

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND SERVICES IN MODERN AGE

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ABSTRACT

The present conceptual based paper examine the important of social media networking academic libraries in the present days libraries can leverage on social networking and Social Media skills to provide dynamic library services. Information communication and technology (ICT) play a vital role in every walk of the life not exception the libraries also. The unprecedented technological advancement of the 21st century, no doubt has impacted on library services globally. The Social Media hype has gradually crept into the library profession with social sites such as Blog, Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube, Library Thing, These channel can help libraries for to reach the user's growing requirements in short life span. This paper is therefore, an attempt to examine the present scenario in library services delivery with these new and emerging technologies. Challenges faced by libraries in the use of these Social Media are investigated and possible solutions proffered.

KEYWORD: Social Networking, Social media, Libraries, Library services.

1. Introduction

Face book, MySpace, Twitter, Second Life, Delicious, Blogs, and Wikis – these are just of the social networking options available on the internet today. The Oxford English Dictionary Online (2010) defines social networking as: the use or establishment of social networks or connections; the use of Web sites which enable users to interact with one another, find and contact people with common interests, etc.

The varied social networking tools are increasingly used by individuals of all ages but are especially popular among young people and college students. Due to high use

among these two groups, many academic librarians advocate using these new social Web platforms to reach out to student populations (Farkas, 2007; Mathews, 2006, 2007, Milstein, 2009). Online social networking by academic libraries is not, however, without controversy. While some maintain that social networking efforts are a successful and innovative method of student outreach, others argue that social networking by academic librarians is an ineffective use of librarian time and effort (Sekyere, 2009). A review of recent literature shows that social networking by academic libraries provides a potentially effective method of student outreach as long as librarians take into account the possible issues that may arise.

The use of social networking services such as Face book and Twitter has become an integral part of everyday communication in daily life. People are fundamentally social beings, both in our private lives and in our professional interactions. Young generation people are very enthusiastic users and majority are engaging on a daily basis with social networking services via a computer or smart phone. Now days, the importance of social networking services has become a major issue within society, as well as a significant study topic for many researchers. Social network sites integrate digital communication; in addition, the most important characteristics of social networking service is that they enable users to make their social networks visible and build connections among individuals (Huan, & Eric, 2010).

2. Literature Review

The library as an organization is a collection of information resources with the specific purpose of obtaining, preserving and making available recorded knowledge. The efficiency

and effectiveness of the library as a tool of Research and Learning is determined by the success of providing patrons with relevant and timely information and utilization. Previously, libraries measured their successes based on completeness and balance of collection. In recent times, the focus has changed towards technology driven service delivery. O'Brien (1996) and Dadzie (2005) assert that for information to be of optimal use, it must have the following qualities: relevance, accuracy, timeliness, currency, completeness and clarity and also cost effectiveness.

Traditional Library processes and structures are proving unsatisfactory to respond quickly enough to technology driven environment. However, change is not desirable but also mandatory as technology has much potential that cannot be ignored. The biggest change in today's patrons from those in the past is their intense reliance on technology such as cell phones, computers, and access to the Internet etc.

3. Definition of Social Networking

According to Computing Dictionary (2011), Social networking site as any website designed to allow multiple users to publish content of them. The information may be on any subject and may be for consumption by friends, mates, employers, employees just to mention a few.

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, to view and navigate their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Powell (2009) defines social networking as a community in which individuals are somehow connected through friendship, values, working relationships, idea and so on. Seufert et al (1999) defines social networking in terms of knowledge networking as signifying a number of people, resources and relationships among them, who are assembled in order to accumulate and use knowledge primarily by means of knowledge

creation and transfer processes, for the purpose of creating value. The concept of social networking is one of the tools of Web 2.0, which also forms the basis of library 2.0. "Social Media are primarily Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings." - Wikipedia

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Deducing from the above definitions, the term social networking can be referred to as a web platform where people from different cultural settings can connect and interact with each other.

4. Uses of Social Networking sites by the Academic libraries-

Academic libraries are using social networking platform to interact and reach out to their patrons or clients. This platform has been embraced by International University libraries in their service delivery even though resources available to them abound. It has also become a level playing ground for academics and students to interact on issues pertaining to course work. Students also use this platform to share information amongst themselves on any subject and topic. The use of these tools has been affirmed by Bell (2007), that Academic libraries do not only use social media for communication purposes, but had adapted their research strategies to this environment.

Yale Science Libraries, Adelphi University Libraries, Carnegie Mellon University Libraries, Cambridge University Library and Norwegian University of Science and Technology Library are just a few examples of the Academic Libraries with social networking wall. The walls are mostly used to:

- Announcement of the library programmes.

- Give students the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to the use of the library
- Teach basic search tools
- Send brief updates to patrons
- Ask a Librarian

Academic Libraries also respond to the needs of modern day patrons by applying efficient such as social networking, mobile application, and online check in/check outs to their service delivery.

These developments in the operations of library service delivery should encourage Academic Libraries to reinvent itself to respond adequately to this call by investing in technologies that have direct effect on the operations of the library. To achieve this, Academic libraries must upgrade library staff skills in information Technology (IT) so as to be able to understand and use Social Networking sites to their maximum.

5. Major social networking web sites

- **Blog-**A blog or Weblog is a website, usually personal, professional or institutional with regular entries of comments, descriptions of events or other material in reverse chronological order from the most recent 'post' or entry at the top of the main page to the oldest entries towards the bottom. A typical blog combines text, graphics, and video, and has links to other blogs/web pages. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual and focused on art (artlog), photographs (photoblog), sketches (sketchblog), videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), audio (podcasting), which are part of a wider network of social media. Micro-blogging is another type of blogging, one which consists of blogs with very short posts.
- **Facebook-** Most popular now because it is librarian- friendly, with many applications like JSTOR search, World Cat, and much more. Librarians can interact with users to know their information need. Libraries try to link some of these specialized library applications to Facebook.
- **MySpace-** In Academic institutions where the students are; libraries have taken advantage of this site post, calendar, custom catalog

search tools, and blog features to improve their presence.

- **Wikis-** Is a free online encyclopedia that gives a background knowledge and definition of concepts. It offers a platform for users to access, edit and contribute to content. This is a collaborative web page for developing web content.
- **LinkedIn-** Librarians can get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest via LinkedIn. Librarians can use this platform to render specialized services such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).
- **Twitter-** A micro blogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update. Librarians can use this platform to give users firsthand information on the on-going national elections. Users can send Instant Messages (IM) on complaints or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using twitter.
- **YouTube-** By this channel librarian can put updates of various events such as important highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops are disseminated via the YouTube.
- **Flicker-** Librarians can use this tool to share and distribute new images of library collections. Cover page of new arrivals of both books and journals can be disseminated to users via Flicker.
- **Library Thing-** A tool that enriches the library OPAC. Once an account is created, a list of books with ISBNs is sent to Library Thing which sends back a piece of code which is pasted into the footer of the Library OPAC.

6. Advantage of use of Social Media in Academic Libraries

Social connections have become very important and have improved the library profession tremendously in all countries of the world. Social networking refers to a process of relationship building among a group with a common interest. The Face book initially was used only for social discussions, however over time, particularly by the turn of

the 21st century the grouping of individuals into specific groups emerged. Professional groups started to spring up and within time the library profession had its own group with the sole purpose of sharing ideas and gathering first hand information regarding the profession. Undoubtedly, as a growing economy the use of these media often meet with challenges which are succinctly discussed in this paper and strategies for the enhancement of library services. Social networking presents some important opportunities to libraries which include marketing of services and reference services.

- **Marketing of library services** – the growing population of patrons and librarians that make use of social networking is an indication that it is an ideal vehicle for marketing the services of libraries to patrons. Flickr is an excellent marketing tool which could be used by librarians to sensitize the users on general library services. Most students are not aware of the different services offered in the library such as reservation of books, reference services and Current Awareness Service (CAS), Dissemination of Information (SDI). Librarians can spread awareness of library services to those who may not be aware of these services via Social Media. Librarians can also develop subject specific blogs and play a leading role in advocating the use of blogs for scholarly communication and commenting on research findings.
- **Reference Services** – the use of social networking tools enable librarians to identify library patrons on the social cyberspace and pro-actively provide the type of information that would normally result from reference service. Social networking tools are not only being used as a vehicle for promoting services, programs and new resources but they are also used for reference service. Students are using tools like Ask a Librarian, and twitter to ask questions in “real time and this is assisting in promoting the library as a relevant, efficient and helpful place.
- **Information Exchange** -Information exchange fall into small-scale collaborative activities, including exchange of informal ideas about concepts and technologies, and

also formal categories of collaborative tasks engaged in by academic librarians

- **Resource Sharing** -The resource-sharing category of collaborations includes interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing arrangements, cooperative collection development efforts, and cooperative resource management programs.
- **Sharing Services** -The sharing services category focuses primarily on public services functions such as reference and instruction. It includes efforts between librarians within individual institutions and externally, between librarians and vendors and with government entities.
- **Work-Related Project Collaboration** - Work-related tasks include consortia partnerships. In this long-term groups seeking to establish priorities and standardize practices across member institutions in a particular consortium, as well as short-term groups focused on particular shared projects or concerns for particular functional areas. Aside from consortia, work-related project collaboration also appears as participation on committees from local to international levels and as work with donors and friends of the library groups.
- **Resource Description and Standards of Practice** -The final category of collaborative tasks, establishing rules for description and standards of practice, encompasses creating and refining classification rules and instituting broad.

7. Disadvantage or Problems use of Social Media

As demonstrated above, online social networking by academic libraries has many possibilities within the realm of student outreach. Some libraries may choose to use several social networking methods simultaneously while others may only use one preferred option. Yet, using the various social networking web sites available does not guarantee success or effectiveness as an outreach method. Several concerns about the use of social networking have been raised and must be considered by any academic library currently using social networking web sites or considering the implementation of

social networking outreach programs. It is also difficult to determine if patrons using the library's social networking tools are new library users or existing patrons (Sekyere, 2009). Thus, each library must decide on its definition of success for social networking tools. Is the goal chiefly to draw new users into the library, or does it also include keeping current users informed and engaged? Although each library can determine its own measures for success, usage rates should be monitored in social networking programs to determine whether or not they meet the library's goals.

- Low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media
- Slow speed of Internet
- Electricity failure

8. Here are some examples of Social Media websites

- Social Bookmaking. (Del.icio.us, Reference Services – the use of social networking tools enable librarians to identify library patrons on the social cyberspace and pro-actively provide the type of information that would normally result from reference service. Social networking tools are not only being used as a vehicle for promoting services, programs and new resources but they are also used for reference service. Students are using tools like Ask a Librarian, and twitter to ask questions in “real time and this is assisting in promoting the library as a relevant, efficient and helpful place., Simpy) Interact by tagging websites and searching through websites bookmarked by other people.
- Social News. (Digg, Propeller, Reddit) Interact by voting for articles and commenting on them.
- Social Photo and Video Sharing. (YouTube, Flickr) Interact by sharing photos or videos and commenting on user submissions.
- Wikis. (Wikipedia, Wikia) Interact by adding articles and editing existing articles.

10. Conclusion

Social networking web sites are a new technology offering promising new outreach options for academic librarians. They provide a new platform for reaching students beyond

the traditional library building and web site by allowing students to access librarians and the library's resources without leaving the comfort of the web sites they use the most. Although this discussion examines only a select few of the social networking tools available to librarians, the ideas for how best to use social networking tools are widely applicable. However, student outreach attempts using social networking are less likely to be effective if they are not based upon targeted, well-thought out programs. Concerns still exist regarding the effectiveness of social networking by academic libraries, but librarians should not be scared off entirely by these concerns. Rather, academic librarians must thoughtfully address the issues associated with social networking as they seek new avenues to reach their students outside the library walls. Lastly, there needs to be quantitative and qualitative research about the use of social networking tools as a form of student outreach to determine its effectiveness within academic libraries so that academic librarians do not rely only on anecdotal evidence when considering implementing social networking programs within their own libraries.

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