For this marketing critique I chose to do the Smithsonian Institution’s Libraries, which can be found at http://www.sil.si.edu/. I chose to do it rather than my local libraries because they have several social networking things which are more than my local libraries (which only have one or two but not a ton). Plus I love The Smithsonian.

The “Library” has several social networking areas and I will look over each one and give a critique

* **Blog** - http://smithsonianlibraries.si.edu/smithsonianlibraries/

Now I don’t know if they change their blog layout often or not, but I am not totally a fan of this layout. It only has one entry per page, which, for some people may not matter if they read it in an RSS feeder like GoogleReader. However, if you are reading it on the page, reading one entry per page and having to click the next button often can be cumbersome. Then I clicked on the next button… whops, there are more than one post per page! This is good. However, there are other design features I would change such as the color and font color. This blog does allow readers to comment which I think is an effective way to reach people and a way to allow them to voice opinions. Lastly, at the top of the blog, there are links to almost all of their other social networking areas which is nice. I used the website

http://www.checksitetraffic.com/index.php to see how many visitors the blog got and according to this site, the page has 1, 886,827 unique visitors, or 62,894 per day. There is other traffic information for the blog that can be found at http://www.checksitetraffic.com/traffic\_spy/smithsonianlibraries.si.edu

* **Flickr** -http://www.flickr.com/photos/smithsonianlibraries/

I haven’t seen a lot of traditional libraries with Flickr feeds and so I find this one particularly awesome. In the Flickr account there are 3,141 items with items continually to be added. I feel having this type of social networking has the potential to reach a lot of people because people like to see pictures. Like the blog, I went and looked at their unique visitor’s numbers. The only problem with this is that it does not take into account the specific Flickr account, only flickr.com. So no accurate counts on how many people visit the Smithsonian’s flickr.

* **Facebook** - http://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianLibraries?ref=ts&sk=wall#!/SmithsonianLibraries?sk=info

This is probably the second most popular way that the Smithsonian libraries can reach people (and a very close second to Twitter). According to the page, only 3,284 people like it. One thing I really love about the facebook page is that they have a section to get desktop wallpaper (http://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianLibraries?ref=ts&sk=wall#!/SmithsonianLibraries?sk=app\_45439413586). I’m *always* on the lookout for cool wallpaper so that is unique to them. The facebook page also incorporates some of the other social networking sites, for example, photos and videos. The only thing I do not like about their page is their profile picture. I do not think it represents them as a library. The Libraries also have another facebook page http://www.facebook.com/pages/Smithsonian-Institution-Libraries/116094141738450?ref=ts&sk=info but it is more of an “info” page than anything else.

* **Twitter** - http://twitter.com/#!/SILibraries

Like their facebook page, this one is updated faster and with different updates than the blog or Flickr. They only have 1245 tweets which is not a whole lot. They have 5,275 followers which is quite low, in my mind, especially for something like The Smithsonian. They are listed on quite a lot of different lists which is cool to see.

* **Youtube** - http://www.youtube.com/user/SmithsonianLibraries

This is probably the most neglected part of the Smithsonian Libraries’ social networking areas. There are only 28 videos uploaded. While it probably does not stand out as much as say the Smithsonian Channel’s video page, or even the Smithsonian Museum’s YouTube page; I feel they could do better. (Smithsonian Channel’s page is here: http://www.youtube.com/user/smithsonianchannel?blend=5&ob=5 and Smithsonian’s general YouTube page is here: http://www.youtube.com/user/SmithsonianVideos#p/u).

I feel that the Smithsonian Libraries are stepping up their marketing efforts to get the word out about them (they claim that they’re the largest museum library). The major thing I think they have going for them is that, they have a variety of different social networking places. Having both a blog *and* a Facebook is good because both can have pictures and video uploaded but having those two *plus* a Flickr and a YouTube page? Golden in my mind! Plus, they have a Twitter, which, they should use to promote all their pages. However, they are not stepping up like they could. They could link their Twitter to their Facebook (though some users may find this annoying if they’re only on Facebook). They also need to just promote, promote, promote. Lastly, while it does take time, more videos, or even links to other Smithsonian museum videos would be good marketing.

In terms of the brand “Smithsonian Libraries”, I am not quite sure that the Smithsonian Libraries have built a strong one in the virtual world. Sure, people immediate recognize and most likely trust the name “Smithsonian”, but I would assume that most people did not even know that the Museum(s) had a central library.

If I was hired to do their social media marketing, probably the first thing I would do would be to redo some of the blog design. I think it could be more effective. The second things I would do would to have them promote themselves more, for example using their twitter more effective. Yes, it takes a bit more time, but in the end, if people are coming to your social media pages to look for answers, isn’t the better? Third, while their blog posts are certainly intriguing and I would keep them, I would also add more content and because this *is* a library. I would add information about books! Going back three pages of posts, I found only a handful that had book recommendations on them. For example in the post on this post: http://smithsonianlibraries.si.edu/smithsonianlibraries/2011/07/n-3.html. My guess is that you go to the specific museum library page to find book recommendations. But for a post like this on National Postal Worker’s day (http://smithsonianlibraries.si.edu/smithsonianlibraries/2011/07/national-postal-worker-day.html), it would be better in my market to people, to put books on postal workers. Again, it would take a bit more time, but I think if people saw more book recommendations, it would gather their interest more. They could then link these posts both Facebook and Twitter that would gather more visitors as well as people interested in the Smithsonian Libraries.