

LITTLEBOROUGH SILVER SURFERS - session 8

All the information and links below are at www.wardle.demon.co.uk/silversurfers.html

Social networking and podcasts

Podcasts

Podcasts don't fall under the heading of "social networking", but this is a convenient place to mention them. (The word comes from "iPod" and "broadcast", but you don't have to have an iPod to access them.) The simplest way to explain podcasts is that they are internet-based radio programmes. (There are video podcasts too, but most podcasts are audio only.) Sometimes it's just a one-off programme, but strictly to be called a podcast it needs to be a regular series. Unlike a normal radio programme, which you have to listen to at a specific time, podcast episodes are released regularly, but you can download them at any point after that (at least, until the creator removes the episode). You can listen to them directly from a website, but most people use iTunes or similar software, which retrieves new episodes automatically.

My favourite podcasts, by way of example:

www.guardian.co.uk/football/series/footballweekly
www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/5lfd
theinstance.net

Guardian Football Weekly
5 Live Football Daily
The Instance

Social networking

One definition of "social networking" is "the use of a website to connect with people who share personal or professional interests". Most websites do this to some extent, but there are several well-known websites whose primary purpose is social networking. The three examples I want to mention are **blogs**, **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

Blogs

A blog (a contraction of the term "weblog") is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as pictures or video. Entries are usually displayed in reverse chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject (e.g. The Leaky Cauldron covers all things related to Harry Potter); others function as more personal online diaries. Most are a combination of both (i.e. an **online diary with a theme**). A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other web pages. The ability for readers to leave **comments in an interactive format** is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on music (MP3 blog), audio (podcasting), or other media. Micro-blogging is another type of blogging, which consists of blogs with very short posts (Twitter is the best-known micro-blogging website - see below).

A few to try for starters....

dominantpedal.blogspot.com

www.the-leaky-cauldron.org

www.neilgaiman.com/journal/journal.asp

sethgodin.typepad.com

therepublikofmancuria.com

riverbendblog.blogspot.com

2nd Altos Like the Bottom Parts (Jocelyn's choir blog)

The Leaky Cauldron

Neil Gaiman

Seth Godin

Republik of Mancunia

Baghdad Burning (not updated since 2007)

To find blogs on subjects of interest to you, just do a Google search, e.g. "knitting blogs". To start your own blog, go to Blogger (also via Google) and follow the instructions. It's free!

Facebook (facebook.com)

This is extremely popular in the UK (and elsewhere in the world as well) - so much so that it is banned at many workplaces because of employees spending too much time on it when they should be working! To see most Facebook content, you have to be a registered user yourself. It is a free service, but some people are wary of signing up because of concerns over privacy. Until recently, for example, it was impossible to delete your details from Facebook once you'd added them - Facebook would deactivate your account but not actually remove it. They also retained the right to use your personal information for their own purposes, and they frequently change their privacy policies.

However, fans of Facebook - and there are MANY of these (as of June 2012 they had over 955 million active users worldwide - more than 3 times the population of the USA) - like it because: Users can join groups organised by city, workplace, school, interest etc. to connect and interact with other people. (In many cases, joining groups organised by school has enabled people to get back in touch with schoolmates they haven't seen in many years.) People can also add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves (some people do this every few minutes!) They can upload photos for their friends to see. They can search to see whether people they know are also on Facebook. They can view celebrities' Facebook pages and send them messages.

(There is a new (free) service recently launched by Google, called Google Plus - it remains to be seen how successful it will be, but it seems designed to become a direct competitor of Facebook.)

Twitter (twitter.com)

Twitter is newer than Facebook, and many people don't know anything about it, although its popularity has soared since 2009 due to many news stories. As of 2012 it has over 500 million active users.

Unlike Facebook, you can look at Twitter pages without actually signing up yourself (although it's still free). Twitter is much simpler than Facebook - users post very short updates (called "tweets") of what they're doing (the maximum length for a single update is 140 characters, i.e. the maximum length of a single phone text). These updates can include links to websites or pictures, but the actual update must always be text-only and no longer than 140 characters.

Because the updates are so short, many users tend to send lots of them! They can do so either from their computer or by sending a text from their phone. There are also many celebrity Twitter users, and many of these actually reply directly to their fans via the service.

(The other benefit of Twitter being so quick and easy to update is that news stories often break on Twitter before anywhere else. For example, in January 2009, the first photograph of the plane that landed in the Hudson River was on Twitter before any news reporters had arrived on scene.)

After signing up, users decide who to "follow". When a user looks at their own Twitter page, they see all the updates from everyone they are following, plus they see any updates from OTHER users (that they aren't following) if those updates include their own Twitter name preceded by an @ symbol. For example, Stephen Fry (one of the best-known users) will see any message from anyone, if it includes @stephenfry

Some Twitter users to look at:

twitter.com/stephenfry	Stephen Fry
twitter.com/rioferd5	Rio Ferdinand
twitter.com/robbiesavage8	Robbie Savage

twitter.com/waynerooney	WayneRooney
twitter.com/ProfBrianCox	Professor Brian Cox
twitter.com/Wossy	Jonathan Ross
twitter.com/mcflyharry	Harry Judd
twitter.com/iolanthe	Jocelyn

Various websites to bring to your attention

Useful sites:

snopes.com	Snopes (urban legend debunking)
hoax-slayer.com	Hoax Slayer (ditto)
imdb.com	Internet Movie Database
www.bbc.co.uk	BBC (well worth exploring - it has EVERYTHING)
amazon.co.uk	Amazon (useful for a lot more than just shopping!)
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk	NHS Direct
www.rochdale.gov.uk	Rochdale Council
postcode.royalmail.com	Royal Mail postcode finder
www.yell.com	Yellow Pages
www.bt.com	BT (online phone book)
www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook	CIA World Factbook
www.radiotimes.com	Radio Times (TV listings)
www.ticketmaster.co.uk	Ticketmaster (concert & theatre tickets)
www.thompson-morgan.com	Thompson & Morgan (gardening stuff)
www.ebay.co.uk	eBay (online marketplace)
www.youtube.com	YouTube (video clips)
www.skype.com	Skype (free telephone and video calls over the internet)
www.saynoto0870.com	Say no to 0870 (alternative cheaper phone numbers)
www.vouchercodes.co.uk	Voucher Codes (special offers & vouchers)
www.quidco.com	Quidco (cashback & voucher site)
www.topcashback.co.uk	Top Cashback (ditto)
www.dec.org.uk	Disasters Emergency Committee (for donations)

News sites:

news.bbc.co.uk	BBC News
www.rochdaleobserver.co.uk	Rochdale Observer
www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk	Manchester Evening News
www.guardian.co.uk	The Guardian
us.cnn.com/US/	CNN (American TV news station)
www.rochdaleonline.co.uk	Rochdale Online

Games and puzzles:

www.guardian.co.uk/crossword	Guardian crosswords
www.freeplaysolitaire.com	Free online solitaire
www.goodsol.com/online	More free online solitaire
www.solitaireparadise.com	Yet more free online solitaire
www.dailysudoku.com	The Daily Sudoku

Other sites that may be of interest:

www.number10.gov.uk	10 Downing Street
www.royal.gov.uk	The Queen's website
www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm	The Pope's website
www.whitehouse.gov	White House (Washington)

And, last but not least, a silly one: www.googlefight.com Googlefight!