Biebtobieb: Stimulating cooperation among Dutch public libraries through an online knowledge and innovation platform

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Abstract:

This paper provides a brief overview of what Biebtobieb, the online innovation and knowledge sharing platform for Dutch public libraries, entails and gives some background information on the history and current status of the platform.

Keywords: community, knowledge sharing, co-creation, online platform

Introduction

Although there are of course differences between the various public libraries in the Netherlands, they all (in essence) face similar questions, challenges and needs. In order to prevent them from reinventing the wheel and stimulate the sharing and co-creation of knowledge and ideas, the online platform Biebtobieb was created. Biebtobieb offers employees of Dutch public libraries and relating fields an online environment within which they can cooperate, pose questions, gather information and share their knowledge.

The essentials of the platform

Biebtobieb was created in 2012 by SIOB (an institute for public libraries that became a part of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in 2015), and SPN (the organ within which the Dutch provincial library organizations cooperate). It is an online innovation and knowledge sharing platform, built with open-source software Drupal, that features (to a certain extent) elements of social platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Yammer. Once users have created a profile, they can join groups (both open and closed), within which they can cooperate with colleagues throughout the Netherlands, follow other users, join discussions, create events or post personal contributions. Groups are formed around either a theme (for instance: e-books, youth or refugees), event (for instance: the national library congress) or region in the

Netherlands. An overview of recent messages posted by the persons or within the groups you follow is presented in the form of a personal timeline. Groups also have a separate timeline which only contains the messages posted or shared in that specific group. Users can comment on, like or share each message and tag colleagues. They receive notifications on the platform and can opt for additional notifications and digests via e-mail. To stimulate online cooperation the platform features a Google Docs integration.

Sustainability

The main challenge for Biebtobieb has been to create a sustainable organizational structure around the platform. Building a thriving community, that is adopted by the sector as a whole, takes a considerable amount of time and requires a long-term commitment from all parties involved. It is therefore essential to create a structure that is not dependent on individuals, but is properly embedded in all organizations involved.

First of all this relates to the technical maintenance and development of the platform. The parties involved have chosen to incorporate Biebtobieb into the digital structure of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek. The reason for this is the fact that the Koninklijke Bibliotheek develops and maintains multiple digital services for the sector as a whole and has the best resources to do so. By incorporating Biebtobieb into the digital structure of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek the platform rests on a more stable base, than when it would be a stand-alone product. For the technical development of the platform a team was formed, which consists of the project leader, representatives of the software developer, a representative of the UX design department of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and two representatives of provincial organizations. User feedback, gathered through recurring usability research and surveys, provides guidance for which improvements are implemented.

More important though, is the fact that we managed to establish a sustainable network of organizations that explicitly share responsibility for the substantive value, adoption and advancement of the platform. By explicitly sharing this responsibility, a broader support base for the platform was created, which makes it easier to attract new users and stimulates users on a provincial and local level to participate on the platform, as their organizations are explicitly committed to the platform. The network also enables us to create links between the online and offline world, which would not be possible if the platform was only managed on a central level.

Facts and figures

- Number of registered users (as of June 14, 2016): 4.350
- Number of groups (as of June 14, 2016): 372 (130 open, 242 closed)
- Total number of logins in 2015: 28.858
- Total number of messages posted in 2015: 3.189
- Total number of likes in 2015: 1.201
- Total number of replies in 2015: 2.165
- Nominated for a Drupal Splash Award in 2014

References

- The live version of the platform can be found at: http://www.biebtobieb.nl/.
- Special showcase page created by the software developer (in Dutch): http://biebtobieb.merge.nl/
- Drupal Splash Award nomination 2014 (in English): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbFP8-MA7j0