

Use of Social Media in Libraries: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

The developments in Web technology are creating friendlier, social, and fun environments for retrieving and sharing information and one of such is social media networking websites. It has been observed, however, that despite the benefits of social networking sites, only a few libraries use them to render services to their users, resulting in limited user patronage and response. To address these problems of limited use of social media, this paper focuses on increasing awareness of the usefulness of SNSs to libraries. It also addressed the significance of SNSs, their effect on library facilities in the digital environment in particular, the characteristics and kinds of SNSs accessible to consumers.

Keywords: Social Networking, Library Services, Digital Environment, Social media

Introduction

Social connections in Nigeria have become very crucial and need to be tremendously improved in the library environment. According to Suraweera et al (2011), social networking means a process of relationship building among a group with a unique interest. In order to socialize, social media starts in Nigeria. Facebook was only used for social debates, the division of individuals into particular organizations emerged by the turn of the 21st century. Professional organizations arise and within the era the profession of the library had its own group with the primary purpose of exchanging thoughts and obtaining data about the profession. The first professional library group was the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) forum. Within Nigeria, librarians would subscribe to the group. This enabled librarians to collect data in the Library and Information Science profession on career possibilities, professional activities and fresh techniques. This group kept growing

without boundaries. Beyond that, Nigeria's various libraries need to progress over time. The exponential growth of social media such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and Youtube has made it essential for librarians to use these instruments to maintain growing and advanced customers alive. Libraries began using these instruments to interact on a real-time basis with customers. Given the current financial situation in the nation where library revenues have been declining, social media has become a means of serving our employers in a more specific, interactive and value-added manner without undue spending. These media are to provide users with present and up-to-date data, provide connections to other open source library resources, and provide the connection to the library globe for fresh arrivals in books and through the updated journal list. In Social Network Space (SNS), individuals with common interests are sharing data with each other through a wide range of social networking locations (sites

specifically designed to create sharing, communicating and generating data as easy and effective as possible). Social networking is a fresh way of offering library service through new Internet technologies, with a focus on "user-centric," bidirectional interaction and data communication. With fresh networking instruments, data can now flow into a multi-faceted dimension (the user's library, the user's library, library to library, and user to user) rather than the user's one-way library stereotype form. The world of participatory and cooperative academic interaction and learning is continually growing. Social networking tool is a platform where internet content users are both consumers and manufacturers. Librarians can constantly assess and update content with these instruments to satisfy evolving user needs. These instruments are used to collaborate and share thoughts and become an essential component of library services. It also calls for libraries to promote the involvement and feedback mechanism of customers in library services growth and maintenance.

Social networking sites

Social networking sites are web-based services that enable people to build a public or semi-public profile within a limited scheme, articulate a list of other consumers they are connected to, and view and traverse their list of links and connections made by others within the scheme (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Contacts & online forums can be established by various social groups in Nigeria such as the Nigerian Library Association (NLA). Social Network Sites (also known as Social Networking Services or Social Networking Communities) are Internet systems with a personalized profile at their

core (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 49). Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and MySpace are some of the prominent examples. Social networking sites are transparent two-way communication that promotes a mechanism for feedback; linking individuals with shared interest.

In addition, linking to patron profiles keeps the library within user consciousness, possibly improving interaction. Courtney (, 2007 p. 83). Some of these Social Networking Sites (SNS) popularly used by librarians in Nigeria to meet the information needs of the users include:

- **Facebook:** most popular now because it is librarian-friendly, with many applications like JSTOR search, World Cat, and much more. Librarians can communicate with consumers to understand their need for data. Libraries are attempting to link to Facebook some of these specialized library applications to Facebook applications.
- **MySpace:** The libraries used this site to publish, calendar, custom catalog search instruments, and blog characteristics to enhance their presence in academic organizations where the learners are.
- **Ning:** Librarian can use this tool to get connected with students, library associations, and more. You can also use it to share information with many people at a time.
- **RSS:** Really Simple Syndication is a [web feed](#) that allows users and applications to access updates to websites in a standardized, computer-readable format. These

feeds can, for example, allow a user to keep track of many different websites in a single [news aggregator](#). The news aggregator will automatically check the RSS feed for new content, allowing the list to be automatically passed from website to website or from website to user. This passing of content is called [web syndication](#).

- **Blogs:** librarians can post messages periodically here; share data about a specific topic or problem, and enable users to contribute to content. They can write articles, news about topical problems and expect their users to respond instantly.
- **Wikis:** is a free encyclopedia online that provides background understanding and concept definition. It provides users with a platform to access, edit and add to content. This is a cooperative web page for web content development.
- **LinkedIn:** Using LinkedIn, librarians can connect customers with experts in their specific field of concern. Librarians can use this platform to provide specific services such as Selective Dissemination Information (SDI).
- **Twitter:** an application for micro blogging to maintain employees and employers up-to-date on daily operations, such as frequently updated collections. This platform can be used by users to type in brief emails or status updates. Nigerian librarians can use this platform to provide users with first-hand data about continuing national elections. Users can use

twitter to send Instant Messages (IM) on complaints or ask questions about a specific problem and receive feedback on the spot.

- **YouTube:** In institutions in Nigeria, events such as important highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences, and workshops are disseminated via the YouTube.
- **Flickr:** This tool can be used by librarians to share and distribute fresh library collection pictures. It is possible to distribute the cover page of fresh arrivals of both books and publications to consumers via Flickr. It can also be used to enlighten users on topical issues such as the different pictures of emblems of the political parties in Nigeria; many Public and Academic libraries put this to great use.
- **Library Thing:** an enriching tool for the OPAC library. Once an account is formed, a list of ISBN books is sent to Library Thing which returns a piece of software that is pasted into the OPAC Library footer. Librarians can use this to send users a list of present journals; Libraries are using the recent techniques and trends to their users.

Emerging Role of Libraries in the Digital Age

Today to make their services popular and user friendly. The idea of a library as a physical location to visit for data is quickly transforming into a social cyberspace where users can access, interact and contribute to current knowledge. This is because the contemporary 21st century library is characterized by collective

knowledge creation and facilitating systems, as well as a move away from the ancient stereotype, standard and one-way library services for consumers to a more vibrant, two-way communication network setting with open access, content development, cooperative and participatory social space. With the Open Access Protocols, the potential of contemporary technology provides the chance for free access, free interaction, free communication and information contribution. Tise (2009) argues that libraries promote access to data and thus provide the means by which fresh knowledge is created and made accessible to everyone. Ezeani & Eke (2010) posit that the most applicable web 2.0 technology for library services is the social networking tools—where librarians can interact with their users to study their needs and give a feedback; photo sharing—where archival pictures can be posted to users or uploaded on the library websites.. ”Librarians in Nigeria are gradually utilizing these tools to offer “on the spot” library services to users. These are made possible with the present social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Wiki, etc. which provide an interactive platform for users to access and generate content. Information is now produced in a variety of media whose representation can no longer be presented in the physical books alone. Libraries need to realize that in order to engage with their users they will need to reach them "in their preferred methods of communication" (Topper, 2007, p. 378).

Social networking: an open access platform for knowledge-based Economy

Social networking sites are constantly encouraging open access to knowledge.

Open access is the word used to refer to assets that are open to customers without authentication or payment demands. It is a model that presents free access to publications. Users are not charged for access to papers or other resources on an open access platform and are free to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to complete texts of these materials, provided they do not violate the laws of copyright, Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2002. Cited by Tihamiyu & Aina (2008). The feature of social networking allows users to search, browse, filter, find, collaborate and have online open access to knowledge and contribute to web content.

Social networking opportunities for libraries

Social networking provides some significant library possibilities that include library services marketing and reference services.

Marketing library services—an indication that it is an optimal vehicle for marketing library services to customers is the increasing population of patrons and librarians using social networking. Flickr is an outstanding marketing tool that librarians can use to make consumers aware of overall library services. Most learners are unaware of the various facilities provided in the library, such as book reservations, reference services and SDI. Librarians can disseminate knowledge of library facilities through social media to those who may not be conscious of them. Librarians can also create subject-specific blogs and play a major role in promoting the use of blogs to communicate with scholars and comment on study results.

Reference Services— Using social networking instruments allows librarians

to identify social cyberspace library patterns and provide proactively the sort of data that would usually result from reference services. In addition to being used as a vehicle for encouraging services, programs and fresh resources, social networking instruments are also used as a reference service. (Steiner, 2009, p. 4) Students use instruments such as Ask a Librarian and Twitter to ask questions in 'actual time' (Steiner, 2009, p. 5) to help promote the library as an appropriate, effective and useful location. Social networking tools like Instant Messaging (IM), Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) could be used to achieve a successful and sustainable reference service in an online social space by engaging in an online face-to-face interaction.

This is particularly useful for distance learners who may call in from any part of the country with reference queries. Reference interaction has always been a discussion (Lankes, 2008); therefore moving towards reference in the social environment is a natural development that has been shown not only to be practically feasible but to benefit the scientist as well. The use of social networking instruments to make the reference act participatory implies that various sources and a range of authoritative, academic views can serve the client, leading in an enriching wealth of data and experience (Lankes, 2008; Miller, 2006). Ezeani (2010) noted that librarians need to be flexible and knowledgeable in distinct topic areas in order to be able to match customers with required data in order to efficiently deploy these social media for reference purposes.

Emerging Roles of Librarians

Libraries play important roles in providing information for research and access to

knowledge. In order to stay relevant in the socially networked environment and meet the growing needs of their users, libraries, therefore, need to proactively embrace the new technologies and face the challenges for better services delivery. Librarians respond to the popularity and growing role of social networking sites in the development, use and sharing of data as a key medium for communicating with library users and offering facilities to satisfy their data requirements. The way individuals interact, obtain, and share information will inevitably affect the library, its facilities, and its employees (Miller, 2006). Librarians should follow these main individuals' public discussions, messages, updates, and activities, and provide advice, resources, and assistance proactively. He should act as an active participant of the social space and be able to identify the needs of the members of the library communities and to proffer solutions by offering information, links to the websites that are relevant to their information needs; and even direct offers of help.

Libraries urgently need to adopt in their services the latest social networking instruments as a strategy to embrace change while supporting a participatory role in knowledge creation for library users. The increasing use of social networking instruments requires librarians to create digital technology abilities in the 21st century. Libraries can connect their websites with their library websites to links to their catalogue, chat reference pages, study guides, event calendar, news etc. Some of the social networking librarian's tasks include: understanding and articulating the nature of social networking sites, producing websites and content,

creating network-wide user-friendly interfaces, creating online database management, assessing and implementing data, and helping users with skill development. Other abilities for a literate librarian in social networking include: searching and browsing the internet, establishing social network room, teaching, and offering quality internet library services. The Model below is an adaptation of Richter and Koch (2008) model on the process of IT-supported social networking. This model encapsulates the future roles of the 21st-century librarians in the dynamic technological environment. Librarians must possess these skills:

Identity management – Librarians should be able to examine the profiles of users to mirror their information needs and match them with the library collections.

Network awareness - Should be able to share views and create awareness of the different social network sites and their uses.

Expert search–The librarian of the 21st century should be a internet browser expert; able to locate friends of colleagues and prospective customers of the library with a common concern. **Contact leadership**–Librarians can link individuals and thoughts across distinct groups ' conglomerates.

Context awareness–should be diversified in knowledge and ability to link information to people's profiles.

Role of Information Professionals in Using Social Networks

1. **Library as Educator** Libraries should play important roles in educating patrons about the new technologies and the social networking skills. We can educate

our users on new skills and competencies needed to flourish in the new environment. Users need to know how to navigate the web as a new method of learning requires a form of connectivity with other people as knowledge is no longer acquired in a linear manner. Librarians can and should educate clients on the use of these social networking instruments to adapt to fresh forms of information access, communicate and share. Brilliant social cyberspace utilization encourages access to information.

2. **Information Broker:** He should identify, collect, organize, repackage as an information broker and provide multiple means of electronic access to digital data resources.
3. **Change Agent:** ICTs has posed a great challenge. For proper access to information, the librarian should work as technology application leader. He should assess systems that enable e-access from moment to time.
4. **Information facilitator:** Accessing data in libraries in a timely and simple manner is a significant problem. Librarian as an information facilitator should facilitate access to data by offering simple access to the network, adopting appropriate software, a Web 2.0 tool follower, e-journal licenses, and portal design.
5. **Knowledge Educator:** Web 2.0 tools user consciousness is essential to the library's successful implementation of Web 2.0. The

- librarian should train customers on the use of the Internet, i.e. instruments, search engines, e-journals, e-databases, the use of data portals, online tutorials, etc. for the user to access prospective data from different web resources.
6. **Innovative Manager:** Concerning on the role of innovative manager the activities like website or knowledge portal design by giving various links from various information resources, providing information awareness on what library services available in the website with their effective use to the user. As far concerned he should time to time evaluate websites on a user-centric approach
 7. **Effective Collaborator:** As an appropriate collaborator, it needed actions such as extending cooperation not only with fellow librarian, but also with IT individuals who have experienced using the latest Web 2.0 tool to obtain some understanding about how and when to use Web 2.0 resources in the library. Libraries should not only examine how social software can enhance their employers' services, but also consider how these instruments can enhance internal communication and cooperation.
 8. **Policymaker:** Web 2.0 policy to ensure complete or selective access to all data resources should be strictly followed and framed for the organisation. However, it should be analyzed efficiently before applying it in the library if necessary.
 9. **Image Maker:** add value to the library in order to help management and create a favorable picture for the outside world.
 10. **User Interaction:** Lastly, librarians often speak to their customers about offering outreach. Usually this implies leaving the library and offering services where customers are gathering. Libraries should be aware of their patrons' online social worlds, whether these are Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs), social networking sites, or other online communities.
- Prospects of social Media Use in libraries are:**
- Participatory** — users have the chance to actively participate in knowledge building rather than passive content customers ;
 - Educational** — users are kept up-to-date with the recent innovations and have open access to information;
 - Collaborative** –SN guarantees the sharing of knowledge creates a communication connection with professionals and enables users to create teamwork skills;
 - Fascinating** – It is inspirational, interesting and users can be involved in the use of social networking sites; some users gather data with these locations in an simple and unencumbered way; and
 - Flexibility** – Easy content development and sharing, simple to update film.
- Challenges of Social Media Use in Libraries**
1. **Lack of awareness**–Most librarians in developing nations are unaware of social networking facilities, and even the few who are conscious are still struggling to figure out the productive uses for library services of these locations. The protocols

engaged in social communication are also not known to users. Many learners and potentially even some academic employees may not be aware of the fact that their discipline has a topic expert. Initiating communication with customers and experimenting with creating a "public self" is essential for librarians (Horizon Report, 2007).

It is a challenge in Nigeria to get learners and Facebook users to move beyond Facebook's social aspect to use it for a more severe and productive result. Indeed, in Nigeria there is a general slogan saying "leave Facebook and face your book." These points to the reality that generally Facebook is seen as a car for our communications

2. Bandwidth issue—To support this practice, most organizations have restricted bandwidth. Poor connectivity may frustrate efficient internet involvement.

3. Technophobia—Many librarians and customers fear computer processing. They make the traditional facilities of the library their comfort zone and are not willing to accept change.

4. Maintenance culture shortage—Maintenance culture is seriously shortage in most emerging countries organizations. In moribund circumstances, the few accessible techniques may not support remote access to data.

5. Unreliable energy supply—Low energy supply discourages internet forum participants from participating.

6. Lack of personnel training—Most librarians lack the abilities of the 21st century needed to embrace the instruments of social networking for efficient library services.

7. Intervention by the government:

There is little or no public intervention in Nigeria's ICT region.

8. Copyright Issue—A severe challenge to copyright management is free access to data where individuals copy, paste and edit without recognizing the power.

Conclusion

This article attempted to examine the notion of social networking and its application to library facilities with specific reference to the scenario in Nigeria. Librarians in Nigeria have not been fully adopted in library facilities by these social networking instruments. As such, there is a need for a pro-active awareness and training to educate both the librarians and the users on the invaluable importance of utilizing social networking in library services.

There is a great deal of potential inherent in social networking software (SNSes) for professional development and professional networking purposes. This applies especially to the library and information industry, which already encompasses Web 2.0 technologies across many of its key operations. At the same moment, however, there is a substantial amount of confusion, skepticism, opposition and even fear surrounding many librarians, not just the baby boomers, using these techniques in the workplace. A suitable plan and strong evaluation need to look while pioneering social networks in the library. Users needed to carry out the assignment of planning social software in the library should be provided with knowledgeable and adequate training. Last but not least, promoting and empowering users on techniques used in Web 2.0 should offer priority to thinking about implementing social software in the library. By undertaking full research and experiment

on social networking from a distinct point of perspective on the library, the possible involvement of social networking can be effective. Librarian is the sole custodian of the planning, organization and implementation of social networks in the library and data center.

In this context, he needs to obtain enough training and more knowledge to provide an absolute shape to the library's social networks.

Recommendations

The problems identified above could be solved by organizing a government awareness forum such as library orientation, meetings, symposia, workshops to generate knowledge and inform librarians and users on social networking services and apps.

This will help to stimulate new ideas, sensitize and create awareness of the new tools.

- Librarians should embrace current change in order to remain relevant and adapt to the new ICT driven environment.
- Librarians and IT specialist imbibe a maintenance culture so as to manage the few available ICT facilities effectively.
- Government should provide stable power supply which will encourage and facilitate the effective use of these tools.
- The government and professional bodies should be pro-active in training of librarians to acquire 21st-century skills to adapt to the changing ICT environment.
- The government should take an active role in providing ICT facilities to institutions.

- Educating the public on the issue of copyright law and violation.

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