

AAUW Convention
Website Tools Roundtable
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Social Tools

Ann MacKay, CAE

Corresponding Secretary, Warner Robins Branch, GA

There are many web-based tools that promote connection, interaction and increase productivity. I have included the tools that I have personally used.

Definition:

Social media is a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. It's a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologues (one to many) into dialogues (many to many). Social media has become extremely popular because it allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal and business. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media

1. Google Groups

Define: [Google Groups](#) is a free service from Google where groups of people have discussions about common interests. Internet users can find discussion groups related to their interests and participate in threaded conversations, either through the Google Groups web interface, or by e-mail. Groups can be closed to members only.

Goal: The goal for the Branch use of Google Groups is to foster communications between meetings, increase communication to members that do not attend meetings and provide a way for members to announce community events or request help for projects.

Costs and Money: Google Groups is free. There was a few hours setting it up and adding email addresses.

Return on Investment: Members are more connected. Before, if you were not at a meeting, you wouldn't hear about some community events or if help was needed for a project. It did take awhile for people to understand how it worked and how to send replies. Although there has been only 130 messages since we started the group in October of 2007, that is 130 more contacts with **all** members than we had before. The group is for members only. The emails are always up to date (the moderator does the emails) so members don't have to worry about keeping the entire membership list current.

Branch Solution: It is more like email than other tools like Twitter and Facebook. It arrives in the inbox and looks like a regular email except with tag in the subject line [AAUW_WR]. There are options in the Google Group for other pages. I added a branch calendar, policy updates, community spotlight when we were using a traditional website which was hard to update. There also is a place to upload files (minutes, public policy updates) and photos. Members can add and delete items which can be a negative or a positive.

Broader Strategy: The Google Apps could be integrated with the Groups for a full package of applications. It is free for non-profits. We are registered but have not used it. The applications that are all integrated are: Email, Calendar, Chat, Start Page, Docs, Sites, Mobile, and Web pages (googlepages.com is included in the URL)

2. Mynewsletterbuilder

Define: MyNewsletterBuilder is an online email marketing and e-newsletter service. It is easy for anyone to create, send, and track rich multimedia html-format emails for permission-based email marketing and email newsletters. Templates are provided which can be modified to change color schemes and add a custom header.

Goal: As the newsletter editor, it was my goal to reduce the production time of the newsletter, eliminate possible spam problems with my ISP, and provide a newsletter that would not require 3rd party applications to open and read PDF files. I did not have enough expertise to code a HTML newsletter myself. <http://www.mynewsletterbuilder.com/>

Cost and Money: The HTML newsletter pricing is \$10 per month or \$8 per month prepaid for 12 months. 250 emails can be sent per month. Since membership is less than that, extra announcements can be sent.

Return on Investment: The money spent on postage and ink toner was about what the yearly fee is for using this service. All the members have email addresses including our members in their middle 80s. It reduced layout and production time, reduced the number of steps in producing the newsletter including converting to PDF, shrinking the PDF to make the email limit for size of attachments, and troubleshooting with members when the PDF file couldn't be opened.

Branch Solutions: There are other HTML newsletter companies. This was the cheapest I found for my purposes. I used the free trial for a month and decided this web app was easy for me to use. Other members should be able to use the software with some instruction after my term of office is completed.

Broader Strategy: It is important to project a professional image to members and perspective members. An HTML newsletter does that. Members are used to receiving HTML newsletters from companies, AAUW and other organizations.

3. Slideshare

Define: [Slideshare](http://www.slideshare.net) is a site where you can host your PowerPoint presentations (other formats also) and share them with others. Presentations can be linked to the website or be embedded in a web page. You can also synchronize an MP3 audio file (podcast) with the slideset to create a slidecast—a more powerful way of distributing presentations/tutorials. Slideshare is also a tremendous resource site for presentations on a variety of topics, including many of the tools I mention.
www.slideshare.net

Goal: A Powerpoint presentation was prepared for the state convention as part of a membership showcase. Since many members did not attend the convention, slideshare became the vehicle to share the presentation for all members by uploading it to Slideshare and then embedding it into the website.

Cost and Money: The use of Slideshare is free.

Return on Investment: Slideshare becomes a great tool to share existing PPT presentations for a broader audience. It can be a vehicle for training with videos of “how to do something.” Audio can be added to a presentation for a complete package.

Branch Strategy: Since all members do not attend meetings, Slideshare can be used to share the information with others. The site provides the code to embed a slide show into a website which is a big advantage when using a blogging platform.

Broader Strategy: Slide presentations offered at the state and branch level can be made available to AAUW and visa versa.

4. Transfer Big Files

Define: This category of web-based tools allows you to share large files with others. Files are uploaded to the web site and an email is send to the person that will receive the file. There is a time limit to download the file by clicking on the link in the email. A conventional email client prevents you from sending big files because there usually is a size limit on email attachments.

Goal: I needed to receive a large powerpoint presentation for proofing and tweaking. Transfer Big Files was the solution. <http://www.transferbigfiles.com/>

Cost and Money: The site is free and takes as much time as sending an email.

Return on Investment: This tool eliminates a lot of frustration and time by getting information to another person without having to burn a CD to mail or meet with the person to transfer content on a CD or Flash Drive.

Branch Strategy: It is useful for officers or committee members to share files as needed.

Broader Strategy: There is no excuse not to get information as needed.

5. Dropbox

Define: This new web-based tool allows you to transfer files of any size through the Dropbox server. It works with computers running Windows, Macintosh or Linux operating systems. It is also useful to share files between desktop and laptop computers. Public and private folders can be set up. The files sync in seconds.

Goal: I work on two machines and it was a nuisance to transfer large files on a flash drive when I was not connected to the same network. Dropbox is a new website which was runner up for the best new start-up in 2008 for the Crunchies awards. <https://www.getdropbox.com/>

Cost and Money: It is free and easy to use.

Branch Strategy: This becomes another tool in our kit to be more productive and share files. It may be the answer for small groups to set up a website. The Dropbox website offers instructions how to use it for a small website without a server.

Dropbox is an easy way to create a quick website without the need for a server. You are limited to client side scripts and HTML since Dropbox cannot run any server side stuff.

- *Create a folder in your Public folder for your website.*
- *Put your entire website under this folder.*
- *Right click on the homepage of your website (usually something like home.htm or index.html) and get the public URL for it.*
- *Bookmark this URL. You can share this URL with your friends, and let them access your website.*
- *Alternatively, you can use TinyUrl to create a shorter, custom link to your page or setup a redirect from a domain name you already own.*

6. Yugma Free Web Conferencing

Define: This service offers another web-based tool for free groupware or collaborative software. It allows anyone, anywhere to instantly share their desktop and ideas with others. The free version allows one individual to share with others. The Pro version allows others to take over the mouse and keyboard. There is a Skype version. <https://www.yugma.com/>

Goal: Nancy Shoemaker gave me the heads up on this tool. It is great for training. I needed some way to offer training for other Georgia members on the revamped website.

Cost: The free version allows free desktop sharing for 20 attendees with limitations on use of tools after 15 day free trail. The Pro version is \$14.95 per month for up to 50 attendees. The cost goes up for 100 and 500 attendees. There are presentation tools, whiteboard and annotation tools in the paid versions.

Branch Strategy: This is a great vehicle for training and webinars.

7. Mind Map Collaboration Online

Define: A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Mind maps are used to generate, visualize, structure, and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organization, problem solving, decision making, and writing.

I have use mind maps for several years using paper and pen. When software applications came on the scene I did try some programs. I use Personal Brain now. There are several mind mapping applications including a free application, FreeMind.

Cost: If you only mind map occasionally or if you want to collaborate in real-time with your colleagues, there are free online mind mapper or brainstormer applications. Four online mind map or brainstorm tools are:

- bubbl.us
- Mindomo
- MindMeister (I like this one)

- [Mind42](#)

Branch Strategy: There is potential to use groupware for project planning, brainstorming and a host of other uses. I think there is more potential for use at the national level.