Wedding Dresses and Wanted Criminals: Pinterest.com as an Infrastructure for Repository Building

Michael Zarro, Catherine Hall, Andrea Forte
Drexel University, College of Information Science and Technology
{mzarro, ceh48, aforte}@drexel.edu

Outline

- Introduction
- About Pinterest
- Research Questions & Findings
- Theorizing Pinterest
- Conclusion & Future Work

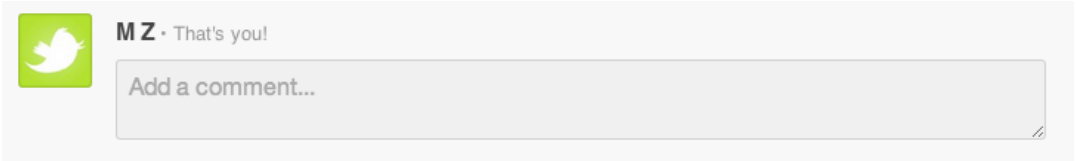
Collections

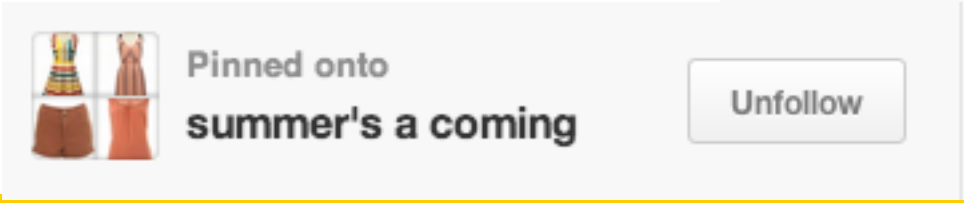
Online Collections

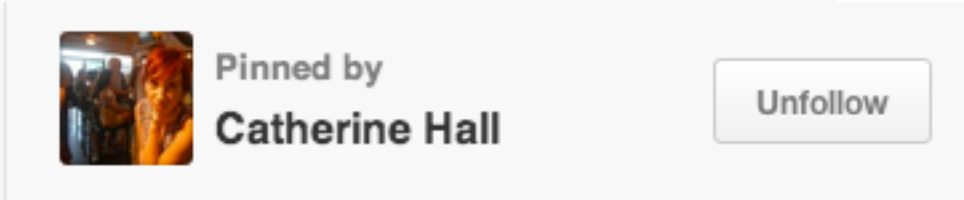
flickr™

Social Curation

combines social media features, such as sharing, liking, commenting and following with collecting capabilities like creation and curation
(Hall & Zarro, 2012; Zarro & Hall, 2012)







Media Lab MIT

The MIT Media Lab is an antidisciplinary research lab focusing on the invention of new media technologies that radically improve the ways people live, learn, work, and play.

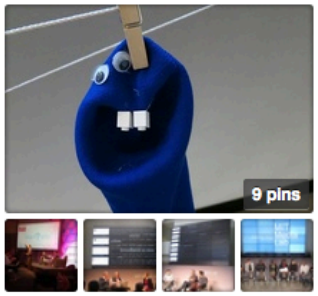
Cambridge, MA, USA · www.media.mit.edu

Repins from

- Supermechanical
- Yana Deitsch
- Sifteo Inc.

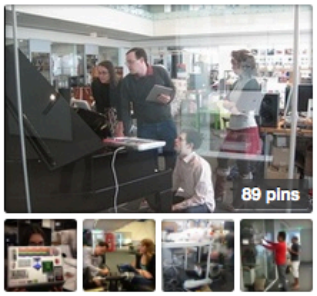
10 Boards | 238 Pins | 1 Like | Follow All | 396 Followers | 22 Following

Events at the Lab



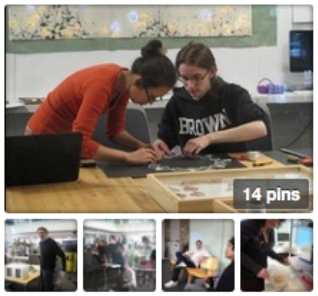
Follow

Day in the Life of the Media L...



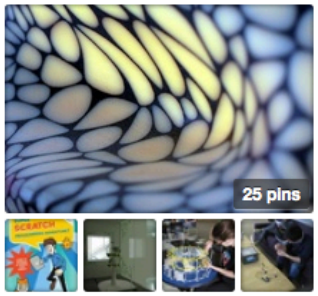
Follow

People



Follow

Projects



Follow

E14 + E15

Follow

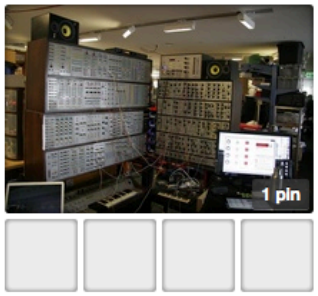
Spinoffs

Follow

Media Lab Pancake Race 2013

Follow

Geeky Goodness



Follow

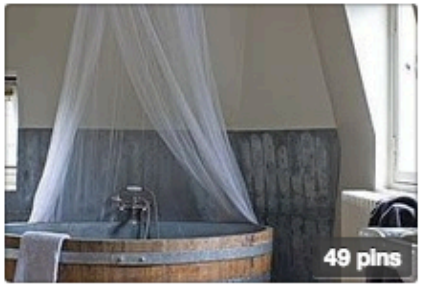
7 Boards | 224 Pins | 16 Likes | 18 Followers | 23 Following

Create a board

Kitchen

Edit

Home Design

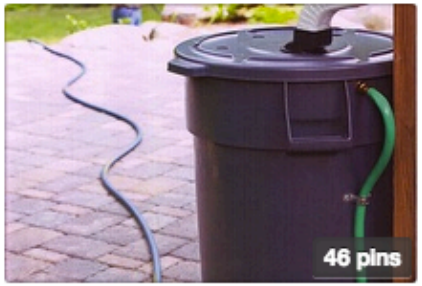


Edit

Kayaks & Boating

Edit

Outdoor Space



Edit

Eat & Drink

Edit

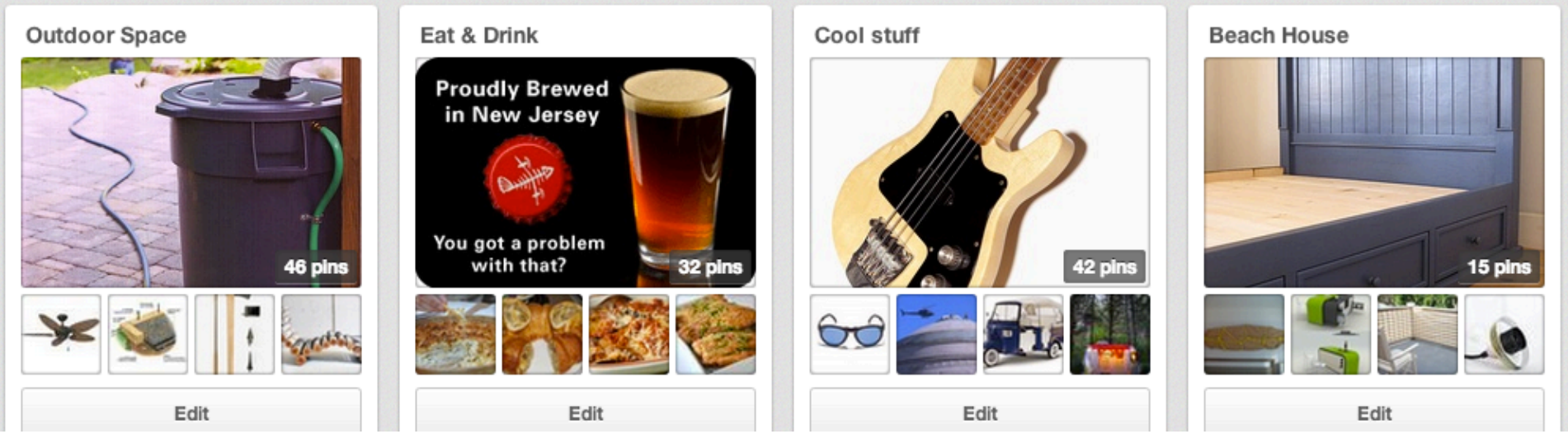
Cool stuff

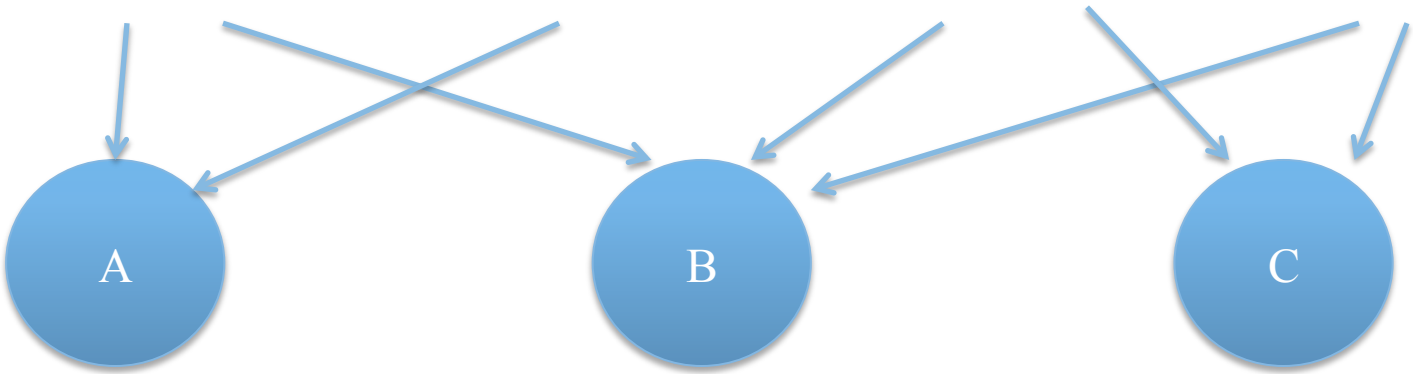
Edit

Beach House

Edit

Interest-Based Network





Research Questions

- What kinds of activities are people engaged in on Pinterest.com and why?
- How do Pinterest users understand these goals and activities within the broader ecology of social network sites?

Methods

- Qualitative Research Study
- Interviewed 9 participants
  - 4 personal, 4 professional, 1 both
  - 8 female, 1 male
  - Mid-late 20's
  - Experienced with Web and social media
- Observed public activities on Pinterest
- Examined (evolving) usage guidelines of the site operator

Interviews

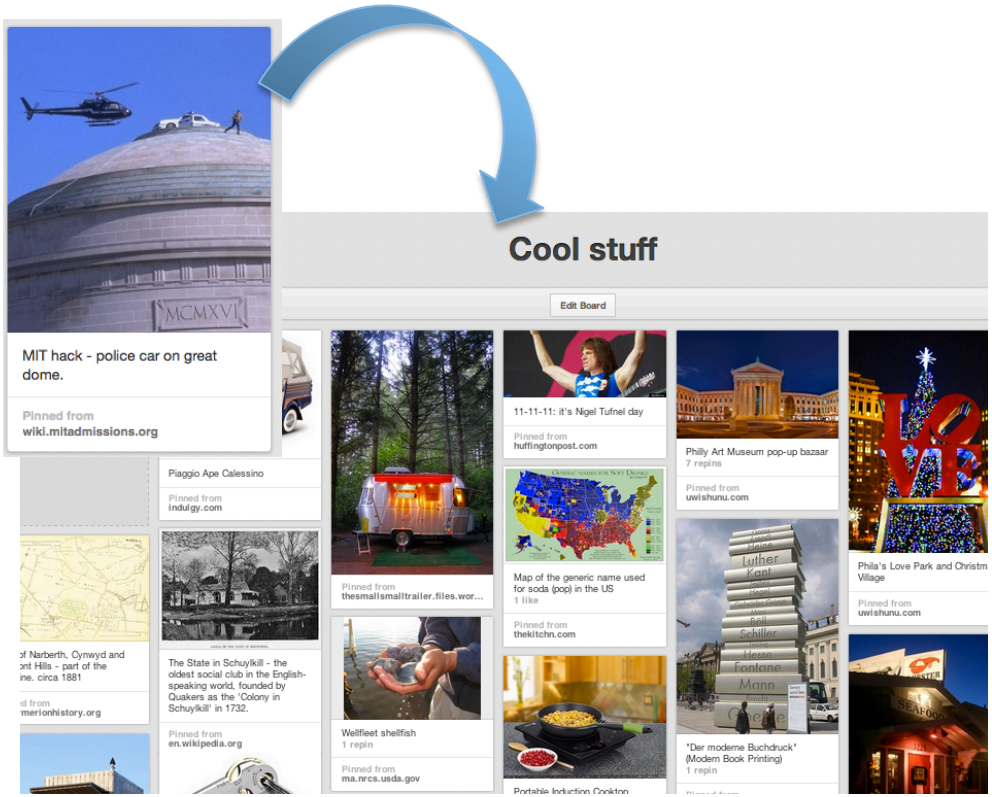
- 30 – 60 minute sessions
- 12 guiding questions, interviews were semi-structured
- Recorded and transcribed
- Two authors iteratively coded interview transcripts; third author brought in to discuss emerging concepts

Findings

E. Ownership
F. Interaction and Identity
A. Collecting
B. Discovering
C. Collaborating
D. Publishing

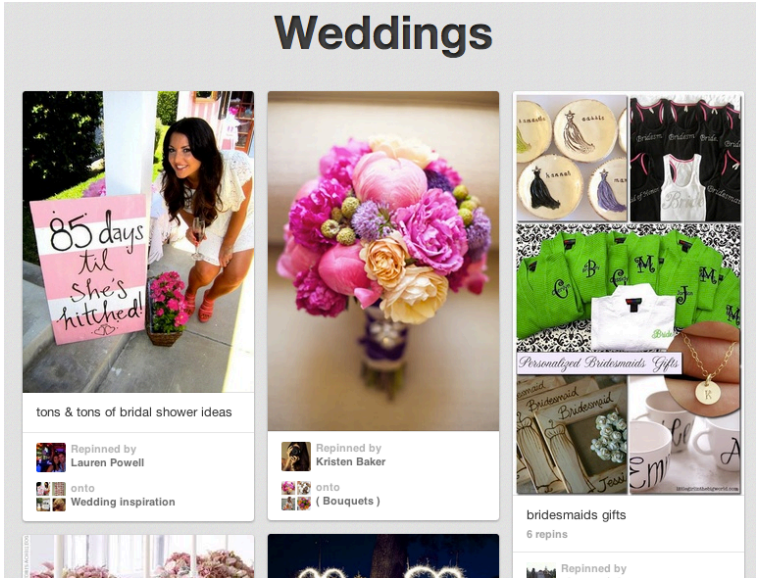
Collecting

- “You’re a curator, not an aggregator. Thinking of how a museum works, you’re finding the best things that you would want to showcase, not necessarily everything” (Kendra)
- “I actually kind of forget that it's all really, really public... because I just think of it as a better way for me to organize these links or bookmarks and images.” (Sara).



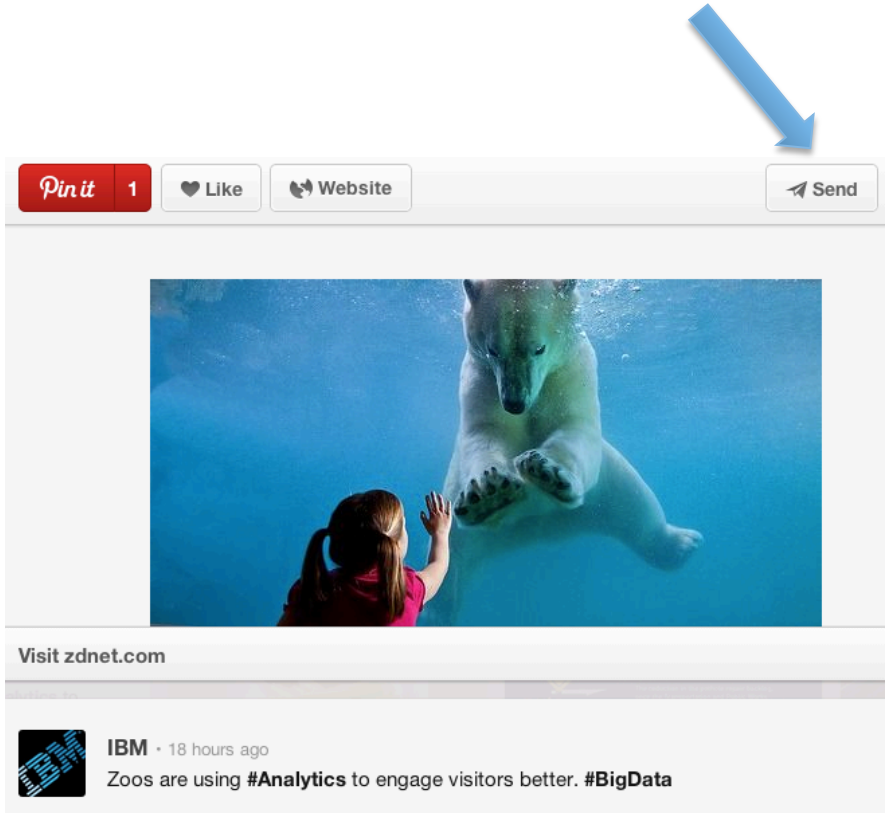
Discovering

- “It's a time saver because you don’t have to go to a specific website, it just kind of finds it for you and then compiles it together. And then grouping each one into their own categories to make it easier to find” (Jane).
- “I get sucked in… and then two hours later have no idea of how I got to where I am” (Katie)



Collaborating

- “I see something cool and I think my mother would like something, I’ll email the pin to her” (Liz).
- “When participants come home from the trips we asked them to share their photos with us.” (Jess). [works for a travel organization]



Publishing

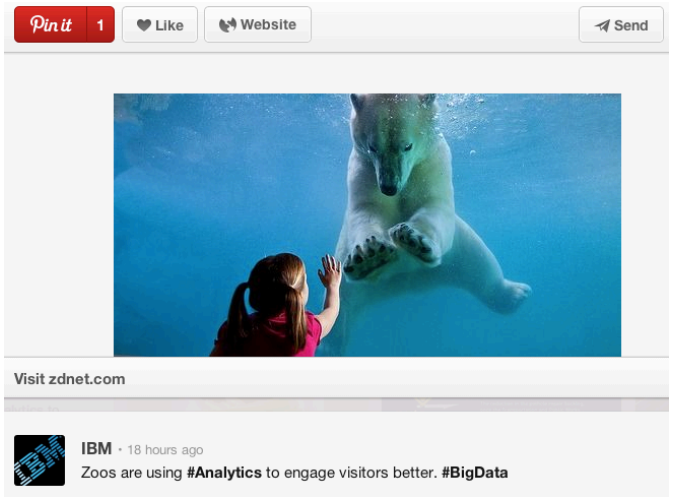
- Recognition, such as repins are important to some personal users.
- Professionals are aware of the prevailing standards on the site.
- Show a different, more 'human' side

"sort of cheesy and slimy and I don't want to appear that way" (Sean).

Ownership

- "There have been a couple of women that have repinned like 90% of pins from my wedding…it made me feel a little protective of my boards"

- Copyright of individual images: "I don't even think about it"
  - Accurate attribution to the source (URL) was important.



Interaction and Identity

- "Community of people who don't know each other", "It's about your interests, it's not necessarily about who" (Kendra).
- "The business building side of it is mostly just showing off a little bit more of what I'm in to" (Becky, a professional photographer).

"Why would I want to get to know them?" (Zhong, et al. ICWSM2013)

Theorizing Pinterest

- **Boundary Objects** Star and Griesemer (1989)
  - mediate the boundaries between groups; they can be processes, things, or concepts that are shared but used by different groups for different purposes or imbued with different meanings and are negotiated over time.
  - and include; **repositories**, ideal types, coincident boundaries, and standardized forms

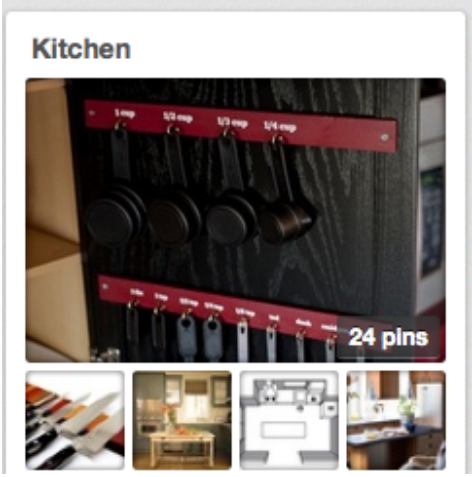
Repositories

- "ordered 'piles' of objects, which are indexed in a standardized fashion."

Scale

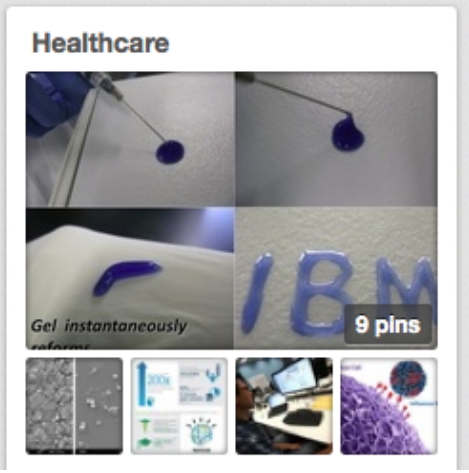
Individuals (small)

- Localized
- Shared with few
- Outside interest a positive, but not sought after



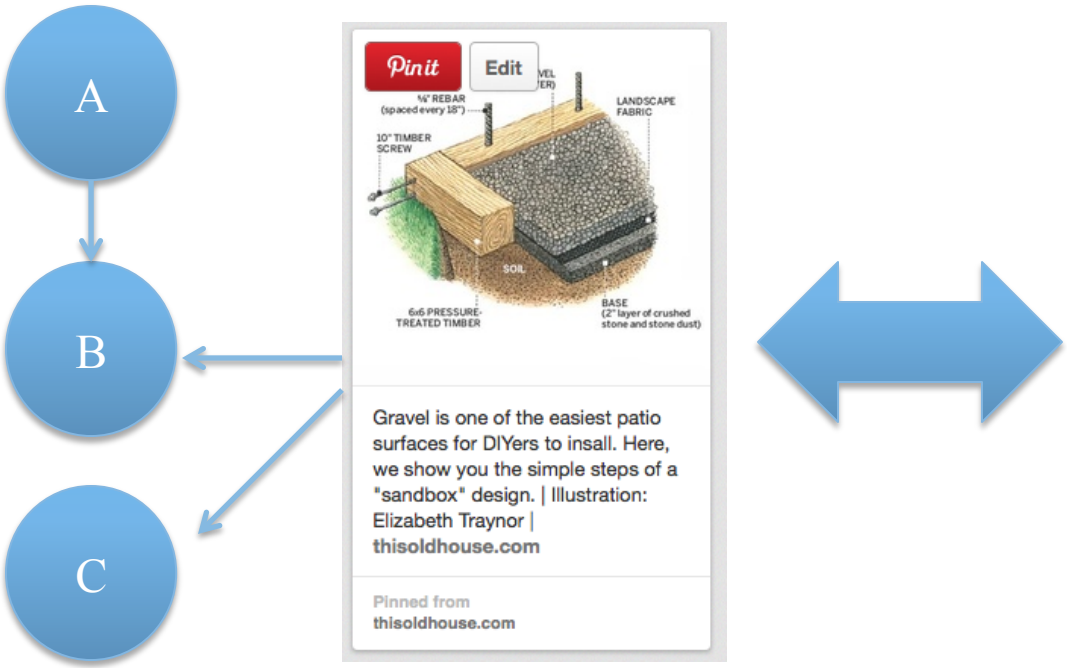
Professionals (large)

- Wide reach
- Shared with many
- Analytics, track the use and impact of pins



Social Worlds

- Life events are an intersection
  - Weddings, birthdays, home purchase



Future

- Evolving use of Pinterest and goal of site operator
- Libraries, healthcare and other areas?
  - General Services Administration, 62nd agreement with a social media provider
- Pinterest-like sites within organizations

Thank You

Andrea Forte
aforte@drexel.edu
www.andreaforte.net | @andicat

Catherine Hall
ceh46@drexel.edu
@britishredcoat

Michael Zarro
mzarro@drexel.edu
www.mikezarro.com | @mzarro