

Social Media and Libraries: A Symbiotic Relationship for Information Dissemination in 21st Century

¹ Gayus Yaji Soro ² Hassan Salama Dala ³ Maryam Babayo Bello

¹ College of Education Billiri, Gombe State +2348160349141

^{2&3} College Library, Federal College of Education (Tech), Gombe, Gombe State.

² hassansalamadala@gmail.com, +2347082747289

³ maryambabayobello@gmail.com, +2348036523758

Abstract

This paper aims to showcase the symbiotic relationship between libraries and social media platforms for information dissemination in the 21st century. Social media is a phenomenon to library users as social media platform is a great medium to improve the interpersonal relationship between librarians and patrons. The 21st century technological advancement affects library services, consequently, many changes in the format of information resources and dissemination have been altered as a result of social media. However the basic role of the libraries is to provide information according to the needs and demands of the users. Social media helps the library users to access necessary resources without physically visiting the library. So it is high time for the library professionals to think of the alternate ways of attracting the users and to meet their needs and demands. As the popularity of social media is growing exponentially, library professionals cannot keep themselves aside without exploiting the social media. Through social media, libraries can attract users and enable them to participate in the production of library products and services. The paper discussed how social media can be exploited for the benefit of library users.

Keywords: Librarians, Libraries, Social Media, FaceBook, Twitter, Library Service, YouTube, Flickr, Blog.

Introduction

The concept of information dissemination has been universally accepted as an essential developmental tool and basic resources upon which the improvement of education, economic, politics and all living condition of population are anchored. Usually a well informed society is considered as an enlightened and developed one, and as such, the importance of libraries as an efficient vehicle for acquiring, organizing and making information available cannot be over emphasized. Momodu, (2012) In this 21st century, the development of information technology made social media easy to be used and accessed. In the words of Dewing (2010) social networking platforms as a wide range of internet based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchange of information or join communities. People can share any news and information instantly without being limited by time and distance. Social media is a computer based collection of tools as well as platform where people build social relations among people who share their interests, activities, personal matters, etc. They share their information in different forms, namely text, photos, audio, video, etc. In light of the above, both social media and libraries have common goals of information dissemination and as such have a symbiotic relationship of having the same goals and purpose. These facts afforded library the opportunity to use social media as an effective platform to engage with their users, as well as promotion to tools. Garofalo (2013) explained that academic libraries (university, polytechnics, and college libraries) can use social media networking to notify their communities about news, events, library resources, and library services. What we wish to show



here, is how social networks provides supporting technology that can be used by libraries and librarians to ensure the effective information services delivery.

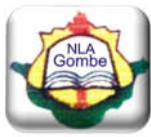
In other words, Social media serve as a collective term for the online tools and services such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo and video sharing communities, social bookmarking, podcasts, discussion forums, RSS feeds, virtual worlds, presentation sharing and a lot more. Due to the popularity of social media among the teaming youth adults including students and researchers engaging with social media 24/7days, libraries and librarians cannot be exempted from the use of social media in this information age. It is a great challenge for the librarians to capture the attention of the remote users who are using Social Networking (Face book, MySpace, LinkedIn), Social news (Dig, Propeller), Social Bookmarking (Del.icio.us, Blink list), Social Photo and Video Sharing (YouTube, Flickr, instagaram) and Wikis who are reluctant to visit the library physically. So many libraries particularly academic libraries in Nigeria and around the world are providing opportunity to their patrons to use social media through library's website. By exploiting Social media, the library can give extra facility to reach their services to their web users, and offer them opportunity to communicate with the librarians. Chakrabarti (2016) stated that, it is found that, there are nearly millions of active Face book users, over millions of LinkedIn members, billion+ of images on Flickr, millions of pages on Wikipedia. So many libraries use Facebook Wikis, Flickr, and Blogs for publication of historical photos and identification of notable people, places, or events picture. Academic libraries use Wikis for content creation and building a collaborative relation between library and users whereas other libraries also use it for marketing their library services.

The utilization of social media in the libraries and information centers has been increased year by year. Charkrabarti (2016) applauded that, by using social media libraries can attract their users and enable them to participate in the production of library products and services. The use of social media in academic libraries is widespread in terms of marketing and broadcasting. Libraries commonly use Facebook fan pages, Twitter accounts, YouTube channels or blogs to distribute news about events, services, or resources. Libraries have also actively used these mechanisms to reach out to potential new users (Stoeckel & Sinkinson, 2015).

Benefits of Using Social Media in Libraries

The application of Social media in libraries for information dissemination have considerable benefits that patrons can take advantage of. Some of them according to Kumar (2015) are the improvement of innovation and learning, the opportunity to accelerate knowledge flow across functional and organizational boundaries, remote access as well as information flexibility for the users, and also the increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of existing, formal communication channels. Other benefits of social media in libraries include:

- It helps libraries to get closer to the users and build a collaborative platform for the users. Social media are a great way to attract the attention of new users for marketing of library resources and services. Thus Social media creates potential users of the library.
- Registration is very easy for any user. It allows users to update their profile via their mobile phone through text messaging and apps downloaded for certain smart phones and tablets. User can create as many accounts as he wishes to create in different social media.
- Users are able to get answers to specific questions by using social media. It is also helpful to elicit ideas and suggestions. Thus it enhances reference service.



- Library authority can encourage programs and events by rating, reviewing, and sharing with their friends and neighbors. This new method has applied for Amazon and the same may be applied for libraries.
- Through the use of social media, the messages can be sent to others persons or users so that the message can be viewed easily. This is a great attempt for advocating the concept of reading lists generated by librarians, and in some cases user generated reading list which is more beneficial than librarians.
- Social media helps students in choosing library resources and making it easy for them to add content to the library's website.
- It is not highly expensive. User can afford benefit of social media by paying phone service provider fees.
- Users are willing to use Social Media in libraries and they showed their urge towards the benefits of social media in library resources and services.

Social Networking Used in Libraries

a. Face book: - is one of the best social media site used by students, Face book is librarian friendly. Group communication among patrons can be possible in web 2.0.

With the help of Face book, library users can be informed with different upcoming events and share the information about their new arrivals and editions of books. .Face book mainly helps in marketing of library services and resources. Photo can be tagged through the use of it. Ask-A –Librarian service can be exploited by using it.

b. Twitter: - Twitter is a free social networking used to send and read messages known as tweets. At present librarians share all kinds of news regarding library through the use of twitter. Librarians can highlight new materials, new groups, meetings and more with some of these suggestions through twitter. Twitter, is Use as a micro blogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections, new arrival, current content services of library.

c. LinkedIn: - It is a professional networking site. It can be used by the librarians to create professional connections and to market library services among other library professionals spread all over the world and can also share their ideas and professional experiences.

d. WEB 2.0:- The term was coined by Darcy DiNuccie in 1999 and the term was popularized by Tim O'Reilly⁴. The term includes weblogs, wikis and syndications. It is nearly synonymous with social media.

e. MySpace: - Here library users can use html to customize their profile and they can add new graphics and videos on it.

f. Blog: - By creating a blog, you'll be able to disseminate information to lots of people at one time. Whether you're updating students on new collections, or just conversing with library staff, blogs are a powerful tool, especially when combined with RSS. Libraries can use Blogs to keep their users aware with the latest developments in the field of library related matter. Blogs can be subscribed through RSS feeds. Blogger and Word Press are the examples of blog. In addition to this blog can be used as follows:- Notice Board, Latest arrival, Current Awareness Service and User Orientation Programme can be uploaded

Wikis: - The most recognized wiki is Wikipedia. A few other wiki services are wikia, wiki how, wiki dot, Wikimedia, wiki news, PB works. Wikis can be used for---

- Collaborative work
- Publication of historical photos and information
- Building relation between librarian and user

Ajax: - Ajax, part of web 2.0, is one tool of choice for creating interactive pages with easily changeable components. In libraries web pages can update frequently with new messages with help of Ajax without reloading the entire browser page.



Mashups:-It is hybrid of different social media. The users are allowed to edit OPAC data and metadata and create a user driven catalogue.

Instant Messaging (IM):- Users can chat with the librarian through *IM*, an online communication service which is used for reference service and voice chat. Here co-browsing, file sharing, screen capturing and data sharing; etc. are also possible. It is generally communicated through SMS via mobile phone.

Youtube: - Libraries can also advocate their different programs, conferences, workshops, seminars, Virtual conferences by uploading their videos on the YouTube.

Flickr:- It is an online image sharing service. Sharing and uploading picture of library events and services are possible for libraries by using Flickr. RSS – RSS, a collection of web feed formats for publishing frequently updated works, became popular as web users need not to browse frequently the new entry in their preferred website. Feed reader or feed aggregator is needed to read RSS feed. The popular feed readers are blog lines, Google reader, feed demon, etc. In the domain of LIS, RSS may be used for -

- Marketing the library services among distance learner.
- Dissemination of updated news to the web user
- Selective Dissemination Of Information
- Sending News to the users according to their area of interest Library news, events, orientation, etc.

Social Bookmarking and Tagging

Social bookmarking is a method for the users of internet to store, organize, the bookmarks of the web pages on the net with the help of user-driven metadata popularly known as tagging. Libraries can use social bookmarking web sites to tag and develop online catalog of library resources. Delicious is an online social bookmarking service which store and share the large number of web bookmarks. Other notable bookmarking services are CiteUlike, Diigo, Google Reader, folkd, etc.

Library 2.0

In September 2005, Michale Carey used the term —**Library 2.0** n his personal blog Library Crunch .When —Web 2.0| is combined with library services, it is renamed as —Lib 2.0| where web users can create the content and services they view within the library's web-presence, OPAC, etc.

Vodcasting: - Vodcasting is a series of digital media files which delivers videos according to the demand of web users and needs high speed internet connectivity. Library can be utilized it for:-Uploading the database of issue-return of documents and user education.

Podcasting: - Podcasting⁷ provides the end user to play the recorded intellectual output online without any additional software and also to download for future use. It may be utilized for:- Story hours for children library, User orientation programme, Marketing of library services, Music and audio book collections and providing library staff details on podcasting with their job profile

Role of Librarians in Using Social Media in Libraries

Information dissemination and sharing is the major part and crucial area where libraries and information professionals should looks seriously while considering and designing library activities in modern digital age. User Satisfaction is the first priority of libraries by providing right information at the right time in a right way. Abhijit (2016) stated that librarians should consider the following while using social media in a library.

1. Librarians should combine the e-resources and print formats.



2. Librarians should maintain the traditional cataloging and classification and other index to information resources and he should also inform the users about the availability of OPAC in the library.
3. Adopts the new communication mode of choice - telephone, Skype, IM, SMS, texting, email, virtual reference, etc.
4. Connects the web users with subject expert for discussions, conversations □ Uses the latest tools of communication for sharing of information.
5. Uses and caters everything from laptops to PDAs to iPods.
6. Develops targeted federated search and adopts the open URL standard.
7. Embraces non-textual information and graphics, moving images, audio, and video.
8. Encourages user driven metadata and user developed content and commentary.
9. Learns the power of the Web 2.0 opportunities.
10. Plays an active role in online communication by optimizing the available resources from social media.
11. Understands the potential in using content sources like the Open Content Alliance, Google Print, and Open World Cat.

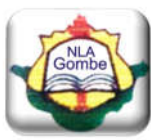
Social media are dynamic and can change rapidly as the technology is changing faster. However in near future librarians may have to track how the web users use library profiles or how their users access the library catalog or do something else that librarians cannot anticipate presently. Therefore, librarians need to change their role accordingly in the hi-tech digital environment of 21st century to continue to deliver their services for the web users.

Purpose of Using the Social Media in Libraries

According to Suraweera (2011) social media are highly significant for libraries today. The provision of news and information for users as well as recommended Internet resources, book reviews, new collections of books, entertainment for users, book discussions, and communication with the librarians are some of the purpose behind using social media platforms by both libraries and users. In this way, social media can be a valuable media for both library professionals and users.to

- To attract potential users of the library by making announcements, providing reference service, networking with other libraries, promoting general library services, providing quick updates to users and their query and to develop communities.
- To cater information about latest arrivals and news about the library to encourage discussions among users about new arrivals to build discussion groups.
- Users are to be given links to recommended Internet Resources, Book reviews, latest arrivals, etc.
- To communicate among the librarians about their professional development.
- To build an e-reputation of LIS domain.
- To modernize the library & information centre.
- To place a platform for users to discuss among the users and staffs about the services of the library and their grievances.
- To provide entertainment or amusement for users.

According to global survey made by Taylor. & Francis (2014), on current practices of social media by libraries, the top three purposes of using the social media in libraries are to:- Promote events regarding libraries and to Provide library resources and collections.



Factors to be considered in choosing a Social Media in Alibrary

According to Tylerin (2011) if a library takes decision of using a social media application, the following factors are to be considered before selecting any social media for a library.

The website of library's presence may be in a blog or face book or Flickr or whatever may be.

- i. How the accepted site or tool will be utilized by the library.
- ii. The target users of the library.
- iii. How the library will evaluate its presence.
- iv. Implications of resources
- v. Management of potential risks.
- vi. How the chosen social site or tool is compatible with library service and marketing plans.

Challenges Faced while Using Social Media in Libraries

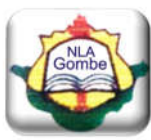
The challenges for using social media for information dissemination to library users include the followings:-

1. Most of the users are not acquainted with the usage of social media Some librarians and the library users may not possess needed skill to effectively in their use of social media tools to disseminate information to users.
2. Lack of sufficient fund. It is difficult if not impossible for Library authorities to host a website and use social media in their website due the he cost of carrying out library services using social media could be enormous. This includes the cost of purchasing and maintaining needed equipment, the cost of regular staff training, the cost of bandwidth and cost of electricity.
3. Many social media tools are available in the library website as a result of which users are unable to choose the right things at the right time.

Users are reluctant to use social media because of technophobia. Despite level of importance and acceptance of social media in general and in the libraries in particular as a medium of information dissemination, some information professional still have that pear of using technology. They prepare traditional library services.

Conclusion

Most social network services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the internet. They interact, share and exchange resources by social networks. It promotes free flow of information and sharing of resources beyond boundaries. Thus a symbiotic relationship between the libraries and social media are needed to present together best of the physical and digital environment to create learning hubs. Symbiotic relationship is a close relationship between two species –library and social media. This relationship is essential in this present 21st century, social media has a great advantage with enormous tools for libraries to cater their information in a sophisticated manner. Due to the popularity of the internet, users and the librarians want to use the social media for their need. Social media can help the libraries to promote their services, resources, events and communicate with their users. In conclusion it may be said that according to the digital needs of library users, libraries need to be changed accordingly. Internet service should be provided in the library and the libraries should create a web page and social media accounts in order to facilitate the information dissemination to users. Due to increasing popularity of social media in Nigeria and abroad, librarians should be properly trained in this regard so that they should utilized the social media platform effectively, librarians and libraries may extend their services for web users who are unable and reluctant to visit the library physically. At present it is observed that the printed documents play a crucial



role but the social media offer an additional pathway to content acquisitions and dissemination to users.

Recommendations

Social media platforms served as information and knowledge dissemination and sharing. Therefore library as an information provider needs to accommodate and implement all new trends and technologies that will improve the dissemination of information to its users.

- Librarians should not only be aware about the social media but they must be well trained and informed in using social media for information dissemination.
- Seminar, workshop, etc must be organized by the professional institutions so that the librarians may be well enriched and they can cultivate their knowledge.
- All libraries should develop their own website so that they can build their own social media plan and social media services.
- Research should be conducted to investigate the use of different social media among students and general public and how they can be properly utilized by library Library authority does not want to disclose their personal information to unknown users as all users are not known to them.
- Library authorities hesitate to use it due to confidentiality and security of information. Any user may posts objectionable, illicit, offensive material in the site. The authenticity of the user's comment is not always trustworthy. So the library authority should be careful about the security and authenticity of information.

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