Building Communities
How online reader networks are shaping the future

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Defining Online Communities

What is an online community?

“A publisher-owned website/platform that offers a common interest around which the community is themed, with interactive communication between the organisation and community members and between the members themselves.”

- Trade publishing
- Academic and professional publishing
What does research address?

Questions the research is looking to answer:

- How many publishers currently have online communities? Academic? Trade?
- Anecdotal evidence of growth, but what are the stats?
- What might the market look like in 2 years time?
Key Findings – Current Market

- Currently **2/3** of all publishers host at least one online community.
- Trade publishers are more advanced in this field.

![Bar Chart]

- Number of publishers currently hosting online communities
- Trade: 86%
- Academic: 45%
- Total: 69%
Key Findings – The Benefits

- 73% of publishers feel that online communities help them to engage better with their audiences
- 72% of trade publishers think they help to build direct relationships with consumers
- 45% say they provide good marketing support
- 40% of academic publishers say they help them to increase their knowledge of customers
- 40% think they help boost content usage
- Just 16% of all publishers viewed them as viable direct sales channels
Overall, 94% of all publishers expect to own at least one online community by 2015.

Publishers’ online communities are set to double.

1/4 of publishers think they will have seven or more up and running.

The average number of online communities hosted by publishers is set to rise from 2.1 to 5.0, per company.
Key Findings – Future Investment

- **84%** of all publisher respondents think their investment in online communities will increase over the next two years
- **64%** of publishers feel their investment in online communities is already paying off
- **24%** believe it will do so in the short term
Summary

- Online communities are on the up
- Trade publishing is ahead of the game
- Huge increase in investment and number of online communities predicted by 2015
Conclusions

- Publishers see online communities as:
  - a way of getting closer to their readers
  - a way of becoming more customer/consumer focused
  - a way to gain understanding of what audiences want (access to metrics)
  - a way to make their content go further
  - a way to support marketing efforts, not generating direct sales
To view the full research findings, please visit: www.publishingtechnology.com/blog
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