

**To Face or not to Face:**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Library Social Networking**  
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**Abstract**

Due to popularity of Facebook as one of online social network an academic library fan-page was established. Number of fans and their interactions were examined in period of six months observing Facebook library page. In order to determine level of interactions within the page Facebook insights tool was used. Findings indicated that although great fan number, interactions were low.

*Keywords:* academic library, Facebook, social network

## **Introduction**

Beginning of the 21st century is marked with technological development. According to Feenberg (2009) technology has two levels, the level of our original functional relation to reality and the level of design and implementation. The use of information technology is changing every part of society including education and human interaction. As Large (2009) outline the rapid penetration of information technology (IT) into schools, libraries and homes has opened many opportunities to enrich educational, leisure and social activities. Natriello and Hughes (2008) emphasis that libraries as learning environments will evolve in response to the changing needs of learners, the changing conceptions of learning, and the new opportunities afforded by developments in computing and communications technologies. Tapscott (2009) underlines that Net generation are assimilated with technology because they grew up with it, while adults have had to accommodate it. The way the Net generation differs the most from the preceding generation is in its use, comfort, and familiarity with digital technology (Gibbons, 2007). It is probably the main reason why younger generations see information technology as part of environment while elderly generations have had learn new ways of communicating and accessing information (Tapscott, 2009). According to Roberts (2005) definition of technology is not qualified just to computers or Internet; it's viewed as any electronically based application or piece of equipment that meets a need for access to information or communication. Due to contemporary life which indicated being online constantly, communication behaviour is changing. It will necessary erase boundary between studying or working and private or social life. That's the reason why students often want technology to be a part of their academic life (Gibbons, 2007). Because of central role of academic libraries in higher education as a place and as a supporter in the teaching, learning and research agenda a future of academic libraries requires a realignment of the services, collections, and resources (Gibbons, 2007). According to Budd (2005) core roles of academic

libraries are constant: libraries have to be responsive to the needs of students and faculty; be sensitive to the institution's curricula; be aware of administrative emphases; deal with costs related to the provision of information services; and libraries have to realize that information content is produced externally to the library, in large part by college and universities.

In last few years online social networking grows up like Martínez Alemán and Lynk Wartman (2009) emphasis, the use of social networking sites is dominant in contemporary culture. Those networks offer ability to connect, communicate and network with other people according to interest, not just geographical location. Farkas (2007) highlighting that social networks allows people to communicate, collaborate, and build community online with tools which can be used to share, reuse, remix and learn from a behaviour or knowledge of others. As Scale (2008) underline librarians are always seeking a way to connect with suppliers, other information resource providers, patrons and other stakeholders as well as recognizing the benefit of building communities of users that help to add value to library services. Farkas (2007) suggest that librarians should pay more attention to social networking sites because we can learn from seeing where our patrons hang out online and engage in viral marketing, integrating themselves into patrons' social networks and promote library services.

One of the most growing online social network is Facebook; in between 2008 and April 2010, number of active users increase from 70 millions to 400 millions. Number of Croatian Facebook users is estimated up to 775000 users (out of 4 437460 people). According to Google insights Facebook is most common (per number of search) social network in Croatia. Same tool presents interest in region toward search scope which is 63, behind Tunis (100), Turkey (81) and Italy (67). Like Martínez Alemán and Lynk Wartman (2009) emphasises, Facebook allows students to join home college network or any other network.

Facebook recommends creating a page or group for organizations. Once created, Facebook users can join groups or become fans of organizations with pages. Group

administrators can “message all members,” whereas page administrators have a similar option to “send an update to fans”. Connell (2009) emphasises that fans or group members are not notified of changes to the library pages unless the administrator messages them; so, if libraries want to do outreach through groups or fan pages, these messaging options are essential. There are two types Facebook groups and fan-pages, those which exist only online, and other real-world groups which use Facebook to keep in touch. Groups help people to share information, tips and advice and anyone can start it. Facebook is perceived as an on-line directory for providing information about people and companies, with possibilities for networking and for engaging and building a library or information service community (Scale, 2008, 9).

Farkas (2007) emphasis that people use online social networking sites to display their identity and social network publicly and make new connections. According to OCLC (De Rossa) finding it seems that college students are relatively unfamiliar with online presence of their academic libraries. On the other side, many high school and college students has a profile at least one social network site (Farkas, 2007). Furthermore Martínez Alemán and Lynk Wartman (2009) points out Facebook is most frequently visited site on college campuses and the fifth most trafficked site on the Internet overall. That suggests that Faculty of Humanities and Social Science Library have to increase communication between patrons’ and library staff by building presence and providing services in the online spaces where patrons congregate (Farkas, 2007).

According to Farkas (2007) social software can provide libraries with a human face beyond their walls and it can provide them with ways to communicate, collaborate, educate, and market services to their patrons and other community members. As most of students already have a profile on the Facebook we decided to move our information where users are. Due to number of study programmes (34 undergraduate, 37 graduate and 18 postgraduate) University of Zagreb’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Library has more than

750.000 volumes of humanities, social sciences and philological books and periodical. In the beginning of 2010 there are around 2000 registered library users, and around 1400 library profile fans.

### **Method**

To illustrate online social networking phenomena in academic environment a Facebook library fan-page case study was used. Stake (1998) underlines that case study can be defined by interest in individual cases therefore use of single case study might not provide generalizations but it may be useful to other similar situations. The main interest was to determine whether Croatian students and librarians use Facebook profile of library. In order to determine number of fans assembled at library fan page in period of 6 months from starting a profile, the Facebook insights tool was used. Facebook insights measures user activity and performance, number of fans, trends and comparisons. Metrics is updated daily 12 hours after the full day. Page administrators have ability to see weekly information about interactions, fan base and the fans that interact with page content. An interaction occurs when a fan writes profile wall, comments on posts, or likes content. Related to posts it is possible to measure interactions per post, post quality and number of posts. An interaction per post is referring to average number of comments, wall posts and likes. A post quality is score measuring how engaging content to users. A higher post quality indicates material that better engages users. As the post quality rating is a measure of the percentage of users that have interacted with page in one way or another that means that is most important that different user interact. This score is calculated with an algorithm that takes into account number of posts, total fan interactions received and number of fans (Facebook, 2010). Fans activity on some page it is published in their friends' news feed. That is one of the ways to spread content virally through Facebook. There is possible to see how many new fans are added and how much unsubscribes

and re-subscribes was. Number of times that page was viewed could be indicative too. A Facebook insight was used as tool to analyse total of fans and their activity within period of 6 months. In the same time a number of new library profiles on Facebook were examined. In order to determine increasing number of Croatian library profiles a Facebook browsing was used.

## Results

Analysis of Facebook insights focus on total number of fans after 6 months (September 2009 until February 2010). Total number of fans in that period was 1271. Figure 1 present new fans number grows each month. Most of fans were added in first month of fan-page (N=739), while other months were mostly under 100 new fans per month (Oct=99, Nov=89, Dec=89, Jan=156, Feb=99). In that period there were 57 removed fans, 65 unsubscribes and 2 re-subscribes. Demographic insights (Figure 2) presents that fans (F=1018, M=208) of Faculty library are mostly females age between 18 and 24 (N=680). Figure 3 present average numbers of wall posts, comments and like what indicated that fans were most active in fourth month of fan-page (Sep=2,4235; Oct=1,3890; Nov=2,6814; Dec=5,758; Jan=1,1534; Feb=2,0446). Data refer number of different fans activity per post and per date. Total interactions outline that number of activity varies between 9 and 76 per month and refers on likes, comments, wall posts, discussion posts and posts. Results indicates that most interaction are likes posts (total=214), than comments (total=24) and discussions (total=10). There is 0, 16 average post per fan. Figure 4 presents how interaction goes through months. Analysis of total page view in Figure 5, including unique page views and photo views indicates that page visiting goes from 893 per month up to 2422 (first month).

In order to determine number of other library fan-pages in Croatia a Facebook profiles was browsed. In beginning of research (September) there were 2 public libraries profiles.

After 6 months there were 23 profiles, of which 5 are academic libraries and 1 is Croatian library network.

The described results suggest that library profile is regularly visited and that number of fans increasing. It is not significant that demographics insight presented that fans of page are mostly female students, because major population at the Faculty are female. Number of older fans (female and masculine above 35) might indicate that Faculty teachers also have Facebook profiles. Although there is great number of fans their activity is mostly referred on likes buttons and browsing page. It is indicative that discussion posts present activity just in first month. As Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Library was first Facebook academic library profile in Croatia it might be indicative that expansion of profiles started shortly after. Those results provide basic evidence that Facebook profiles are popular and recognized in librarians network. Benefit of these results might be basic guide how to communicate, connect and network through Facebook.

### **Discussion**

In view of the fact that examined profile was first that kind in Croatian academic environment number of fans is representative. Although Facebook profile is opened to everybody without any restriction, due to privacy reasons we don't know how many our patrons are fans in same time. According to results it seems that Facebook users are most likely to put likes on page. Low post quality indicates that number of fans don't post comment or likeness. There are many of them who didn't communicate to fan-page in any way. We can find reasons in receiving information for which fans find not important, or just don't want to post something because of privacy reasons. Although posting engaging content is the best way to increase interaction it seems that interaction stops when it comes to writing a comment or discuss. Because social software can help libraries position themselves as the online hub of



communities (Farkas, 2007), this profile tries to create an environment of not just library information but news in culture, education and other main problems of contemporary society. According to number of likes, it seems that fans find that engaging.

Because social network sites combine the abilities to create profiles, acquire friends and explore connections between you and other people (Farkas, 2007) it is indicative that more and more libraries create fan-pages or groups and connecting themselves to improve collaboration and networking. After a while Croatian librarians have created a profile of Croatian libraries at Facebook where every new library profile can be announced.

According to Gibbons (2007) the mission of an academic library should follow the needs of its patrons, even if it means changing some of the library's core functions and services. Therefore a creating of Facebook profile was used. Most of our patrons are students who already have their personal profiles and spend some time each day in front of computer which offers effortless, fast, and supportive for many different types of media is commonplace for communication and social life. Coming of age in technological era in which computing has always been user-friendly, personal and used for multiple purposes, students today have experienced the Internet and all of its functions beginning in their teenage years emphasise Martínez Alemán and Lynk Wartman (2009). The role of academic librarians could be changed in the way they may need to educate and play the role of information consultants, educating users about copyright, privacy control and strategic use of information stresses Scale (2008, 9) so technology can make libraries more relevant to people who think they can get all their information from the web, while attracting a brand new population to the library (Farkas, 2007).

Library profile is a place where an online identity can be created. Farkas (2007) emphasise a tremendous potential of social software for libraries which allows better connection and provide services for patrons. Through profile library can offer to its patrons a

Facebook group (or page) to join and it also can become partner or friend site to other pages of significance. As Tapscott (2009) underlines, Facebook is simply one of thousands of XML-based applications that enable people to collaborate.

The study results can be used to develop library services and policies of communication not just with patrons but internal communication and knowledge sharing (Farkas, 2007). Over the past decade, libraries have begun to evolve into multipurpose settings for diverse learners, often spurred by new technologies and new patron interests and demands (Natriello, Hughes, 2008). While Martínez Alemán and Lynk Wartman (2009) emphasize that social network sites like Facebook are for this generation of college and university students a fundamental component of their lived experiences, and an important element of the phenomenology of campus culture. Librarians can do market research, build presence, market services, provide reference services, and develop portals to library resources in these online worlds (Farkas, 2007).

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Appendices

Figure 1

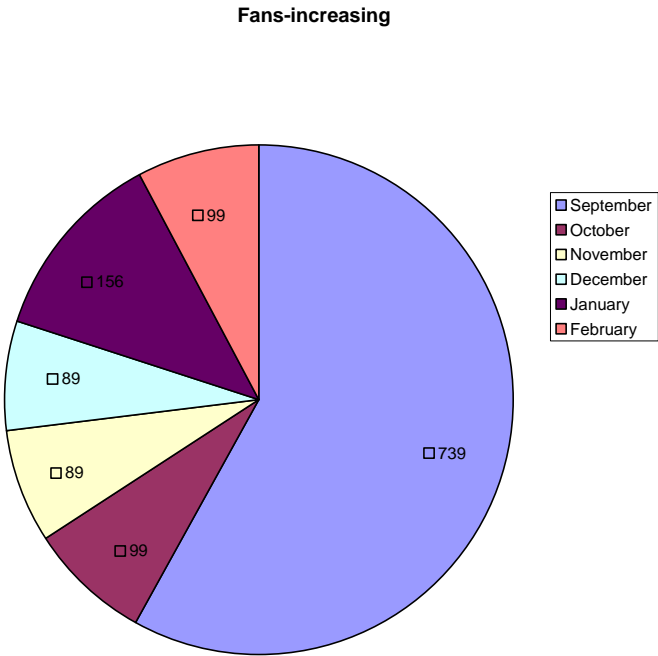


Figure 1. Values are representing the number of new fans as it grows each month.

Figure 2

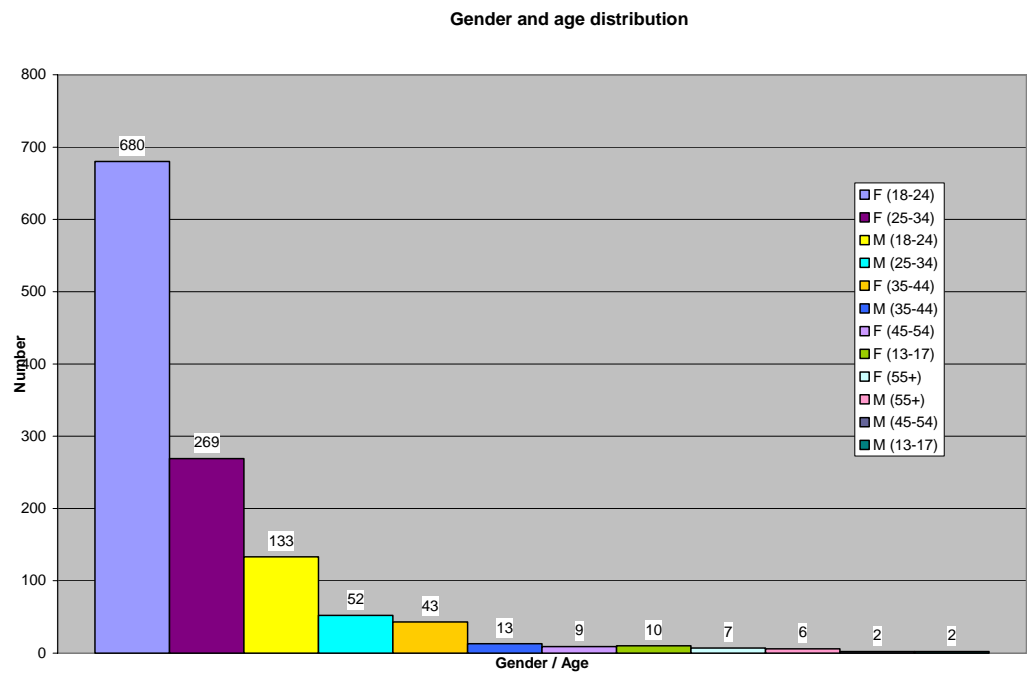


Figure 2. The columns represent the dispersion of fans by age and gender. The values reported in the table refer to the number of fans, by age and sex.

Figure 3

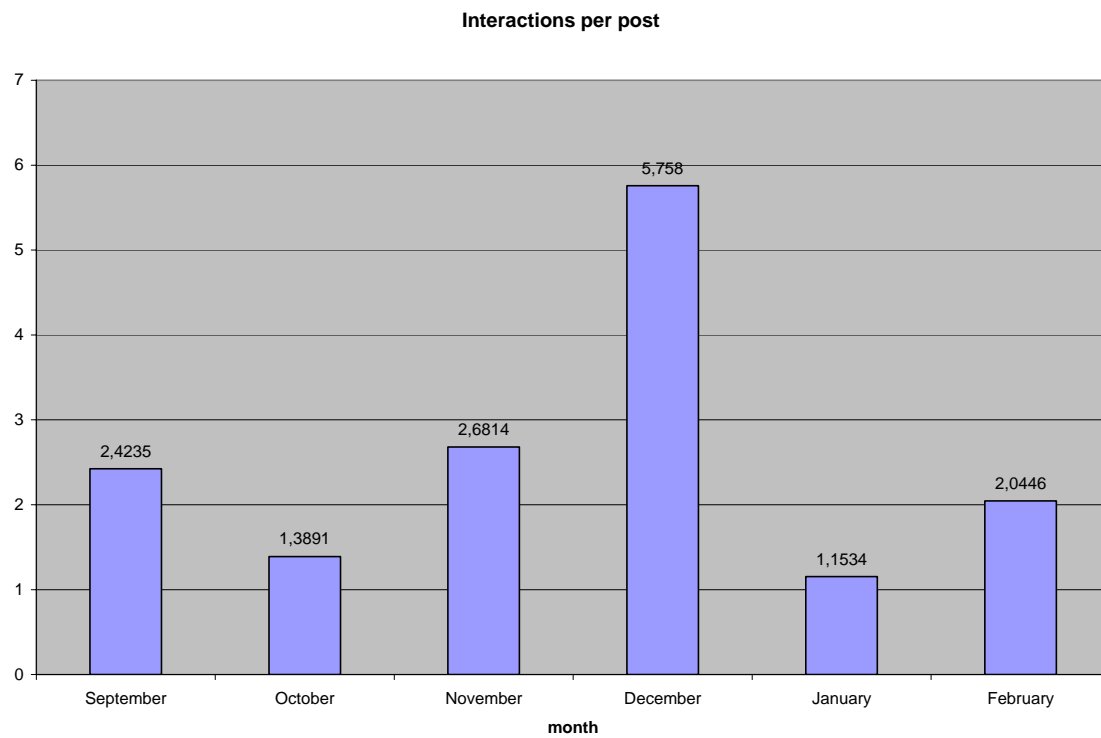


Figure 3. Mean difference values representing posting interaction percentage according to total number of fans and their interactions for particular month.

Figure 4

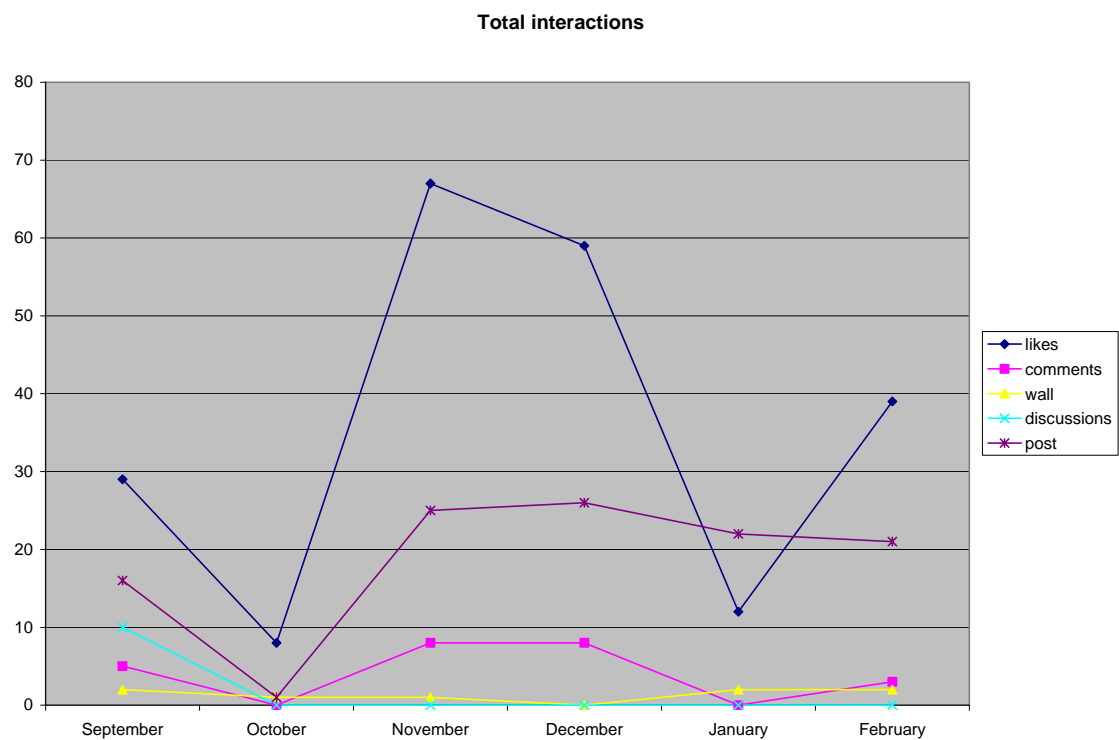
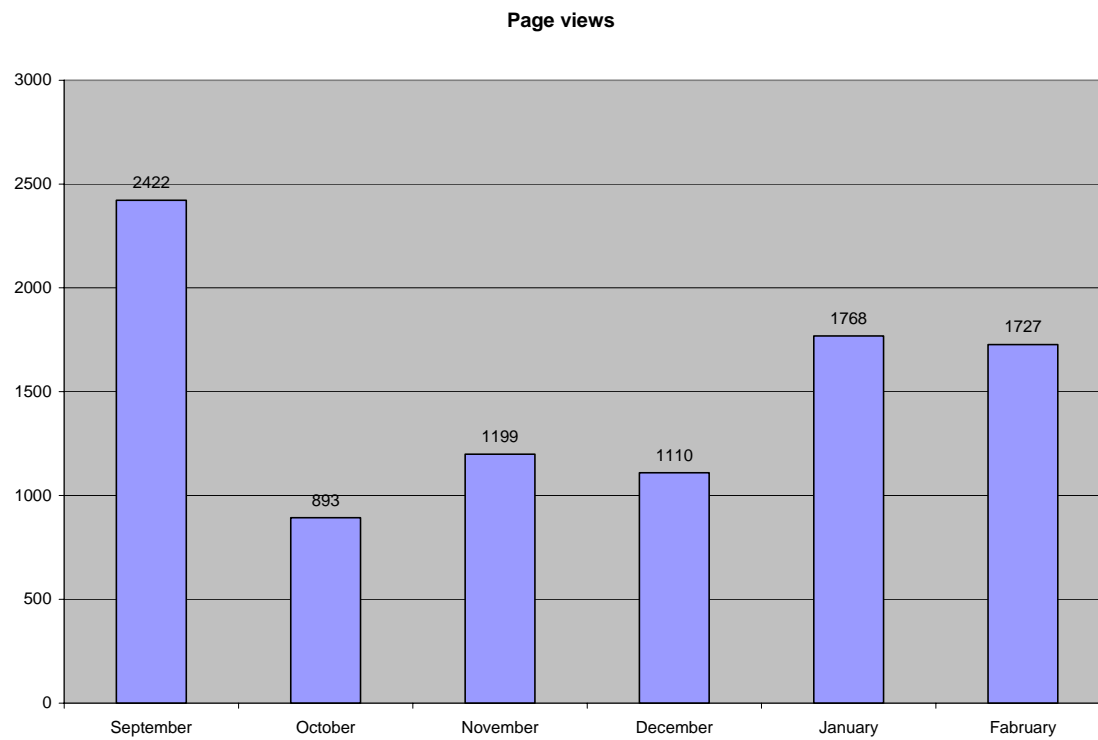


Figure 4. The total number of likes, comments, wall post, discussion and post for each month is presented.



Figure 5



*Figure 5.* Values present total number of page views for each month.