

***Full Length Research***

**The Use of Social Networking Sites amongst  
Postgraduates Students of Federal University of  
Agriculture, Makurdi**

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This study examines the use of social networking sites among postgraduate students of federal University of Agriculture Makurdi as a gateway to information access and knowledge sharing. The study sought to determine the various social networking sites available at federal University of Agriculture Makurdi website, the extent of use of social networking tools in federal University of Agriculture Makurdi to provide information access and knowledge sharing and the level of use of social networking sites, in accessing information services in federal University of Agriculture Makurdi. Five questions guided the study and descriptive survey were used as the research design. Also, all the final year students of department of Home Science and Management, federal University of Agriculture Makurdi. There are about 33 students and these are what made up the population of the study were used as sample for the study. Data from each research question were collected and analyzed for easy interpretation. Statistically, simple mean method was used for data analysis. The study revealed that the available social networking sites in federal University of Agriculture Makurdi website were Facebook, Instant Messaging, Twitter, LinkedIn and blog. Also, the study showed that the extent of use of social networking tools to provide information access in the library was very low. Findings from the study also revealed, that the level of influence of social networking sites for accessing information services was very low and that the challenges to use of social networking sites information access and knowledge sharing were due to lack of ICT skills by librarians and cost of ICT equipment among others. Appropriate recommendations such as training of librarians in the use of ICT and social media and seeking of alternative means of funding by the libraries were made.

**Key Words:** Social, Networking Site, Post graduate Students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Universities are important academic institutions that produce human resources vital for all sphere of life. It is the highest academic institution that produces knowledge through research for problem solving be it social, economic, moral, or political. The primary role of any university therefore is teaching and carrying out research for the development of the Nation. Obasike, (2010) described the university as an institution that render essential community service and serve as centers for moral, social and intellectual rejuvenation. University libraries are established primarily to support and enhance the full realization of the educational goals of the university as well as educational objectives of the students. It is the repository of knowledge. Library as a place where information in whatever form or format, printed or none printed is acquired, preserved, processed, organized and disseminated for use. The university Library is therefore very important agent for the transmission of knowledge and preservation of civilization. It is the heart of the university. It is impossible to have a university without a library. It is in this regard that Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) observed that “the quality of education is impossible without a quality library” and that the academic, health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any university depend largely upon the state of health and excellence of its library.

Libraries have undergone rapid change in recent decades that not only pertain to their holdings, but to services as well. When job descriptions for subject bibliographers became common in the 1990s, the positions were intended to develop expertise in building collections within assigned disciplines. Much of the work was directed toward wise purchasing decisions and staying in touch with departmental faculty for research needs. However, a shift was seen as these roles led more into subject liaison work, with assignments related to an array of tasks in instruction, research consultations, and reference services as well as collection building. Outreach, library promotion, marketing and creating connections to targeted user groups are fairly recent concerns for academic library programs. (Waycott, Thompson, Sheard and Clerehan, 2017).

A Social Networking Site (SNSs) is an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website. SNSs usually have a new user input a list of people with whom they share a connection and then allow the people on the list to confirm or deny the connection. After connections are established, the new user can search the networks of connections to make more connections. A SNS is also known as a social networking website or social website.

The journey of social networking started with Six.Degrees.com in 1997, followed by others such as Live Journal, Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr,

YouTube, and Facebook<sup>5</sup>. Now, there are special categories of SNSs dealing with different fields of life like business (LinkedIn), education (Classmates), research (Research Gate), writers (My Creative Community), books (Shel fari), travel (Trav Buddy), religious (My Church) and many more. Even there are content specific SNS also like Flickr (photo sharing), Twitter (text sharing), Last.FM (music listening habits) and YouTube (video sharing). People, now use SNSs to connect with others in many ways, including dating, meeting people with common interests and sharing information. It is very easy to get carried away with the attention and interactions you can have twenty-four hours a day on websites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, but what are the effects that these SNSs are having on our undergraduates in respect to their academic activities. It is obvious that our undergraduates spend a lot of precious time engaged in these SNSs, even while lectures are going on. The educational benefits of SNSs are undeniable. If carefully used and properly implemented, these are powerful tools in education (Wang, 2016).

Eid and AL-Jabri (2016) define social network 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, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and organization of these connections may vary from site to site. There are more than a thousand of such social sites. However, the most important thing about social networks is that it enables information to be shared by a vast group of people who in return give their feedback.

Postgraduate student is a person who already holds a first degree and who is doing advanced study or research. Generally, a postgraduate degree is a degree which you study for once you have finished a bachelor's degree. Some postgraduate degree require the completion of particular bachelor's degree, others don't. There are four main types of postgraduate degrees: taught courses, research degree, conversion courses and professional qualifications. Many postgraduate courses are studied at university, but some courses are taught in a commercial environment.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to examines Use of Social Networking Sites amongst Postgraduates Students of University of Agriculture, Makurdi Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. Identify the various social networking sites used by in Postgraduate Students of University of

- Agriculture Makurdi.
2. Identify the related literature on social networking by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.
  3. Identify the level of use of social media tools to provide information access in University of Agriculture Makurdi.
  4. To identify the level of satisfaction derived by Postgraduate students in the use of the sites in University of Agriculture Makurdi.
  5. To identify the challenges of use of social networking sites tools by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.
  6. Identify possible solutions to these challenges.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the various social networking sites used by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?
2. What is the related literature on social networking by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?
3. What is the level of use of social media tools to provide information access in University of Agriculture Makurdi?
4. What is the level of satisfaction derived by Postgraduate students in the use of the sites in University of Agriculture Makurdi?
5. What are the challenges of use of social networking sites tools by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?
6. What is the possible solution?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research design used for this study is the descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design is concerned with condition or relationship that exists, opinion that are held, process that are going on, effect that are evident or trends that are developed (Akuezilo & Agu, 2003). This design is deemed appropriate for this study because data will be collected from a sampled population.

### Area of Study

The study is conducted in Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi Nigeria (FUAM) Benue State - Nigeria. The University was established in 1988. The university succeeded the Makurdi campus of the University of Jos (established in 1984) which in turn succeeded the former university of Technology Makurdi.

## Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all postgraduate students of department of Home Science and Management, University of Agriculture Makurdi. There are about 33 students and these are what made up the population of the study.

## Sample and Sampling Techniques

The researcher used all the professional librarians in the library as sample for the study. This is due to their limited number. No sampling was used. The total number of students to be used will be thirty-three (33).

## Research Instrument

A well-structured questionnaire was used by the researcher to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was titled 'The use of Social Networking by undergraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.' The items in the questionnaire were structured using available and not available. However, from research question 2 agree, strongly agree and disagree and strongly disagree were used.

## Validation Instrument

The validation of the instrument was carried out by three experts, who were requested to scrutinize the instrument for relevance of face and content validity. All the experts were from College of Educational Foundations and General Studies. One expert was from the Department of Test and Measurement, another from Administration and planning the third was from Library and Information Science all from University of Agriculture, Makurdi. Each of the three experts were given a copy of the questionnaire containing the purpose, research questions and hypotheses so as to get them well informed to read the items thoroughly for correction on any wrongly spelled words or wrong information on the questionnaire items. Appropriate modification will be affected on the instruments based on the corrections and comments of validates.

## Method of Data Analysis

Percentages and weighted means were used as the method of data analysis. From 2.50 and above were accepted in the weighted mean while anything below 2.50 was rejected.

## Presentation and Interpretation of Data

**Research Question 1:** What are the various social networking sites used by Postgraduate Students of

**Table 1:** A table of available social networking sites

S/N	social media	Remarks
1	Facebook	Available
2	Twitter	Available
3	Instant Messaging	Available
4	Linkedin	Available
5	MySpace	Not Available
6	Youtube	Not Available
7	Friendstar	Not Available
8	Blog.	Available
9	Wiki	Available
10	Skype	Available

**Table 2:** Mean responses on the related literature on social networking by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

S/N	Social Media Platform	$\bar{x}$	Remarks
1	Facebook	2.56	High Extent
2	Twitter	2.74	High Extent
3	MySpace	2.9	Very Low Extent
4	YouTube	2.7	Low Extent
5	Instant Messaging	2.35	Low Extent
6	Wiki	2.44	Low Extent
7	Skype	1.46	Low Extent
8	Blog	2.18	Low Extent
9	LinkedIn	2.77	High
10	Frienstar	1.32	Low Extent
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.34</b>	

University of Agriculture Makurdi?

Table 1 shows the social networking sites used by Postgraduate students University of Agriculture Makurdi. From the table, social networking sites such as Facebook, Instant Messaging, LinkedIn, Blog and Twitter were available on the library website while Myspace, Friendstar, Youtube, Wiki and Skype were not available on the library website.

**Research Question 2:** What is the related literature on social networking by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?

Table 2 shows the findings of research question two which sought to determine the related on social networking in University of Agriculture Makurdi. The table shows that out of the ten (10) social networking tools listed only were high extent which means tools such as Facebook (2.56) and Twitter (2.74) while Myspace (2.9) is very low extent. Instant messaging (2.35), Blog (2.18) and LinkedIn (2.77), Blog (2.18) and LinkedIn (2.77) YouTube (2.7), Wiki (2.44) and among others were low extent. The average mean which is (2.34) shows that the related on social networking in University of Agriculture Makurdi. is very low.

**Table 3:** Mean responses on the level of use of social media tools to provide information access in University of Agriculture Makurdi.

S/N	Library Services	$\bar{x}$	Remarks
1	Online library resources	3.66	Highly Influenced
2	Current awareness service	2.70	Influenced
3	Selective dissemination of information	2.76	Influenced
4	Library news and event	2.69	Influenced
5	Online library tour	2.99	Influenced
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.96</b>	<b>Highly Influenced</b>

**Table 4:** Mean responses on the challenges of use of social networking sites tools by Undergraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

S/N	Item	$\bar{x}$	Remarks
1	Lack of ICT skills by librarians	3.01	Agree
2	Poor internet service by network providers	2.66	Agree
3	Cost of ICT equipment and internet services	2.76	Agree
4	Lack of willingness by librarians to be trained	2.87	Agree
5	Medium of distraction for students	2.99	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.86</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**Table 5:** Mean responses on the solutions to the challenges of using social networking sites

S/N	Item	$\bar{x}$	Remarks
1	Training the librarians on the use of ICT and social media	2.67	Agree
2	Training the users on social media behaviour	2.77	Agree
3	Creating avenues for that will bring in more fund for the library	3.16	Agree
4	Ensuring that only librarians who are willing to be trained and retrained	2.55	Agree
5	Creation of awareness of available library services on social media	2.99	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.83</b>	

**Research Question 3:** What is the level of use of social media tools to provide information access in University of Agriculture Makurdi?

Table 3 shows the findings from research question 3 which sought to find out the level use of social media tools to provide information access in University of Agriculture Makurdi. It shows that social networking sites is highly influenced on Online Library Resources (3.66), Library News and Events (2.69) and Online Library Tour (2.99) while it has low level of influence on Current Awareness Services (2.70), and Selective Dissemination of Information (2.76). The grand means is 2.96 highly influenced

**Research Question 4:** What are the challenges of use of

social networking sites tools by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?

Table 4 shows challenges of use of social networking sites tools by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi. From the table lack of ICT skill (3.01), poor internet service by service providers (2.66), cost of ICT equipment and internet service (2.76) and medium of distraction for students (2.99) were all agreed with a grand mean of 2.86 agreed.

**Research Question 5:** What are the possible solutions to these challenges?

Table 5 shows research question 5 which sought to determine the strategies that could be used to solve the

challenge of using social networking sites for information access and knowledge sharing in the library. From the findings, training the librarians on the use of ICT and social media (2.67), training the users on the use of social media (2.77), creating avenues that will bring in more funds for the library (3.16) and creation of awareness of available library services (2.55) amongst others were the strategies suggested. The average mean was (2.99) which was agreed with a grand mean of 2.83 agreed.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study also revealed that social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Instant Messaging and LinkedIn were the only social networking sites available. This is obviously not enough as library users are known to use other social networks such as YouTube, MySpace, Wiki and so on for their studies. However, the available ones are of immense benefit if properly put to use. For instance, Grinter and Palen, (2002) affirms that IM systems support Internet-based synchronous text chat, with point-to-point communication between users on the same system. They noted that a window is dedicated to the conversation, with messages scrolling upward and eventually out of view as the conversation ensues. This offers the opportunity of virtual reference services. As noted by American Library Association (ALA) (2004) which defines virtual reference as a service initiated electronically, often in real-time, where patrons employ computers or other Internet technology to communicate with reference staff, without being physically present. The Association cites the examples of communication channels used frequently in virtual reference as chat, video conferencing, Voice over IP, co-browsing, email and instant messaging.

Furthermore, available social networking site such as Facebook, opens a whole new window for marketing and provision of library services. Halloran (2012) affirms from studies that more than half of business-to-business (B2B) marketers agree that Facebook is an effective marketing tool. More than half of small businesses agree that Facebook is beneficial to their business. More than one-third of marketers say Facebook is 'critical' or 'important' to their business. Also, the number of marketers who say Facebook is critical or important to their business has increased by 83 percent in two years. 67 percent of business-to-consumer (B2C) and 41 percent of B2B companies that use Facebook for marketing have acquired a customer through this channel. Other available social networking sites such as Twitter, Blog and LinkedIn could boost the library's use if properly utilized.

The result of the study revealed that the extent to social networking tools were used to provide information access

in the library was very low. In other words, social networking such LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Blog and Instant Messaging were available in the library; they are not being used to provide information access. This negates the concept of social networking, which was meant to expose the library to their digital users. Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014) defined "social networking" as the application of interactive collaborative and multimedia web-based technologies to web-based library services and collections. It is the application and implication of social networking principles and technologies in the field of library and information services. According to Miller (2006) Libraries and information centers can underscore the importance of social networking because it breaks the cycle of "plan, implement, and forget" that many services and plans suffer. Library can be a part of social networking by harnessing the concept, principles and technologies for rendering exemplarily services to user in electronic world. It's a framework for incorporating all changes made at all levels in the management of library.

In addition, Mishra (2009) submitted that, Social Networks tools can be used for providing user centric service in social library environment. Virtual Reference Desk (VRD) can be performed by Wikipedias. Librarians can plan, design and disseminate information to patrons by KM Wiki. Marketing of library services can be possible by using social software tools like Podcast, YouTube, Blogger, Second Life, Ning etc. also librarians can catalogue some of their library books on library thing. Professionals can put their collections on flicker. Footnote.com may be used to learn about history of library. And it will be helpful to provide the means to learn more about students, which can help libraries, better meet their needs. However, the low use of this tool in the library, puts the library at risk of having most of the services underutilized which invariably will result to poor academic performance of the university students who wouldn't visit the physical library.

Question three sought to explore the level of influence of social networking sites in accessing library services. From the findings, the level of influence of social networking sites in accessing library services is very low. This is to say that despite the availability of some of the social networking sites in the library, they are hardly being used to propagate library services and as a result they are not been used by the library patrons. This situation is so deplorable because the library seems not to understand the potential of social networking sites.

In discussing the influence of social networking tools, Curtis (2013) noted that with about 225 million users, LinkedIn is probably one of the most popular professional and, or business-to-business social networking sites. Not only that influence that Facebook platform has on students in African Universities is not completely different from the experience in other parts of the world. In a study carried out in Ghana, by Ayiah and Kumah (2011)

revealed that when researchers sought the respondents view on the most visited social network site, 508 respondents representing 93.9% indicated Facebook as the most visited social-networking site. When asked if they would like to have a library wall on social network like Facebook, 79.5% indicated that they would like to access the library wall on their social network. Similarly, 79.5% offered their reason and said they would like to access the library's page on a social network since they would be able to post comments and send suggestions on relevant issues on such a page.

Findings from research question four which sought to determine the challenges of using social. Networking for information access and knowledge sharing revealed that some of the challenges were lack of ICT skill by librarians, poor internet service by service providers, cost of ICT equipment and internet service and the fact that social networks are also a medium of distraction for students. Most of these challenges especially lack of ICT skills by librarians is a major problem and should be given serious attention. This is because today's information landscape requires information providers to be at the cutting edge of technology if they must remain relevant. The lack of ICT skills and social media know-how by librarians will not only hinder the provision of library services on the social networking sites but also it will prevent them from understanding the of their digital client. Also, another challenge that should be noted is the potential of social networking sites to distract or waste student's time. For instance, in a study on the Effects of Facebook on the life of Medical University students, Farooqi, (2013) noted that majority of the users are highly addicted and showed multiple signs of Facebook addiction, without them (the students) realizing it. The authors further noted that those that realize the addiction and wanted to quit found it difficult. They note that the students could hardly be diverted to do other things at the time they surf or chat on Facebook.

Furthermore, the students who get involved in activities on social networking sites while studying experience reduction in their focus of attention, reduction in their academic performance, and concentration to study well. Alhaazmi and Rahman (2013) observed that instant messaging is detrimental to learning because it requires students to split their attention in an academic setting. All these shows that libraries will also face challenges especially that of distraction or divided attention when serving their users online as social media involves so many other things than library services. This therefore makes it more difficult for libraries to reach potential users since they could be distracted by other things while on the platform.

Findings from research question five revealed that the strategies that could be used to overcome the challenges of using social networking for information access and knowledge sharing were training of librarians on the use

of ICT and social networking, organizing a training for students on social media use behavior, seeking for alternative avenues for income, creation of awareness of available library services on the social networking. Although all the strategies outlined above are important. There is no doubt that the best strategy is ensuring that librarians are adequately trained. According to Farkas (2006) librarians should have the ability to embrace change, comfort in the online medium, ability to troubleshoot new technologies, ability to easily learn new technologies and to keep up with new ideas in technology and librarianship, which he describes as enthusiasm for learning. Farkas further suggests that Library schools should help by teaching students how to develop a strategy for continuing their education once they are out of library school, how to develop skills for learning new technologies and how to develop a strategy for troubleshooting technologies. Needless to state that given the demand in the practice of today, the librarians that lack the knowledge, skills and tools required to keep pace with effective and efficient information service and practice are living in an age that no longer exists.

Finally, irrespective of the problems that the social media may bring, the benefits far outweigh the problems it generates. It depends on whose hand the tool is. Consequently, the librarians are challenged to understand the radical shifts in how today's college and university students use information and communication technologies (ICTs) and social networking in particular and attempt to meet them in their familiar terrain. It is however important to note that as librarians meet the students in the familiar territory, they owe the students the responsibility to effectively train them in the art of responsible use of social networking.

## CONCLUSION

It evident from the findings of this study that although a good number of the major social networking sites are available on the library website, most of them are used to a very low extent. This low use of these social networking sites in the library, have resulted to a low level of influence of use of social networking sites tools for accessing library services. This is to say that the myriad of opportunities available due to the influence of social networking site on young library users are not only been underutilized in the library but are not being used at all. This is the cause of a major setback in the library in terms of attracting and keeping more users, because both current library users and potential library users are now using the Internet to meet most of their information needs and without the library deploying their services online and on social networking sites, they will be relegated to the past as most information providers in the information industry now have a shop front on the web and enough

social media link embedded in it. It is therefore imperative the library revamps its social networking sites links, by updating their social media pages, informing both current and potential users of available services and training of librarians who are techno-savvy to operate and update these links.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were recommended based on the above findings.

- (i) The library should employ fresh graduates from library school as these are young and understands the needs of their peers in terms of providing library services through social networking sites. Not only do they understand these needs they also possess the prerequisite knowledge on the use of these social media tools, also they can easily be trained in the area they are lacking. This will solve the problem of training old library staff on the use of ICT and social media. This is because even though old library staff possess a wealth of experience on meeting library user's needs, most of them already have a mindset of what the library needs and expects the library users to conform to these needs instead of the other way around. Also, no matter how much experience old staff have on meeting the needs of their users, they can never be able to anticipate what a young user needs more than a young library staff who is well trained.
- (ii) Furthermore, the library should have a department in charge of social media updates. This should be made up of young librarians who will be online any time to give updates in library events and answer questions from the online users.

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