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INTERNET WAVES

My Opinions Have Evolved

Politicians do not like to be called “flip-floppers” when they change their minds about a particular issue. After all, it is a label that does have a derisive tone. It connotes someone who alters his or her views in response to public opinion, someone whose convictions are wavering rather than steadfast.

But you and I know that someone who changes his or her mind about something isn't necessarily doing so in response to prevailing beliefs. Quite often, we find ourselves altering our opinions after doing more research, talking to folks with opposing points of view, pondering an issue in depth, or allowing ourselves more exposure to people/places/activities/objects we previously avoided.

It's not flip-flopping if you find that your views have changed after educating yourself. In fact, it could be considered a mark of intelligence that signifies that you are an open-minded person.

The Benefits of Tweeting

OK, let's now turn our thoughts to Twitter.

I established a Twitter account in 2006, the first year of its existence. I really didn't understand what it was for, but I felt as though I had to sign on because I didn't want

people to think I was old or something. Frankly, I wasn't sure it would stick around that long. I didn't use the service very much until 2009, when I noticed that people whose opinions I valued were using it, as were publications I enjoyed reading

but could never find the time (or could not actually afford, and I'm talking to YOU, *The Economist*). I also noticed an increasing number of government and other organizations sharing useful information via Twitter.

Human nature being what it is, especially where librarians are concerned, the desire to forward links and other tidbits of information could not be suppressed, and so I began to tweet and retweet. Before I knew it, I had 700-plus followers.

Somewhere along the line, I “got it.” I had become a filter for other people, just as I had taken to following people, publications, and organizations that I could rely on for breaking news, actionable information, pithy analysis, and the occasional laugh. Due to the 140-character-per-tweet limit, it is easy to scan plenty of information in a very short time. And you can use the list function to pre-organize incoming tweets by topic, source, or whatever.

Twitter has matured as a social technology; corporate America is using it big time. As a result, you can

often get customer service or technical support via Twitter. As a matter of fact, you can get answers to just about any type of question since all subject matter experts are on Twitter around the clock. It's a wonderful source of quick updates to breaking news stories, and it's an awesome adjunct to significant real-time events on the television, such as news conferences, crucial playoff games, key episodes of popular programs, and awards shows.

I had Twitter up and running on my iPad while I watched the presidential debates in the fall, which is somewhat ironic considering that I specifically chose to watch the debates on C-SPAN because I didn't want to hear any spin by an endless parade of talking heads on the com-

mercial networks. But I actually enjoyed the diverse, rapid-fire, witty spin on Twitter. And the real-time fact-checking by @PolitiFact and other sources greatly enhanced the experience every single time.

Look for me on Twitter as @webdoyenne.

Stitch by Stitch

Cats and baby animals aside, I've never been a huge fan of online video. Maybe it's because I read so fast that a news story is generally more useful to me than a news video, provided that a visual element isn't crucial. Also, depending on the quality of your internet connection, watching streaming video online can sometimes be a frustrating experience, due to freezing up, rebuffering, etc. (I'm talking to YOU, MLB.tv).

However, over the past several months, I've gradually settled back into two hobbies from my childhood: knitting and crocheting. My aunt and cousin had a yarn and needle-point shop while I was growing up, so these were just things I did as a routine part of my life. But it has truly been decades since I handled yarn, needles, and hooks on a regular basis.

I've gradually been making my way around to all the public libraries in my county to browse the knitting and crocheting books; I settled on a couple that I wanted to own, and I bought them. And I tried to use them to jump-start my muscle memory, which they did to a certain extent. But sometimes, it is just too difficult to learn a particular skill from a lot of words and some static illustrations.

Why it did not dawn on me to check YouTube right from the get-go, I cannot tell you. Over the years, I have used YouTube as a how-to resource for so many things, such as assembling IKEA furniture, adding RAM to a MacBook Pro, installing a programmable thermostat, checking for leaks in a toilet, and working with tables in Microsoft Word. The sheer

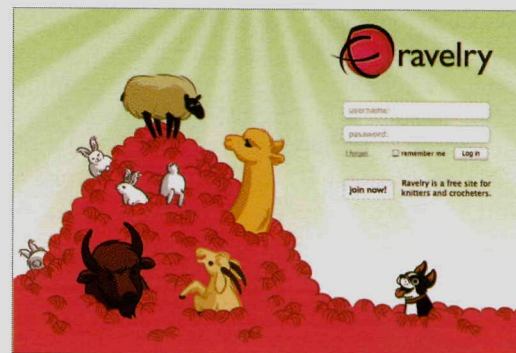


volume of high-quality instructional videos on YouTube is astounding.

Granted, it's easy to get sidetracked by all the “Call Me Maybe” parodies and music videos of every age and genre (but at least I finally found out what “Gangnam Style” is).

Whether for knitting or crocheting, there were multiple videos for any technique I wanted to learn. I don't know about you, but I find it much easier to learn skills such as these by watching someone else. And you can view the videos over and over again or skip around and get multiple views and explanations. On some of these videos, you can watch in slow motion and work along with the instructor, which I have done with my iPad propped up next to me. You can learn how to do one particular stitch, or you can watch a long, multipart series and make an entire sweater over several sessions.

Personally, I like to read first about a particular technique in a book or a pattern and then fire up YouTube and search for related instructional videos. Then I try it myself, and if it doesn't go well, I look at a different video.



If all else fails, there is help from people who are experts, and in fact, there are hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world. Check out Ravelry.com, which is much the same as Facebook for folks who knit and/or crochet.

I'm webdoyenne. Look me up and see the ginormous crocheted octopus I made ... with the help of the internet.



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