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The possibilities and challenges of social media in the work practices of university libraries: Tampere University Library Case Study

Introduction

University libraries are big and old organisations which are not easily turned in a new direction. However, their working environment is changing quickly and substantially and university libraries must undergo a transformation.

Tampere University Library aims to be well-known for its trustworthiness as a scientific information supplier and authority. The Library actively promotes open access availability, foresees the changing information needs of its users and wants to offer an inspiring operational environment. To be able to reach the customer better the Library has begun using social media tools.

University libraries face several challenges when integrating social media into the everyday work of the library. The main challenge is to choose the best tool suitable for the content of the library service. In addition there are challenges related to the employees' know-how and motivation. We also have to admit that our customers are not only students who are quick to adopt new social media tools, but that they include researchers, teachers, doctors, nurses and various university employees who might not be using social media at all or only very slightly. Some customers are not even allowed to use social media at all, for example the staff in the University hospital. The library must not overlook any customer and so library staff must be flexible and use both old and new media.

By using social media university libraries have the opportunity to reach new and younger customers, mainly students, within their own fields; and to encourage existing customers to get full value out of library resources and to find new resources. Social media allows libraries to react to customers' needs quickly and gain a positive and proactive image.

In this presentation our aim is to describe how social media was implemented in Tampere University Library.

Tampere University Library

In 2008, the management group of the library set up a working group to find out which Web 2.0 tools other university libraries in Finland had implemented at that point. These tools were briefly presented to the staff and the management group. In 2009, the management group decided to pilot LibraryThing in marketing new book

acquisitions. At the same time, the management group gathered a social media team together to explore which of these social media tools could be utilised in Tampere University Library. The team members came from different departments and had different posts in the library. The team organised workshops, where every member of the staff had a chance to practice using these tools.

We decided not to organise the famous 23 things course (<http://plcmcl2-about.blogspot.com/>) to train our whole staff, as this was thought to be too laborious for our purpose. The 23 things course is a very popular approach in libraries but our starting point was to deliberate which social media tools are worth trying in library practices, and which could offer some added-value to the customers. We also tried to figure out if there are alternative ways to do the same old library tasks in new ways to reach the variety of our customers (whether customers of today or those of the future).

The main issue was that of integrating social media into the strategy of the university library and merging it into the library's everyday work. Another consideration was to understand the nature of the challenges the library would face in adopting social media, and to find out how we could encourage the employees to use social media tools in their work. And finally, we wanted to determine the opportunities and benefits social media could bring to the university library in better reaching its customers, reacting to their needs and promoting the positive and proactive image of the library.

What is social media

The terms "Web 2.0" and "social media" are often seen as synonymous but since "social media" is, in our opinion, a broader and more vivacious term, and describes the content better, we define social media in this presentation in the same way as we explained the concept in the workshops for our library staff. We define social media as a triangle of three parts: the first part is Web 2.0, the second part is communities and networks and the third, and most important part, is content.

We define Web 2.0 as social media tools – advanced technology that has made the birth of communities and networks possible. Social media is a tripartite, the most important part of which is user-generated content.

Creating content is only possible when the technology and communities form the supporting pillars of the triangle.

Since 2004 the term Web 2.0 quickly became popular, reaching its peak during 2007 and at the beginning of 2008. The concept of social media appeared at the end of 2006 and by the beginning of 2010 it had surpassed Web 2.0. It seems usage of the term Web 2.0 is nearing its end.

The sense of community and user-generated content cannot be forced, they are born naturally. Communities are built on transparency, openness, sharing and talking; the content is typically interactive, low threshold, fast in tempo and uncontrollable.

In libraries, social media means communicating between customers and staff, but also learning within the organisation and sharing knowledge. Social media also encourages benchmarking the best practices and peer support between university libraries. At its best, communication via social media is vivacious, colourful, funny, and easy. The library has to be where the customers are and talk in the same language as the customers do – libraries must admit that there is life outside the library.

Implementation

As stated in the Tampere University library vision, the library must foresee the changing information needs of its users and offer an inspiring operational environment. Our mission is to develop those services focussed on customer orientation. Social media is customer-oriented and always begins with customer need. We did not adopt social media tools just because they existed; rather we saw the phenomenon as a natural phase in the development of the university library.

The first blog was created in 2003 when the Department Library of Humanities and Education moved. The second blog was created in 2006, when the university main library moved into a new building; and the third one when the Department of Health Sciences moved in 2008. The latter was born spontaneously out of the need to document the move of the department library. Flickr photo service became familiar to the staff as the blog was enriched with photographs from the move and the slideshow of the opening of the new library building. In the same year, the library management group decided to create a Web 2.0 work group to probe into Web 2.0 tools already in use in Finnish University libraries and decide which tools and practices would benefit the work of the library most and which library processes could be carried out via social media tools.

In 2009, the library blog for the whole university library was launched to celebrate the library's 85th anniversary, and the pilot blog of the department library was merged into it. The work group presented the library management group with different tools out of which the library management group also selected to pilot LibraryThing to market new acquisitions for the customers. An intranet based on wiki-technology was created and library staff trained to use it. In autumn 2009, Tertio, the departmental library of Health Sciences founded a Facebook profile. The main function of the status updates was to lead the students to the library web site and scholarly content easily, utilising the forum in which they are used to receive messages, and providing a colloquial and familiar context.

At the beginning of 2010, the library management group founded a team for Social Media in the library, which was to follow the development of Web 2.0 tools and determine

which of these could be utilised in information literacy teaching, the marketing of library services and resources, and communication in general. The team was also given the task of motivating, teaching and supporting the library staff. The team organised three workshops in early summer; almost every staff member participated and had the chance to add content to the intranet and blog including videos, photographs and polls. In the workshops the LibraryThing catalogue's possibilities were presented to staff, the RSS feeds were discussed, and the possibilities of Facebook in library marketing looked into. To progress the staff training, a poll was created on the library blog to find out which services would be most wanted among the staff for future workshops.

The library found it necessary to define a specific social media policy for the library. The team was assigned to gather links to social media policies made by various public organisations. The social media team also considered it crucial to follow the development of the social media policy at the university level, as well as to look into the information security principles of Tampere University. However, since the university strategy process is still unfinished, the social media team will keep an eye on developments and adjust the social media policy to fit with the university strategies accordingly. During work on the policy, special attention has been paid to similar projects in peer universities in Finland, so as to be consistent on the national level, as well.

The team recommended that the policy should be encouraging and point out opportunities to staff rather than warn or list what not to do; the team did not want staff to be put off by rules, rather they wanted to encourage voluntary adoption of social media. When using social media the role of the library worker will depend on the media being used and of course, as a representative of the library it is best practice to use social media within the wider library communication strategy, ensuring respect for co-workers, colleagues and customers. Working in the library, like any other office in public administration, it is important to realise that you can always be linked to your work organisation, whether you take the professional role or a private role in social media. As they say, in the end there is no such thing as private when you are online.

Where are we now?

Let us not forget the history. Over the years the changing digital landscape has made it compulsory to develop different remote services for customers, allowing remote use of electronic articles and books and the accessing of information services without physically coming to the library. The library space extended beyond the limits of the physical library space a long time ago and that is why one can see social media, new technologies and web 2.0 tools as a natural continuum to the process, not something that looks arbitrarily imposed. With social media we try to attract the customers and lead them to the scholarly content available for them.

The social media tools mainly have an informative function in the library. Via the library blog, there is a possibility for the customers to interact and make comments, but so far the customers have only commented on topics related to their everyday life, such as opening hours or self-service pick-up of requested books. The Department Library of Health Sciences has already reached over 200 customers via Facebook, and the library has received positive feedback on the library news updates on Facebook and the page itself. Furthermore, the communication channel

inside the library, the intranet on the wiki platform, has already been accepted and has become widely used among the staff – it has replaced the previous intranet.

Today the library invests in meeting customers and sharing knowledge with customers using selected tools: Wiki, blog, LibraryThing and feeds. Slideshare and Flickr and tools that are “good to know” – tools that work well in marketing library services, informing the customers and making the library’s competence visible. Facebook is a tool that makes access to the library easier. LinkedIn and Twitter are interesting experiments for those interested and “early adopters”. iGoogle and other tools could be used if the task at hand demands these or working becomes easier or more versatile with the help of them.

The library intranet, based on wiki technique, is currently the only Web 2.0 tool that every library worker is expected to use and contribute to, creating an expanding information resource for us all. Every staff member is encouraged to write in the library blog but they are not told to. LibraryThing makes connecting the customer and library easier, and inspires the customer towards new resources. Social media tools are there to find the customer, make library work more visible and enhance the image of the library as an up-to-date institution that follows what is happening in the world and wants to serve the customers in their own arena.

Possibilities – summary

We want to point out that new tools do not exclude the old ones: for example it is most effective to inform the customers via more traditional tools and using new social media tools.

Getting the message to as many customers as possible, as quickly as possible, using as many channels as possible is ideal for both library and the customer. Social media empowers the library to blow the dust out of the library image and make it shine in the scholarly universe. Social media offers the means to turn the communication strategy into action.

The communication between library and staff makes it possible for the library to serve the customers of the future as well. We must sell the library, the knowledge we have, and the scholarly resources we can offer to the customers. We are only one player in the endless universe of open access internet resources, but scholarly content is our strength. Social media offers tools to be up-to-date, to benchmark each others’ competence, and to be where the customers are.

Challenges – summary

Students or researchers might not always take the library as their starting point for research. To attract those young customers who are using social media tools as their primary communication channel, we need to be where those customers are. We must stay alert to be able to recognise the channels customers use, speak in their language and inspire them to do better research and find the scholarly resources. And not only are there customers to consider, motivating co-workers and peers is just as important. It is a challenge to find the time and energy to encourage people to find the enthusiasm to learn new things and move out of their comfort zone. One of the main challenges is to find the time and energy to do things in both the old and new way.

Library customers are not only early adopters and young students but also some senior researchers that have not yet used social media. One large customer group of the library is Tampere University Hospital, whose staff is not allowed to use some of the social media tools during working hours. We cannot afford to forget these customers. All customers have to be treated equally so we have to maintain the traditional tools too.

No matter how many social media tools and channels we are using, they are worthless if they are not discovered by the customer. A big challenge is to market communication channels to the customers and keep them using those channels. You need to write, make comments, respond to feedback and be active. Where do you take the time that it requires? One has to accept the fact that you might not know if anybody is reading the blog or feeds. Even though the use of a blog can be analysed by counters, the use of feeds cannot. Motivating the customers and staff and inspiring them to continue is the key. This will be the challenge for years to come.

Vision

The uncertainty of what lies ahead is all we know for sure. The library must be able to look ahead. The social media vision in our library is simple: we are ready to welcome customers with any device, program or platform they might have and respond to their future demands. We must be innovative and enthusiastic explorers in the world of social media or what the future concept might be. Virtual reality is our reality if needed and new tools are part of our daily routines. The library is not only an address or place on the map, cosy sofas and nice environment, the library is online, present.

Useful resources

23 things course
<http://plcmcl2-about.blogspot.com/>

CamStudio
<http://camstudio.org/>

Dropbox
<https://www.dropbox.com/>

Doodle
<http://www.doodle.com/>

Janika Asplund – LinkedIn
<http://fi.linkedin.com/pub/janika-asplund/6/557/b8/>

Mervi Ahola – LinkedIn
<http://fi.linkedin.com/in/merviahola>

Original presentation
<http://prezi.com/vecbfy3zd0xu/social-media-in-tampere-university-library/>

Prezi
<http://prezi.com>

Tampere University Library
<http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/kirjasto/english/>

Tampere University Library blog Kirjasto 8.5
<http://taykirjasto.wordpress.com/>

Tampere University Library – LibraryThing
Main Library:
http://fi.librarything.com/catalog/uta_uutuukisa

Humanika:

<http://www.librarything.com/catalog/Humanika>

Tertio:

<http://www.librarything.com/catalog/Humanika>

Tampere University Library Department of Health Sciences

<http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/kirjasto/english/laak/>

Tertio's photos – Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tertio/sets/72157608261154464/>

Tertio's slideshow – Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tertio/sets/72157622423094168/show/>

Tertio – Slideshare

<http://www.slideshare.net/tertiolainen/presentations>

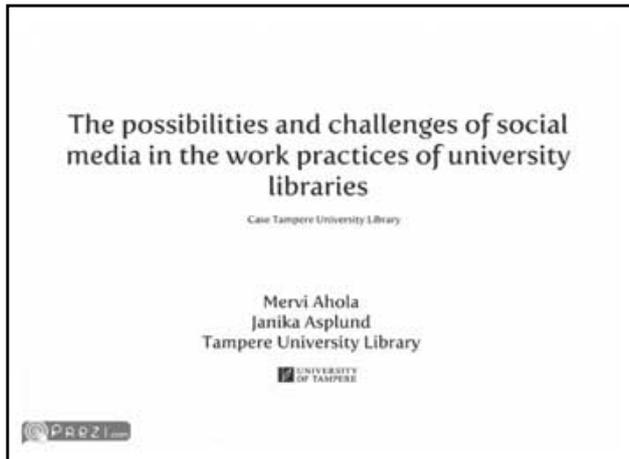
Tertio – Facebook

<http://facebook.com/TayKTertio>

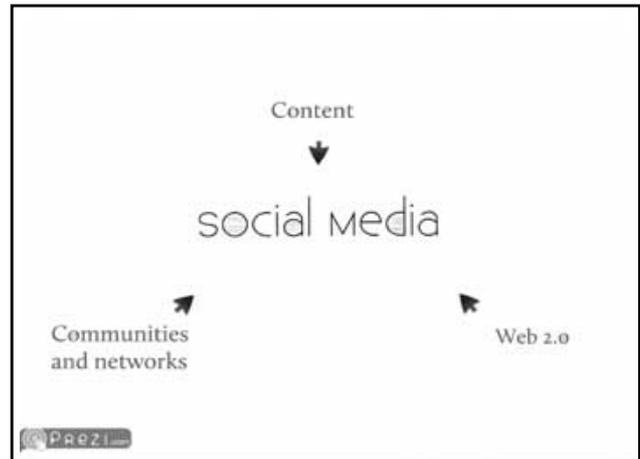
Twitter

<http://twitter.com/>

Slide 1



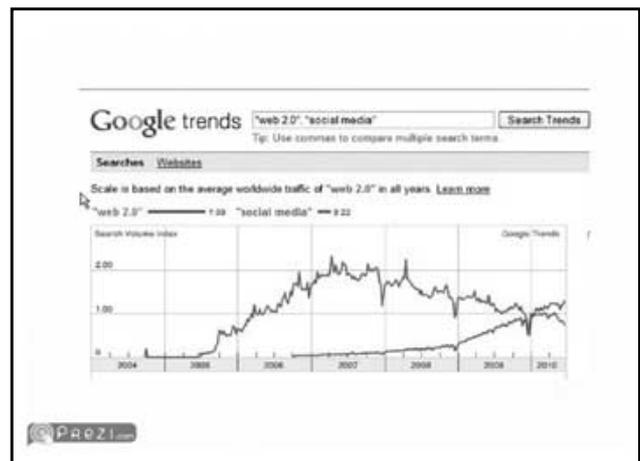
Slide 2



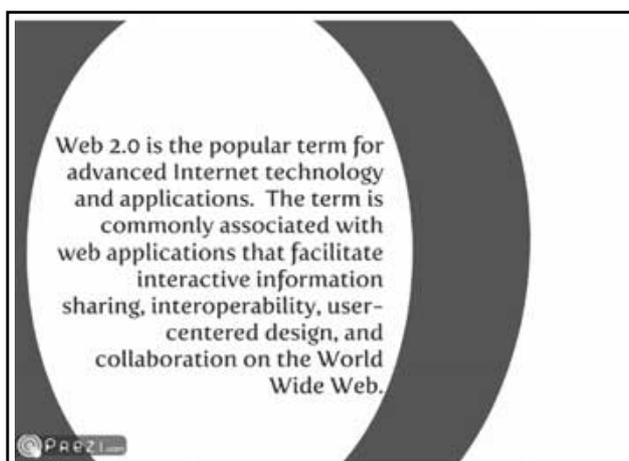
Slide 3



Slide 4



Slide 5



Slide 6



Slide 7

A social media community is a group of interacting people sharing a virtual environment which can be the whole Internet or a closed organisation.

Social media tools are increasingly used for collaboration, communication and document sharing within an organization. A wiki platform works effectively as an intranet.

Slide 8

Content

↓

Slide 9

Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, wikis and blogs are centered on user interaction and produced by users together. These sites have low threshold, and the content spreads immediately and usually without any control.

Slide 10

↓

social media

↖ ↗

Slide 11

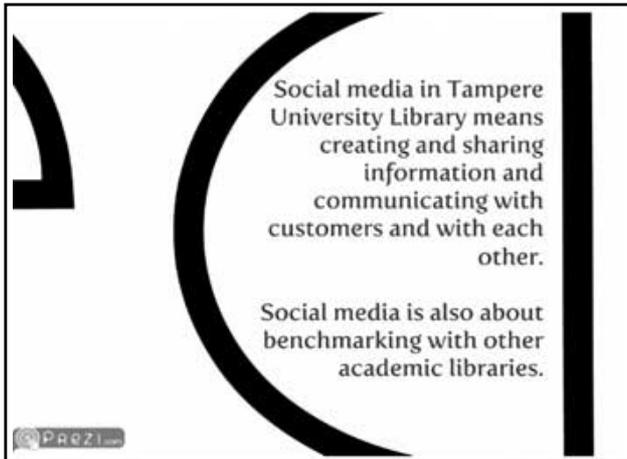
Social media is an umbrella term describing web services that are based on the content users create.

Social media in libraries is conversation between customers and employees and between all employees.

Slide 12

The social media conversation is not controlled or organized. At its best, the conversation is fun and catching. Before we can join the conversation, we need to be present and listen to our customers and learn from them.

Slide 13

A slide with a large, stylized letter 'C' in the background. The text is centered within the 'C'.

Social media in Tampere University Library means creating and sharing information and communicating with customers and with each other.

Social media is also about benchmarking with other academic libraries.

PREZI

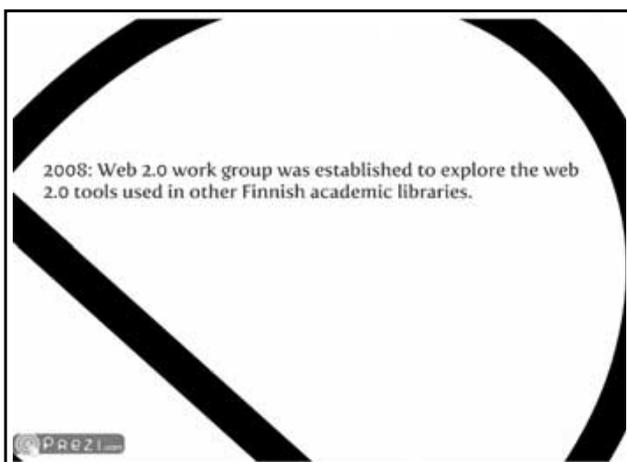
Slide 14

A slide with the word 'implementation' in a simple, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered on the page.

implementation

PREZI

Slide 15

A slide with a large, stylized letter 'N' in the background. The text is centered within the 'N'.

2008: Web 2.0 work group was established to explore the web 2.0 tools used in other Finnish academic libraries.

PREZI

Slide 16

A slide with a large, stylized letter 'A' in the background. The text is centered within the 'A'.

2009: The official library blog was established. LibraryThing was selected as a pilot project and wiki-intranet was rolled out. The Facebook page of the Department Library of Health Sciences was created.

PREZI

Slide 17

A slide with a large, stylized letter 'C' in the background. The text is centered within the 'C'.

2010: Social Media team was established, which arranged workshops for the library staff on using wiki platform, blogging, LibraryThing and Facebook. The team also began to outline a social media policy for Tampere University Library together with the management group.

PREZI

Slide 18

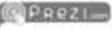
A slide with a large, stylized letter 'C' in the background. The text is centered within the 'C'.

2011 : The team will offer more workshops for the staff on selected tools like Prezi, Slideshare, IGoogle. The team continues to work on the social media policy.

PREZI

Slide 19

where are we now?



Slide 20

wiki-intranet

- Collaborative knowledge sharing
- Building an information resource to which all members of the organization can contribute.
- Building a sense of community.

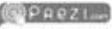



Slide 21

blogs

- Communication
 - Sharing
 - Commenting
- Embedded SlideShare shows
- Polls





Slide 22

LibraryThing

- A selection of new book acquisitions for the main library and department libraries respectively
- Customers can make comments and subscribe to an RSS feed
- Marketing new books in an easy and entertaining way.




Slide 23

Feeds

- It is easy to keep up with what is new: follow the blog and newsletters
- Librarians can encourage the customers to subscribe to library news.




Slide 24

slideshare

- Sharing knowledge of the library staff with customers and colleagues
- Embedding slideshows into the library blog




Slide 25

Flickr

- Libraries can add photos easily to Flickr and use them in blogs as embedded slideshows.
- Slideshows can be used in library marketing.



PREZI.com

Slide 26

Facebook

- The facebook page of the academic library is a light and more informal version of the official library website.
- Librarians have to know how their customers think and be where they are, and know their working habits.
 - Library's facebook page has to be sold to the customers.
- Library's facebook page works as a marketing tool if it has fans and if the updates lead them to library website and scholarly content.



PREZI.com

Slide 27

LinkedIn

- A librarian never has enough contacts!
- LinkedIn works as an electronic business card and as a modern CV
- A modern tool for professional collaboration
 - You can participate in groups and expand your professional networks



PREZI.com

Slide 28

Twitter

- Participating and sharing
- Reading conference news in advance
- Sharing conferences realtime and helping colleagues to follow the conference topics by linking hashtags to the wiki intranet.



PREZI.com

Slide 29

iGoogle

- GoogleDocs
- Gmail
- Google calendar
- Google alerts
- Google Reader



PREZI.com

Slide 30

other services

- Doodle : You are able to arrange times for meetings in a democratic way.
- Prezi : you can make new kind of slideshows
- CamStudio : easy tool to make lively quickguides and then be embedded to your blog.

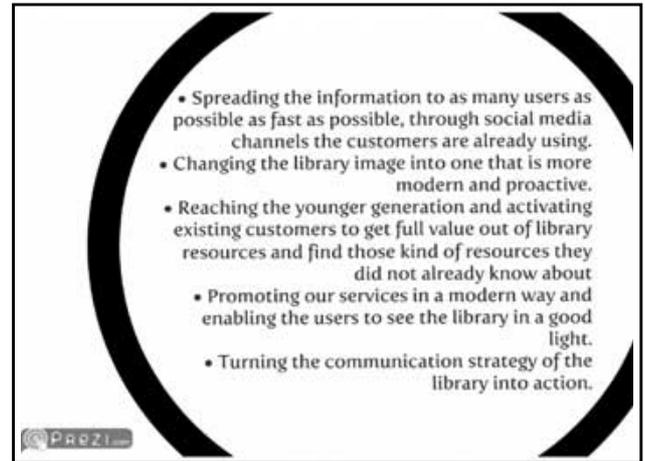


PREZI.com

Slide 31



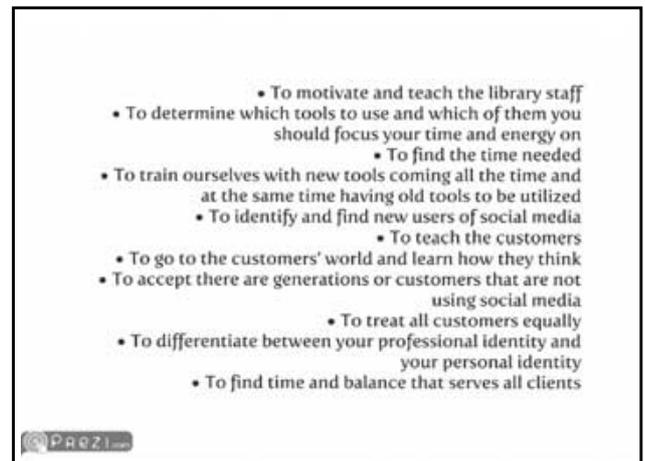
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Slide 33



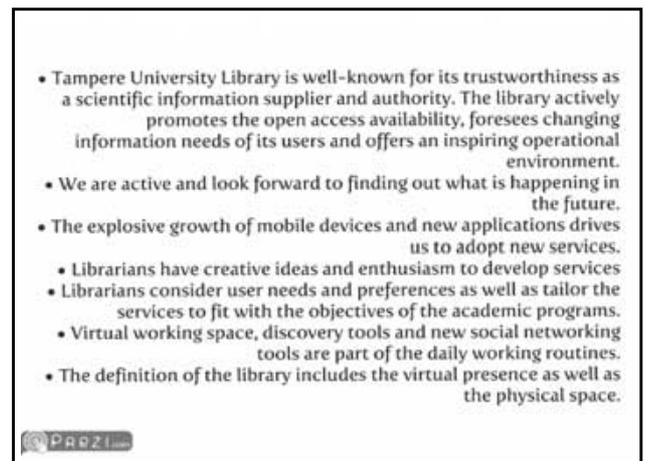
Slide 34



Slide 35



Slide 36





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