

Assessment 1: Online Community Search
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The purpose of this assessment is to examine and compare two existing online community spaces, ultimately identifying criteria as to what constitutes a community.

MakerShare - <https://makershare.com>

MakerShare is Maker Media's second attempt at an online community for Makers. This online community is currently in Beta and provides a place for Makers to share projects and ideas from all over the world. Because this online community is run by Maker Media, the same company that owns and operates Make: magazine and the Maker Faire, it is an obvious resource for Makers familiar with the Maker Media brands.

Currently, MakerShare hosts 6,139 Makers since its launch in June 2017. Maker profiles provide an image, name, location, "about me" summary, number of projects, views, the ability to share their information or message them directly. Members can choose to follow Makers and view their connected social media and websites.

A page on the MakerShare website suggests Dos and Don'ts. These are provided to help keep the online community friendly and supportive, which will encourage Makers to participate. The site also offers a reminder that one's demographic characteristics and skill level should not dictate or have an impact on a Maker's ability to participate in this online community.

The MakerShare website has a place for members to look for and find Makers and Projects, join Maker Groups, find a Mission to join and build with a purpose, and look at Maker Showcases which are project collections provided by the Community Managers. Many of the projects keep track of "likes," symbolized by a heart and views, symbolized by an eye icon. MakerShare also makes use of Badges to showcase each member's involvement with the community website.

DeviantArt - <https://www.deviantart.com/>

DeviantArt is an online community for artists and appreciators of art can come together. The creators believe that art is for everyone and DeviantArt provides a culture and context for how art is created, discovered, and shared. Each artist member is affectionately called a Deviant; a title heavily revered. The site was started in August 2000 and currently has over 44 million registered members with even more visitors each month. The site keeps track of art uploads, which amount to tens of thousands of new art pieces uploaded daily. DeviantArt has categories which include Digital Art, Traditional Art, Photography, Cartoons and Comics, Literature, and more.

The website is geared to discovering new art for anyone who stops by the online community. This feature is accessible to anyone, regardless if they are a member or not. When members upload art, members and visitors can add comments, click on the member profile to learn more about the artist, known as a deviant, see their other creations, purchase prints, see the member's favorites, and read their journal. Members can connect social media to their profiles, as well.

DeviantArt also provides other community-based resources like a forum, chat, critiques, badges, and more. The Help and FAQ page contains all the information a member or visitor might need to understand how the community works. The Help Center explains what the

symbols mean, how to use RSS feeds, how to become a member, rules for social interaction, and community etiquette.

What Makes a Community?

Communities allow for members to interact with one another, engage in common activities, learn from each other, and even build relationships. Both MakerShare and DeviantArt are exemplar communities in an online setting, as they meet this key criterion. While both websites would be considered communities, they have some similarities and differences.

MakerShare and DeviantArt are web-based communities that allow for members and even outside visitors to interact with one another. Interaction is one of the most essential aspects of an online community and evident among both sites. Both of these communities thrive on the ability to see other members and their work. Through the arena of common interest, newcomers sign up to be a part of these communities and are truly invested in learning about one another, observing, and learning from their work. Other common characteristics that create the interaction within these two web-based communities are sharing, clear rules and expectations that guide interaction, and an emphasis on communication and relationship-building.

Communication is a common occurrence in both online communities. Both online communities allow members and non-members to participate, though members tend to have added perks and abilities. Specifics about communication on both sites are governed by the rules and guidelines. Members and non-members of DeviantArt can comment on each other's work providing feedback and constructive criticism. Sometimes this shared communication results in the asking of questions regarding a certain artistic technique, thus facilitating learning. Both sites even have additional forms of collaborative communication in the form of Groups and Forums for individuals to join and discuss specific topics.

Besides regular communication between community members, following one another is another way to build relationships. DeviantArt members can award digital badges, "favorite" artwork, and follow one another; receiving updates on new postings by a specific member. MakerShare also employs the ability to build relationships by allowing members to follow each other and send messages. The site provides links to members' social media pages, and the following of these may create what may be perceived as even stronger relationships.

While also found on DeviantArt, MakerShare has a much more significant emphasis on the sharing of stories and skills. On MakerShare, Community Managers have a heavy influence on what's presented as part of the Showcases page. These project collections are specifically curated by the Community Managers and reflect what they think is best to share with the entire community. In addition to viewing Showcases, members and even non-members can view other projects and discover what they are interested in by using the filter and sorting options. Non-members can see everything, but only members can "like" and comment. An additional useful feature on MakerShare is a project creator's sharing of both AHA! Moments and UH-OH! Moments to help those interested in doing a similar project troubleshoot.

Both online communities meet expected criteria for a true community and even allow them to be considered a Community of Practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Each has a domain, or specific area of interest, with clear commitment from members and visitors to the domain. Each site represents a community through the interaction and engagement of shared activities, the building of relationships, and learning from one another. As part of their practice, members share cases, stories, and build a shared repertoire. Though emphasized in different quantities and styles, both online communities have the qualities that constitute a CoP.

References

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.