

# **purrr** from the New York Public Library

A Design Proposal for LIS 697 Social Media/Anthony Cocciolo

Molly Cronin, Quaid Long, Ann Morris, and John Tomlinson  
May 5, 2010

## Summary

Purrr from the New York Public Library will create a “low intensity” community of library users – users who are avid readers and tech savvy, but typically do not use the library due to the limited hours – by allowing patrons to get library books through the mail or by picking them up at a truck located at popular locations around the city. In addition, this “purrrMobile” and other aspects of the service will promote library membership.

**purrr** brings the library to users when and where they need it.

## Background and Need

In our experiences at Pratt and working at various libraries and educational institutions in New York, we found that there was a huge gap in services for working adults, particularly between the ages of 22 and 40. Too many such New Yorkers do not use the library and see no need to start.

It's not that this user population does not read. The successes of e-reader sales and mobile book downloads, as well as the large number of bookstores in the city (particularly Manhattan, with over 600 bookstores according to [citysearch.com](http://citysearch.com)) show that these people read, and read in innovative technology-forward ways.

However, too many such people just do not use the library for three reasons:

- Limited hours
- Limited locations
- Lack of awareness of library offerings.

Our project's goal is to create an augmented library system that will appeal to the non-library users in New York City, particularly busy, working adults who are "technology comfortable" and demanding information consumers.

We have decided to name this service "purrr," drawing from the feline imagery of the lion in the NYPL logo. Purrr will bring the library to users when and where they need it.

## Overview

Purrr has five components:

- Mail delivery service for books in the catalog of the New York Public Library
- Mobile libraries – the purrrMobiles – located at busy locations around the city, including at times when libraries are typically closed, that will serve as locations for book pick-up, as well as offering other library services such as reference and membership
- a website through which purrr users can use their computer or smart phone to request books for delivery by mail, or for pick-up at a purrrMobile
- social media features on the website

- outreach efforts to purrr users via the purrrMobile, the website, email/instant messaging, the mail service, truck and in-library programs.

The ultimate results will be:

- Increased borrowing of books by previous non-users
- Increased engagement of previous non-users in the library.

## Membership and Getting Books: The Purrr Process

For patrons, the key initial benefit of purrr is the ability to obtain library books without visiting a library location. Through the purrr website (a sub-site of the NYPL website which is described below), purrr users will be able to order books for deliver by mail or for pick-up at a purrrMobile.

A version of the purrr website for use on mobile phones will make the service even more accessible for busy users.

Membership is free for use of all services except mail delivery, which is \$12 per year following a 30-day trial. When patrons join the service they are offered the option of signing up for the paid version at that time, via credit card online. This option is made available when their free trial expires.

Credit card payment would be preferred, but the option to pay in cash at a library branch would also be available for those without a credit card.

Basic membership in purrr allows users to have two books out of the library at any time, for up to three weeks. Users who participate actively in the social media aspects of purrr, such as by providing reviews of books, will earn credits that enable them to have more books delivered each month.

For ease of shipping, purrr will be limited to fiction and popular non-fiction books. Users will be able to specify how they would like whether they would like a book delivered to their home by mail, or if they would like that book held for pick-up at a purrrMobile. They could also set a default preference in their profile.

## Books by Mail

Books received by mail come in a package that also includes a pre-paid padded return envelope that can be dropped into any mailbox and a receipt/slip. The aim is to make it very convenient to return books.

The receipt/slip would be on an 8.5 x 11" paper and include a mail-by date and instructions that the book can also be returned at any library branch. In addition, receipts would include information on schedules and locations of the purrrMobile library truck, as well as a pre-printed calendar of special events hosted by the New York Public Library at various branches in the next four to six weeks. The aim is to push information about library services into the hands of purrr members in a respectful manner.

## Physical Library Outreach – The purrrMobile

On Saturday and Sundays, each truck would be placed in a location near another attraction for New Yorkers – typically a regular farmers market. Hours would typically be 11:00a.m. to 6:00p.m. These locations might vary seasonally.

On weekdays, the placement and hours would be different, with locations near major subway stations and places of work, at slightly later hours – typically 8:00am-2:00pm and 5:00-8:00pm.

In all cases, the locations for each truck would remain consistent from week to week, and the truck would be available at a particular location at least twice a week. The aim is to make potential patrons aware of the location of the truck. Truck locations/schedule would also be printed on purrr book receipts and, of course, available on the purrr website.

A key function of the purrrMobile would be to serve as a convenient pick-up location for books patrons order. Trucks would carry items requested over the current online request system, as well as a selection of other popular titles.

But the purrrMobile would do more than just deliver circulating books. It would serve as mobile library outreach, bringing NYPL to where users are. They would be also

equipped with a portable, internet-connected computer for the librarian to use to check the OPAC, check on statuses of requests and process new library card applications. Via signage, the purrrMobile would be a rolling billboard for the library, encouraging users to stop by, get a library card (if they do not already have one) and use purrr and other library services.

Each mobile library would be staffed by a minimum of two people: a librarian and a driver/assistant. If demand requires, a second assistant would be available.

The receipts issued with books would include the same truck and event schedule as for books received by mail.

## The Purrr Website and User Community

This project will create a low-intensity community of users. The service will harvest information from this community to benefit individual members in choosing books to read. The objective isn't to foster a sense of community per se – it is to enrich the knowledge of the community at large through social media features.

In considering features, we examined a number of online book- and library-related social networks/services including BookSwim.com, Booksfree.com, BookFox (at thejohnfox.com), Goodreads.com, and LibraryThing.com, as well as online vendors Amazon.com and Netflix.com.

In addition to a simple user profile, including user name and borough/location, as well as optional photo and 140-character biography, these features will include:

### **Following Users**

Users will be able to “follow” the book selections of other users. This will allow users to learn what others are reading and discuss those books. Because following is built around borrowing books, the volume of communications will be low, thus avoiding user concerns of obtaining frequent updates.

### **Book Popularity and Ratings**

Display of books on the purrr website will show how many times the book has been checked out in the previous year, as well as average user ratings. Users will have the option of rating books they borrow through purrr.

### **Queue**

Users can add books to (or remove books from) their queues. Users can also freeze their queues. The design of the queue, as well as other features on the website, would be similar to those used by successful online services such as Amazon and Netflix, which have demonstrated how to make renting/buying products “ridiculously” easy.

### **Suggest a Book**

Purrr will automatically suggest books to users based on their past selections, using genres, authors, and subjects as guides.

In addition, users will also be able to suggest books to their followers.

### **Book Reviews**

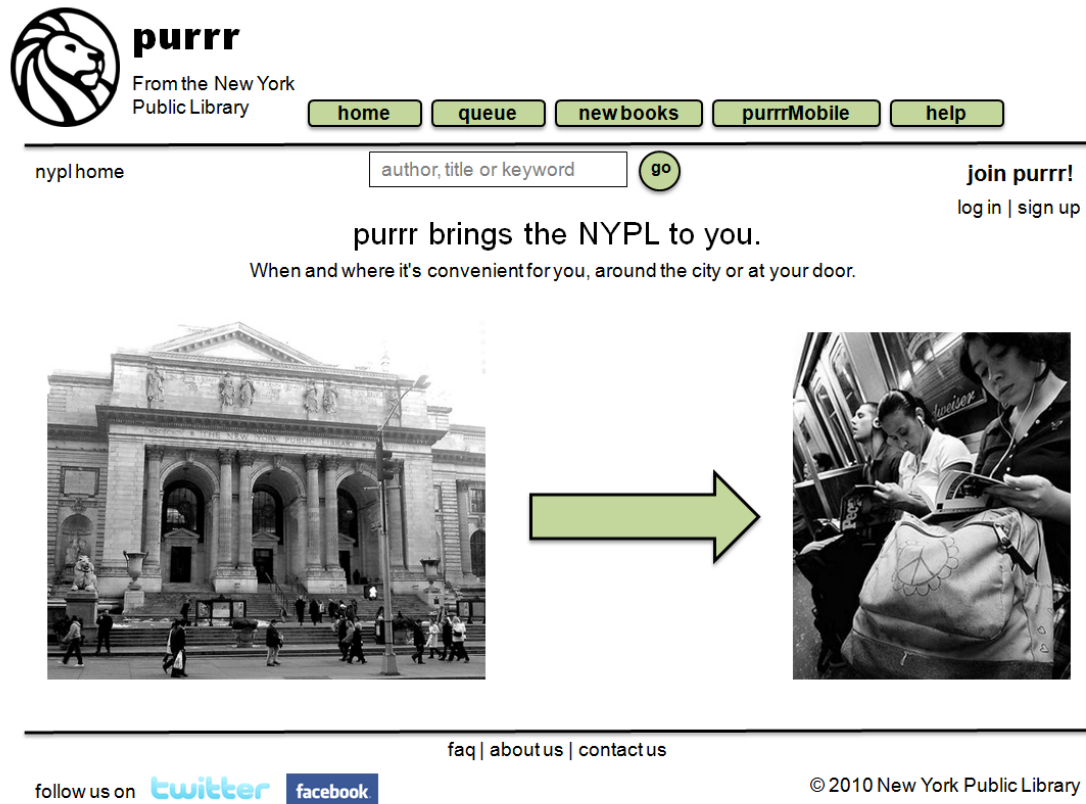
Users will be able to post reviews of books they have read, which will appear on both the purrr page about that book as well as their own profile page. Reviews will be allowed for any book available via purrr, not only books borrowed through the system. To encourage ratings, which must be at least 140 characters in length, users that contribute 12 reviews within the previous year will receive a free credit for keeping a third book checked out. More than 36 ratings will allow a fourth book, and more than 72 a fifth. User profiles will include a list of books each user has reviewed.

### **Links to Facebook, Twitter and Other Social Media Sites**

When users create their profile, they can opt to have their actions on purrr (such as when they rate, suggest, review or order a book) link to their page on Facebook or other social media services. This will not only allow users to easily inject their love of books into their online lives, but also allow NYPL to identify active participants in social media in New York City in order to engage them, as needed, in ongoing conversation about the library and its services.

Some key pages from the site are shown below.

## Homepage



The purrr homepage aims to briefly communicate the purpose of the service, entice potential users to learn more, and encourage them to sign up. The site would be located at a simple URL, such as [purrr.nypl.org](http://purrr.nypl.org).

Purrr members who are logged-in to the system would be redirected to their queue page when visiting the purrr URL.

## PurrrMobile



**purrr**

From the New York  
Public Library

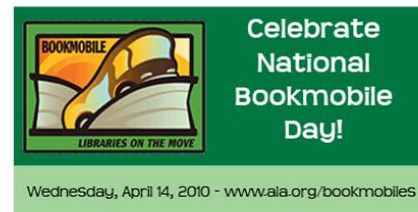
[home](#)
[queue](#)
[new books](#)
[purrrMobile](#)
[help](#)
[log in](#) | [sign up](#)

What's **purrrMobile**? Just look for the red truck!

purrrMobile from the NYPL brings the library to you.

whether you are coming home, out to lunch or running errands, you'll always have time to go to the library with purrrMobile

- pick up library books on reserve
- sign up for a library card
- return library books
- free wireless
- ask-a-librarian reference desk


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The novelty of the purrrMobile, as well as the convenience it offers to users, is a key selling point to users, so the trucks would have an explanatory page on the website.



## PurrrMobile Locations



**purrr**

From the New York  
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[home](#)
[queue](#)
[newbooks](#)
[purrrMobile](#)
[help](#)

nyp/home

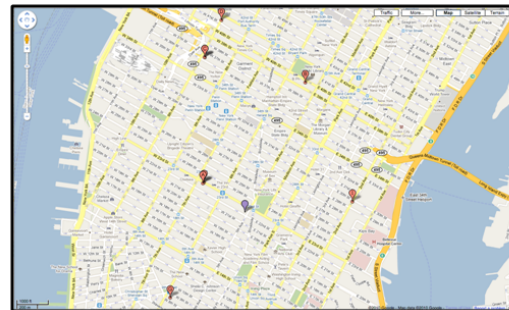
go

[log in](#) | [sign up](#)

### Today's purrrMobile locations

**Wednesday, May 5, 2010**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Union Square Farmer's Market<br>E. 17 <sup>th</sup> & Broadway<br>8am to 2pm; 5pm to 8pm | 2. Grand Central Station<br>E. 42 <sup>nd</sup> St. & Vanderbilt<br>8am to 2pm; 5pm to 8pm |
| 3. Tompkins Square Park<br>E. 7 <sup>th</sup> St. & Avenue A<br>8am to 2pm; 5pm to 8pm      | 4. Central Park North<br>Lennox Ave. & 110 <sup>th</sup> St.<br>8am to 2pm; 5pm to 8pm     |



#### Schedule

This week: Sun Mon Tue **Wed** Thu Fri Sat

Next week: Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

Learn more about the purrrMobile

Be a purrrMobile volunteer!

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## User Profile



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[home](#)
[queue](#)
[new books](#)
[purrrMobile](#)
[help](#)

---


[nyp home](#)

[go](#)

logged in as mollyc | [sign out](#)

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**mollyc's profile** ([edit profile](#))



where Brooklyn, NY  
 member since March 2010


[follow mollyc](#)
[mollyc's reviews](#)

**mollyc's bookshelves**

[read \(67\)](#)
[currently reading \(3\)](#)
[in queue \(50\)](#)

**mollyc's recent activity**

April 18, 2010
 



Molly gave this book 5 out of 5 stars:  
**The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**  
 by **Stieg Larsson**  
 Read in March 2010

[Rate this book](#)  
[Review this book](#)  
[Comment](#)

**mollyc's events**

**Dance Dance Library Revolution**  
Saturday, May 22, 2010 at 10:00pm

**purrrMobile Volunteer Day**  
Saturday, May 8, 2010 at 9:00am

**SLA@Pratt Skill Share Fair**  
Friday, April 23, 4:30pm

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Purrr does not emphasize detailed user profiles – it is expected that most users will have more robust profiles at places such as Facebook. Rather, the profile aims to communicate what each user's interactions are with purrr. This is a low-intensity community is build around actions with books.

## Catalog Display





**purrr**  
From the New York Public Library


[home](#) [queue](#) [new books](#) [purrrMobile](#) [help](#)

nypl home  [go](#) [log in](#) | [sign up](#)


Results 1-25 of 165 for **social media**  
> Refined to Format: BOOK/TEXT [x] & Collection: Circulating [x] & Language: English [x] & Search Found In: Subject [x]  
Sorted by [Relevance](#) | [Title](#) | [Date](#) 1 2 3 4 5 next

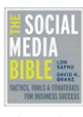
 **Social media 101 : tactics and tips to develop your business online /**  
Chris Brogan  
Brogan, Chris.  
BOOK/TEXT  
2010  
DUE 04-16-10 - SIBL Non-Fiction - 658.872 B  
+ Show all 3 copies/volumes  
[Place hold](#) [Save this record](#) [More info](#)

 [Add to queue](#)  
[Learn more in purrr](#)  
Avg rating 4 stars  
[Reviews / Comments](#)

 **The social media marketing book /** Dan Zarrella  
Zarrella, Dan.  
BOOK/TEXT  
2009  
DUE 04-16-10 - Bronx Library Center Non-Fiction - 658.0567 Z  
+ Show all 7 copies/volumes  
[Place hold](#) [Save this record](#) [More info](#)

 [Add to queue](#)  
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Avg rating 3.5 stars  
[Reviews / Comments](#)

 **The social media bible : tactics, tools, and strategies for business success /** Lon Safko, David K. Brake  
Safko, Lon.  
BOOK/TEXT  
2009  
DUE 04-22-10 - Riverside Non-Fiction - 658.872 S  
[Place hold](#) [Save this record](#) [More info](#)

 [Add to queue](#)  
[Learn more in purrr](#)  
Avg rating 3.2 stars  
[Reviews / Comments](#)

**Refine by tag:**

communication **digital media** globalization internet  
**internet marketing** journalism  
**mass media** mass media and culture **mass media and youth** **online**  
**social networks** popular culture public opinion **social media** technology united states

[\[Show more tags\]](#)

**Recommended:**

- This is social media: how to tweet, post, link and blog your way to business success / Guy Clapperton
- Yes we did: an inside look at how social media built the Obama brand / [Rahaf Harfoush](#)

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Results of a basic search for books draws content from the main NYPL online public catalog. Tag cloud and other features add community-generated knowledge to the basic display.

## Tag Search Results



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[home](#)
[queue](#)
[new books](#)
[purrrMobile](#)
[help](#)

[nyp home](#)



logged in as mollyc | [sign out](#)

Books tagged with "social media"

Subscribe to this tag's RSS feed

### FORMAT

Book (12)  
DVD (3)  
[E-Audiobook \(3\)](#)

### COLLECTION

Adult (15)  
Circulating (13)  
Non-circulating (2)

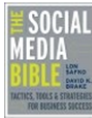
### LANGUAGE

English (15)  
French (13)  
Chinese (2)



Social media 101: tactics and tips to help your business  
online / Chris Brogan

Paperback, 239 pages  
Checked out  
Average rating 4 stars



The social media Bible / Lon [Safko](#), David K. Brake

Paperback, 174 pages  
Checked out  
Average rating 4 stars



Social media marketing: an hour a day / Dave Evans

Paperback, 301 pages  
Available  
Average rating 3 stars

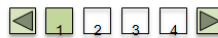
### TAGS

New media (5)  
Internet (15)  
Communications (3)

### MOST POPULAR

Social media 101:  
tactics and tips to  
help your business  
online

The social media  
Bible



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## Book Record/Discussion



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[home](#)
[queue](#)
[new books](#)
[purrrMobile](#)
[help](#)

---

nypl home

go
log in | sign up

---

Social Media 101 : Tactics and Tips to Develop Your Business Online  
By Chris Brogan



[Add to queue](#)

Published: February 2010

Format: Hardcover, 352 pages

ISBN: 0470563419

Description: 100 ways to tap into social media for a more profitable business


Avg rating 4 stars  
Reviews / Comments

Tags: social media, internet, business, new media

[Add new tags](#)


 [Preview this book in Google Books](#)

People who checked out this book also checked out:




Discuss this book (54 comments)



**Ann** said:  
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nunc vitae vehicula nibh. Vestibulum semper congue nulla nec condimentum. Mauris lectus risus, tempor a condimentum vel, consectetur vitae sem.

[Comment](#)



**John** said:  
Donec luctus, leo non feugiat sagittis, dui leo adipiscing ipsum, vitae condimentum leo metus in sapien. Proin massa magna, bibendum sed tristique non, vulputate sed orci.

[Comment](#)

[Add your review](#)

[View all comments](#)

Review this book

Recommend this book to a friend

Find this book on Amazon

Find this book on WorldCat

Rate this book: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

What people around the web are saying about this book

**Social Media Today**, 3/1/2010

*"Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit..."*

[Read more](#)


**Mashable**, 3/15/2010

*"Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit..."*

[Read more](#)

The page for a particular book includes not only information drawn from NYPL's OPAC, but space for discussion among and rating by purrr users. Book recommendations further encourage use of the system.

## Queue



**purrr**  
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Public Library

0 books ready for check out

[home](#) [queue](#) [new books](#) [purrrMobile](#) [help](#)

nypl home  [go](#) logged in as mollyc | [sign out](#)

### mollyc's queue

Books checked out

	Title	Checked out	Due Date
1.	More Information Than You Require	04/19/2010	05/10/2010
2.	The Areas of My Expertise	04/19/2010	05/10/2010

Books in your queue

	Title	Holds	Estimated Availability	Remove
1	This Book Is Overdue!	42	06/01/2010	<a href="#">x</a>
2	The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao	4	05/25/2010	<a href="#">x</a>
3	All Families Are Psychotic	12	06/30/2010	<a href="#">x</a>
4	Quiet Please: Dispatches from a Public Librarian	15	05/15/2010	<a href="#">x</a>
5	Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out: Kids Living and Learning with New Media	1	06/15/2010	<a href="#">x</a>


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The user queue will include interactive features, such as pop-up display of additional information.



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nypl home  [go](#)

### mollyc's queue

Books checked out

	Title
1.	More Information Than You Require
2.	The Areas of My Expertise

Books in your queue

1	This Book Is Overdue!
2	The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
3	All Families Are Psychotic

**This Book Is Overdue!**  
by Marilyn Johnson

Published: February 2010  
Format: Hardcover, 288 pages  
ISBN: 0061431605

Description: How librarians and [cybrarians](#) can save us all  
Tags: librarians, libraries, library science, humor

103 checkouts  
Avg rating 4.8 stars  
[Reviews / Comments](#)

## Community in Physical Space

The most active purrr users – in terms of numbers of books borrowed or reviews contributed – will also be invited to special physical events such as book reading/receptions at libraries or other locations throughout the city held in the evenings. The initial level of participation required to be invited to these events will be low. However, if these events prove very popular, either the level or activity required to attend would be raised or (preferably) additional funding would be sought within the NYPL system to expand the number and/or size of events.

## Outreach Benefits for NYPL

Beyond getting books into the hands of more users, purrr represents a new form of outreach for the library. Fundamentally, purrrMobiles will be “branch libraries” at New York’s busiest locations, offering a convenient place for people to obtain library cards and learn about library services and events.

They will also serve as mobile billboards about the library and its new service. Purrr book receipts will function as informative direct mail marketing of library events.

Finally, the purrr online community will engage an important demographic in a low-intensity community with each other and the library, a community that can extend in a meaningful way into other areas of the internet.

## Purrr “Back Office” Operations

The service shipping is managed from a central location that sends (via NYPL's regular inter-branch delivery service) a daily package to each branch containing shipping packages for all books requested that is currently at that branch. For each item it will include a call slip to help pages get the item, plus the complete mailing package described above. The address on the return package is the library to which the item belongs – this will help reduce need for inter-library delivery of items.

The focus is on making shipping and receipt easy for the branches, with everything printed and ready to go, apart from placing the items in the packages, sealing and mailing.

## Funding

Within New York Public Library, purrr would be positioned as a marketing/outreach program, with funding from those portions of the organization's budget. The cost of the mailing and packaging would come from the income generated from the paid membership options for purrr. The funding from the trucks would ideally come from grant and possibly sponsor funding, who may be attracted to purrr's outreach to younger, active New Yorkers. Other departments in the NYPL work with third party sponsors, and this would be a good opportunity to reach out and partner with other community groups.

## Assessment, Improvement and Future Directions

Purrr would be assessed in three levels.

- Circulation of books via purrrMobile and by mail
- Website activities, as well as mentions/links to purrr from other locations online
- Visits to purrrMobiles, including general inquiries, reference questions and new library cards issued.

Information about visits to purrrMobiles would be used not only in evaluating the program as a whole, but also for fine-tuning the locations and hours of operations of these mobile libraries.

In addition, purrr website users would occasionally be asked to complete an online survey of about purrr. This survey would be designed not only to elicit immediate feedback, but also to instill a sense of membership in the community. If finances permit, a free book delivery might be offered as an incentive to complete a longer version of the user survey.

If purrr proves successful in terms of NYPL outreach and engaging previous non-users of the library the service could be expanded in form of additional purrrMobiles for other locations. In addition, it is hoped that lessons/practices from the service (such as user-tagging and reviewing of books, and simple profiles of members) might be considered as possible features for NYPL to use in its main website and online catalog, bringing features of social networking more closely into its core services.