

Full Length Research

Social Media/Networking: Tools for Service Delivery by Librarians

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This paper takes a critical look at the social media/networking as tools for librarians in Nigeria for optimum service delivery to their clientele. The recent invasion of information technology in the area of human endeavours has changed the way information seekers demand quick answers to their quest for knowledge, especially with the information explosion time globally, most especially in Nigeria. Social media such as Flickr, Facebook, Friendster, Hi5, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, YouTube, MySpace etc. have become apparent in the way of information handling and delivery in information age. Hence, this paper takes a look at the characteristics of social media/networking, social media in libraries, reasons for using social media by libraries and advantage of social media/networking. Also, appropriate conclusion was drawn and proper recommendations were given.

Key words: social media/networking, service delivery, librarian

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INTRODUCTION

The swift growth of Information and Communication Technologies and its associated aids has changed the living standard of human beings Muhammad Anwar and Tang Zhiwei (2019). The development of web technology are creating more friendly social and fun environments for retrieving and sharing information and one of such is social media networking websites. These sites typically allow users to create a "profile" describing themselves, exchange public or private messages and list other users or groups they are connected to in the same way. Social media refers mostly to the activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the creation of works, videos, and audio (Bamigboye, Oduwole & Ogunyinka, 2019). Social media/networking is an evolutionary development of online participation where people of

common interest communicate, share and contribute content on the social cyberspace. Muhammad & Tang (2019) agreed that social media has finished the discrimination of communication from the community and it provides the way to access the learned society and make them aware of the access to the library sources and services from their home. It is a viable tool for cooperation and sharing of knowledge in an open access platform (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012). Social Network Sites (also called Social Networking Services or Social Networking Communities), are those Internet systems that have at their heart the personalized profile (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). These social networking sites may contain set rules and regulations to be followed as per their editorial policy or may be entirely user-driven. Some of the most popular social networking websites are: Academia.edu, Flickr, Facebook, Friendster, Hi5,

Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, YouTube, MySpace.

Several people as well as the academic communities are engaged with the operation of social media for their everyday activities. It consequently becomes indispensable for the academic libraries to outline how to create awareness about the existence of its products and services, through adjusting to modern trends of participating in various online promotional activities. Social media is now the mainstream and is expected by library users and client groups (O'Dell, 2010). There are 2.701 billion monthly active users on Face book (MAUs). Furthermore, the number of Facebook's daily active users (DAUs) currently stands at 1.8 billion people, meaning 66.09% of the total monthly users log in on a mobile device or desktop each day. (Face book, 2021), 10.7 million of whom are Australian (Cowling, 2012). Twitter reported that they reached the 100 million user mark in 2011 (Kiss, 2011), and there are increasing numbers of new social media tools entering the market. There are also many organizations in the non-library sector that have already integrated social media into service models to enhance relationships with patrons. This inclusion of social media is no longer fresh. Organizations are even moving beyond the use of social media in this way and increasing its use further to drive innovation in products and services (KPMG, 2011).

Social media includes web and mobile-based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among organizations, communities, and individuals (Wikipedia, 2012). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social Media are social software which mediates human communication. When the technologies are in place, social media is ubiquitously accessible, and enabled by scalable communication techniques. In the year 2012, social media became one of the most influential sources for news updates through platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The conversation traces the roots of social media back to the principles upon which social media is founded. The literature is used to contextualize how the terms web 2.0, social networking and social media relate to each other. Web 2.0 is characterized by open communication, participation, collaboration and content creation (Abram, 2005). The term social networking is often mentioned in conjunction with social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) whereby users can create a profile with the purpose of building a personal network to connect with others (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). The term social media encompasses any internet-based or mobile application which operates for the purpose of collaboration, where participants can connect, create, comment, view, share, rate, discover, profile and exchange user-generated content (Bradley & McDonald,

2011; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Rheingold, 2002). Web 2.0, social networking and social media are inextricably linked, and have in fact often been used synonymously (Cook & Hopkins, 2006).

The term web 2.0 precedes the terms social networking and social media in the research literature. Web 2.0 has been in usage since 2005, when it was defined by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Doherty (O'Reilly, 2005). Chu & Du (2008) stated that social media can be taken to mean any collaborative environments employing web 2.0 technologies. Thus, web 2.0 is the platform upon which social media is based (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Ergul & Cakir (2021) opined that a web 2.0 environment creates culture that facilitates the learners to read, write, think, and reflect during the learning activities. In addition, since learners can easily master about creating content or web pages without having to learn coding knowledge, utilization of such environments becomes widespread in educational and daily contexts . Social networking site as any website designed to allow multiple users to publish contents of them. The information may be on any subject and may be for consumption by friends, mates, employers, employees just to mention but a few. 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) defined social networking as a community in which individuals are somehow connected through friendship, values, working relationships, idea and so on. Seufert , Von Krogh & Bach (1999) defined 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. 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 (Ayiah & Kumah, 2011).

Importance of social media/networking in libraries

The important of social media/networking (SN) in libraries according to (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012) are as follows:

- **Participatory** - Users have the opportunity to actively engage in the construction of knowledge rather than being passive consumers of content;
- **Educative** – Users are kept abreast of the latest developments and can have open access to knowledge;

- **Collaborative** – This ensures knowledge sharing, establishes communication link with experts and allows users to develop a team working skill;
- **Fascinating** – It is inspiring, interesting and users can be engrossed in the use of social network sites; some users garner information with these sites in an easy and unencumbered manner; and
- **Flexibility** – Easy content creation and sharing, easy to update files and personal contact.

Social Media/Networking in Academic Libraries

The library as an organization with the principle of collection of information wealth with the unambiguous purpose of obtaining, processing, preserving and making available recorded knowledge (Ayiah and Kumah, 2011). 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. Previously, libraries measured their services and successes based on completeness and balance of collection of information material. Moreover, social media is providing massive space to the library professionals to create a virtual environment to enhance the library service providing capacity. Taylor and Francis (2017) addressed that the use of social media is making things easy for library professionals to reduce the gap between library users and library resources and services. In recent times, the focus has changed towards technology driven service delivery. O'Brien (1996) and Dadzie (2005) asserted that for information to be of optimally use, it must have the following qualities: relevance, accuracy, timeliness, currency, completeness, and clarity and cost effectiveness. Traditional Library processes and structures are proving unsatisfactory to respond quickly enough to technology driven environment. On the other hand, 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. (Ayiah and Kumah, 2011). A lot of organizations are ahead of libraries, especially in Nigeria when it comes to the incorporation of social media strategies. A study by PR firm Burson-Marsteller found that 79% of the largest 100 companies on the Fortune 500 list use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or corporate blogs (Burson-Marsteller, 2010). A survey conducted by KPMG on Australian managers of businesses with employees of more than 50 found that 42% use social media (KPMG, 2011). Social media can no longer be seen as a triviality (Loudon & Hall, 2010), and will continue to proliferate to the extent that it will become fundamental to every organization (Jue, Marr, & Kassotakis, 2009). Simply having a social media presence is not enough to realize

the benefits of social media (Prohaska, 2011).

Consequently, the ingress into the social media sphere should not be devoid of careful consideration and strategic planning. The literature in the business/marketing and communications sector has considered the benefits and positive impact of social media (Barwise & Meehan, 2010), such as the building of reputation and credibility, monitoring what people are saying (Edelman, 2010) and the building of customer relations through interaction (Jue, Marr & Kassotakes, 2009). According to Ayiah and Kumah, (2011), International University Libraries and other business organizations 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 confirmed 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 International University Libraries with social networking walls. The walls are mostly used to:

- Announce programmes of the library
- Give students the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to the use of the library
- Teach basic search tools
- Paste new books on the wall to inform the University Community
- Send brief updates to patrons
- Ask a Librarian

It is possible that academic Libraries in Africa, most especially Nigeria can also respond to the needs of modern day clientele by applying efficient technologies such as social media/networking, mobile application, and online check ins/check outs to their service delivery. These developments in the operations of library service delivery should encourage Nigerian 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, Nigerian 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 (Ayiah and Kumah, 2011). As of April, 2011 Association of African Universities (AAU) had 180 Universities from 30 member Countries including Nigeria in good standing as per AAU

site. A search on the Universities at AAU site revealed that some of the Universities do not even have University websites, which means that their libraries cannot have a web page. Some of the Universities have the websites but the websites are inactive and non accessible. The rest of the Universities have websites and their University libraries too have their own web pages. A handful of African University Libraries have social networking sites linked to their Library's web page examples include; University of the Witwatersrand Library, University of Pretoria Library and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Library all from South Africa (Ayiah and Kumah, 2011). However, most universities in Nigeria have websites and the sites are inactive, but the same thing about their university libraries. There is a need to equip staff with the competencies and skills they will need, as libraries evolve from predominantly transactional places to fulfill the vision of becoming creative community hubs and places of participation, creation and learning. There are two potential issues emerge to this approach: Firstly, there is always a need for improving ways in which libraries bridge the gap between vision and reality: secondly, there is a remarkable similarity between this vision of participation, creation and learning" and Library 2.0. It has already been established in the library world and beyond, that the social media movement cannot be ignored (CILIP, 2012; Joint, 2009, KPMG, 2011). Web 2.0 and social media skills will become essential for library staff as they make the transition to becoming librarian 2.0 (Partridge, 2011). Hence there is a need for libraries to help LIS Professionals and Para-professionals gain the web 2.0 and social media competencies and skills required, to bridge this gap. A possible way forward is to address these issues by including social media in the strategic plans of libraries. This will enable libraries to capitalize on the LIS staffs who have already embraced social media, and to convert those more reluctant LIS professionals to the benefits of social media. By including social media in library strategic plans, this would have the desired trickle-down effect of it being realized in operational plans and performance management and development plans. Training of LIS Professionals and Para-professionals in this area would also become a normal part of a library's service provision model (CHOI, 2012). How do libraries stack up against the broader social media strategy context? A review of the literature yields little in the way of research studies on libraries incorporating social media into their strategic plans. However Thompson (Kho, 2011) suggests that social media should be in performance plans, with more formal coordination. It is not clear whether this formal coordination refers to the inclusion of social media in strategic plans. The web 2.0 literature however, yields insight into the inclusion of web 2.0 strategies in library strategic plans. The literature suggests that web 2.0 is not just a challenge for libraries,

but an opportunity, and soon a requirement (Allard, 2009; 2008, Hall, 2011). Libraries are invited to rise to the web 2.0 challenge (Joint, 2009) when considering web 2.0 in the development of strategic plans.

Reasons For Using Social Media by Academic Libraries

According to Burkhardt (2009), libraries should adopt social media/networking for the following reasons:

➤ **Communication** – Social media is another way that you can get into contact with your patrons. Contacting younger people is becoming increasingly difficult since a growing number of them believe that email is dead. Instead they use instant messaging, Facebook, WhatsApp or SMS etc. It's a change in our way of thinking since many of us still do business primarily through email, but it's necessary to recognize these new trends.

➤ **Respond to Positive/Negative Feedback** - People are talking about your library on the web and in different social media channels. They are saying both good things and bad things. One of the most important tenets of customer service is to be responsive to your users' concerns or praises. Recognize them and show that you are interested in and care about their opinions. There is no controlling what is said about your library anymore, but you can influence the message that comes across.

➤ **Marketing/Advertising** – This is the opportunity your library to markets its services or events using traditional media: fliers, bookmarks, announcements in calendars of events, newspaper ads, press releases, etc. Social media is simply another *form* of media that you can use to get your message out there. Millions of people use social networks and likely a large percentage of the population you serve does too. Libraries will be missing out on a lot of eyes if you eschew social media.

➤ **Understanding Users Better** – Often people assume they know their user population. Often very surprised at things I overheard or questions patrons asked. Social media allows conversations with your users, and these conversations often reveal important insights. Simply talking with people allows you to get to know them better, and more importantly, serve them better. Have conversations with patrons both in person and through social media. You will be surprised at what you learn.

Advantages of social medial/networking

Social networking sites have its own advantages to Librarians and Clients. Some of the benefits are as follows:

- Social networking sites will facilitate collaborations and promote effective Communication between Librarians and their patrons.
- It will generate a flow of information excluded from search engines and Library Catalogues.
- Some scholars as cited in Scale (2008) suggest that social networking sites will lead future delivery of information to meet search queries
- The crucial aim of librarians is to make library resources available to patrons so if social networking sites will help achieve this goal then it should be pursued vigorously.
- Social networking sites wall linked to a library's web page has the potential of reaping great results by attracting and serving Distance Education Students. Through social networking sites that any person is capable of communicating and delivering a message to a distant target person.
- It will help African Librarians and Libraries to keep pace with technologies and compete effectively with the developed World. In all social networking sites can be beneficial to librarians and their clients.

Negative/disadvantages impact of social medial/networking

The following are some of the negative/disadvantages facing the use of social media/networking as tools in academic libraries in Nigeria.

- Lack of awareness: very many of librarians are not keeping abreast of the new development in social media/networking services. This happens mostly to librarians in developing countries, even the few that are aware are still struggling to find out the productive uses of these sites for library services.
- Resistance to change: medial some traditional and conservative librarians are never ready to embrace change. This could be a function of some reasons. This is a very big threat to library services in the modern world. Resistance to change can cause retrogression and degeneration. In a situation whereby librarians are afraid of learning new technologies to enhance library services, this keeps the whole system on hold.
- Lack of training of staff: most librarians lack the 21st century skills that could be required to adopt the social media/networking tools for effective library services delivery. One of the major inhibitors to Nigeria fully embracing ICTs and its peripherals is that average Nigerian's general lack of training to them. For most Nigerians, information technology is still something unfamiliar, distant, and mysterious.
- Bandwidth problem: most institutions have limited bandwidth to support this practice. Poor connectivity can frustrate effective online participation (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012).

- Government intervention: there little or no intervention of the government in the area of ICT in Nigeria. Government attitude towards academic libraries in Nigeria and the limited resources available to libraries in Nigeria had made it difficult for academic libraries to acquire and install ICT facilities for the use of librarians and patrons. Cost has been reported as one of the factors which influence provision and use of ICT services (Adomi, 2011). The cost of computers is too high for many to afford.
- Lack of maintenance culture: maintenance culture is seriously lacking in most institutions in developing countries. The few available technologies are in moribund conditions that may not support remote access to information.
- Unreliable power supply: it may be difficult for libraries to maintain the use of social medial/networking. This is in relation to low electricity supply which otherwise discourage people to from participating in online forum.
- Technophobia: many librarians and users are afraid of handling computers. They make the traditional services their comfort zone and are not eager to embrace change.
- Copyright issue: the free access to information where people copy, paste and edit without acknowledge the authority is a serious challenge to the copyright (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012).

CONCLUSION

A few setbacks should not dampen Librarians in their quest of taking the library to the next level. Constructive social actions and actions recognized online can be transferred to our day by day lives. Social networking sites if instituted in Academic Libraries will go a long way to solve some of the significant issues dealing with them. The majority of the Academic Libraries in Nigeria lack skilled manpower; this can be credited to the few schools available to educate Librarians coupled with lack of incentives for them. Social Networking can help minimize the impact of insufficient Professional Librarians in the running of these Libraries, by serving some of the patrons online by Professional; having to answer queries from different people at the same time reducing their physical presence in the libraries. Limited space African Academic Libraries can go unnoticed if the necessary information can be accessed in the comfort of their rooms. African Academic Libraries can use social networking sites to deliver effective services to clients with limited resources. The use of this tool does not require any special equipment apart from computer, Internet connectivity and a trained professional to manage. The literature related to social networking in Academic Libraries in Africa reveals many gaps in the use of these tools for service delivery. While much of the existing literature deals with the use of

social networking sites by International University Libraries to promote collaborations and connections between librarians and their clients. Web has evolved, considerably from a read-only technology to an interactive and participatory platform that allows users to create and share information (Ayiah & Kumah, 2011). Social media would play an important role to change the role and responsibilities of the librarians what we called today cyprion.it would be suggested that every librarian is to apply social media to promote their sources and services (Dave, 2019)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organizing training for librarians in the area of social medial/networking usage through organization of library orientation programme, conferences, symposia, workshops to create awareness and educate librarians and users on the social networking services and applications should be taken seriously.
- There should be a change of attitude of librarians towards the current change in new ICT driven environment in order to remain relevant and provide adequate and current services to the end users.
- There should be a spirit of maintenance culture so as to manage the few available ICT facilities effectively.
- Provision of stable power supply should be encouraged in order to facilitate the effective use of these tools at any times.
- There should be pro-active training of librarians to acquire 21st century skills to adapt to the changing sophistication of ICT environment.
- Government should take an active role in providing ICT facilities for institutions.
- Educating the public on the issue of copyright law and violation of intellectual works of and individual and group (plagiarism) should be adequate and implemented at all levels of education.

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