

Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship

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Social network sites (SNSs) are increasingly attracting the attention of academic and industry researchers intrigued by their affordances and reach. This special theme section of the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication brings together scholarship on these emergent phenomena. In this introductory article, we describe features of SNSs and propose a comprehensive definition. We then present one perspective on the history of such sites, discussing key changes and developments. After briefly summarizing existing scholarship concerning SNSs, we discuss the articles in this special section and conclude with considerations for future research.

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Introduction

Since their introduction, social network sites (SNSs) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. As of this writing, there are hundreds of SNSs, with various technological affordances, supporting a wide range of interests and practices. While their key technological features are fairly consistent, the cultures that emerge around SNSs are varied. Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities. Sites also vary in the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging, and photo/video-sharing.

Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship

JR Anderson



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Table of Contents Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship

1. Understanding the eBook Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship User Reviews and Ratings
 - Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship Free and Paid eBooks
 - Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship Public Domain eBooks
 - Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship eBook Subscription Services
 - Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship eBook Formats

- ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship Compatibility with Devices
 - Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Interactive Elements Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 8. Staying Engaged with Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
 11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Setting Reading Goals Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
 12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Social Network Sites Definition History And Scholarship
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
 13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
 14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements
 - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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