

INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ACADEMIC LIBRARY: A TRANSFORMATIONAL TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By

ABOH, SAMUEL OTSONU (Ph.D)
and
KUDU, DOGARA

Abstract

The paper examined social media integration in the delivery of library services in the 21st century. The paper covered several contents including the roles of social media in enhancing the relevance of academic libraries; the 21st skill set necessary for effective implementation of social media powered library services. It further highlighted the strategies for effective integration of social media in academic library services delivery. This paper adopted content analysis and, reviewed several literatures related to social media use in academic libraries. The study found out that to be able to stay relevant in the socially networked environment and meet the growing needs of its patrons in the 21st century, it has become imperative for academic libraries to fully integrate social media, which has become a library technology that has the capacity to expand the frontiers of library service delivery as well as to reach the hitherto unreached categories of patrons. The study suggested among others that, academic libraries in Nigeria should design a social media strategy which would guide a smooth integration and use of social media. That library and information professionals in Nigeria should engage in aggressive social media campaigns and awareness so as to enhance the patronage of their library services and resources. The study also suggests that institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should ensure adequate budgetary provision for the purchase and maintenance of technologies and facilities to effectively drive the social media implementation for effective service delivery.

Keywords: Social media, Library Services, 21st century libraries, ICT

Introduction

Academic library is a vital part of the big working machine in any academic institution. Academic library are libraries attached to tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of Agricultures and research institutes (Akporhonor, 2017). According to Bayat, Isfadyari-Moghadam and Alipouri Hafezi (2019), these libraries are established to acquire, preserve, create access to knowledge and information which is the core mandate of their parent institution as well as create an enabling environment conducive for teaching, learning and research.

The concept of service delivery in an academic library is important because, the effectiveness of the library can be measured by its effective service delivery. Therefore, library services such as circulation services, reference services, book reservation, technical services, current awareness services, etc., are directed towards enhancing information access for the satisfaction of library patrons' information need.

The advent of the Internet (WWW) has brought a new challenge for librarians in meeting the rapidly changing information needs and expectations of the 21st century library patrons (Okoroma, 2017). Academic libraries of the 21st Century is witnessing a paradigm shift in delivering library services to users hence, the use of social media became a potent means in which librarians and libraries can optimize their service delivery and also remain relevant (Gallardo, 2019).

Social media refers to a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein 2016). They include a variety of applications, including collaborative projects, content communities, and micro-blogs/blogs, Twitter; social networking sites and virtual worlds. The integration of social media platforms in academic libraries, therefore, is extremely useful for the improvement and promotion of qualitative library service especially in the provision of reference services. To further buttress the fact that social media is suitable in library operations, Adetola and Okeoghene (2016) and Bakare and Umar (2018) identified the following services through which social media can enhance services deliver in academic libraries. These are:- Marketing of Library Services, Current Awareness Services, Reference Services, Reservation, User Education Programme, and Multimedia Sharing

Evolution of Social Media

The evolution of social media according to Drew (2013) can be said to have begun in 1978, when the first social media platform known as *Bulletin Board System (BBS)* was created by Ward Christensen and Randy Suess. It was solely used to announce meeting and sharing of information by posting it on BBS. That was the beginning of virtual community and the first dial-up in history. Also, after the internet (WWW) was launched and loved by many people, *Geocities* was launched by Beverly Hills Internet (BHI) as a web hosting service that allows internet users to create simple websites for themselves.

Early social media service that appeared in 1997 was “*Six Degrees*”, which allows its users to create profile and list of friends. The year 1999 was a year for *Blogger* and *Live journal*, as users could write, share and communicate with friends by using their own blog or journal. After this, *Friendster* was launched in 2002, which allows users to create profile and virtual connection with people around the world; it later became a social media for games. *MySpace*, *LinkedIn* and *WordPress* were launched in the same year, 2003. Most of MySpace users were musicians. WordPress was used as open-source content management system; and LinkedIn was a business-oriented social networking platform.

In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg launched ‘The Facebook’. Facebook was created as a social networking platform for college students. YouTube was launched in 2005. Later on, other social networking platforms such as Twitter, Google plus (Google+) were launched in 2006. Today, social Media consists of thousands of social media platforms, all serving the same but slightly different purpose.

Popular Social Media Platforms for delivering Library Services in academic Libraries

As identified by Ezeani & Igwesi (2018), Adetola & Okeoghene (2018) and Bakare and Umar (2019), the following Social media platforms are popularly used by academic libraries in

Nigeria:

- **Facebook:** Most popular because it is librarian-friendly, with this network, academic libraries try to link some of these specialized library applications like JSTOR search, World Cat, and much more to Facebook to draw users' attention to useful hidden treasures of the academic library.
- **WhatsApp:** is yet another social media platform mostly used by librarians in Nigeria. It allows interaction between library staff and their colleagues. WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform messaging application which allows its users to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS' (WhatsApp.com, 2023).
- **LinkedIn:** This is another social network platform used by librarians in Nigeria to connect and collaborate with other library and information professionals in various States and abroad. Librarians also use this site to get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest via LinkedIn.
- **Blogs:** Here, librarians can periodically post messages; share information on a particular subject or issue, and allow users to contribute to content. They can write articles, news on topical issues and expect an instant reaction from their users.
- **MySpace:** In academic institutions where the students are; libraries have taken advantage of this site to post, calendar, custom catalogue search tools, and blog features to improve their presence.
- **Twitter:** A micro blogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update. Librarians in Nigeria use this platform to give users first-hand information on

the on- going national elections.

- **YouTube:** In institutions in Nigeria, events such as important highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops are disseminated via the YouTube.
- **Instagram:** Librarians use this tool to share and distribute new images of library collections. Cover page of new arrivals of both books and journals can be disseminated to users via Instagram. It can also be used to enlighten users on topical issues.
- **Library Thing:** A tool that enriches the library Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Once an account is created, a list of books with ISBNs is sent to Library Thing which sends back a piece of code which is pasted into the footer of the Library OPAC. Librarians utilize this to send a list of current publications to users.

21st Century Skill set necessary for effective integration of social media platforms in library services delivery.

The American Library Association (2016) noted that the following competencies based on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education are general enough to be applicable across various social networking sites and are flexible for new sites and their evolving applications to library services.

- **Understanding and Articulating Social Networking Sites and Their Roles:** Librarians should be familiar with a diversity of social networking sites and social media including those most relevant to their patrons.
- **Creating Content:** The ability of creating, contributing, and revising content in various formats including images, text, audio, video, links, and more within and beyond the presence of their library in a variety of social networking sites with various tools.
- **Evaluating Information:** The ability to critically evaluate information encountered in

social networking sites on the basis of authority, currency, and bias etc.

- **Applying Information Ethically and Legally:** Being able to respect copyright and intellectual property of information encountered and applied in social networking sites, and conscious of the unique cultural norms.
- **Searching and Navigating:** The ability to know how to effectively search and browse various online social networks for known and unknown contacts, and for information and resources in a variety of formats.
- **Interacting:** Being familiar with the diverse methods of communicating with social networking sites and must be aware of and be able to apply the unique cultural norms and expectations of each communication method. A librarian must be familiar with every communication channel; they should possess the skills for interacting with patrons in these sites via smart phone applications, mobile webpages, etc.
- **Teaching:** The librarian must be capable of teaching these skills to library patrons and peers. This includes guiding and training patrons through targeted aspects of social networking sites that arise in their use as resources and tools and teaching about the use of social networking sites for scholarly purposes.
- **Providing Services:** The ability to utilize a variety of online social networking sites to provide quality library services. They evaluate social network sites and choose which are most appropriate to establish a library presence in. It is important that librarians are familiar with the steps and etiquette for initiating and responding to friend requests in building networks.
- **Photo and video skills.** Social media is very visual. Take a peek at Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Slideshare, Vine, Flickr, Youtube, e.t.c., all include

photos and videos. It means that library personnel should be able to create photos and videos that quickly communicate to his/her organization's social media crowd.

- **Marketing and promotion.** Part of library personnel social media duties include sharing the cool stuff your library is doing.

Drawbacks of social media integration in academic library Services

Lack of Policy: Lack of library social media policy contributes to wrong or inadequate implementation of social media which can even tannish the image and purpose of the library.

Lack of Awareness: A great number of librarians engaged in discharging library services in academic libraries are still unaware of the potentials and opportunities of social networking services in library service provision.

Finance: Many academic libraries in Africa still suffer setbacks in adoption of social media in library service provision due to lack or low budgetary provisions for technologies that supports the implementation of social media tools such as computers, robust internet facilities, mobile devices, alternative power supply, etc.

Lack of ICT Skills: Most librarians are yet to come to terms with this sudden exposure, as it looks alien and antagonistic to them. As such, they continue to provide library services traditionally.

Bandwidth problem: Every library online services are driven by efficient internet bandwidth. Poor connectivity frustrates effective online participation.

Technophobia/Techno stress: Some librarians are afraid of handling computers and online services. They make the traditional library services their comfort zone and are not eager to embrace change.

Lack of maintenance culture: Maintenance culture is seriously lacking in most academic libraries especially in developing countries. The few available technologies are in moribund conditions that does not encourage the adoption of social media technology talk more of supporting remote access to information.

Unreliable power supply: Erratic supply of electricity hinders the effective and efficient use of ICT gadgets and discourages academic libraries from implementing digital services. This is because, the facilities on which social networks thrives on is power driven.

Inadequate Training: – Inadequate training opportunities for a responsible workforce to handle library service provision through social media are major challenge in developing countries.

Strategies for Effective Integration of Social Media in academic Library Services

Successful integration of social media in libraries is done considering a number of strategies. According to Burclaff and Johnson (2018), the following strategies are keen for effective integration of social media platforms in academic library service delivery:

1. **Purpose:** Identifying the purpose for using social media is the first step to creating a successful social media plan. A meaningful purpose statement connects with the library's mission, so as to explicitly make the library social media actions one of the many ways your library fulfills its mission. The purpose for adopting social media should hinged on the library's core values and types of library services to be provided.
2. **Policy:** Once the library's social media purpose is established, it should be articulated in an official document referred to as social media policy. The overarching document outlines the library's intentions and guides the choices to make on various platforms. The policy should address issues such as creating new accounts, approval of posts, and appropriate ethical or legal issues, including copyright and privacy policies.

3. **Implementation:** Successfully putting a social media policy into practice is demonstrated by your ability to select the right platform, create posts and interact with patrons on social media in a way that reflects the library's purpose and follows the social media policy.
4. **Goals:** Engage in aggressive social media campaign and awareness programmes using various mediums in the community, set goals that are firmly rooted in the purpose that is articulated to ensure that every action is purpose driven.

5. **Assessment:** Measuring and determining success is dependent on what you're trying to achieve. Most social media platforms offer embedded tools for assessment, like Facebook insights, Twitter analytics, or Google analytics.
6. **Give away:** Establish specific rewards and recognition for contributors to the library's social media platforms. This will help attract and motivate the community to connect and appreciate the role of the library as a major information provider.

Conclusion

Academic libraries play important roles in providing information for education, research and access to diverse knowledge embedded in materials in diverse formats. To be able to stay relevant in the socially networked environment and meet the growing needs of its users in the 21st century, it has become imperative for all academic libraries to fully integrate social media platforms which has become a library technology that has the capacity to expand the frontiers of the library service delivery as well as reach the hitherto unreached categories of users. At this point in time, it has become very important for every academic library to integrate social media into the main stream of its service delivery chain through dedicated, skillful and committed professionals.

Recommendations

For proper integration of social media in the provision of library and information services, the following recommendations are made:

1. Library personnel in academic libraries in Nigeria should efficiently explore and adopt social media platforms that are suitable for their community, so as to grow the visibility and social media presence of their libraries and as well reach out to every member of their community.

2. Academic libraries in Nigeria should design a social media strategy which would guide a smooth integration and use of social media.
3. Library and information professionals in Nigeria should engage in aggressive social media campaigns and awareness so as to enhance the patronage of their library services and resources by new and prospective patrons.
4. Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should ensure adequate budgetary provision is made for the purchase and maintenance of technologies and facilities to effectively drive the social media implementation for effective service delivery.
5. Library and information personnel in academic libraries in Nigeria should be exposed to various training and development programmes that will enrich them with skills on how to drive and manage the social media technologies for effective service delivery.
6. Design a social media strategy which would guide a smooth adoption and use of social media.

References

- Abdulsami, T. L & Dika, S. I. (2017). Use of social media in marketing and public relations in academic libraries. Compendium of paper presented at the 1st international conference and home coming of the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka on 25th -30th June, 2017. Pp. 272-282.
- Adetola, A. A. & Okeoghene, M. A. (2016). Social media usage by library staff in academic libraries: The case of Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, Nigeria. *Information and Knowledge Management*. 6(1): 43-49.
- Adewoyin, O. O., Onuoha, U. D., & Ikonne, C. N. (2017). Social Media Use and Service Delivery by Librarians in Federal Universities in South-West, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 1641. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1641>
- Aichner, T. & Jacob, F. (2015). Measuring the degree of corporate social media use. *International Journal of Market Research* 57 (2): 257-275.
- Akporhonor, B. A. & Olise, F. (2017). Librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in university libraries in South- South Nigeria. *Information and Knowledge Management* 5(6). Available at: <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/IKM/article/viewFile/23139/23651>.
- Bakare, O. A. & Umar, M.Y. (2018). Use of social media platforms to promote library services and profitable librarianship. *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*. 9(7): 324-334)

- Bayat, M., Isfadyari-Moghadam, A. & Hafezi, H. (2019). The use of social media in university libraries: Meta-analysis of international papers. *New Media Studies*, 4(14), 317-365. doi: 10.22054/nms.2018.15269.103
- Burclaff, N. & Johnson, C. (2018). Developing a social media strategy: Tweets, pins, and posts with a purpose. *Collage and Research Libraries*. 75(7). Accessed on 18/11/2023 at: <https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/9156/10100>
- Chu, S. K. W., & Du, H. S. (2013). Social networking tools for academic libraries. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 45(1), 64-75. Available on: <http://libedpsy.alzahra.ac.ir/documents/10157/39868/64.full.pdf>
- Drew, H. (2013). Complete history of social media: then and Now. Accessed on 19/11/2018 at: <https://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-media-infographic.html>
- Dika, S. I. & Chukwudum, M. J. (2017). The use of social media for enhancement of service delivery in academic libraries in Nigeria. Compendium of paper presented at the 1st international conference and home coming of the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka on 25th -30th June, 2017. Pp. 258-271.
- Evgenia, V. & Emmanouel, G. (2014). The impact of Facebook on libraries and librarians: a review of the literature. *Program: electronic library and information systems*, 48(3), 226 - 245.
- Ezeani, C. N. & Igwesi, U. (2018). Using Social Media for Dynamic Library Service Delivery: The Nigeria Experience. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 814. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/814>
- Gallardo, R. (2013). Social media for libraries. Accessed on 19/11/2018 at: http://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/Library_Social_Media_Use.html

- Ifijeh, G. (2014). Adoption of digital preservation methods for thesis in Nigerian academic libraries: applications and implications. *The Journal of Academic Libraries*. 40: 399-404.
- Kaplan, A. M. & Haenlein, M. (2016). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons* 53 (1):59-68.. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003.
- McFadden, C. (2018). A chronological history of social media. Accessed on 19/11/2018 at: <https://interestingengineering.com/a-chronological-history-of-social-media>
- Okoroma, F. N. (2017). Issues and the use of social media in reference services by academic library personnel in Nigeria. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 4(12) 187-199.
- Onuoha U.D. (2013) Librarians' use of social media for professional development in Nigeria. *Information Management and Business Review*. 5(3): 136–143.
- Quadri, G. and Idowu, O. (2018). The use of social media for information dissemination by librarians in Nigerian Universities. Paper presented at the 15th Annual IS Conference, University of Zululand, South Africa, September, 2014.
- Taylor and Francis Group (2014). Use of social media by the library. Current Practices and future opportunities. A white paper from Taylor & Francis, 2014.