

Social Media Primer

What is social media?

Social media are the various electronic tools, technologies and applications that facilitate interactive communication and content exchange, allowing the user to move back and forth easily between the roles of audience and author. These tools are underscored by a significant cultural shift towards more open, transparent and collaborative user experiences.

Social media tools include:

<i>Tool</i>	<i>Description</i>
Blogs	Short for weblog, a type of Web site that is updated frequently, written in a conversational tone and contains regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events or other material
Podcasts	Web-based audio and/or video content made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player
Social Networking Sites (Facebook, MySpace, etc.)	Online communities that allow users to connect, interact and exchange information with those who share interests and/or activities
Microblogs (Twitter, Plurk, etc.)	Form of blogging that allows users to write brief text updates (usually 140 characters) and publish them to be viewed and commented upon by their network
Mobile Text Messaging	Short messages of text exchanged between mobile devices
Wikis	Collaborative Web page or collection of Web pages that allow all users to contribute or modify content
Widgets	Piece of self-contained code (a small application) that can be embedded into a Web site or program to perform a specific function
Social Bookmarking (Delicious, Digg, etc.)	Sites where a virtual community exchanges links to content and stores links for future use
RSS Feeds	Short for Real Simple Syndication, a file that contains frequently updated information (such as news headlines or blog posts) that can be subscribed to using programs called feed readers or aggregators
Image/Video Sharing Sites (Flickr, YouTube, etc.)	User generated sites that allow people to upload pictures or videos and view and comment on the uploaded content of others
Virtual Worlds (Second Life, Whyville, etc.)	A computer-based simulated environment in which users interact with each other via avatars, virtual representations of themselves
Internet Forums	Also called message boards, online discussion sites where users can discuss issues, exchange information and share views
Mobile Web Sites	Web sites geared for mobile devices