WHAT IS SOCIAL BOOKMARKING?

What do you do when you find a Web site you want to save and retrieve later? You probably add it to Favorites or Bookmarks in your browser (Internet Explorer, for example). But there are a couple of problems with that:

- What happens if you bookmark a site at home, and then want to go to it at school, but can't remember the URL?
- Or, let's say you have 100+ author Web sites bookmarked in Internet Explorer and have the sites arranged by authors' last names. You're looking for a great criticism of Jane Austen you had bookmarked, but it's not in the Austen folder. Where is it? And, what do you do when you finally remember it was on a Bronte site? Do you save it twice, once to your Austen folder and once to your Bronte folder?
- Or, suppose you have 23 sites in your Tennyson folder and you need to find one in particular quickly. You remember a phrase from it, but not the actual URL or page title. And your students, year after year, have been discovering some amazing research online and you'd like to take advantage of their efforts by combining their bookmarks with yours. But how?
Social bookmarking solves all those problems! Instead of saving Web sites to your browser's Bookmarks folder, you use an online tool that saves your information on a Web site. Each time you save a new Web page there, you type a few keywords or phrases to help you remember what you liked about the site. Those keywords are called tags. And, most social bookmarking tools allow users to share lists, so you benefit from the hard work of others interested in the same topics.

Sound confusing? Let's look at Del.icio.us, one of the most popular social bookmarking sites.

When you search for a tag -- "kindergarten," for example -- on Del.icio.us, its search engine looks at every bookmarked Web site to find all those saved with the tag "kindergarten." It then displays a list of those sites, much like any search engine:

![List of Social Bookmarks]

The pink highlighting beneath each listed Web site tells how many users have saved that site tagged with the word "kindergarten."

**REGISTER FOR SOCIAL BOOKMARKING**

Now, let's find out how to create social bookmarks and use them in the high school environment.
To create social bookmarks, you first must register at a social bookmarking site: Go to Del.icio.us -- or another social bookmarking site -- and complete the one page registration form. Click Register. (You might receive a confirmation e-mail.) Just click the link to confirm your registration.

Del.icio.us and most similar tools install buttons on your browser's (Internet Explorer, Firefox....) toolbar. Click Install Extension Now to add those buttons to your browser. You probably also will have to close and then reopen your browser. Your browser menu bar now should have two new buttons on it:

![ADD A BOOKMARK](image)

**ADD A BOOKMARK**

Now we're all set to bookmark!

- Go to Education World's Techtorial [table of contents](#) page. This is the page we're going to bookmark.
- Click the TAG button you just installed on your menu bar. The window/pane below will appear:
Notice that the site's title and URL appear in the correct blanks. The tags blank, however, is...well...blank. Remember, tags are keywords you might use in a search. So in that blank, type keywords you might use if this is the site you wanted to find. If you were a teacher, for example, who used Excel for grading and Word and the Internet in your early childhood classroom, you might type "Excel Word Internet Early Childhood" as your tags for this site. (Notice that Del.icio.us also has suggested "teaching" as a tag.)

- Click Save.
- Click the blue/black/white checkerboard icon to go to your saved bookmarks. You should see:

Note: As I'm writing this techtorial, you can see from the image above that two other Del.icio.us users also have saved the Education World Techtorial Table of Contents. How many others will have saved it by the time you complete this techtorial?
MORE TRICKS

A couple of other tricks before we move to high-school usage. After you have 12, 120, or 1200 sites saved, you can change the organization of your bookmarks. Look to the right of Del.icio.us page to find the words "view as cloud." That allows you to sort your sites by the tags themselves, which would look something like this:

You would then click on the tag you were looking for and a list of sites you’d saved with that keyword would appear!

Notice how some of the words are bigger or smaller than others? In a tag cloud, keywords are arranged alphabetically, and the size of the words indicates how often they’ve been used as keywords. The tag cloud above is from a site called Blogmeister, where Blog, reading, and mom are some of the most common tags.

Who knows what the tag cloud for your social bookmarks will look like at Del.icio.us -- osmosis might be the most frequent tag, and basketball the least common tag.

BALANCING INNOVATION AND PRIVACY

Many educators belong to a generation that grew up with Reader's Guide to Periodicals and other research tools that listed information in a linear fashion. Many of today's
students, on the other hand, think in webs and clusters. High school students, therefore, often benefit from social bookmarking because it organizes information as they think.

A lingering concern, however, is that if a tool like Del.icio.us shares bookmarked sites and tags among users, inappropriate content is only a click away from students. In one of the previous screen shots listing the kindergarten search results, for example, one site contained language that was inappropriate even for the high school setting.

So…how can you utilize social bookmarking safely? Consider using a closed system like BuddyMarks, in which only users you designate as your "buddies" have access to your sites and are allowed to combine their tags and sites with yours. That would allow your students to experiment with social bookmarks in a safe environment. Try using them for research projects or science-fair projects, so the information students find can be shared collectively!

TELL ME MORE!

Where can I find more information?
Check out Sites to See article on Social Bookmarking for the latest on this emerging technology!