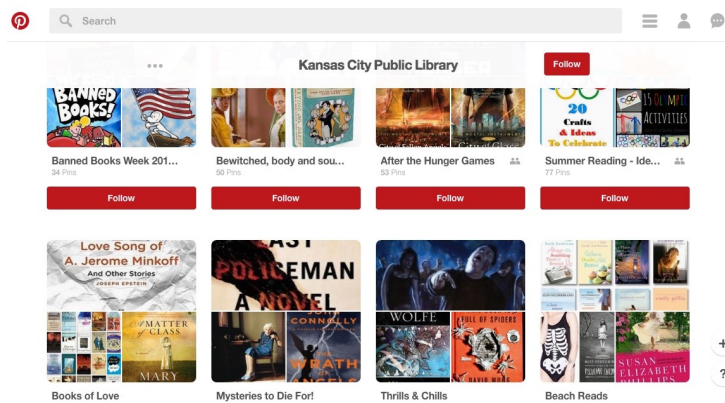
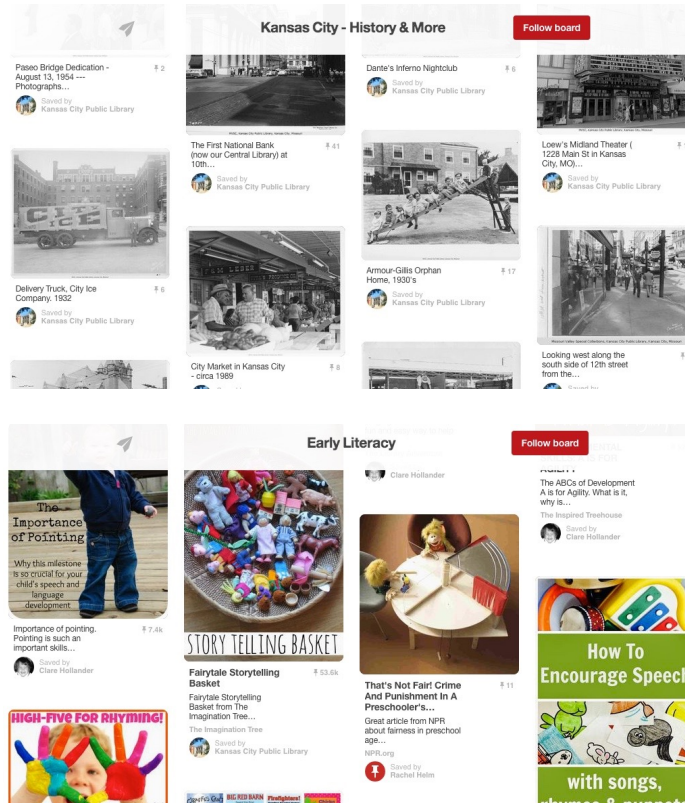


## D4 Social Media Tools: Pinterest in a Public Library

Due to continuous technological advancements and corresponding trends in their application, it is essential for information professionals to adapt services to the evolving expectations of patrons. Social media tools provided by new technologies have had a profound impact on how people interact and access information. In order to remain relevant to their patrons, libraries must understand the evolving nature of this information behavior. The Kansas City Public Library (KCPL) has responded to trends in social media with its innovative use of Pinterest, a visual curation tool that "allows users to 'pin' or bookmark website images with embedded links onto a virtual board" (Eckert, 2016, p. 34).

The KCPL has 43 "boards" on its Pinterest page, each appealing to patrons with various interests. KCPL boards focus on a range of subjects including reader advisory, such as "Mysteries to Die For!," library archival materials, such as "Kansas City - History & More," and child development, such as "Early Literacy." (KCPL, n.d.)





The images pinned by the KCPL are not merely photographs of library materials. Instead, the KCPL seems to have "adopted the Whole Foods' strategy of communicating a sense of identity through [their] Pinterest account" and "creat[ing] an emotional connection with other users" (Gilman & Vincent, 2013, p. 141). Through the specific advantages offered by Pinterest, the library is able "to capture the attention of their audience by engaging in a visual conversation about their users' interests while simultaneously promoting library resources" (p. 139).

There are many benefits of using Pinterest to promote libraries. New clients can easily be reached through the site's existing user base. By re-pinning library pins onto their own boards, users extend the range of viewers. The technological skills required for librarians to use Pinterest are simple. "Updating a Pinterest page tends to be easier than updating a library website, to which the librarian may or may not have access." (Eckert,

2016, p. 34) On the client side, benefits include Pinterest's ease of use, cost (which is free), accessibility, unique visual concept, and the ability for users to browse both randomly and purposely (Gilman & Vincent, 2013, p. 140-141).

Libraries must also consider challenges and concerns involved in using Pinterest. Interactive exchange between the library and patrons is an intriguing possibility, but allowing patrons to contribute images to library Pinterest boards is complicated. The patron must have a Pinterest account, and the library must first follow the patron's board. Copyright concerns arise from the fact that "Pinterest is based on pinning the content of others, not one's own" (Gilman & Vincent, 2013, p. 146). It is unclear who has the right to pin what and under what conditions. Users express concern about Pinterest's Terms of Service indicating that, "Once users post content it becomes the property of Pinterest," and about "violating the intellectual property rights of others by re-pinning images" (p. 146). The scope of potential viewers of library Pinterest boards is restricted by the site's appeal to users, of whom many are women under the age of 50 (Duggan, 2015, para. 2). Additionally, social media is unable to reach patrons on the wrong side of the digital divide or who lack the technological skills to access these tools. Although Pinterest is effective in attracting, inspiring, and interacting with patrons, the medium is limited in its ability to engage in deep and meaningful intercourse. Pinterest boards are best suited to outreach strategies that focus on visually oriented patrons who frequent social media websites.

The use of Pinterest by the Kansas City Public Library is an example of how libraries are responding to trends in social media, connecting with their patrons in unconventional ways, and providing useful information services. Through user

assessment and strategic planning, libraries are implementing action plans to address the challenges of the changing environment of information services. Libraries that do not assess trends in social media and modify their services accordingly risk redundancy.

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