



## **Integrating Facebook as a Medium of Academic Library Services in Contemporary Society: An Overview**

<sup>1</sup>Mohammed Bello Ahmed, <sup>2</sup>Hassan Salama Dala, <sup>3</sup>Mabruka Abubakar Abba &  
<sup>4</sup>Aishatu Umaru Abdullahi

<sup>1</sup>mbahmed26@gmail.com +2347065171412, <sup>2</sup>hassansalamadala@gmail.com  
+23470117645, <sup>3</sup>mabruka883@gmail.com +2348023726825 &  
<sup>4</sup>aishatuabdullahi12@gmail.com +2348030471890

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> Federal College of Education (Tech) P. M. B. 60, Gombe State. <sup>3</sup>Sa'adatu Rimi College  
of Education Kumbotso, P. M. B. 3218, Kano & <sup>4</sup>Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola.

### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the integration of Facebook as a medium of academic libraries services in contemporary society, The paper discussed the roles of Facebook in facilitating academic library services such as reference services, special events, circulation services, exhibition and display of new arrivals, user education, marketing strategic and promotion, archival services, provision of information resources, and referral service. The benefits of integrating Facebook in library and information service delivery includes user engagement, visibility, cost and ease of use by both the librarians and patrons were identified and highlighted. Conclusion and recommendations were equally provided for effective information services delivery in today's contemporary society.*

**Keywords:** Facebook, Academic Library, Academic Library Services, Contemporary Society

### **Introduction**

Academic library is established to support learning, research and leisure for both students and teaching staff. According to Dika and Jegbefume (2020) academic library libraries established in higher institutions of learning such as universities, polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Colleges of Technologies, Colleges of Agriculture and Research Institutes by their parents institutions for the primary purpose of teaching, learning and research. The objective of academic libraries is to meet the information and research needs of patrons by provision of resources and services that will satisfy the information need of the users. These libraries are expected to support their parent institution with available resources and services. Larson (2014) asserted that the core objective of academic library is to support the parent institution in achieving their objectives. This is partly because the institutions need information and the libraries play such roles of providing the information. The basic function of an academic library is to provide a research support, teaching and learning activities by providing relevant and useful materials in the form of books, periodicals, and electronic information resources etc. Millson-Martula & Menon (1995) state that, one element of high quality service is "the incorporation of users' personal needs and expectations into the development of programs and service. For the library to be functional, the services it provides should correspond with the needs of its users because, the users are the very reason for the existence of the library and it ensures that the services so provided are exploited to the maximum level.

The need to move with the times has made libraries particularly academic libraries to integrate the use of social media and technology for information services delivery, fallout of which brought about the use of social media as a means of communication to provide an effective library services delivery (Oraekwe & Emenari 2020). Social media is a virtual information



sharing space which complements face -to-face interaction and relationship between individuals. Oraekwe and Emenari (2020) defined social media as online tools whose principal aims is to offer social interaction and exchange of information, items ideas, products and services among people of common interests. Fang, Hu, Li and Tsai (2014) defined social media tool as computer and mobile mediated tools that facilitate interaction and sharing of information in text, visual, audio and video forms in an online networking environment The social media platform include but not limited to following Facebook, My-Space, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, Wikis, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Flickr, Orkut among others. These social media tools are integrated and used in libraries to adapt with the current time towards enhancing services delivery and to accelerate information access by the wide range of users. According to Oraekwe & Emenari (2020) Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and Blog have come to stay and they are already having their impact on library and information services in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's based on this that the submission of these authors is that the integration of Facebook as a medium of communication enhances library services delivery in academic libraries.

The Integration of social media particularly Facebook platform is a great impact in all spheres of information services. This has improved effectiveness and efficiency in library and information services delivery. Quadri and Idowu (2016) believe that facebook is one of the social media platform that is rapidly becoming the most preferred means of establishing social/professional networks among librarians. Nevertheless, facebook is also being used to communicate with potential library users as well as extending him information services to other remote users particularly in the academic communities. In addition, Sahu (2013) asserted that, the information professionals, particularly in libraries, used Facebook as platforms to interact, disseminate, and share information among themselves. Librarians and libraries in tertiary institutions are now realizing the potentials of social media and are making efforts to integrate it into the library services for library orientation, referral services, customer services, selective dissemination of information, new arrival of information resources answers to user enquiries in order to meet the overall information need of the potentials library users (Oraekwa & Emenary, 2020 and, Sumadevi, & Mallinath, 2019).

Stoeckel & Sinkinson (2013) in their study revealed that students live and interact with Facebook as a social media site in their personal, civic and informal learning contexts of library services. It provides an opportunity for academic libraries to develop and maintain closer ties with patrons and to foster the position for reading, research and community development. The implication of Facebook is that it provided an opportunity for academic libraries to offer information services through wider access and dissemination of information resources in digital form to potential library users.

### **Facebook as a Medium for Academic Library Services Provision**

In a quest to satisfy the rising information needs of library users, academic libraries integrate Facebook as a medium for efficient, effective and fast information services delivery. In the views of Kwanya and Stiwell (2015), library users are now more familiar, and competent with the modern social media technological tools and devices such as facebook, Librarians must be proactive and embrace the new technologies and face the contemporary societal challenges for a better information service delivery. Examples of such academic library services delivery that can be improved through Facebook as a medium of interaction are

**Communication:** - in the contemporary society, academic libraries use Facebook platform to inform clients on the changes in the library services. For example, change in opening hours, exhibition and display of new arrivals of resources. Carr (2019) stated that the use of Facebook



as a social media tool helps create with library users that may lead to the conversion of potential users into becoming actual library users. One of the greatest strengths of using communication as that it makes the users' interact, with libraries. It is no longer a one-way flow of information from librarians; both librarians and the users can actively engage in the process of knowledge sharing, and management (Femandez, 2019). In order for library users to keep abreast with the activities of the library resources and services, using Facebook about the daily activities happening in the libraries

**Reference Services:-** the use Facebook platforms for reference and information services such as ask the librarian, send instant messaging to ask questions about personal information need or otherwise. It also enables library users to have direct access to reference librarian to ask their questions and likely get a response immediately, such media platform like the, facebook provides users with an opportunity to interact face-to-face virtually with librarians without coming to the library physically (Salami *et al.*, 2020).

**Special Events:** This is another way academic libraries can employed the use of facebook platform to provide essential features of special events virtually with the librarians from the center such as library week, workshops, seminar, orientations programs, inaugural lectures, library outreach programs, library carnivals and public lectures among others.

**Circulation Services** - this is another important aspect or domain in academic library services delivery whereby the circulation services staff can employ Facebook platforms to send alert messages informing patrons/users about library for membership registration, lending or barrowing of library materials, sending overdue notices to the borrowers, sending overdue fines notice and even reminder to defaulters. Library users can also use the Facebook platforms for reservation of books, and journals, renewal of loan books by sending a message to the circulation librarian.

**Exhibition and Display of New Arrivals Medium:** - this is another medium in which academic libraries use integrated Facebook platform to their users with information about new collection or arrivals such as books, subscription of journals and database etc.

**User Education Medium:** - this is one of the medium in which academic libraries in the contemporary society use Facebook application medium to educate it users to demonstrate practice, communicate, informed, share information and document available resources and services in their libraries to their users virtually (Kwanya and Stilwell, 2015).

**Marketing Strategic and Promotion:** - this is another medium in which academic libraries use integrated Facebook platform to improve on the interpersonal relationship between librarians and the library patrons. Kwanya &l Stilwell (2015) argued that, library users perceive librarians as harsh, unapproachable and know it all individuals who are not helpful to the users. In order to attract users, academic libraries, need to employ and integrate Facebook to project themselves as progressive, liberal, approachable, friendly and adoptable. The library catalogue can be included on the library Facebook page in order for users to be informed on the information resources available in the library. Through the platform it can be employed to notify users on the various strategic services and resource available, especially specialized services offered by the library such as selective dissemination of information (SDI), research consulting services, data management, and current awareness service (CAS) among others.

**Archival Services:** this is medium whereby academic libraries use Facebook as a social media platform to share archives such as historical pictures, images, artworks, artifacts, photographs, dairies and the digital equivalentents available in their library sphere (Ezeani and Eke, 2018).



**Provision of Information Resources:** - this is one of the main reasons for establishing libraries generally, Facebook, platform play a vital role in academic libraries to provide or share links of open-sources information resources to their clients for their information quest. Librarians can also utilize Facebook platforms to send a list of current publications to users individually or collectively.

**Referral Services Medium:** - today's academic libraries are involved the use Facebook to offer referral services to their clients such as the ask librarian, call the librarian, or directing the client to some resources available in another shelves or another library, or directing users to visit the web site, databases or library guides, and provide links etc. Most of the referral service is being carried out by subject specialist or professional librarians. Other referral services include Interlibrary Loan, Reserves, and Requesting Materials (Earl, 2020).

**Current Awareness Services:** this is a great media in which academic libraries today practice current and up-to-date information service provision through the use of integrated Facebook. Example of such information are: campaigns, mobilizations, elections, inaugural lectures, and current happenings like environmental issues of climate change, health issues, malaria, corona virus in Nigeria and all over the world.

### **Benefits of Integrating Facebook in Information Services Delivery**

In the present contemporary society, academic libraries can benefit in several ways in improving their information services delivery by integrating Facebook platform. Some of these benefits are both institutional and personal which are:-

**User Engagement:** - this is one of the benefits of integrating Facebook platform in the academic library information service delivery which empowers them (libraries) and librarians to engage users personally or in an identified group. Kwanya and Stilwell (2015) stated that Facebook as a social media enables librarians to break down the walls between them and their users. User's engagement too enhances the library's ability to meet the user's information needs irrespective of time and geographical location. The platforms facilitate academic libraries to build a sound relationship between users and librarians through user's engagement (Ivala and Gachago, 2012).

**Visibility:** - Facebook platform facilitates make academic libraries activities and services to be visible among library users. Fernandez (2019) in an analysis of the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of social media in libraries more especially the Facebook platform assist the librarians to identify and address many questions asked by the users. It similarly helps users to be up-to-dated with the various activities in the library without visiting the library physically.

**Promotion and Marketing of Information Services:** - in the present contemporary society academic libraries useful Facebook tool in promoting library services. It helps users and non-users to change their perception towards the activities of the library. It used to keep users with current development in terms of resources and services rendered in the libraries.

**Improvement of Customer Services Delivery:** - in the present information society academic libraries today use Facebook as a medium in which instant information, messages can reach millions of its users promptly thus facilitate them to improve their customer's services delivery irrespective of time and distance. Academic libraries management can get feedback from the services rendered to users and improve when necessary.



**Better Informed Learning, Research and Knowledge Community:** - in today's academic libraries integrated Facebook with the sole aim of providing timely and useful information about their services, resources and community outreach events and projects. However, academic libraries aimed at using the Facebook in order to create a stronger community and better informed learning, research and knowledge community. Academic libraries require a best practice while, using Facebook to educate and guide acceptable online information seeking, retrieval, storage and information dissemination and such activity would bring positive experience for all.

#### **Challenges Related to Integration of Facebook in Academic Libraries Service Delivery**

It is worth to note that, even though integrating Facebook has its own benefits, they have various challenges in using the social media platform, the following are the challenges enumerated by Ahmed, Dala and Jegbefume (2020) which are :-

**Technophobia, Lack of Interest in Learning and Utilizing Social Site Applications:** - in the present time most librarians are not interested to integrate new technologies in the field of librarianship. Oladokun (2014) stated that, many librarian lack the skills to keep with the new trends in librarianship. They do not want explore the new opportunities of technology that can equip them with necessary skills to promote library services.

**Poor Institutional Support:-** in present days some libraries do engage in nonchalant attitude by neglecting and support new innovation more especially in creating and maintaining the social networking site like the Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Flickr and Podcast etc, no library can successfully implement it without approval and support from their institutional management.

**Too Many Social Networking Site to Use and Learn:** - there are several social networks tools available that can be integrated in to the delivery of library services like, Myspace, Togo, Facebook, Blog, Wikis, Library thing, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter etc and most librarians do not know how to handle these innovative tools.

**Decrease in Productivity:** - now a day's social networking site has made many people to become redundant and reduce productivity among workers (Librarians), and students as both of them underutilize the potential of the sites, whereas many use their time in browsing unnecessary information instead of concentrating on scholarly work and their job.

**Bandwidth Issues:** - most academic libraries in Nigeria today face issues with slow speed networks over the nets, and this pose a threat in delivering what is required at the right time, a times such event resulted someone in frustrated as part social media participant.

**Privacy Concern:** - this refers to improper use of the technology in sharing too much information or unnecessary postings by librarians can lead to false or fake information or news and this pose a threat or risk if care is not taking.

**Lack of Regulating Social Media Policy:** - most of academic libraries today, lack a workable backing policy statement surrounding the implementation of social networks in their institution libraries. This has resulted in inefficient operation and poor information service delivery

#### **Conclusion**

Academic libraries play a vital role in providing information for research and access to diverse knowledge embedded in the materials in various format. Application and integration of Facebook in academic library services occupies central and great potentials in facilitating



information service delivery in the digital era. When it's effectively utilized, it can empower academic libraries to target more audience (Users), to reduce the barriers of information service delivery and improve their visibility. However, despite the benefits associated with the integration of the Facebook in library service delivery, Academic libraries in developing countries were faced with some challenges while using Facebook platform for providing services delivery. These challenges include poor interest in learning and utilizing social media applications, technophobia or resistance to change, poor training, and poor institutional support, too many social networking site to use and learn, decrease in productivity, bandwidth issues, privacy concern and lack of regulating social media policy where they exist. However, the usage and integration of platform as a medium of academic library services can become better when recommendation are carefully observe and implemented.

### **Way Forward**

The following are the way forward made based on the gaps in the literature review for study.

- i. Training: there is a need to build sound proactive librarians through updating their skills and knowledge by training through seminars, workshop, conference, symposia, and in-service training in order empower
- ii. Fund: there is a need for institution management to provide adequate funds, in order to carry out certain expected changes, such funds should be used for the subscription and purchase of internet (Bandwidth) and it accessories.
- iii. Attitude: there is a need for librarians to be careful of what to post on the Facebook platform—because once a content is shared online, it might be very difficult to take it offline again.

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