Have You Heard About the Herd? Using Yik Yak as a Tool for Library Assessment

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Project Summary

During the Spring Semester 2016 (Jan 4 – May 13), the social media site, Yik Yak, was monitored by Library staff to collect data on how the Library was referenced. During this period, the researchers saw an opportunity to assess the information gathered about the Library to improve Library services and conditions in real time.

Findings

Library Study Environment: Noise and Temperature

- Access to Library: Construction Concerns
- Library Safety Concerns
- Library Services

Real-time Assessment Opportunities

- Yik Yak offered an opportunity for real-time assessment
- Provided the ability to communicate with patrons about construction issues
- The anonymity facilitated a better understanding of patron needs
- Patrons were able to communicate their frustrations with no imbalance of power or fear of repercussion, providing a venue for freedom of expression
- Library staff gained a new understanding of how the Library is used by patrons
- It was noted that 13% of the posts were of a discriminatory nature – Racism, sexism and sexuality emerged as the most likely [communications] to be offensive
- If a post accumulated five down-votes, Yik Yak automatically removed it.

Determinations

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Future Directions

With the rapidly changing world of social media, this study would not be able to be replicated in the same way it was created. One reason is that Yik Yak, itself, is no longer as anonymous as it was when this study was conducted. Users are now required to create “handles” and are provided the opportunity to generate personal profiles and private chats.

The key for future studies will be to use the most current social media platforms available.

Based on this qualitative research, there appears to be a relationship between patron anonymity and candor.