

1-1-2010

Using the iPhone and iPod touch@Work

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Recommended Citation

Susan L. Kendall, M Nino, and S Stewart. "Using the iPhone and iPod touch@Work" *Computers in Libraries* (2010): 14-19.

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by **Susan Kendall, Mary Nino,**
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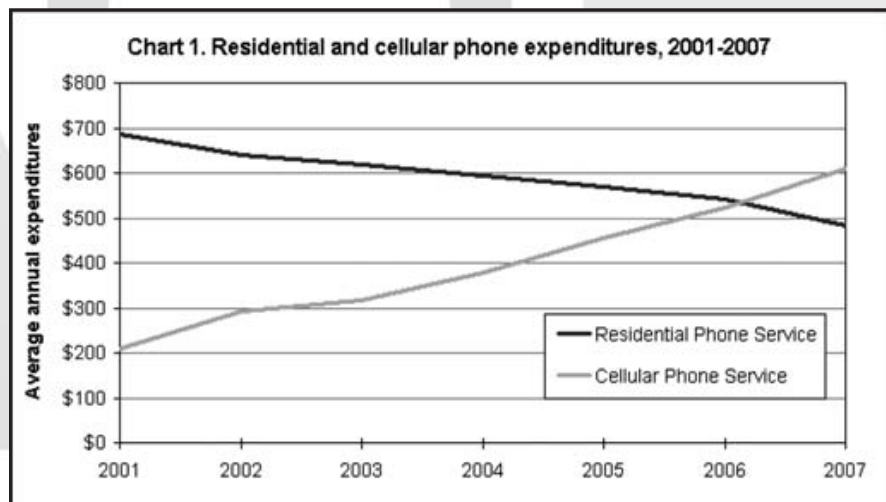
Using the iPhone and iPod touch@Work

The rise of the mobile web and the ease of access afforded by smartphones, particularly the iPhone, have the potential to transform reference and customer service once again.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, where author Kendall serves as coordinator for collection development and government publications and author Nino works as interim associate dean, is a joint co-managed library of the San Jose Public Library, where author Stewart is youth services and programming manager, and the San Jose State University Library, located in San Jose, Calif., the capital of Silicon Valley. Working in this merged public and academic environment, the authors find that the uses of technology transcend the differences and enhance the collaboration and exchange of new concepts.

One innovation that has impacted libraries and society in general has been the introduction of cell phones with expanded capabilities—the BlackBerry, the iPhone, the Nexus, the Palm Pre, and the Droid, to name a few. Several employees have adopted the iPhone in particular and are examining ways to adapt its capabilities for the library environment.

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The last decade has seen a steady rise in cell phone use and a steady decline in landline use.

Indeed, cell phones are playing a more important role in society in general. According to a report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, consumer spending on all types of cell phones has skyrocketed while expenditure on landlines has steadily declined.

At a number of universities, landlines are even being replaced by cell phones in dorms!

Introduction of the iPhone

One of the most exciting innovations from Silicon Valley has been the introduction of Apple's iPhone and the burgeoning applications store available through iTunes. Apple introduced the iPhone and the iPod touch (a touch-screen iPod with wireless access) in 2007. In less than 2 years, more than 3 billion applications (apps) have been either downloaded for free or sold via the iTunes store. What has caused the unprecedented adoption of this product? Why have customers flocked to the iPhone, and what features make this device so powerful? While it has the conventional features of a personal digital assistant (PDA), i.e., calendars, contact management, and a notes feature, the iPhone brings a new dynamic to a PDA environment. It functions more as a portable personal computer with Apple's sleek, intuitive interface. The iPhone and the iPod touch with their wireless/3G network capabilities can be used in the office, in public services areas, and in the stacks.

With the iPhone Come the Apps

With more than 3 billion apps downloaded as of January 2010, the iTunes

App Store continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. Many institutions and businesses are jumping into the fray with their own apps, hoping to enable customer convenience and to inspire loyalty. With web access through smartphones now outpacing access through laptops or desktops, many library systems have already developed mobile-friendly websites. Customized iPhone apps are also gaining popularity and offer an ideal way to interact with users, providing easily accessible mobile content and demonstrating marketing cachet at the same time.

Library-specific apps, while not yet as developed or as ubiquitous as many commercial apps, are starting to appear and should continue to explode in popularity. According to its website, the District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL) system was the first library in the nation to develop an iPhone application. Users can search the catalog, place holds, check hours, and find phone numbers. College and university libraries appear to be moving quickly in this direction also. The iPhone apps for Stanford University, North Carolina State University, and Duke University are particularly engaging, user-friendly, and comprehensive. Duke's extensive digital collections are beautifully showcased through the app's images section, which provides superb marketing for and access to the university's library holdings. Library vendors such as Innovative Interfaces, OCLC, Gale, and others are offering mobile apps, and others are undoubtedly gearing up to expand their own access points.

Evaluating iPhone Apps. When exploring what iPhone apps can be adapted for use in library settings, evaluation criteria should be applied. Price is not an important issue—many apps are free or are priced at less than \$5, which offers good value. Memory requirements of apps are a consideration though, especially with an older iPhone model such as the 8G. Criteria to consider include the following:



An iPhone and its apps

App	Function	Price
TripIt	Track travel information, share itineraries, displays flight status	Free with paid Premium version
Xpenser	Track expenses	Free
Calendar	Scheduling – syncs with Outlook, Google Calendar, etc.	Comes pre-loaded
Boopsie	Track conference programs	Free
Evernote	Save and tag documents, webpage snippets, photos, voice memos	Free with paid Premium version
Dragon Dictation	Voice-to-Text Converter	Free
Dragon Search	Voice searching for Google YouTube, Twitter, and Wikipedia.	Free
RedLaser	Use camera as bar code reader. Link to library catalog via WorldCat and local setting	\$1.99
RSS Readers	Check blogs and RSS feeds	Free and varying prices

Apps that promise to improve productivity

- **Cost.** Is the application free? If not, is there a “lite” version available to investigate?
- **Reviews.** While many apps are reviewed in blogs, some library apps have been reviewed in library-related journals such as *Library Journal*.
- **Version.** Is this the most recent app, or has it been replaced by a newer version or a competing app?
- **File Size.** Is this app a memory hog? If so, are there competing apps that would have less of an impact on the iPhone’s performance?
- **Authorship.** Who developed the app? Do they have a reputation for quality products?
- **Membership.** Does the app require you to enroll before you can access the app or its full capabilities?
- **Privacy.** Does the app keep your information private? Is there password capability?
- **Web Interface.** Is there an accompanying web interface?

Apps for Productivity. While many iPhone users have organized and streamlined their personal lives with the iPhone, how can its capabilities be harnessed for in-library use? Several productivity apps can be adapted for in-house use and are easily accessible by employees. Job-related activities such as professional development, training, scheduling, record keeping, emergency procedures, and expense tracking are areas that could benefit from the efficiency and portability of iPhone apps.

TripIt

Conference attendees can use the TripIt app to track travel itineraries with confirmation numbers, dates, phone numbers, and maps. TripIt also accepts reservation information from hundreds of travel websites. Travel confirmations are arranged into a well-organized and easily accessible format on the iPhone. TripIt itineraries can also be synced with Outlook, Lotus Notes, iCal, and Google Calendars.

Xpenser

Xpenser is a web-based utility that allows you to track expenses using

many different devices, including an iPhone. You can send an instant message, a tweet, an email, a phone call, or a photo of a receipt to add expenses as you go. Xpenser tracks and adds these expenses for you and allows you to export the report in several different formats, including Excel and Quicken.

Calendar

While at off-site meetings, scheduling future meeting times and locations can be challenging. The iPhone calendar makes it easier to plan future meetings on-the-go and allows you to sync with your work calendar.

Boopsie

At conferences such as the ALA annual conference that involve multiple sessions, instead of carrying a bulky paper program around, access Boopsie to see which sessions are scheduled. Boopsie is compatible with all web-enabled phones.

Evernote

Documents located on internal intranets are often hard to access from outside the network. Evernote allows for saving and tagging of documents such as meeting minutes, planning documents, photos, working bibliographies, out-of-order signs, ongoing service-desk updates, most-often-requested maps, training documents, and presentations. During a recent emergency evacuation, it was no problem to check on employee schedules and emergency numbers of building technicians while standing outside the library.

Dragon Dictation

Not everyone has the manual dexterity to use the iPhone keyboard easily. Dragon Dictation simplifies creating text on the iPhone. Open the app, speak into the microphone, and Dragon Dictation converts your words into text, which



can then be copied and pasted into instant messages, emails, and the like.

Dragon Search

Dragon Search enables searching in Google, Twitter, YouTube, iTunes, and Wikipedia by converting voice commands to keywords.

RedLaser

Using the camera, scan UPC bar codes to access product information and pricing on any item. Recent upgrades allow for scanned UPC book bar codes to be searched in the WorldCat database and linked to library catalogs.

RSS Readers

There are many RSS readers available with varying capabilities and prices. We use the mobile version of Bloglines, which is not an app but rather a mobile web address accessible at <http://i.bloglines.com>.

Apps for Marketing and Training. Just as there are apps that improve productivity, so are there apps that can impact both marketing and training.

Facebook

Harness the most popular social networking site to promote library events and services. The iPhone app allows you to post photos directly.

Flickr

Instantly upload images to your photo stream. Customers with Flickr accounts can post and tag their photos taken at the library and tag them with the library name so that others can view all library photos together.

Qik

Using the iPhone camera, create videos and send them to YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook. This app works

App	Function	Price
Facebook	Promote events, create fan page for library to share info	Free
Flickr	Instantly uploads photos of events. Use widget to feature on your website	Free
Qik	Creates a video player and upload to Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube	Free (advanced features - \$1.99)
Twitter	Marketing last-minute info	Prices range from free to \$5. Recommended Twittelator (free) and Tweetie (\$3)
Wikipedia	Post, edit, and link articles to your library	Free
Yelp	Social networking customer review site	Free
YouTube	Allows for viewing of filmed storytimes, events, and tutorials	Free (comes with iPhone)

Marketing- and training-related apps

The screenshot shows the homepage of SJLibrary.org, a collaboration of San José Public Libraries and San José State University Library. The page features a navigation menu with links to Home, Services, Research, Paths to Learning, and About Us. A sidebar on the left contains various links such as About Us, Awards, Contact Us, Donate to the Library, Employment, Events & Programs, Exhibits, Legal Info and Policies, Library History, Locations & Hours, Newaroom, Our Vision, Photos of Your Libraries, San José Public Library System, and SJSU Library. The main content area is titled 'Photos of Your Libraries' and includes a section for 'Library flickr Photos' with a grid of images and a 'More photos' link. Text on the page describes the library's use of Flickr for sharing photos of buildings, staff, and customers, and provides information on how to view the photo stream and subscribe to the RSS feed.

Flickr allows you to instantly upload images.

on older iPhone models that do not have a video recorder.

Twitter

Send out up-to-the-minute information on events or unexpected emergencies or closures. Twitter apps range in functionality and price.

Wikipedia

Write a complete entry for your library. If an article already exists, be sure to fact-check the article. Since

Wikipedia is one of the most visited sites on the internet, having a complete and up-to-date entry is essential.

Yelp

Customers are talking about your library and it is likely they are posting on Yelp. Use this app to follow what they are saying. Responding to reviews on Yelp offers a great opportunity to address patron concerns. This app allows you to draft reviews of businesses, but to post you must go to their website.

YouTube

Use this app to watch database tutorials in addition to promotional and training videos.

Apps Take Us Beyond the Desk.

Generally, most library employees are still tethered to desktop computers with internet access. Given the movement to roving reference and point-of-need customer service, the iPhone and iPod touch offer a way for librarians to help users where and when they need it most. Often, users feel reluctant to approach a reference desk and may be less intimidated asking a question when library employees are providing roving reference. On busy days when there is a line for computers, a librarian can offer quick and easy access to a catalog record via the iPhone or iPod touch. A library-specific app such as DCPL's can easily ascertain if a book is in, and if it is not, it can place a hold. Librarians have created bibliographies and webliographies for years. Consider creating an "app-iography" to address the different types of reference and information questions that users are likely to ask.

Apps for the United States white pages, Yellow Pages, and geographical maps can be utilized to assist patrons with other typical questions fielded by librarians. Questions regarding local landmarks, businesses, or events can be addressed by apps such as Yelp, iConcert, iWant, Around Me, Citysearch, and Fandango. Consider using these apps as a starting point for your own library-specific reference "app-iography."

Conclusion

Library service models changed dramatically with the proliferation of online resources. The rise of the mobile web and the ease of access afforded by smartphones, particularly the iPhone, have the potential to transform reference and customer service once again.

Subject	Apps
Phone Directories	Superpages, White Pages Mobile, Who Called
Encyclopedias/Dictionaries	Dictionary.com, iThesaurus, iQuotations, Wikipedia
Job Search	Craigspro, Indeed, Jobs by Career Builder
Events	iConcert, Local Concerts
Maps	iBART, MapQuest4Mobile
Medical	Epocrates, Pubmed on tap life, WebMD
Consumer	Consumer Reports, Yelp
Real Estate	Zillow
News	BBC, CNN, NPR News, Thomson Reuters News Pro, Yahoo! News
Cooking	Epicurious, Big Oven
Fitness	Restaurant Nutrition
Finance	Yahoo! Finance
Law	Nolo's Plain English Law Dictionary
Movies	Fandango, IMDB, Flixter
Music	Shazam, iTunes, Lastfm
Names	Baby Names
Sports	ESPN Score Center, SportsTap
Travel	AirportStatus, iWant, Kayak, Travelocity traveltools
Weather	Accuweather, WeatherChannel
Government	AMBER Alert, State Government apps – e.g., CA Gov Locator
Citation Help	MyZotero, RefWorks Mobile

Start your "app-iography" with some of these apps.

The iPhone and iPod touch offer a way for librarians to help users where and when they need it most.

Librarians as information professionals are in a unique position to use this technology not only to increase personal productivity, but also, and more importantly, to provide meaningful services and resources for their customers.

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