GalterLists: Integrating Social Bookmarking into the Library’s Website

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OBJECTIVES
To create a web-based tool that would:
• simplify the process for creating customized lists of resources
• allow users to create their own categories for organizing links
• enable users to save both library and non-library links to their lists
• allow users to share their lists with others
• provide new ways for users to discover resources

METHODS
GalterLists builds on customization features already offered to our users on the library website. Modeled on social bookmarking tools such as Delicious and PennTags, GalterLists is an integrated, web-based tool that allows users to create and manage their lists of links. Users can select subject-specific lists created by librarians and other users, or they can create their own lists, including links to external web pages. Listed links can be tagged with one or more tags (keywords). The individual lists can be filtered based on the applied tags, and tags may be used to find similarly-tagged items in other lists. Tagged resources are also displayed in the keyword search results, creating a new node for resource discovery. When links are no longer needed, users can easily delete them from their lists. Users can create private lists that only they can see or elect to share their lists with others.

RESULTS
The library began testing GalterLists with users in the fall of 2008, and the tool was unveiled to all users in January 2009. While most users are creating private lists, some are creating lists that can be viewed by all of our users. Users are also interested in employing GalterLists for journal clubs and recommended reading lists.

CONCLUSIONS
User response has been generally positive. However, some users have reported confusion which warrants further usability analysis. Library staff are actively marketing this new tool to our users through emails, library website promotion, and the library liaison program. We are continuing to develop the tool based on user feedback. We hope that users will see GalterLists as a useful tool for information management and collaboration.

A video guide on using GalterLists is available at http://www.galter.northwestern.edu/Using-the-Library/galter-list