

[Executive Summary]

Web 2.0:

How Associations Are Tapping Social Media

Vol. II— a follow-up report to the
E-Publishing Trends & Metrics Study



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Introduction

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB 2.0 TOOLS are changing the way associations communicate, and now, for the first time, associations have data and benchmarks to better understand how organizations are leveraging emerging Web 2.0 resources. The results of the Angerosa Research Foundation's third study are highlighted in this Executive Summary, provided exclusively to you as a survey participant.

Web 2.0: How Associations Are Tapping Social Media identifies key trends in this ever-evolving new media. It details associations' Web 2.0 activities and how they are engaging their members and other target audiences. Associations have been aggressive adopters of new online media and are uniquely positioned to implement such tools, based on existing communities of like-minded individuals facing common concerns and challenges. Among the key trends revealed in the data:

- **Associations are heavily involved in all types of social media**—57% have tried at least one application, and more than one third of associations have set up their own social media site.
- **Blogs are growing rapidly**—61% of associations report they have at least one blog, commonly used for discussions on general topics, conference-related topics, magazine-related topics, or for CEO messages.
- **Monitoring social media is a growing concern, as well as liability concerns**—82% monitor their sites, and more than half have established strategies to protect the association from legal liability.
- **Association professionals, in their personal communications, regularly access social media**, preferring LinkedIn (78%), YouTube (75%), Facebook (51%), and Flickr (32%).

- **The benefits of tapping social media are widespread**, including the ability to appeal to and engage younger members, to provide an opportunity for member interaction/business, to enable meeting participants to connect, and to spur membership development and retention. Although associations have not yet benefited from significant revenue generation from Web 2.0 activities, many anticipate revenue expansion over time.
- **Challenges with social media include cost and resource allocation** needed to remain current with new technology and the challenge of educating members and leaders about its uses.

Comprehensive research findings are included in the final report, *Web 2.0: How Associations Are Tapping Social Media*, providing data analyzed by association scope, type, and staff size. Associations can benchmark their organizations against others of similar size. (*Order your copy of the complete report with the enclosed order form.*)

FINALLY, MANY THANKS TO ALL OF YOU WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS GROUND-BREAKING STUDY.

We sincerely appreciate the time and effort you contributed to building this data to benefit the association publishing community. At the Angerosa Research Foundation and Stratton Publishing & Marketing Inc., we continually seek opportunities to provide data trends and research analyses that will benefit association communicators and publication professionals.

Please send us your feedback on this study as well as your ideas for future research. Also, become a partner with the Foundation in these data-generating efforts by making your tax-deductible contribution to the Foundation. Visit www.angerosaresearch.org.

Debra J. Stratton
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a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing association publishing
President/CEO, Stratton Publishing & Marketing Inc.
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Highlights of Findings

INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Associations are getting heavily involved in social media. More than half of reporting associations (57%) are involved in at least one form of social media. Among those not currently involved, more than half (59%) plan to get involved in social media initiatives in the next 12 months.

The most common social media sites associations use are Facebook (43%), LinkedIn (35%), YouTube (31%), Wikipedia (27%), Blogger (17%), and MySpace (16%). Few are on TypePad (8%), Ning (7%), or Second Life (4%). Another 43 percent of respondents say their organizations use some “other” social media site, including WordPress, Blogspot, or Twitter.

More than one third of associations have set up their own social media site (38%). They generally use their own program/software (27%), Microsoft SharePoint (25%), or some other software (64%), such as Higher Logic, Moveable Type, or Community of Practice. Among those who have not already set up a social media site, 47 percent plan to set one up in the next 12 months.

Level of member involvement: Among associations that track member usage, a median of 15 percent (mean of 27%) of members are involved in social media tools. Some 41 percent of association respondents track participation by members and note that some sections of members are more involved. **Factors that affect how much members participate in social media** are age (43%), topics/issues addressed (33%), specialty (14%), and participation in face-to-face events (9%). Another 10 percent say some “other” factor affects member participation in social media, including technology expertise, time restraints, and comfort level with social media applications.

Access for nonmembers: About 30 percent of associations make access open to nonmembers or at least some nonmembers (43%); 28 percent restrict access.

The most popular activities in associations’ virtual communities are educational programs (45%), social/networking programs (38%), collaborative/creative projects (16%), or special events (12%).

WIKIS

Wikis are used by associations to collaboratively create, edit, link, and organize content. Slightly more than one quarter of associations have a wiki (28%) or plan to launch one in the next 12 months (39%).

Wikis are generally used for committee collaboration (43%), industry-wide or business-wide encyclopedia (37%), education/training (20%), or product development (18%). Another 29 percent of respondents note some “other” use for their associations’ wikis, including staff knowledge sharing and posting annual meeting information.

Wiki participation is tracked by 44 percent of associations who report a median of one percent (mean of 12%) of members posted or made edits on their wikis. Overwhelmingly, respondents anticipate participation will increase in the next year (68%).

BLOGS

Blogs are increasingly popular with associations; 61 percent of associations have blogs. Of those that don’t currently have one, 62 percent plan to launch in the coming year. Nearly all associations allow users to post comments on the blogs (93%). Access is not generally restricted to members (71% report no restriction; 29% restrict comments).

Blogs are mostly used for general issues discussion (51%), conference-related issues (44%), magazine/publication-related issues (32%), CEO message/comments (22%), or chief elected officer message/comments (15%). Another 38 percent of respondents note some “other” use for their associations’ blogs, including discussions about editorial that has appeared in their magazines and

committee work or other discussions specific to smaller membership segments.

Among the 21 percent of associations that track how many members are accessing the blog, the median participation rate is 10 percent (mean of 21%). Participation is expected to increase over the coming year (78%).

MONITORING AND OVERSIGHT

Monitoring social media groups, listservs, islands, and networks: Most associations monitor their social media sites (82%), and more than half (58%) have strategies in place to protect the association from possible liabilities arising from user-posted comments, videos, etc., or from unwanted advertisements or solicitations.

Managing social networks: Management and oversight for social media networks are generally the purview of the communications or communications/marketing department (65%), IT department (28%), publications department (26%), or some other department, including membership (18%), marketing (17%), conference/education (10%), advocacy/government relations (6%), and some “other” department or group (15%), such as committee members and editorial staff.

BENEFITS TO ASSOCIATIONS AND MEMBERS

Social media tools are as much a membership tool as a communications tool. Key benefits associated with launching and running social media networks in associations are the ability to appeal to younger members (78%), provide an opportunity for interaction/business among members/others (70%), improve member retention by increasing member engagement (67%), connect meeting participants before and after a meeting (60%), increase the frequency of association brand interaction (54%), and create member-generated content (53%). Fewer associations have tapped non-dues revenue through social media (17%).

Some unexpected benefits cited by 15 percent of respondents include increased knowledge about member issues, increased member interaction, and increased response to public policy and advocacy issues.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The biggest social networking challenges most associations experience are getting the resources to launch and maintain Web 2.0 initiatives (56%) and involving members (53%). Other challenges include getting and keeping leaders interested (44%), keeping current with new technologies (43%), monitoring (40%), training staff (25%), getting top management/executive buy-in (24%), and managing message control (24%).

Ties to the strategic plan: For most associations, developing and supporting social media tools and activities are part of their organizations’ strategic plans (68%).

Revenue-generating potential is somewhat limited for now; only 21 percent report that they have generated revenue via these tools, primarily from sponsorships.

Of those associations that have not already tested social media (43%), the primary reasons noted are lack of a champion/advocate to promote the program (58%), limited interest from members (45%), lack of technical expertise on staff (38%), lack of resources to study the idea (37%), lack of funds (30%), or concern about legal issues and risks (27%). Fewer respondents say social media is not appropriate for their associations’ audiences (13%).

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Association professionals use social media in their personal lives as well as professional. The most popular sites are LinkedIn (78%), YouTube (75%), Facebook (51%), Flickr (32%), My Space (25%), Twitter (17%), Second Life (8%), Friendster (6%), and Vlogs (4%).

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Respondents from 343 associations participated in this study, including 84 percent from national/international and 16 percent from state/local/regional. By type of organization, 55 percent represent individual membership organizations, 32 percent trade associations/corporate membership, and 12 percent foundations/charities/other.

Median budget size is \$7 million; 20 percent have budgets of \$25 million or more, 32 percent have budgets of \$5 million to \$25 million, and 48 percent have budgets of less than \$5 million, including 14 percent with budgets of less than \$1 million.

Median staff size is 50 FTEs. Some 29 percent of associations have 30-99 Full-Time staff Equivalents (FTEs), followed by 24 percent with 10 or fewer, and 23 percent with 11-29 FTEs.

STUDY PARTNERS

This study was conducted online from June until August 2008 by the Angerosa Research Foundation in partnership with Stratton Publishing & Marketing Inc., and its research arm, Stratton Research.

GET ALL OF THE DETAILS FROM THIS GROUND-BREAKING STUDY IN THE FULL REPORT.

Web 2.0: How Associations Are Tapping Social Media is the second volume of data on associations' electronic publishing practices, a follow-up to the Angerosa Research Foundation's *E-Publishing Trends & Metrics* study. The report is available in print and in digital formats for easy access and search capabilities. **Special discounts apply for survey participants or when purchasing both the E-Publishing (Vol. I) and Web 2.0 (Vol. II) reports.**



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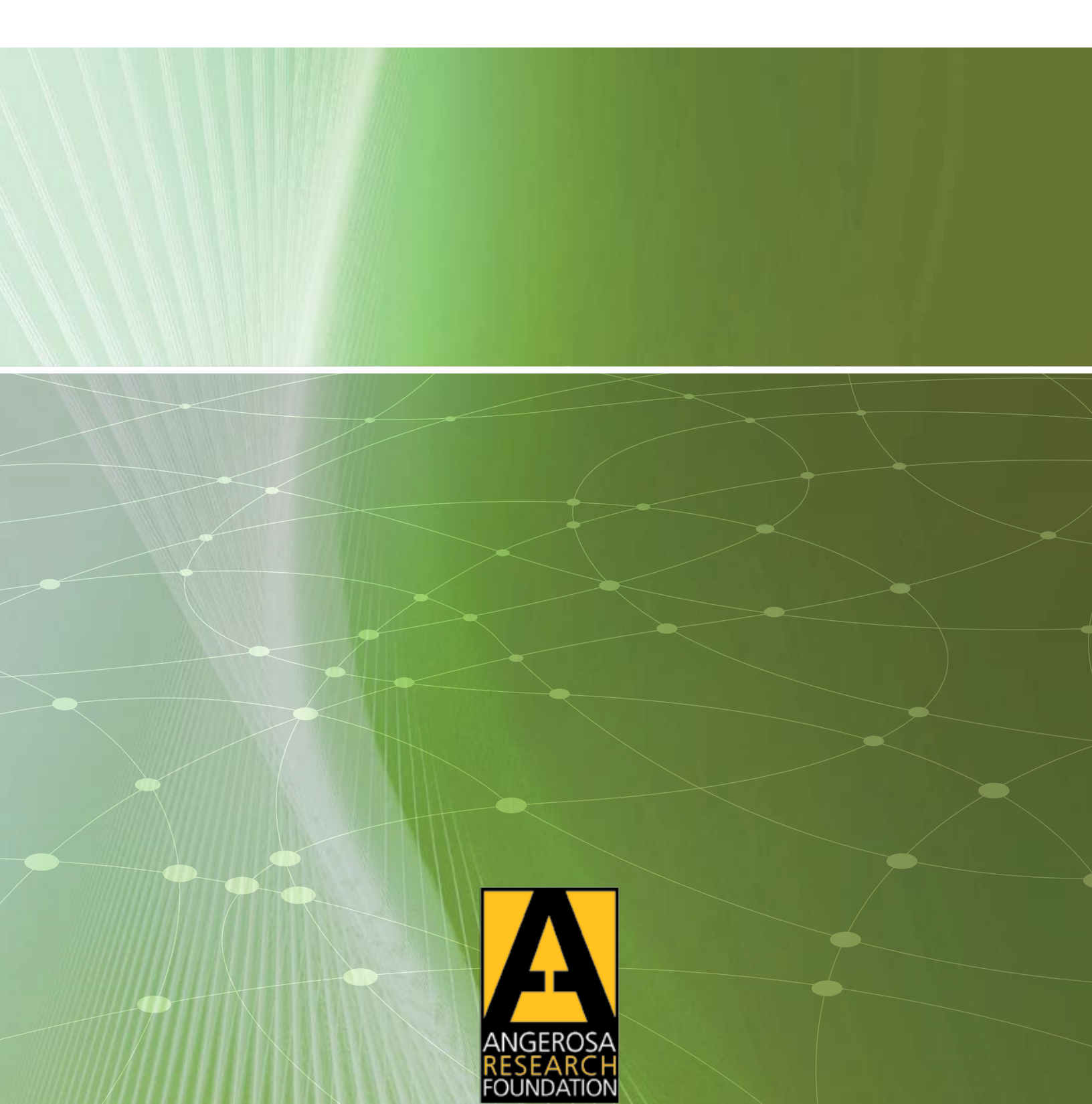
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