

TEAMResearch—A Collaborative Media Tool for Libraries

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Proposal

This project will utilize Mightybell, a website creator that produces an exclusive social network, for the primary purpose of research and study group collaboration in an academic library setting between students and librarians. This site will allow many students to be reached and help simultaneously. Membership will be limited to students of the college for which the network is created, and will be validated by having students use their college email address for sign-up. Upon arrival to the site, users will be met with a landing page displaying two options: signing in or requesting to join by submitting their email address. The audience for the site will be college students and the site will be a place for them to discuss research findings, exchange tips, and help others find sources they are looking for, much in the same way people interact on sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This is also a way for librarians to help students find good sources for their research projects through digital means as students may not always be able to speak to a librarian when they need. This project also promotes community involvement and peer networking, allowing students to have a heightened sense of community and working together towards common goals.

The social network site would be managed and mediated by librarians and library staff because it is a tool that would be sponsored by the library to promote communication and collaboration on research projects. This means they control settings, approve new users, and help users navigate the site. Students would log in to this site just as they would log in to other social media services such as Facebook and Twitter, to be met by other students at the school and library staff. Students could have user profiles and chat one-on-one or in groups with other users. When a student makes a post, it is then able to be seen by everyone else on the site, which for now I will call TeamResearch. When a post is made, the user can decide into which of the

predetermined (by librarians) categories the post fits. To begin with, these categories called “Topics” would include Biology, Chemistry, English, History, Music, Political Science, Art, and Research Help. Because each post is assigned a general topic, users can browse through all the posts, on English for example, by navigating to the English topic posts area in the menu. Students could always request for new Topics to be implemented by communicating with a librarian. Students can also create subsections which can be private—invitation only which would work great for study groups, or public, which would be used for students that had a more specific subject on which they wanted to collaborate with many users, such as research on Edgar Allan Poe under the English Topic category. Students would use this service to help each other and interact with librarians 24/7.

The social media site would also have an area for moderators and users to create events. This would be helpful in getting the word out on events taking place at the library and elsewhere on campus that are related to research, lectures, and study groups. Along with creating events, users can also create polls which many classes use for research purposes in order to collect data for research projects. Mightybell also has a mobile app so users could sign in to the network from their smartphones for even easier access.

Nothing quite like this service is currently in use. The most similar services that are provided by libraries are programs such as “Ask a Librarian” which is used at ECU. This service allows students to call, email, text, or chat with a librarian in order to ask questions. The service I am proposing will allow students a way to interact with each other through academics and collaborate on research projects by helping lead other students to good sources they may know about through familiar interaction in a social network setting. This will also provide a new way

for librarians and students to interact with each other during the research process through an exclusive social media site for students of the school and librarians only.

Literature Review

Introduction: Collaborative Media

The use of social media as a tool for collaboration in the work place for the purposes of learning and knowledge management can also be known as *collaborative media*. There are many advantages to using digital collaboration through social media for learning in the workplace and Thomas and Akdere (2010) conclude that if it is not already so, that social media will soon become the most efficient way to teach and learn within a workplace—which is parallel with a college environment in this case. College is preparation for a career and collaborative media in college is a great way to prepare for the evolving workplace. Collaborative media makes it easier for larger groups to collaborate and learn from each other. As stated by Thomas and Akdere (2010), “problems—particularly in larger organizations—have become too broad and complex for any one person or, in some cases, any one team to solve...” The power of the internet and social media has allowed society to spread out, communicate across the world, and grow businesses, universities, and corporations exponentially and with ease. But with this expansion, problems arise in which it is difficult for one person or group of people in one place have difficulty solving on their own. However, the problems created by social media can also be solved with social media through collaborative media

Social media in general can have a large impact, positive and negative, on college students and can be broken down by information such as amount of time spent on social media, activities participated in, and the scope of connectivity to others. In some cases, it is the best way to reach out to and connect with these students. Social media is familiar to college students and

integrated into their daily lives. Social media can be used as a positive learning tool rather than a waste of time that is life-consuming. As students are constantly connected, a collaborative media tool would be natural to them and offer them a way to learn in a comfortable setting (Mastrodicasa & Metellus, 2013).

Social Media as an Educational Tool

One particular study used social media as a collaboration tool for users encountering similar life experiences and their learning through this tool. This particular study involves first-generation Latino college students. The results of this study show that the students found the social media collaboration tool helpful in preparing for college through talking with other students like themselves and also communicating with counselors who provided step-by-step instructions on different steps in the process (Ware & Ramos, 2013). Social media as a collaboration tool is beneficial socially and academically.

In another study, a librarian created a research learning module for first year college students. Upon completion of the module, the students would understand how to properly research and use the library's resources. The research concluded that the process presented is a great model to teach first year college students of all skill levels basic research techniques (Keyes & Barbier, 2013). The article also discusses successes and failures of the model and how the failures were fixed to better the model over time.

A Modern Learning Environment

Student culture in an academic library setting describes what students expect and how they use the library. Collaborative media only works if the students are in an environment where their intentions are understood (Braunstein, 2012). Braunstein (2012) poses several discussion points on the subject of collaborative media: "Should student research serve the immediate

objective of completing an assignment (to achieve a grade, a degree, a credential), or should it inculcate a love of learning for learning's sake? Are these goals mutually exclusive? In this process, do librarians function as service providers or as educators?" The questions posed all boil down to one major crossroads: research as an obligation vs. research as a desire to learn.

In a modern learning environment, students expect interactive environments rather than passive environments, according to research conducted by Braunstein (2012). Librarians can take advantage of the active learner by implementing programs that promote collaboration between students and librarians and promote the library as a learning center. Librarians also must possess collaboration and communication skills in order to stay relevant, which can be achieved by promoting different kinds of collaborative relationships (student-student, student-librarian, faculty-librarian, etc.) (Johnson, et. al. 2011). This is a central theme of collaborative media.

A Virtual Space

A final study researches whether or not a library-provided virtual space should be available when physical group study space is scarce, particularly when it comes to urban libraries, and also discusses a virtual space as an alternative collaboration option. The study concluded that libraries as a physical space are still necessary and the more popular option (Cocciolo, 2010). Through discussing the positive and negative aspects of a virtual library space, it is clear that students desire physical connection and study space. However, the notion is also presented that a virtual collaboration platform used to compliment a physical area could be effective. This article has an overall negative view on a virtual "space" but in doing so presents several reasons why social media collaboration could enhance user and group research experiences at the library.

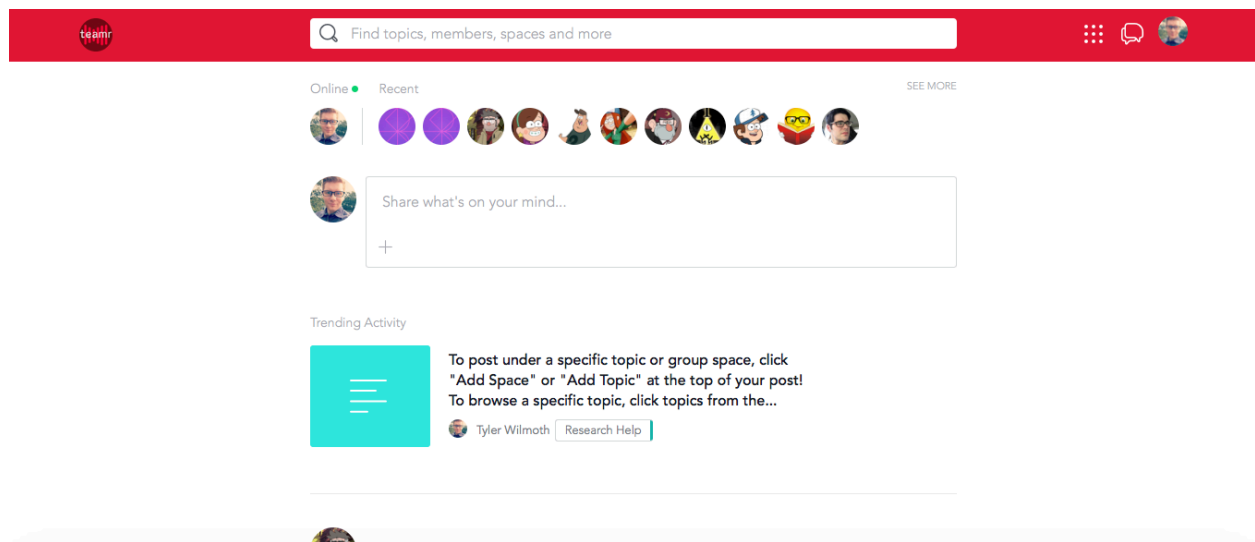
Conclusion

Research collaboration could be defined as a coming together of researchers to build upon one another and working towards the common goal of seeking new knowledge (Katz & Martin, 1997). Taking the tool of social media and applying it to research collaboration results in collaborative media. Collaborative media has the potential to open new doors, streamline the research process, and invoke community and peer bonding—something that the younger generation is perceived to lack. This collaborative media site could provide a virtual space for students and librarians to interact and receive and give research help in a new and innovative way.

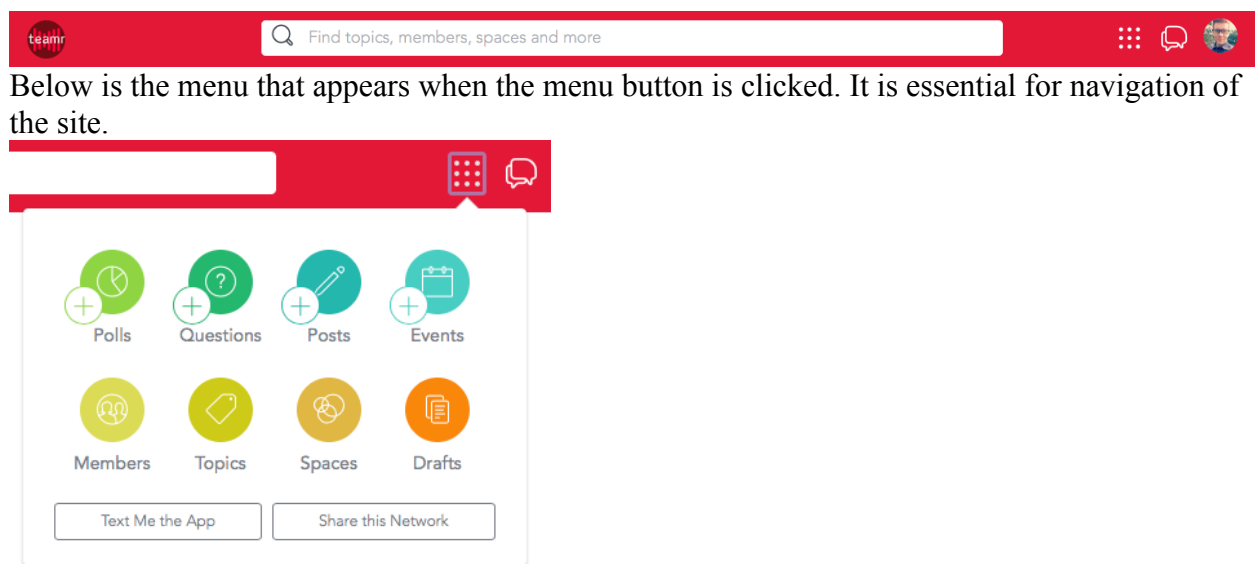
TEAMResearch in Action

Access to the TEAMResearch (a.k.a. TEAMR) collaboration site can be found at www.teamr.org. Once on this page, users can click the “Request Invite” button in order for TEAMR’s administrators to approve their status as a student and allow access to the collaborative media site. For the purposes of this project, I have created an “Example User” login so that it may be viewed in full. The username is “example@teamr.org” and the password is “libs6042” The following are screen shots that display the many features of TEAMR. It should also be noted that for the purposes of this assignment, there are several fictional characters as users in order to show examples and there are also other real users that have made posts and interactions for the assignment.


Upon logging in to the site, the user will see the following page which includes recent users, users currently online, a box to create a new post or status update, and top posts.



The first thing the user will notice on the main page is the menu bar, which is displayed at all times at the top of every page within TEAMR. It includes a search bar in which one can search for topics, posts, members, group space, events, and anything else posted within TEAMR. It also includes a menu button, a chat button, and a profile view button in that order.






Below are two examples of users asking questions and the user in the first example, Debbie, assigned the topic "Research Help" to her question.


 **Debbie** [REDACTED]
New Member

Question Research Help Posted 5 days ago

What is a good app or site to use for help with APA ?



 You answered

 1 Cheer  1 Comment

 **Tyler Wilmoth** ●
Host

The Perdue Online Writing Lab is by far the best site to use for help with APA (and MLA for that matter). This link will take you to the APA section:
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

The left sidebar contains links to specific items within APA


Asheville, NC · 5 days ago · 

This member, Marie, chose to post her question to the thread created by Debbie about APA help, as Marie most likely utilized the information provided to Debbie and wanted to join the conversation by asking a question on the previously created thread.

 **Marie** [REDACTED]
New Member

Looking for studies involving the co-occurrence of autism and deafness


[REDACTED] · 5 days ago ·  1

 **Tyler Wilmoth** ●
Host


A good place to start would be searching the "SAGE Publications" database through the library's website. You can also go directly to the autism section by using the link:
<http://aut.sagepub.com>


You could also use the main search bar to search the library's resources using the terms "co-occurrence AND autism AND deafness"

Here is a link to an article I found that lists related articles as well:
<http://aut.sagepub.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/content/7/3/245>

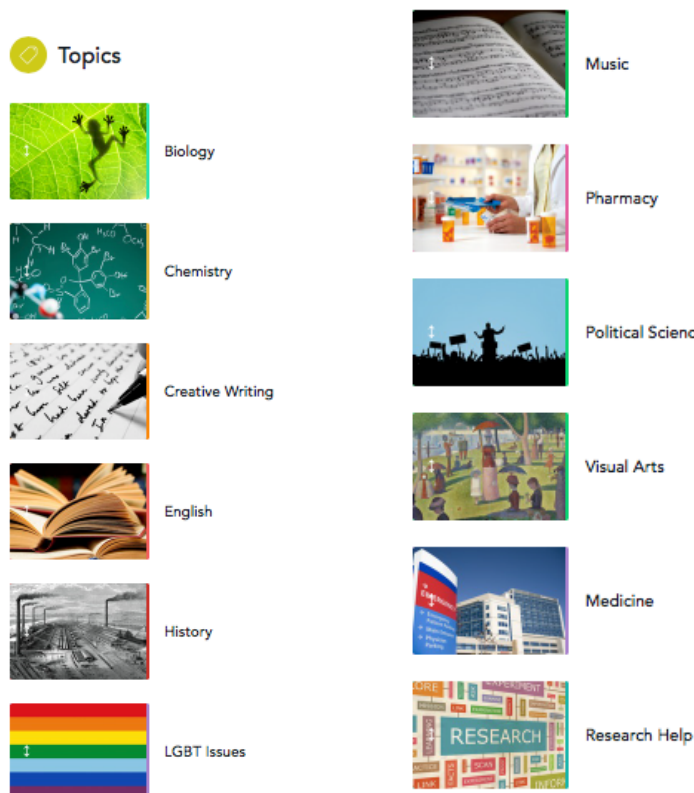


Autism
 Autism is a major, peer-reviewed, international journal, published 8

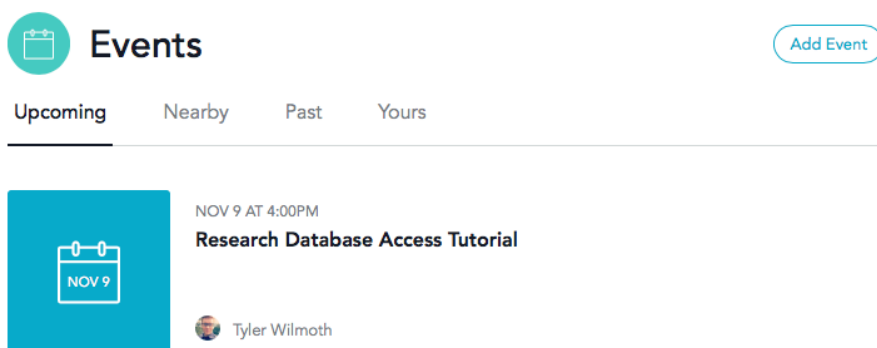
 AUTISM

Asheville, NC · 4 days ago · 

Below is a sample of the “Topics” page where users can click on a Topic to browse through all posts about that particular topic. Topics can always be changed or added by the site administrators.



Below is the “Events” section of the site, where hosts and users can post community events, live and digital. When the user clicks on the event, they will be taken to the event information page.



The event information page gives date, time, location and other information about the event as well as the ability to RSVP, see how many people are attending, and comment on the event.


Local Meetup


Research Database Access Tutorial

The semester is winding down, it's time for research papers! Visit Sherrod Library on Wednesday, November 9 for a free session presented by our Librarians on how to access scholarly research databases through the library's website.

You replied


I'm Going Maybe No

 **Wed Nov 9**
4:00pm - 6:00pm EST
[Export to Calendar](#)

 **Charles C. Sherrod Library**
344 J L Seehorn Jr Rd
Johnson City, TN


1 0 0

Attending Maybes Not Attending

Attending 

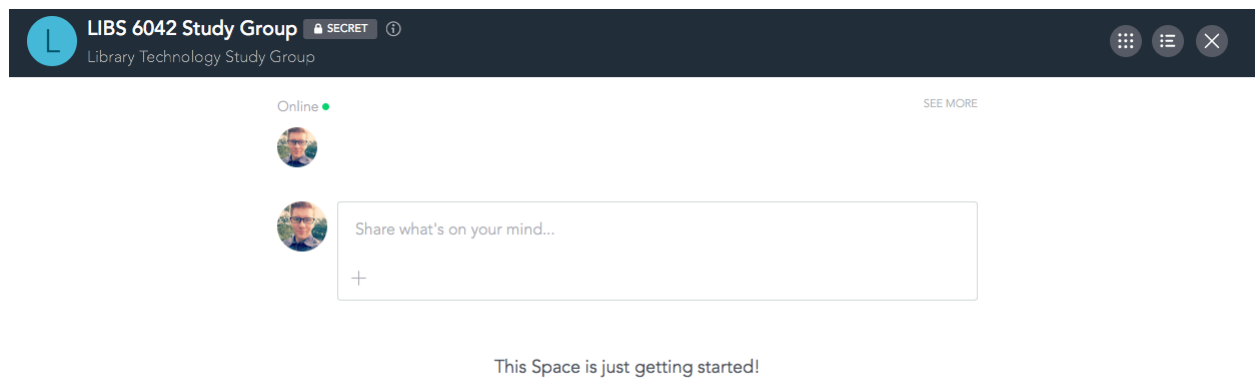
Charles C. Sherrod Library · Updated an hour ago

Join the conversation

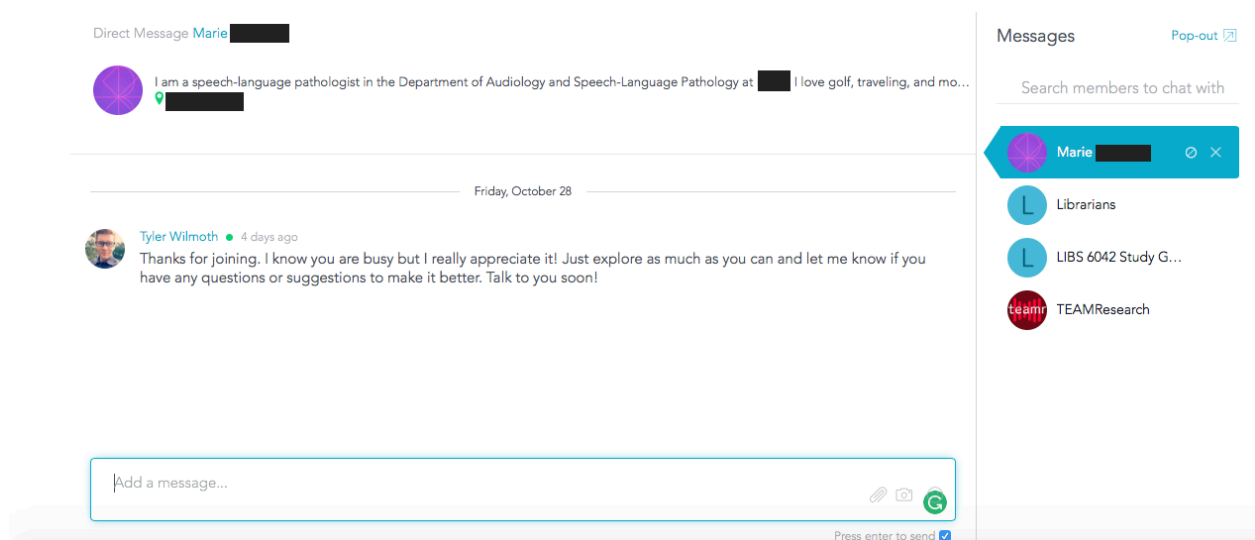
 Share your thoughts...

+

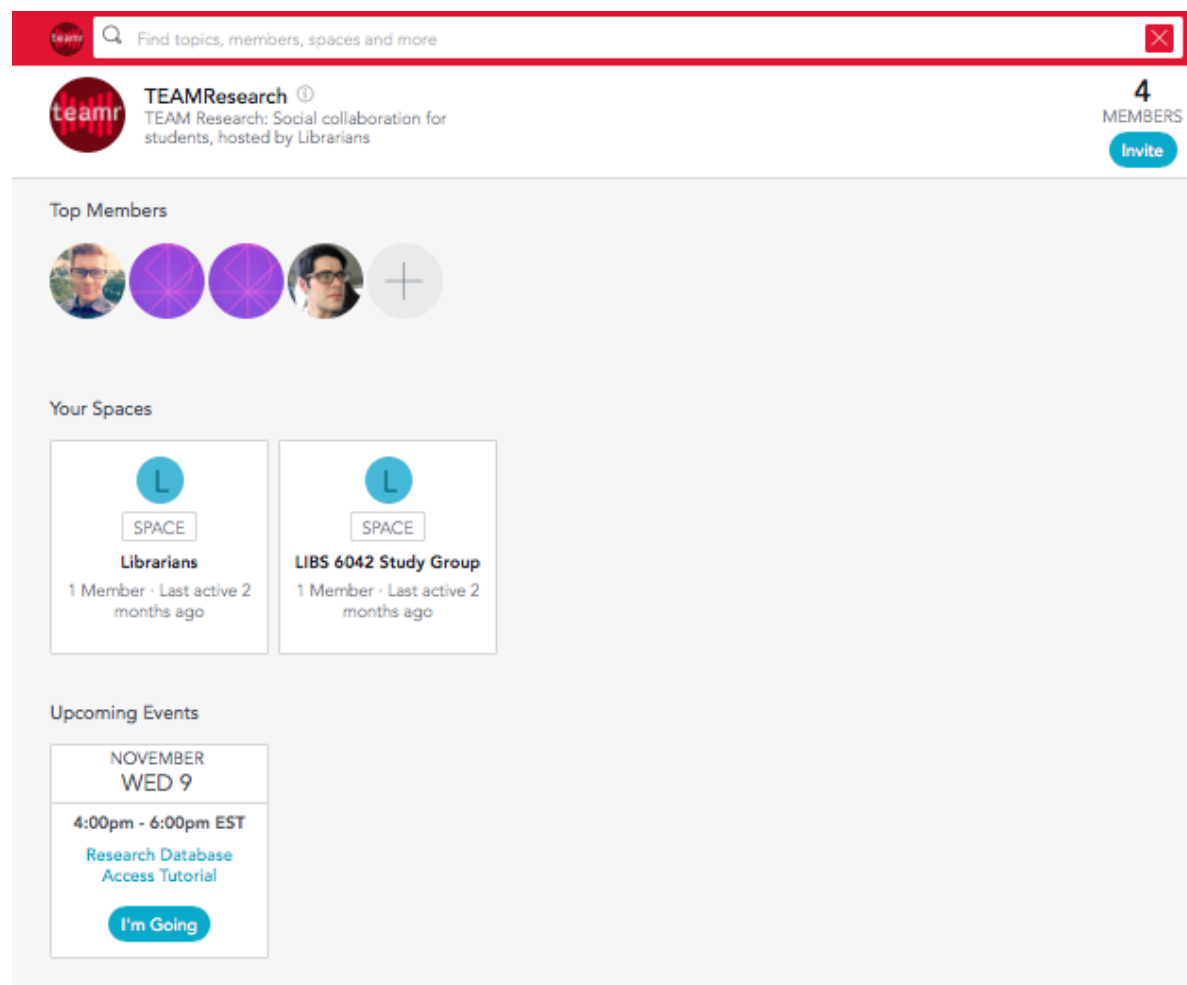
Users can also create “Spaces” for certain groups in order to only work with certain people. For example, a study group for a specific class can post to their space that they have made private and only members of the group can see those posts and only the group creator can add people to the group. This is a great tool for online group collaboration with specific people that works like a discussion board.



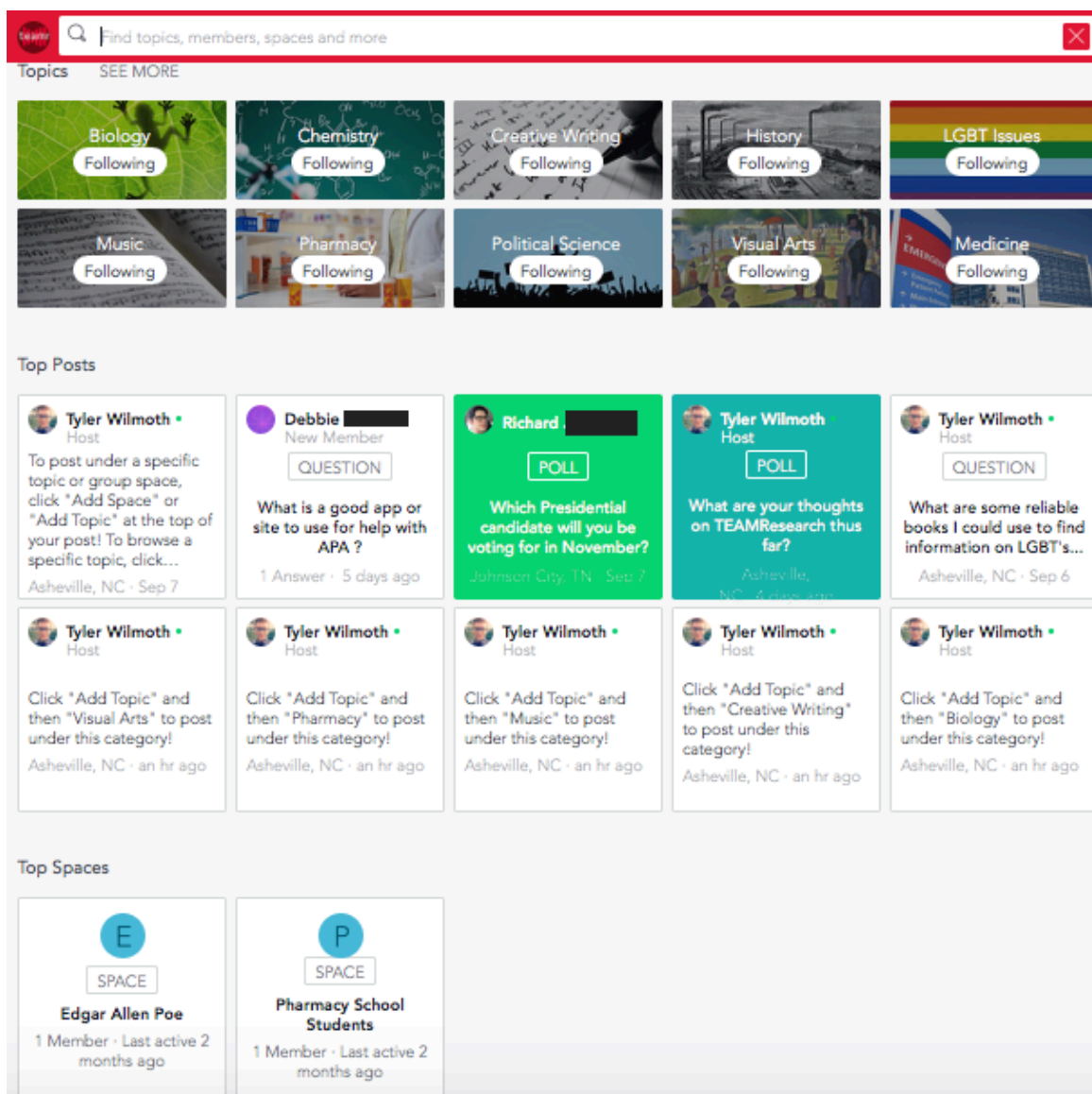
Users can also send direct messages, or “chat” with specific people or groups in private messages.



For new users, the explore page is a great place to start. It is a command center for everything the user is involved in and everything that is public within the site. It is displayed whenever the user clicks within the search bar. It shows “Top Members” or members that contribute often. The “Spaces” to which the user belongs, and Upcoming Events.



When the user continues scrolling on the Explore page, they will see a listing of popular topics, “Top Posts” or posts with the most interaction, and “Top Spaces” or public spaces that anyone can join and view that are receiving the most interaction.



Narrative

In developing the TEAMResearch social media technology tool, I began by thinking about something I would enjoy using in my university's library as a student—something that would allow me to find help from my peers and allow me to help them. When I think about walking through an information commons area or group study area of an academic library, I recall seeing students on their computers and phones, accessing social media while completing research and assignments. I then began to think about how social media, a permanent fixture in

the lives of an increasing number of college students, could be helpful to group work and the research process in general.

In distance education classes, there are often discussion boards within each class that allow collaboration, but those can get crowded and hard to follow after so many posts when trying to collaborate. There is also usually an “Ask a Librarian” feature through the websites of most college libraries at this point in time as well. However, I wanted to create something that would allow all of these things to be accessed in one place, for an entire student population, in order to streamline research collaboration between students with the expert help of librarians. Social media comes naturally to myself as well as so many college students, so I decided to create a way for all of this interaction to take place through an exclusive social media platform mediated by librarians.

This was a great idea in my mind, but it was challenging to find the right platform at first—even more challenging than I had initially thought. There were a couple of different services and templates I had used myself that had been created by others, but after working with them and exhausting all of the different features they offered, I knew they would not have the capability of doing everything I wanted to do with this tool. I did lots of research and experimentation with about 10 different platforms before I found Mightybell, which is the service I ultimately chose to use to build my social media site.

Once I had found the service I wanted to use and had my site created, it was challenging to “show off” all of its capabilities with myself only as a user, as I was not working in a library at the time I created the site and could not test it with users in a real library setting. I was able to get some of my family to join and use the site, but there still was not enough users to show the site’s full potential, so I overcame this obstacle by creating several different users with fictional

characters, and I think this was a really great breakthrough because the site was able to display interaction between many different users, which is its purpose.

I have designed websites and employee intranet platforms at small businesses for which I have worked over the past six or so years, so I had the experience of using web domains and dealing with the different technical aspects of web design, logo creation, and interaction through technology. I also learned many new things as I completed this project such as ways in which different social media feeds operate and how they are different from discussion boards, blog posts, and announcement pages I had used in the past. If I were to make any changes, I would add more topics for discussion and possibly open up the possibility for this same service to be used at many different academic libraries in which users would only interact with their peers at their unique library. This could be accomplished by creating sub-domains of teamr.org and building a new site under each one.

I plan to keep the site operational and keep the domain name registered, as it is a tool on which I have worked very hard and would like to someday implement it in the library in which I work. I plan on starting a new job as a library assistant in an academic library in the spring and would like to share it with the librarians there in order to not only look at implementing it, but to receive feedback from other experienced librarians in order to fine-tune this technology tool.

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