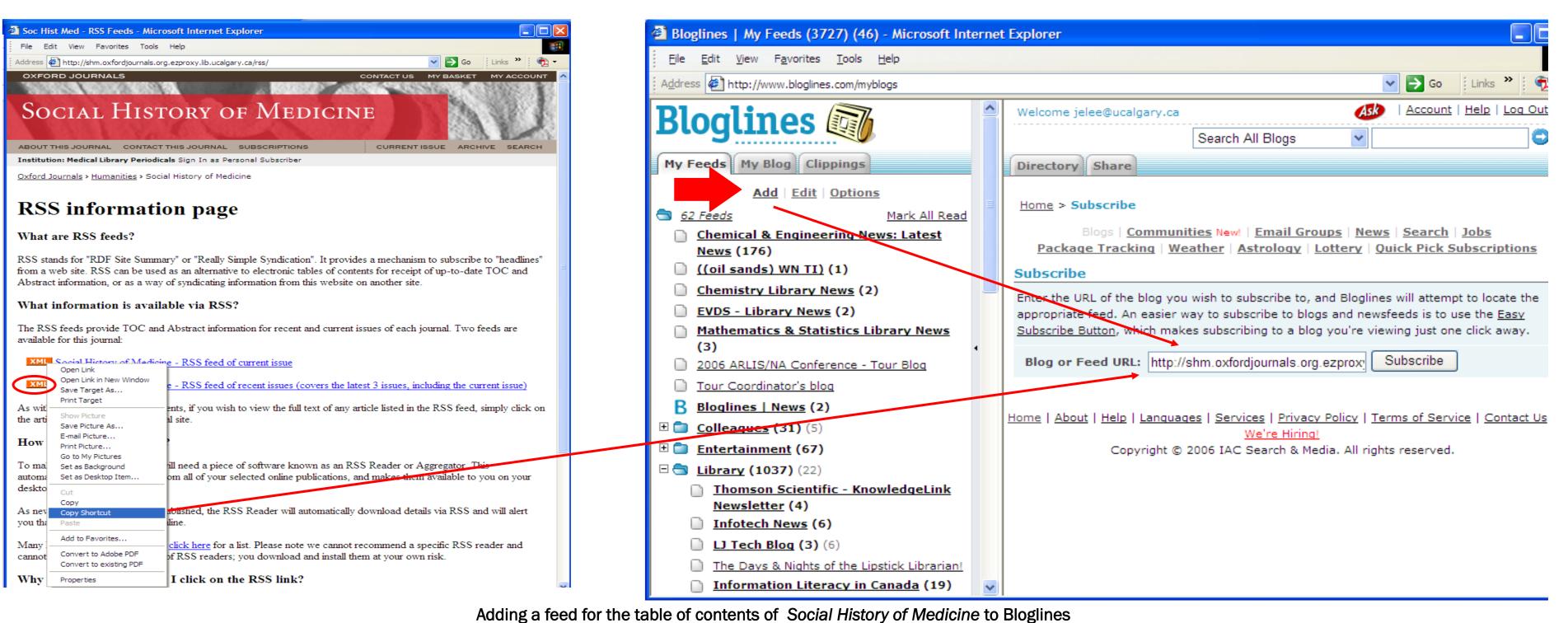- In Bloglines, you will see a list of feeds on the left. Click on the feed name to see the latest content. Once you click on the feed name, Bloglines assumes you have read the content and will not display anything else until there is new content for that feed.

**SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE**

RSS information page

**Bloglines | My Feeds**

Adding a feed for the table of contents of *Social History of Medicine* to Bloglines
Bloglines screen (right screen): also shows a list of subscribed feeds on its left. The second feed, labeled (*oil sands*) WN TI) is a search alert from Compendex

**Conclusion:** RSS feeds provide an alternative to email alerts. More publishers are providing notification of TOCs and news through RSS feeds. There are currently few databases providing search alerts, however, this option will become more prevalent. Since blogs and some social bookmarking tools also provide RSS feeds, aggregators can provide a single spot for keeping up with research.