Apps in

facebook &

And why librarians should pay attention

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ALA Annual 2008 - BIGWIG Social Software Showcase

So what is an "app" anyway?

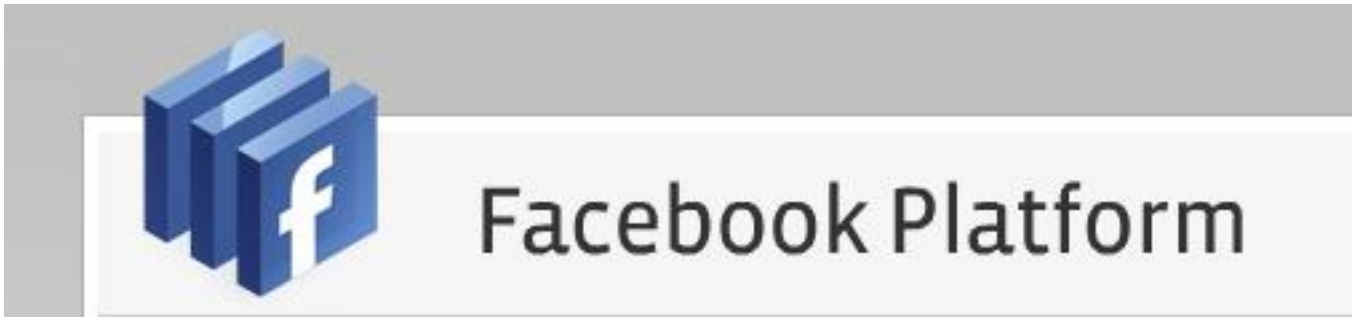
app = application = API

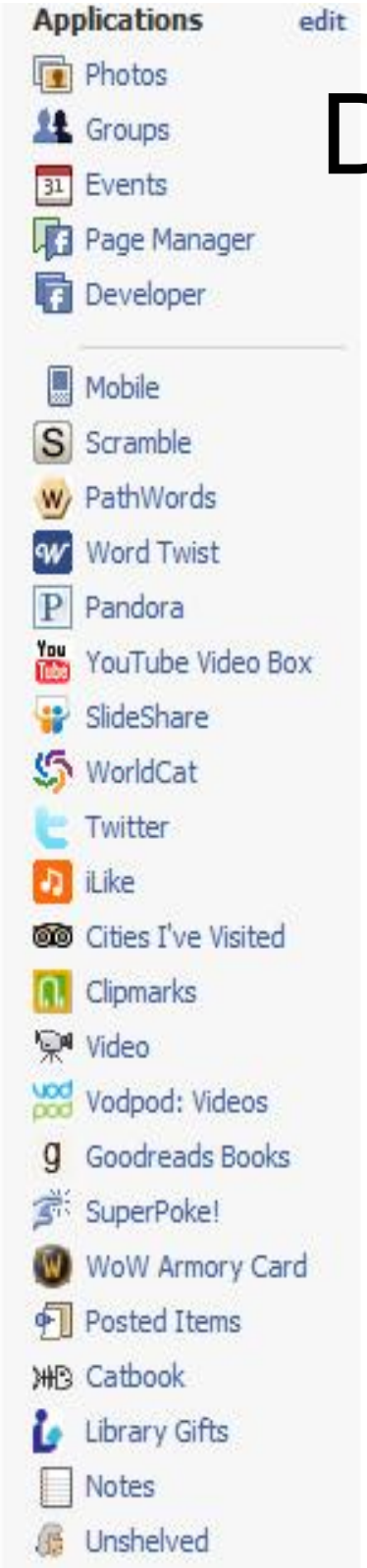
- A set of tools for building software applications

- A good API makes it easier to develop a program by providing all the building blocks.
- A programmer then puts the blocks together.

Facebook

"The Facebook Developer application allows for easy access to application settings *all within* the Facebook environment."





Development Platform - Very cool!

The platform provides a framework for software developers to create applications.

Using the platform, Facebook launched several new applications:

- Gifts
- Marketplace
- Events
- Video

Application Spam - Not so cool!

Developers went nuts.

Within a few months of launching the Facebook platform, issues arose.

"Application spam" is the most likely cause in the drop in visitors to Facebook.

In January 2008, Facebook experienced its first drop since its launch in 2004.

Google OpenSocial

"OpenSocial defines a common API for social applications *across multiple websites*. With standard JavaScript and HTML, developers can create apps that access a social network's friends and update feeds."

Google™

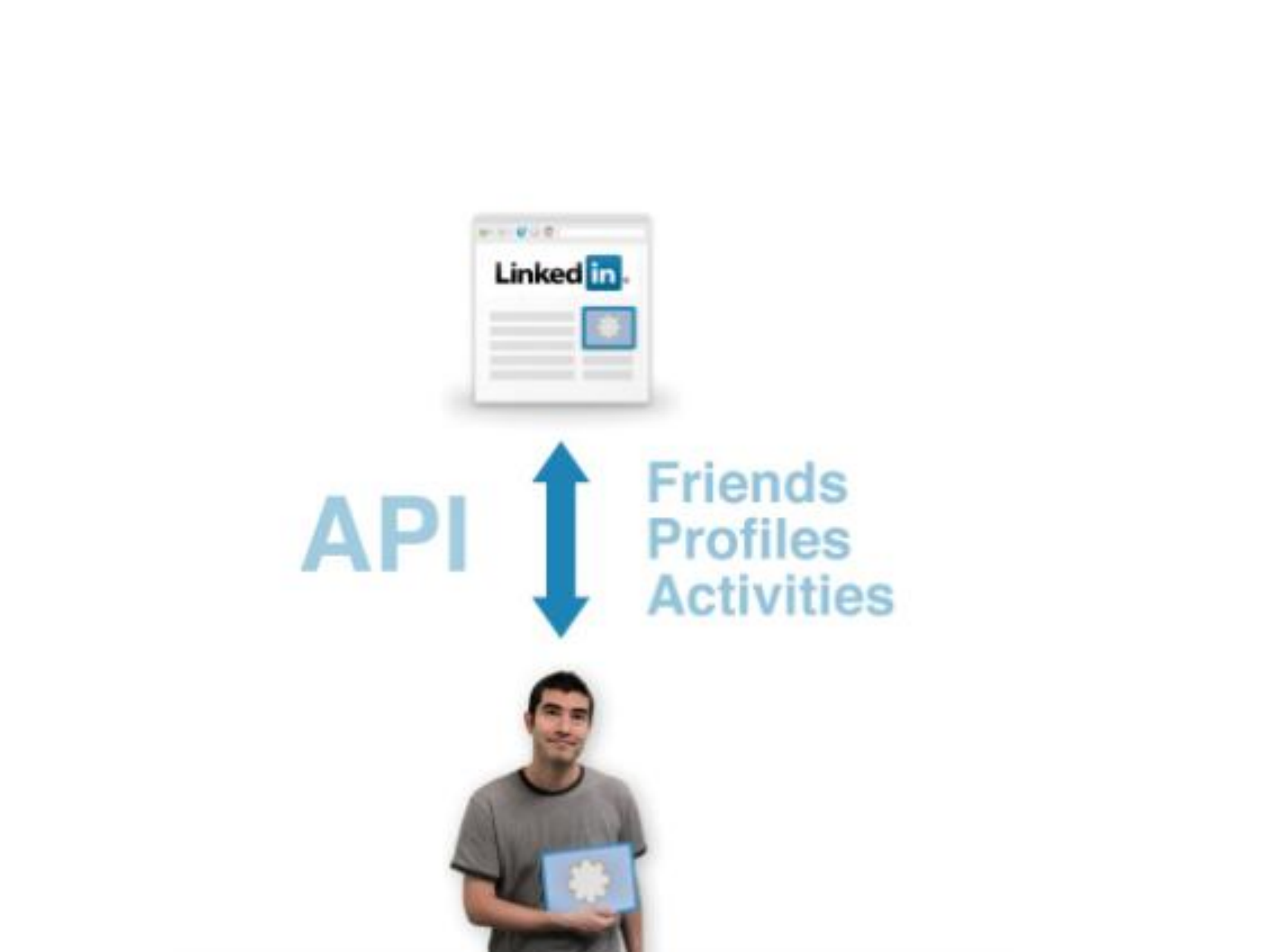
Principle behind "openness"

Examples

- Display LibraryThing book jackets/info in Facebook profiles
- Add widgets to Wordpress blogs
- Put Photobucket pics into LiveJournal entries
- Stick Flickr photos in YouTube videos

*If these standards are **open**, people don't have to reinvent the wheel every time someone wants to use an app on another social website.*

LinkedIn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Friends
Profiles
Activities

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OpenSocial

Time to do some comparisons...

Development Partners

OpenSocial Partners

Facebook Partners

Building Apps

If you've built an app in Facebeook, it should be easy to create an app in OpenSocial.

OpenSocial can scale to other networks, but Facebook applications lack the ability to scale to other networks.

OpenSocial Apps

Uses *Open* Languages

- JavaScript
- HTML
- XML
- Full support for AJAX
- Backend languages include PHP, Java, etc.

Hosting Apps

- Google hosts your apps for FREE

Facebook Apps

Uses *Propriatary* Languages

- FQL
- FBML
- FBJS
- Partial support for AJAX
- Backend languages include PHP, Java, etc.

Hosting Apps

- Facebook doesn't host your code. They simply proxy requests through their servers to yours. So it'll cost you $$.

Criticism of OpenSocial

OpenSocial is still in its infacy.

It did not work well in the beginning

Their philosophy "write once, distribute broadly" was not accurate.

Criticism of Facebook Apps

"a cornucopia of uselessness"

"none of the most popular applications actually do anything"

And then there is the whole privacy controversy...

GILDAN
ULTRA
COTTON
privacy is not a crime

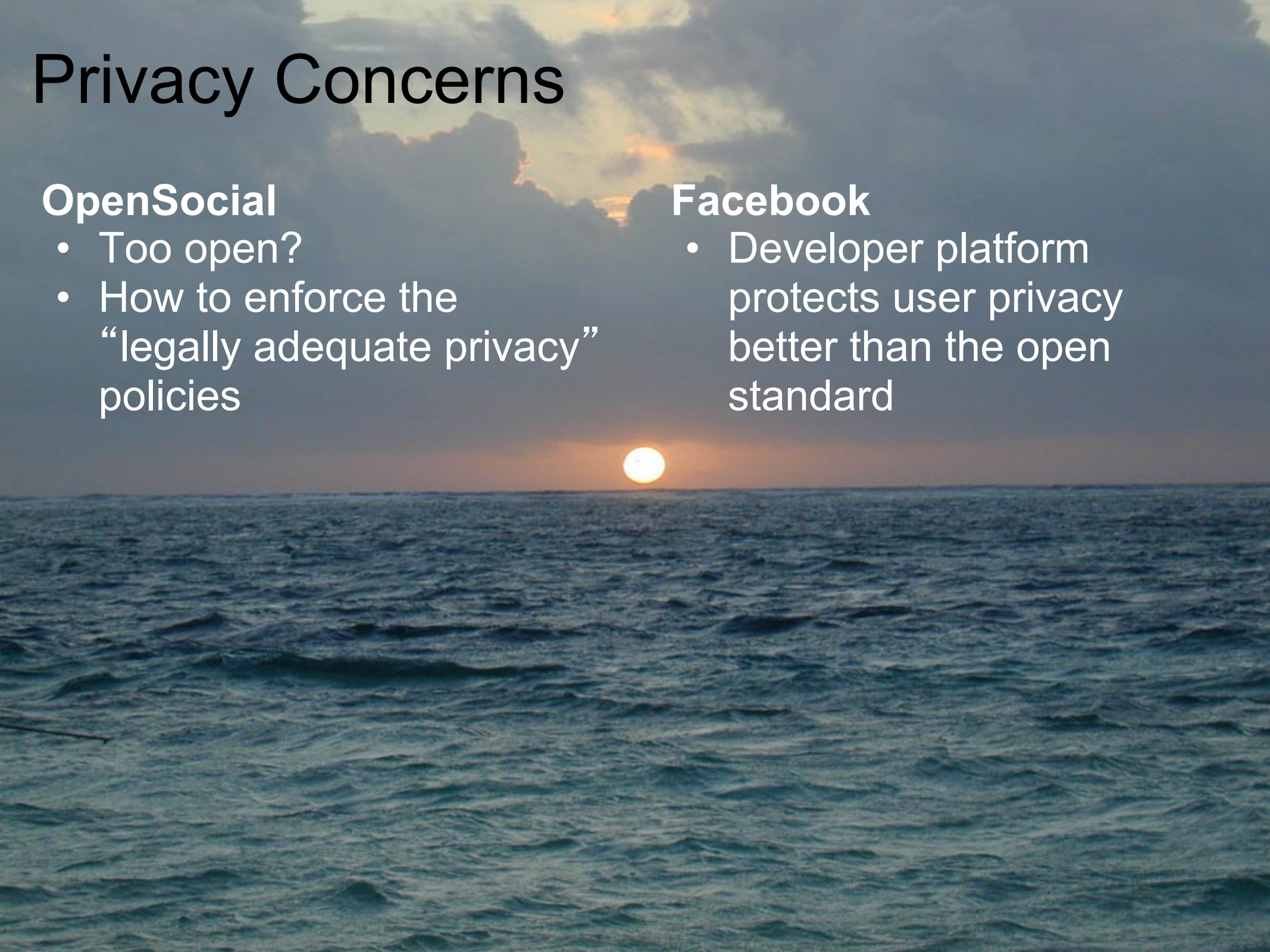
Privacy Concerns

OpenSocial

- Too open?
- How to enforce the "legally adequate privacy" policies

Facebook

- Developer platform protects user privacy better than the open standard



Users of the Apps

OpenSocial

- Market potential for 250 million users worldwide
- MySpace has 73 million users in the United States
- Difficult to rapidly grow user base due to existing competition

Faceboook

- 80 million active users worldwide
- Only 36 million users in the United States
- Difficult to rapidly grow user base due to a saturated market

Dilemmas

You don't want to publish and maintain a database of your personal info for every application you use.

You don't want have to maintain multiple social network accounts to make this information available.

You want your information to remain relatively private and out of the hands of crazy marketers and spammers.

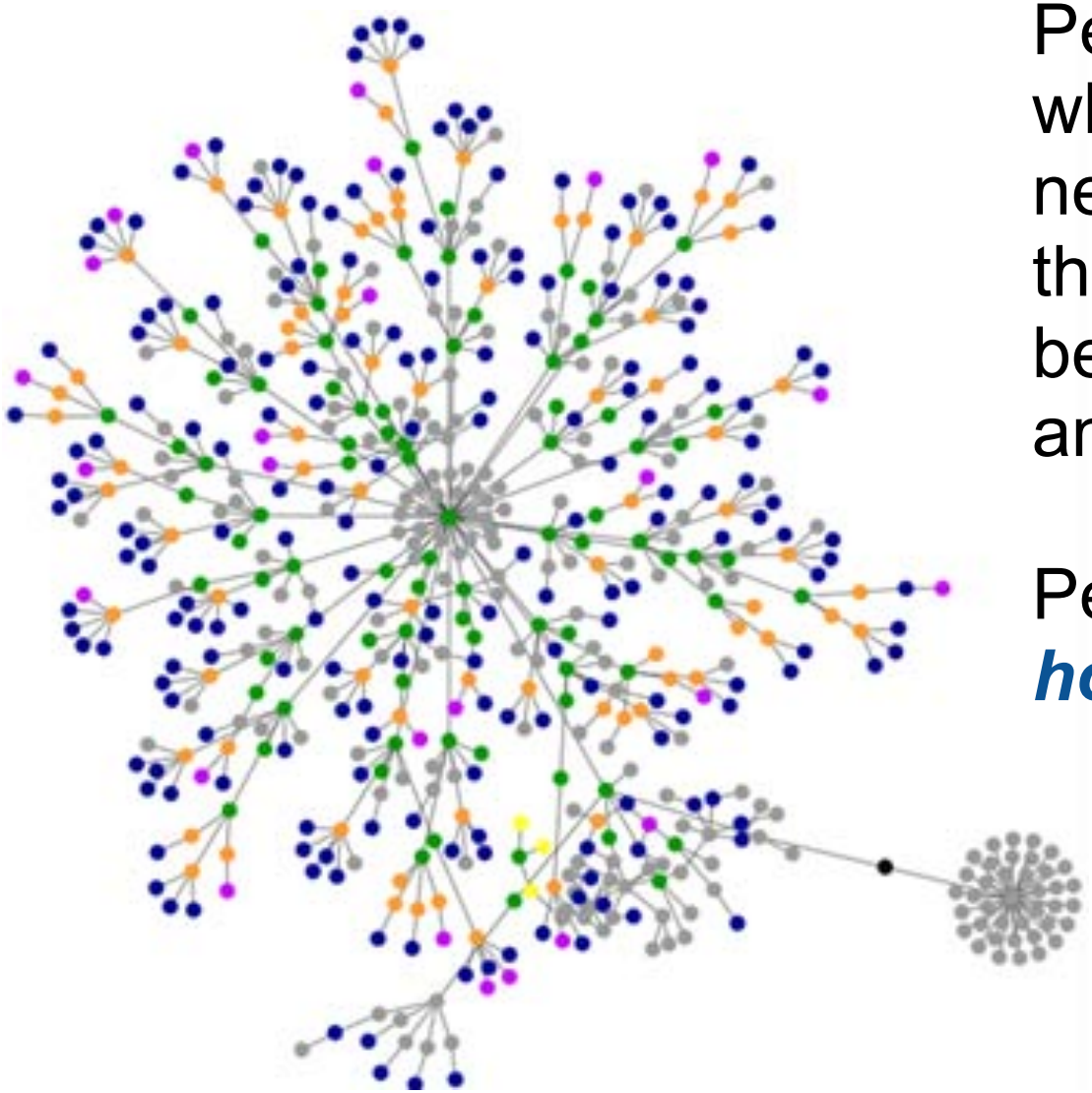
Down the road...

Google will continue to develop new tools to allow developers to help make the web more open. More partners will join.

Facebook will continue to grow only if they eventually open their doors and let Facebook info go beyond their domain name.

Final Thoughts

There isn't going to be one winner and one loser. People will continue to use ***many*** networks and apps.

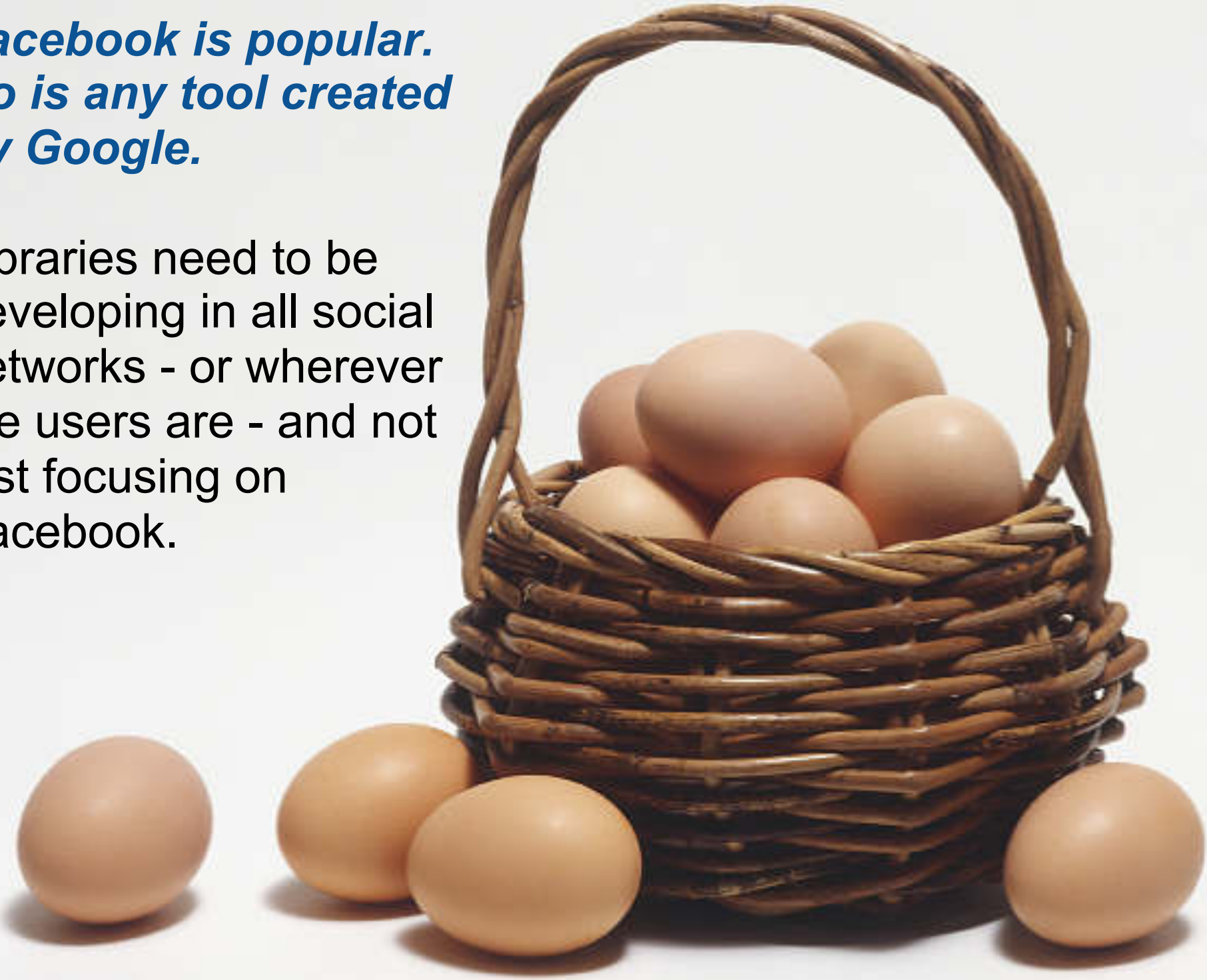


People will want ***control*** over which applications and networks they use, and have the ability to ***move freely*** between them with their data and connections,

People want a system that ***honors privacy***.

Facebook is popular. So is any tool created by Google.

Libraries need to be developing in all social networks - or wherever the users are - and not just focusing on Facebook.



Additional Resources

- Google's OpenSocial
  - http://code.google.com/opensocial
- Further development resources
  - http://code.google.com/p/opensocial-resources
- Developer forums
  - http://groups.google.com/group/opensocial
- Facebook Developer's Platform
  - http://developers.facebook.com/

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(gtalk, yahoo, twitter, flickr, delicious, etc.)

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