ENGAGING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN LEARNING THROUGH SOCIAL

NETWORKING

Jodi Pilgrim (corresponding author)
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
Box 8017
900 College Street
jpilgrim@umhb.edu

Christie Bledsoe
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
Box 8017
900 College Street
cbledsoe@umhb.edu

Abstract

One fast-growing facet of new literacies is social networking. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social networking on preservice teachers' knowledge of professional organizations and resources. In this study, Facebook was utilized to expose pre-service teachers to professional resources. A survey was administered to participants in a pretest and posttest format to measure knowledge of professional resources and trends in education. This article examines the process and data resulting from the use of social networks. Data provided both quantitative and qualitative results that support the use of social networks as a tool to expose preservice teachers to professional organizations and resources.

The International Reading Association (IRA) stated that the literacies used by today's students are much different from those of their parents, or even those of students just a decade ago (IRA, 2009). In May 2009, the IRA Board of Directors adopted a position statement titled "New Literacies and the 21st Century Technologies," which noted that in order "to become fully literate in today's world, students must become proficient in the literacies of the 21st century technologies" (p. 1). IRA proposed literacy educators have a responsibility to integrate information and communication technologies into the curriculum, to prepare students for the future.

Other terms for information and communication technologies in literature included digital literacies, new literacies, and media literacies. The annual survey of literacy leaders (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2009) labeled one of the 2010 topic categories *new literacies/digital literacies*. According to the survey, *new literacies/digital literacies* are among the *hot topics* in the field of reading education for 2010. In addition, at least 75 % of the survey respondents agreed new literacies/digital literacies *should be hot*.

What are new literacies, and why are they a *hot topic*? While literacy includes the ability to read and write, new literacies encompass a broader view of reading and writing in a world of technology. Researchers are now defining literacies within new technologies such as gaming software, video technologies, technologies that establish communities on the Internet, search engines, webpages, etc. (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). In examining literacies within today's social context, Leu, et al. (2004) reported that there are social forces at work today that frame the changes to literacy that we are experiencing. Among those forces is the rapid emergence of the Internet as a powerful new technology for information and communication.

Others supported the notion that information and communication technologies that power

complex social systems are rising in popularity and becoming integral to daily life around the

globe (Schlager, Farooq, Fusco, Schank, & Dwyer, 2009).

One fast-growing facet of new literacies is social networking. Social networking is the

result of the read-write Web, which enables interactive online participation and collaboration on

a scale not possible during the 1990s (Knobel & Laankshear, 2009). Popular forms of social

software included sites like MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter, which bring together online

networks, announcement spaces, group members, and interest groups within one online location

(www.myspace.com; www.facebook.com; www.twitter.com). With increasing mobile phone

popularity and enhanced cell phone technology, social networks may be accessed anytime and

anyplace (including the classroom). Today's online social networks are predominately free to

join, which makes them extremely widespread. According to Schlager, et al. (2009),"the

popularity of social networking among youth and teachers of the net generation is undeniable"

(p. 86).

The National School Board Association (NSBA, 2007) reported that 96% of students

with online access have used social networking technologies and more than 50 % communicate

online about school work. In school districts with structured online communities, participation

by teachers and administrations includes nearly half of staff members. The NSBA suggested

teachers are comfortable and knowledgeable enough to use social networking for educational

purposes with students. Schlager et al. (2009) noted the potential for online social networks to

become a central context for student and teacher learning and a catalyst for instructional

improvement. According to Schlager et al., "research must help education communities convert

the current enthusiasm for online social networking into reliable evidence of *how*, *when*, and *why*

online social networks do and do not advance learning, and we must develop scalable and

replicable models that maximize the value and benefits of emerging social networking models

and technologies" (p. 87). The study presented in this paper addresses the use of social

networking for instructional improvement and investigates *how*, *when*, and *why* social networks

do and do not advance learning.

Purpose of the Study

Evidence supports the popularity of social networks and their potential to advance

learning. In this study, we utilized social networking with preservice teachers. Our research

focused on Facebook, primarily because it was the social network used by the participating

preservice teachers. Facebook's widespread use has been well documented. According to

Heiberger and Harper (2008), Facebook held an 85% market share of four-year U.S. colleges and

universities. "Facebook puts a massive amount of information and communication power at a

student's fingertips, making it possibly the ultimate synthesis of student-relevant data"

(Heiberger & Harper, 2008, p. 20). According to Facebook statistics (2010), the Facebook social

network had more than 400 million active users with 50% of its users logging on in any given

day. In addition, Facebook had more than five billion pieces of content (web links, news stories,

blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.) shared each week and more than three million active Pages.

More than 20 million people joined Pages each day, and Pages created more than 5.3 billion fans

(Facebook, 2010).

Among the Pages accessible on Facebook were educational Pages that we considered

related to the curriculum our preservice teachers encounter during their undergraduate

coursework. We realized that utilizing Pages of professional organizations in the field of

education was a potential source of information for preservice teachers that educators needed to examine. Since Facebook and other social networks provide social interaction and information streaming to users, it is logical that educators could utilize such a powerful network in the classroom. The question is *how* to utilize the network.

Universities have tapped into the social network as a method to recruit and inform students. In addition, some instructors/teachers have used social networks as a means of communicating with students. While researchers have analyzed Facebook as a communication tool in an educational setting (Heiberger & Harper, 2008; Schlager, et al., 2009; Vorlet, 2009), concerns regarding the use of social networks such as Facebook included teacher professionalism; social issues where roles between friend and teacher are crossed; and student complaints that faculty members would judge them or use Facebook against them (Heiberger & Harper, 2008).

In this study, social networking was *not* used as a mode for communication. Instead, we examined an alternative dimension of Facebook that avoided ethical issues and that potentially enhanced pre-service teachers' professional knowledge. We proposed the use of Facebook as a means of exposing pre-service teachers to professional resources. A goal of teacher education programs is to introduce students to professional resources. Traditional assignments in teacher education include article reviews, which are intended to expose preservice teachers to professional journals as well as resources, topics, and issues in education. In this article, we address an alternative to the traditional article review. As Kress (2003) stated, "the former constellation of medium of book and mode of writing is giving way, and in many domains has already given way, to the new constellation of medium of screen and mode of image" (p. 9). Writing an article review doesn't guarantee an understanding of professional resources. Students

could become a fan of organizations through Facebook at no monetary expense. As a result, they

received informational postings throughout the week, often in a weblink or video format. The

rationale behind the use of social networks as a tool for professional exposure included the idea

that the internet is this generation's defining technology for literacy (Coiro & Dobler, 2007), and

students will utilize popular media such as Facebook. Why not use one *Page* to access

professional information?

Social networks such as Facebook provided access to valuable resources for educators.

Becoming a fan was a fast growing use of social networks, with six million plus users joining

Pages each day (Facebook, 2010). Users could become a fan of their favorite restaurant, favorite

movie, or favorite college. In addition, users could become a fan of Pages posted by professional

organizations that serve as resources/advocates of teacher education.   Examples of professional

Pages included the International Reading Association, the International Dyslexia Association,

National Council for Teachers of Mathematics and the National Education Association. By

joining the Pages of these professional organizations on Facebook, students received information

about trends and issues in education.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social networking on preservice

teachers' knowledge of professional organizations and professional resources. Pre-service

teachers in two separate courses (math/science strategy courses and reading courses) at a small

university accessed professional organizations through Facebook as a part a course assignment.

A survey was administered to the students in a pretest and posttest format to measure knowledge

of professional resources and trends in education. The study examined effects of the use of

Facebook as a tool to enhance professional knowledge.

Methodology

The research question guiding this study was *Are popular social networks effective venues for introducing preservice teachers to resources and issues in education?* This research question posed a broad look at using new literacies for learning. This article includes quantitative and qualitative findings collected from prospective teachers' survey responses after using social networks to connect them to educational organizations and resources. This section outlines the framework for the study and presents a course assignment that integrates social networks into education.

Participants

Participants for the study included two groups of pre-service teachers (N=51) enrolled in required undergraduate courses for their program of study at a small university in Central Texas. All but one of the participants were female. Participation was optional, and two students chose not to participate in the Facebook assignment. One student made the choice not to participate based on a lack of time to log onto Facebook. The other decision not to participate was associated with the student's computer problems. The ages of the participants varied. Students that chose to participate were both traditional college students and non-traditional college students. The control group (n=26) consisted of students in a math/science course taught by one of the researchers while the experimental group (n=25) consisted of students in a reading course taught by the other researcher. The students in both courses completed a pretest and posttest survey, which is described below.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in the fall 2009 university semester. A pretest - posttest quasi-experimental group design was used to assess the change in knowledge of professional resources.

Data sources included a pretest-posttest survey that consisted of 10 Likert-type statements (see Table 1). We developed the survey to measure preservice teacher's knowledge of professional organizations and resources. Participants responded on a five point scale that ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. In addition, participants were provided an opportunity to respond to each statement with a written answer supporting their answer choice. The written responses provided qualitative data.

Table 1 Likert Scale Survey Statements

I understand what a professional organization is. Explain:
I am knowledgeable about the types of resources/information professional organizations provide for educators. Provide example:
I use professional resources for information in my field. Provide example:
I understand trends in education. Name a recent trend:
I utilize online resources to locate educational information from professional resources. Example:
I am knowledgeable about professional journals relating to education. Example:
I currently subscribe to a professional journal or to a professional website. Example:
I plan to join (or renew membership in) a professional organization when I begin teaching. Example:
I intend to utilize online resources in lesson planning. Example:
I am likely to investigate professional resources for educators in my free time. Why or why not?

The experimental group was exposed to a *Professional Resource Study* assignment. The assignment required preservice teachers to become a fan of a professional organization, such as

IRA, Reading Rockets, or NEA. Upon becoming a fan, students were to 1) monitor an account

to check for feeds posted by an organization; 2) examine postings, looking for topics of

particular interest; 3) complete a final product. The assignment's final product was a reflection

of the process and a summary of one of the followed links posted by a professional organization.

Because the experimental group included students enrolled in a Reading Language Arts course,

participants were required to join (become a fan of) an organization focusing on literacy. The

researchers selected organizations that are known to support literacy professionals through a

wide range of resources that include accurate and up to date information in the field of literacy.

Participants followed organizations utilizing a social network for 10 weeks. After 10 weeks,

both the control group and the experimental group completed the posttest. Posttest results are

described below.

The control group did not participate in the Facebook assignment. However, the control

group did receive typical exposure to professional resources through article review assignments,

exposure to websites, and class discussions. Participants taking both courses simultaneously

were omitted from the study.

Data were also collected from the social network Pages. While all participants were

exposed to information provided by professional organizations during the study, participants in

the experimental group received information electronically through a digital medium. As

participants *followed* the organizations on Facebook, the researchers studied postings to learn

about types of resources and information accessible through social networks. Through data

collection and the process of following professional Pages, we found that organizations provided

different types of online information. While we could not require students to look at all of the

items posted by professional organizations on Facebook, we could access Facebook to monitor

the information that can potentially be accessed by a fan. The researchers monitored various

sites from August 2009 to December 2009. Sites monitored included the International Reading

Association (IRA), Reading Rockets (RR) the International Dyslexia Association (IDA),

National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the National Education Association

(NEA). The following discussion presents detailed insight into the type of information

participants received through this assignment and through their interactions with professional

organizations using Facebook.

Interaction on Facebook

Some organizations like IRA and RR posted information daily. Other sites were less

active. After becoming a fan of an organization, preservice teachers received newsfeeds from

the organizations they joined. In order to receive the newsfeed, the user must simply log onto

their Facebook Page. Facebook users could either read the posted newsfeeds, or they could

access their Pages and select the desired organization. By selecting an organization, participants

were selecting a link that took them to the webpage of the organization. Newsfeeds could then

be read within the same Page.

Reading Rockets

Through observing classroom discussions and submitted assignments, the researchers

found that Reading Rockets seemed to be the most popular Page with the participants. Reading

Rockets differed from the other professional organizations in that it targets parents as well as

educators. According to the website, "Reading Rockets is a national multimedia project offering

information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how

caring adults can help" (Reading Rockets, 2008). Reading Rockets partners with PBS television

programs and is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special

Education Programs.

Reading Rockets posted information almost daily, and the information covered a broad

variety of topics. For example, on August 25, 2009, they posted a link about building print

awareness. The link led to a helpful article. RR also posted, "A weekly classroom newsletter is

a great way to keep school-to-home communication going. Try our easy-to-use template:

http://ow.ly/16zw." Their September 9th post asked if handwriting is still important and

provided a link to vote in a poll. Another link provided access to a link for books and periodicals

for readers with print disabilities (Sept. 11, 2009). The information posted was relevant to the

coursework and provided exposure to many resources for the preservice teacher participants.

International Reading Association

IRA posted several updates per week, which included items of interest for literacy

educators such as national standards, notifications of journal publications, tips for teachers, and

educational resources. According to IRA's website (IRA, 1996-2010), the organization has been

committed to worldwide literacy since 1956. IRA has more than 70,000 members, and the

organization supports literacy professionals through a wide range of resources, advocacy efforts,

volunteerism, and professional development activities.

The following examples are postings from fall 2009:

1.) Take a look! The Standards for Reading Professionals 2010 Draft is available for

public comment from September 15 – November 1. We need your opinion about the

content and the new format. We encourage you to complete a brief survey to share your

comments with us. More details at the link below (IRA, September 15, 2009).

2.) A DVD set of "Reading as a Psycholinguistic Guessing Game," an institute organized

by Ken Goodman at IRA's 2009 Annual Convention in Minneapolis, is available through

the Center for Expansion of Language and Thinking. Find out more (IRA, September 18,

2009).

3.) What kind of online tools are you using in your classroom? Read about using Web

1.0 and Web 2.0 in *The Reading Teacher* article linked below, and then join in a

conversation with the article authors under the "Discussions" tab (IRA, September 24,

2009).

4.) Just published - the October issue of *The Reading Teacher* (IRA, September 29,

2009).

National Education Association

NEA has crusaded for the rights of educators and children since 1857. They provide

magazines and newsletters to members, and they post links on their Page to distribute relevant

information regarding trends in education. The links often lead to news articles. Sample posts

included the following:

1.) Not in isolation: Research shows that teachers improve their teaching when their

colleagues improve theirs (September 29, 2009).

2.) Students live in a Digital World. Are schools ready to join them (September 29,

2009)?

3.) Latest edition of the National Education Association: Is this going too far? Teachers

banned from contacting students on social networking sites... What do you think (October

24, 2009)?

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

Although NCTM was not utilized by the participants in the Reading/ Language Arts

class, it was monitored by the researchers. NCTM did not post links during the summer of 2009.

However, they posted math problems during the school year. For example, they posted a

Monday math problem, a Tuesday math problem, etc. Fans could participate in posting answers

and responses. Other posts announced opportunities for professional development.

Facebook statistics (2010) reported that the average user becomes a fan of four Pages

each month. We tracked the number of members on the Pages of professional organizations to

monitor their growth. Table 2 provides the number of fans for professional organizations as they

were monitored throughout the study.

Table 2 Fan Numbers of Professional Organizations

Pages	# of fans in June 2009	# of fans in October 2009	# of fans in February 2010
IRA	1104	3239	4240
RR	2895	4771	5775
NEA	1610	3439	4615
IDA	151	328	487
NCTM	716	1262	2064

Table 2 shows that the number of fans from June 2009 to February 2010 doubled and in

some instances nearly tripled. The growing popularity of these Pages suggested an interest in the

use of social networking as a source of information. It must be noted that Facebook (2010) has

recently changed the language for Pages from *Fan* to *Like*. While the terminology changed, the

concept of Pages has not. Instead of selecting *Become a fan* to join a Page, users will select *Like*

to join a Page.

Data Analysis

The participant responses on the survey pretest and posttest provided the data for this

mixed methods study. Statistical analysis included the ANCOVA to compare the mean scores

from the survey. The pretest score was the covariate to control for small preexisting differences

between the groups since random assignment was not used. The independent variable was the

professional resource assignment, and the dependent variable was awareness of professional

resources as measured by the posttest. SPSS Statistics 17.0 was the data analysis software. A

probability level of $p < 0.05$ was the standard to determine if results were statistically significant.

Qualitative information was analyzed as themes emerged.

Results

Preservice teachers in the experimental scored slightly higher on the posttest survey. The

survey consisted of 10 Likert-type items. Individual survey scores could range from 10 to 50.

Students that failed to answer all ten questions were omitted from data analysis, resulting in the

sample size (n) for the experimental group and the control group. The mean scores are presented

in Table 3.

Table 3 Knowledge of Professional Resources Posttest

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Control	31.6087	6.91335	23
Experimental	33.5652	4.64000	22

The ANCOVA was used as the statistic to determine if the differences were significant. The

ANCOVA controlled for initial differences in the pretest by calculating the pretest as the

covariate. The ANCOVA indicated there is no statistically significant main effect between

groups (F = 1.711 and p = .198).

Two survey items were most directly related to exposure to resources and issues in

education. Therefore, these items were analyzed independently. These items were also items

that all participants answered. Therefore, the sample size included all 51 participants. Survey

item one required participants to rate their knowledge of professional organizations. The mean

results for posttest question one are provided in Table 4.

Table 4 Rating of Knowledge of Professional Organizations

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Control	3. 4231	.94543	26
Experimental	4.2400	.72342	25

The ANCOVA was used as the statistic to determine if the differences were significant.

The ANCOVA controlled for initial differences in the pretest by calculating the pretest score as a

covariate. The ANCOVA indicated there was a statistically significant main effect between

groups (F = 10. 903 and p = .002). Therefore, students in the experimental group reported a

greater knowledge of professional organizations after the Facebook assignment.

Survey item two required participants to rate their knowledge about the types of

resources/information professional organizations provide for educators. The mean results for

posttest item two are provided in Table 5.

Table 5 Rating of Knowledge of Available Resources/Information

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Control	3. 0385	.99923	26
Experimental	4.0800	.70238	25

The ANCOVA was used as the statistic to determine if the differences were significant. The

ANCOVA controlled for initial differences in the pretest by calculating the pretest score as a

covariate. The ANCOVA indicated there was a statistically significant main effect between

groups (F = 17.255 and p = .000). Therefore, students in the experimental group reported greater

knowledge of resources and information after completing the Facebook assignment. Analyzing

survey items one and two provided significant quantitative data.

Participants' written responses to each survey statement provided information about their

knowledge of professional resources. The written responses on the pretest were compared to

responses on the posttest and were analyzed qualitatively. We again concentrated our analysis

on survey items one and two. We provide here only a brief illustration of the overall results.

Differences between group explanations were analyzed in an effort to understand the

reasons behind the survey results. *What was the difference in the experimental group and*

control group? After rating their knowledge of professional organizations (item one),

participants were prompted to explain their response. Responses for both groups demonstrated

that participants gained knowledge about professional organizations and resources. Participant

explanations emerged on the posttest to include accurate ideas conveying knowledge of

professional organizations. Responses varied but included ideas about organizations as providers

of *support, legal information, professional information*, and *ideas*. Some responses included one

of these ideas while others may have included many of these ideas. The most significant change

in responses for both groups was a broader understanding of professional organizations. While

pretest responses seemed to focus on one idea, which was primarily that organizations were

legal/insurance providers, posttest responses demonstrated knowledge of professional

organizations as services with multiple roles.

Comparison of groups was difficult because the control group participants did not all

write responses to the open-ended survey items. Participants in the experimental group did write

responses/explanations. The researchers do not have enough information to determine if the

responses were left blank due to a lack of understanding or due to other factors. What *was*

determined was that the experimental group's answers were more thorough and indicated a

greater (more explicit) understanding of the *ideas* mentioned above.

After rating their knowledge about types of resources/information professional

organizations provide for educators (item two), participants were prompted to explain their

response. Written explanations on the pretest survey for both groups reflected a lack of

understanding of professional organizations as sources of information for educators. Participants

could not explain the types of resources available from professional organizations. They lacked

knowledge regarding how to utilize professional organizations in their field of study.

Responses for both groups on posttest survey item two demonstrated that participants

gained knowledge about the types of resources/information available from professional

organizations. Participant explanations evolved to include many services provided by

professional organizations. Responses included the following categories of answers:

articles/journals, books, liability insurance, ideas, regulations, standards, benefits,

activities/lessons. In addition, participants realized that professional organizations represent the

members in the legislative process. Again, not every participant in the control group wrote a

response to the survey item. The researchers determined that the experimental group's answers

were more thorough and indicated a greater (more explicit) understanding of the *services*

mentioned above.

Posttest responses for the experimental group included concepts about professional

organizations that were learned from exposure to professional organizations on Facebook.

Experimental group responses included specific ideas they read online. For example,

participants explained that organizations provide activities and lessons, *and* their responses

included specific examples of activities provided. One student wrote about a phonemic

awareness activity posted by Reading Rockets while another student mentioned a mystery reader

activity that had been posted by Reading Rockets. Participants were exposed to a variety of

information through their access to professional organizations on Facebook. While some class

discussion resulted from postings encountered on Facebook, the various resources provided by

professional organizations was not *taught* to participants. The researchers assumed the

differences could be attributed to the independent variable.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study examined effects of the use of social networking as a tool to enhance

professional knowledge. Data supported the use of social networks as a tool to expose preservice

teachers to professional organizations and to trends and issues in education. Although there was

no statistically significant main effect between groups on the Likert-type survey, researchers

found statistically significant differences between groups' pretest/posttest scores on survey items

one and two. In addition, qualitative analysis suggested that participants gained knowledge about

professional organizations and resources through the independent variable, which was the

professional resource assignment utilizing social networks.

The researchers introduced an alternative to the traditional article review. We did not

determine greater success of one over the other. Instead, we suggest that using popular social

networks may enhance preservice teachers' knowledge of professional organizations and of

trends and issues in education. Exposure to articles through professional journals does not

always result in knowledge about the organization that produced the journal. However, by

becoming a fan of the IRA, the Facebook user received notices when the journal was published.

Students in the education program began to make connections regarding the type of information

professional organizations provide as they interacted with organizations online. They recognized

professional organizations and learned about resources provided by the organizations.

Social networking is not the only way to electronically access professional organizations.

The more obvious way would be for a student to use a direct link to an organization's website.

The rationale behind using the social network in the course assignment (as opposed to a direct

link for each organization) was to provide one link where multiple organizations could be

accessed simultaneously. In addition, we knew social networks were highly popular among our

students, and we wanted to engage them with a medium we knew they were likely to access. As

professional information is posted as feeds on Facebook, group members may respond and

interact with other members, just as users can interact with their *friends* on Facebook. The

potential for motivation through a Facebook Page was an innovative way to introduce preservice

teachers to professional organizations and to get students involved with discussions initiated on

Facebook Pages. Student learning became more social, which potentially increased interest in

learning. Interaction on Facebook often stimulated classroom discussions among the preservice

teachers. Bledsoe and Pilgrim (2011) collected student written reflections which included the

following statements:

> -I was amazed at how much information was out there for teachers. I was even more
>
> surprised to find it on Facebook.
>
> -Facebook made it easy to keep up with the organizations and post feedback to
>
> discussions.
>
> -I became a fan of the International Reading Association to find that social networking is
>
> not only used to generate content for teachers, but is the process of initiating, developing,
>
> and maintaining friendships and collegial or professional relationships for mutual benefit.
>
> (p. 28)

Implications for Education

New literacies refer to new forms of literacy made possible by digital technology

developments. The nature of literacy changes regularly and rapidly as the Internet and other

communication technologies emerge. The challenge of new literacies is to integrate information

and communication technologies into the curriculum to prepare students for the future. With this

in mind, we sought an effective use of new literacies to advance learning by using social

networking to intentionally connect students to professional organizations.

While the nature of literacy is changing, communication technologies are emerging as a

widely popular facet of the Internet. Interaction with social networking is becoming a part of

daily social activity. Integrating education into this social phenomenon is an effective way to

promote continuous learning. These changes and trends support a need for educators to improve

and adapt instruction in the classroom. While literacy becomes richer and more complex,

educators should adapt instruction and assignments that reflect these changes. Findings from our

study suggest that educators need to devote attention to social networks as source of *learning* for

pre-service teachers. Social networks are among the information and communication

technologies of the future. We earlier cited an appeal for research that helps education

communities convert the current enthusiasm for online social networking into reliable evidence

of *how, when,* and *why* online social networks do and do not advance learning (Schlager et al.,

2009). The findings from this study indicate utilizing social networks for professional

information could promote learning in a social, engaging way. It is also probable that the

students may continue to reap the benefits of the Pages after completing the assignment, since

many students are using Facebook for social networking. Exposing pre-service teachers to

professional organizations is a necessary component of teacher preparation, and social

networking provides information at the touch of a key.

References

Bledsoe, C. & Pilgrim, J. (February/March 2011). Preservice and inservice teachers find IRA via

Facebook. *Reading Today*, *28* (4).

Cassidy, J., Cassidy, D. (2009). What's hot for 2009. *Reading Today, 26* (4), 1-8.

Coiro, J. & Dobler, E. (2007). Exploring the online reading comprehension strategies used by

sixth-grade skilled readers to search for and locate information on the Internet. *Reading*

Research Quarterly 42 (2), 214-257.

Facebook, Help Center (2010). Retrieved from http://www.facebook.com/help/?faq=17167

Facebook. Statistics (2010). Retrieved from http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics.

Heiberger, G., & Harper, R. (2008). Have you facebooked Astin lately? Using technology to

increase student involvement. *New Directions for Student Services*, (124), 19-35.

doi:10.1002/ss.293.

International Reading Association (2009). *New literacies and 21st-century technologies: A*

position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA PS 1067).

http://www.reading.org/General/AboutIRA/PositionStatements/21stCenturyLiteracies.asp

x.

International Reading Association. Facebook Page (2009). Retrieved from

http://www.facebook.com/NEA.ORG?ref=nf#!/pages/International-Reading-

Association/81491751082?ref=sgm.

International Reading Association. About IRA (1996-2010). Retrieved from

http://www.reading.org/General/AboutIRA.aspx.

Knobel, M. & Lankshear, C. (2009). Digital literacies: Wikis, digital literacies, and professional

>   growth. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 52*(7), 631-634.

Kress, G. (2003) *Literacy in the new media age.* London: Routledge.

Leu, D. J., Kinzer, C. K., Coiro, J. L., Cammack, D. W. (2004). New literacies: Toward a theory

>   of new literacies emerging from the internet and other information and communication

>   technologies. *Reading Online*. Retrieved from

>   http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/leu/.

National Education Association. About NEA (2002-2010). Retrieved from

>   http://www.nea.org/home/2580.htm.

National School Boards Association (2007). *Creating and connecting: Research and guidelines*

>   *on online social—and educational—networking*. Retrieved from

>   http://www.nsba.org/site/docs/41400/41340.pdf

Reading Rockets. About Reading Rockets (2008). Retrieved from

>   http://www.readingrockets.org/about

Schlager, M. S., Farooq, U., Fusco, J., Schank, P., & Dwyer, N. (2009).

>   Analyzing online teacher networks: Cyber networks require cyber research tools. *Journal*

>   *of Teacher Education, 60* (86), 86-100.

Vorlet, C. (2009). Facebook: The classroom commons? *The Chronicle Review*. Retrieved

>   September 29, 2009, from http://chronicle.com/article/Facebook-The-New-

>   Classroom/48575/?key=S25xcglvZ3EdM3VrfHITKCYCPS4plkl7OXtFY ygaZ1Fc