INTRODUCTION
Social collecting empowers users to act as curators and catalogers; organizing, using, and sharing information in a social web environment. The social media site Pinterest.com, now estimated as the third most popular social media site in the United States [1], combines the annotating features of tagging websites with the collecting and describing features of photo sharing and blogging websites. These technological affordances may prove useful for supporting digital library efforts in social media, outreach, and user engagement.

DISCUSSION
Reusing images [2] is part of the social collecting model. Images are copied and re-copied across the social web (figure 2) as users curate personal and shared collections with implications for understanding provenance and collecting/using user-contributed annotations. User-guided collecting activities can reveal new concepts supporting user-centered indexing and information needs.

Organizational content is added to Pinterest in two ways:
1. An organization create an account and add pins of their resources (images annotated with descriptions, comments, and URLs).
2. Pinterest users add an organization’s content to personal pinboards (collections of similar pins).

A key point of distinction between previous library social media efforts is that users curate publicly visible collections on Pinterest, while professionals curate collections on the Flickr Commons and library sites.

Future work will explore how and why people use social media for creating collections, the benefits of social curating and collecting for libraries and other institutions, and the implications of policy/copyright and interface design on user activity.

QUESTIONS
1) How can we characterize activity of patron-curators on the website Pinterest.com, in relation to library services?
2) How do social collectors represent digital library holdings?

SOURCES
Pinterest: Social Collecting for #linking #using #sharing

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Categories and Subject Descriptors
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1. INTRODUCTION
Information is collected and organized on a massive scale by the general public using social media websites for tagging, blogging, and photo sharing. Institutions have adopted social media efforts like the Flickr Commons or adding user-tagging capabilities to websites in recent years. In a similar vein, the website Pinterest allows users to annotate digital objects in their own personal collections (www.pinterest.com). A key difference between the Pinterest model and previous efforts is that images are copied from the source website to the user’s Pinterest collection, creating a new digital surrogate. Pinterest combines the annotating features of tagging websites with the collecting and describing features of photo sharing and blogging websites. Digital libraries and other organizations can take advantage of these developments to expand the reach of their material, allowing users to create personalized collections incorporating their content.

1.1 Social Collecting
We define a site like Pinterest, that combines social and collecting capabilities, as a “social collecting” website. Social collecting is the collection, categorization, and representation of a digital object in a system that is accessible via the Web. Social collecting can expose a user-centered perspective of organizing or describing information resources in a digital library or website. Users of a social collecting site create and annotate surrogates of digital objects found on the Web, such as photographs or webpages. These surrogates are then saved in personal collections, called “pinboards” on Pinterest.

Social collecting has both personal and public facets. Users maintain collections using their own idiosyncratic methods, while their collections can be viewed by any other user of the system or unregistered visitors to the website. Digital libraries can leverage the work of user-curators to extend the reach of library to resources across the social web, and collect user-centered metadata from social collectors. Social collecting sites represent a path towards digital libraries getting a “social life” [10] by providing tools to curate and share collections.

1.1.1 Introduction to Pinterest.com
Pinterest is described as a “virtual pinboard” where people can “organize and share the beautiful things” found on the web. LAunched in March 2010, Pinterest gained significant traction in late 2011, receiving 4.5 million unique visits in October and November [4] and is now one of the most popular social media websites, surpassing Delicious.com other established sites.

Pinterest users organize objects by selecting an image from the webpage where the object exists using a browser bookmarklet (or by uploading an image from their computer). This technological affordance [3] makes it easy to reuse and share images. Images uploaded via the bookmarklet contain a link back to the source website, but perhaps not to the original, as images may be used and reused several times on the Web. Pinterest also has many social components: users add boards to subject categories, ‘repin’ objects from other users to their own boards, “like” or comment on objects, and “follow” boards and other user’s activity.

1.2 Social Media and Libraries
The Smithsonian Institution [1] and Library of Congress [5] both report positive results from pilot projects collecting tags and image annotations using the Flickr Commons. In some cases, user contributions have been imported into the Library catalog, demonstrating the usefulness of the user’s wisdom. Additional examples of library social efforts include: Steve.museum [6], a long-term project investigating the collecting and use of user tags in online library collections, and Tag-It-Tuesdays at the US National Archives which is part of the “citizen archivist dashboard” that also allows citizens to transcribe historical documents or upload their own digital copies of Archive records. Many libraries also maintain a presence on social sites like twitter or Facebook.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Exploring the Pinterest website and social media literature led to the following preliminary research questions: 1) How can we characterize activity of patron-curators on the social collecting website Pinterest.com, in relation to traditional library service models? 2) How do social collectors represent digital library holdings?

3. DISCUSSION
Annotation is a required feature of Pinterest. Users are collecting, annotating, and sharing digital objects from commercial entities, libraries, and other organizations. We downloaded pins on 12-16-2011 for three Pinterest categories: Food and Drink, Technology, and Travel. The captured data represents approximately 490 pins.
in each category, including the URL, pin description, number of likes and repins, name of the board to which the pin belongs, community comments. Additionally, we explored content from cultural organizations represented on Pinterest.

Social-collecting activity taken by a presumably untrained lay-user can be related to that of a trained librarian. Users “pin” images selected from the World Wide Web (often e-commerce websites and blogs) to a “pinboard” while assigning a short comment. Selecting an item to pin is equivalent to collection development. The Pinterest user is choosing an extremely small subset of objects from the World Wide Web to collect, and some discrimination necessarily occurs. The act of pinning and commenting is analogous to indexing and abstracting. The image is the surrogate the user chooses to represent her concept or object. Creating a pinboard and assigning it to a top-level category is analogous to defining a category in a hierarchy, and placing items in it. Social collecting activities may offer institutions a new way of viewing user-centered categories, much like that provided by earlier work with folksonomies and tagging [2].

Table 1. Pinterest activity compared to library services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinterest Activity</th>
<th>Library Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create and name pinboard</td>
<td>Taxonomy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign pinboard to top-level category</td>
<td>Cataloging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select a website with images suitable</td>
<td>Collection development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for pinning</td>
<td>Surrogate and Representing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pin item to pinboard and comment</td>
<td>Indexing and Abstracting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1 Institutional Collections

Institutional content can be collected on Pinterest in two ways. First, the organization itself can create an account, set up Pinboards, and add pins. Second, Pinterest users can pin an organization’s content to their personal pinboards. This activity does not require the consent or knowledge of the organization, and the context of social collecting allows reusing other’s materials [3]. A key point of distinction between previous efforts like the Flickr Commons and Pinterest is that the “curator” of the social collections found on Pinterest is the user, not a librarian. The act of pinning creates a new digital surrogate and metadata for the object, thus a single item may be represented multiple times across the social web, with no direct link readily accessible between the various representations. This propagation introduces challenges for collecting potentially helpful user-contributed metadata. The following example shows how an image from the Smithsonian collection can be added to Pinterest, three levels away from the original digital photo found on the Smithsonian website:

**Level 0:** Smithsonian posts the image to their online digital collection (digital image of original print).

**Level 1:** Flickr Commons: The Smithsonian adds a copy of the image to their Flickr photostream.

**Level 2:** The design blog apartmenttherapy.com posts copy of the digital photo from Flickr.com to their post “historic interiors.”

**Level 3:** A Pinterest user adds the copy from the blog apartmenttherapy.com to their personal pinboard.

Figure 1. The propagation of resources as they are replicated across the social web, where provenance may be unknown.

4. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

In this work we introduced social collecting and the website Pinterest as an exemplar of the concept. Social collecting is indicative information organization, use, and sharing in a social web environment. This exploratory work describes technology that may prove useful for supporting digital library services.

Social collecting empowers users to act as curators and catalogers. Following the traditional cataloging model, only highly trained professionals are able to create surrogates of objects often while adhering to strict organization guidelines and policies. In contrast, the cataloger and patron roles are one and the same in the social collecting model. Currently, no methods exist to coordinate the collecting and annotation of resources across the social web. Future work will explore the benefits of Pinterest and similar sites to libraries and other institutions, as well as implications of policy decisions and interface design on user activity.

5. REFERENCES


