

CHAPTER SIX

THE PLACE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS IN FACILITATING RESOURCE SHARING IN LIBRARIES

Abstract

Resource sharing in libraries has recently become a top topic in the field of Library and Information Science. This is because the present information explosion has made it practically impossible for libraries to have sufficient stock of the information needs of their users. In addition, the general dwindling of library funding has created the necessity for libraries to look beyond their boundaries to help their users in accessing information resources. However, with the coming of social media networks and applications propelled by the advances of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), opportunities have now been provided for libraries to broaden the scope

of their resource sharing activities. A lot of recent studies that were reviewed have established the fact that social media networks have been very useful in libraries for marketing and promotion of information resources and services, and aiding communication and feedback with their users. This paper examines the place of social media in assisting libraries in resource sharing activities by suggesting some useful social media applications that can assist libraries greatly and forge deeper cooperation.

Keywords: Resource Sharing, Social Media Networks, Library, ICTs, Information explosion

Introduction

With the advent of computer and the internet in the mid 20th century plus the recent revolutionary effects of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which has created a lot of possibilities, the foundation has been well laid for the invasion of social media networks and applications into the lives and activities of people. This is to ease up communication gaps and connect people of diverse ages, backgrounds, creeds, and races; thereby bringing about immeasurable impacts that have reshaped our world into a global village. Today, millions of people have flocked to social networking sites where members create and maintain personal profiles that they link with those of other members. The resulting network of "friends" or "contacts" that have similar interests, business, goals, or academic courses has sharply redefined the concept of community. While the popularity of social networking consistently rises, new uses for the technology are frequently being observed. Today's technologically savvy population requires convenient solutions to their daily needs. At the forefront of emerging trends in social networking sites is the concept of "real-time web" and "location-based". (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014, Wikipedia, 2018). Narrowing it down to the educational sector, Tella, et al (2013) that social media networks offer professionals in many fields the ability to stay informed with new knowledge about their fields. Also, they are being used by teachers, lecturers, and students as a communication tool. Many students are using a wide range of social networking sites for their educational pursuits; while teachers and lecturers are now using it to their advantage. Teachers, lecturers, and professors are doing everything from creating chat room forums and groups; to extending classroom discussions; to posting assignments, tests, and quizzes to assist with homework outside the classroom setting. Social networks are also being used to foster teacher-parent communications. Social media sites make it possible and more

convenient for parents to ask questions and voice concerns without having to meet face to face. The attractiveness of social networking sites have extended to almost all professionals in various human organizations, including the library. With these developments, each profession or field of human endeavour (like librarianship) is trying to take advantage of the numerous benefits and possibilities social networking sites can bequeath to their patrons and services. Libraries and librarians are increasingly engaged on social media in order to connect with diverse community groups and move beyond the traditional bounds of the library. Social media applications have become very helpful to libraries in the promotion and marketing of their services and resources to current and prospective patrons. They do this while leveraging on their ability to facilitate much closer relationships with their patrons wherever they are based and choose to learn and access library services and resources by providing instant communication and feedbacks to foster improved performance. (Taylor and Francis, 2014; Xie and Stevenson, 2014, Akporhonor and Olise 2015).

One particular library service or activity to which social media can be of great assistance is resource sharing. Over the years and around the globe, resource sharing activities have been one of the most important functions of libraries. Thus, no matter the huge size of a particular library and its collection, the library cannot claim to be ever self-sufficient nor boast of having all the required resources for its users. Also, in the midst of the current information explosion and the dwindling funding of libraries in acquiring relevant information resources for their users, the concept of resource sharing has become more compelling for libraries to actively engage in. (Abubarkar, 2007; Ashikuzzaman, 2016).

Definition and Meaning of Resource Sharing

Muthu (2013) defines resource sharing as the activities that result from an agreement, formal or informal, among a group of libraries (usually a consortium or network) to share collections, data, facilities, personnel, etc. for the benefit of their users and to reduce the expense of collection development. Prakash (2017) opines that "the word 'resource' not only represents books or documents but also information in any kind of format. It also includes space, services and even manpower of a library". Altogether, it is termed as "resource sharing" with respect to libraries. This "sharing" means either lending or borrowing. In application to libraries, *resource sharing* means lending and/or borrowing of resources. Similarly, Ashikuzzaman (2016) states that: the term "resource" applies to anything, person or action to which one turns to for aid in time of need. The word "sharing" denotes apportioning, allotting or contributing, something that is owned to benefit others. "Resource sharing" in its most positive aspects, entails reciprocity, implying a partnership in which each member has something useful to contribute to others and is willing and able to make this available when needed.

Ashikuzzaman further notes that the underlying principle of resource sharing is: maximum service at a minimum cost. The main objective of resource sharing is to create a conducive environment in which libraries can offer better services to meet user needs within available limited resources. The area of resource sharing is quite wide and includes all materials, functions, and services. Materials and functions include the reading materials of all types/formats, acquisition, cataloguing, storage, and preservation. Services include all the techniques employed in libraries to establish a link between the reader and the reading material. Inter-Library Loans (ILL) and book exchanges also fall into this. Ejedafiru (2011) also notes that resource sharing among libraries should depend upon the strengths of individual libraries. One weak library cooperating with another weak library cannot promote effective resource sharing. We share our strengths, not our weaknesses. Driven by prevailing circumstances, sharing of resources is the only option left for academic libraries and librarians.

Objectives of Resource Sharing in Libraries

Muthu (2013) and Ashikuzzaman (2016) highlight some objectives of Resource sharing to include the following:

1. **Increased Availability and Accessibility of Resources:** Clientele of the participating libraries will have access to resources available in all the libraries. Resources can be moved from one library to another manually or through modern means. This provides easy access to and easy/free flow of information.
2. **Diminish Cost:** Resource sharing helps in building specialized collections so that all participating libraries need not duplicate the procurement of similar materials. This facilitates the availability of larger collections. Even the basic material required by users can be obtained without causing much delay. It will help in sharing the burden of purchasing materials & processing the materials.
3. **Resource Exploitation:** Resource sharing advocates making the reading material of one library available to the clients of other libraries. Thus, resource sharing exposes the reading materials to a wider group of users. Similarly, the services of a library can be exploited by the users of other libraries. Co-operative activities like acquisition, exchange, storage, binding, training, reference and documentation services, interlibrary-loans, etc., can also be the part of resource sharing.

In view of recent developments, Prakash (2015) states that the following factors have created the necessity of resource sharing among libraries:

- Information explosion and various methods of information and publications.
- Limited funding.
- Verify needs of students.
- Increase in the number of users.
- Steep increase in literature, growth of publications and cost of publications

- Rise of new subjects and specialization.
- In earlier days, only printed resources were available. However, in the present world, digital resources are available in a variety of electronic forms and can be easy to access and share.

Definition and Meaning of Social Media Network

Xie and Stevenson, (2014) define "social media" as a means of communication through the internet that enables social interaction. It is an effective approach for people to use in communicating and interacting with each other. According to Kaplan (2015), social media are commonly defined as "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". Ahenkorah-Marfo & Akussah (2017) state that Social media consists of innovative online tools designed to enhance communication and collaboration. Social Media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media provides more opportunities to reach your community, target specific audience, and give them a chance to interact with your library. Social media is a means of communication through the internet that enables social interaction. It is an effective approach for people to use in communicating and interacting with each other. Simultaneously, more organizations are applying social media to promote their services and interact with their users or patrons. Social media is a growing phenomenon being connected to information in areas, and widens? (Stoeckel and Sinkinson, 2013). Ogbe (2014) sees social media as an online media that takes communication beyond the restraint of the traditional media. Xu (2014) states that mobile social media enables users to maintain and foster social connections with members of a social network. Moreover, they can conduct real-time communication anytime and anywhere via a portable mobile device. This enables the inexpensive exchange of text, video calls, and voice chats. Social media is also easily accessible and immediate because the user always has a mobile device. Essentially, mobile social media services provide an "always-on" environment for information exchange among members of social networks.

Social Media Network in Libraries

Tella, et al(2013)expressed that social media networks are becoming an increasing requirement for libraries. Many libraries are finding that when used properly, it can be a great tool to save money and promote library services and collections. The tremendous popularity of social networking sites now presents libraries with unique opportunities for reaching out to their clientele. The most popular ones with respect to libraries, according to Xie and Stevenson (2014) are Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, RSS, YouTube, and Wikis. According to Zabel (2011), the employment of social media is one of the best ways of making a library interactive and popular.

Through this, a library will be able to mingle with its users and help them in every way possible. Relevant to this, Murphy and Mulaison (2009) assert that social networking sites are becoming central forums for accessing and sharing information. Librarians are responding to the popularity and utility of social networking sites by using them as central media for interacting with library patrons for traditional and novel services. Libraries use social media to fulfill a range of objectives, with most focused on promotion (visibility for and usage of library services and resources). Young and Rossmann (2015) affirm that majority of libraries that use social media networking use it greatly as a marketing and promotional medium to push out information and announcements. However, broadcast/informational communications are increasingly being supplemented with two-way communications designed to solicit feedback (e.g. for collection development), offer real-time customer service, and build engagement with users. Social media is also increasingly being seen as a collection management tool, offering flexible ways to present resources (e.g. YouTube for video delivery) and categorize them (e.g. Folksonomies). Outreach is also seen as important for helping librarians increase their visibility and connections within the broader library community; also, for assisting in the promotion of the work of their faculties. The use of social media for enhancing teaching and learning is currently a lower priority, but this will likely become an important activity in the near future. It is notable that librarians with their growing experience of using social media tools are well-placed to help develop institutional capabilities (Francis and Taylor, 2014).

Reasons for using social media in libraries

Libraries have several objectives that they are using social media to help achieve. These can be summarized as follows:

- To seek opinion on the library and its services for self-evaluation purposes; encourage debate; and, instigate an opportunity to respond to library users' feedback.
- To reach library users in their homes or 'virtual spaces', as today's modern online library no longer rely solely on its physical space as an access point.
- To publicize events, services, news, and presence.
- To encourage collaboration. For example; through collection development and building repositories of collaborative content that is specific to certain user groups;
- To increase usage of library collections by promoting new and existing content;
- To connect with other librarians and keep abreast of industry news;
- To build a sense of community with users, other institutions, and industry contacts.

The Place of Social Media Networks in Resource Sharing in Libraries

Until recently, the concept of resource sharing was then understood as "library cooperation". It was mainly confined to inter-library loan and was not practiced widely among many libraries. However, with the advances and revolutions brought about by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the subsequent creation of online social media networks, the concept of resource sharing now has a deeper meaning and broader scope. ICTs have helped in facilitating resource sharing through the creation of local and international networks, building library consortia and creation of new opportunities for greater cooperation among libraries. The pace of technological improvement shows no signs of abatement, and libraries will find it rewarding to explore the realm of networking possibilities that this new technology makes feasible. Notably, this present decade has seen a greatly renewed interest in library cooperation and mutual benefits at national and international levels. (Ejedafiru, 2011; Urhiewhu, Aji and Polygon, 2015). Furthermore, social media networks can be effectively applied to the library to create and publish content, interact, and have a web presence. In this new world, everyone is a creator or publisher of information. The availability of a range of different social media tools for a wide variety of purposes that include communication, collaborative content building, multimedia sharing, reviewing & expressing opinions, entertainment, monitoring, etc have collectively made this world better. Some of the social media applications helpful to resource sharing include Facebook, Twitter, Drupal, MySpace, LibraryThing, YouTube, Flickr, etc. In specific terms, social media networks can also assist the library's resource sharing activities in the following ways:

- **Communication of scholarly Information and research activities**

In recent times, social media networking services and digital libraries have been widely used in academia and research environments to support researchers' scholarly activities. Gardner and Gardner (2015) observe that "apart from everyday social use of the micro blogging service, scholars are clearly using Twitter to increase their professional networks, organize a prepublication review of working papers and manuscript drafts, offer post-publication critique, disseminate published research, and share pre-prints." They further noted in their study that Twitter is also being used to facilitate access to scholarly articles that would otherwise be denied to users behind a paywall, or obtained using interlibrary loan. However, like peer-to-peer sharing in the music industry, this peer-to-peer access to scholarly material is ethically dubious and may run afoul of copyright laws, though easy to accomplish. The Twitter user simply appends the metadata label, or *hashtag* "#icanhazPDF" in the tweet, thus rendering it discoverable through traditional linking and search functions. Several other authors have advocated for the use of social media for communication and the sharing of scholarly information among researchers and academics. They also believe that academic libraries should be using specific social media applications that allow new ways of resource sharing (Gu and Wide'n-Wulff, 2011). Several terms are used to refer to and differentiate between these services, based on the main functionalities they provide.

Some of such are social bookmarking for researchers, online or social reference management (SRM) systems, academic social media platforms, and academic social networks. A number of popular SRMs and academic social networks have emerged and evolved, including CiteULike, Zotero, BibSonomy, Mendeley, Academia.edu, and ResearchGate, which are used by millions of researchers worldwide.

- **Collection Development and Management**

Francis and Taylor (2014) note in their study that social media was also cited by several librarians as a potentially powerful collection management tool both for hosting institutional resources (e.g. videos on YouTube) and for transforming digital cataloguing. The power of social media has proven to be a useful tool in cooperative collection development and management. This helps libraries to engage and encourage dialogue with their respective users in order to understand their specific information needs, thereby creating opportunities for cooperative collection development. In this regard, Sunil (2015) proposes the concept of collaborative content building whereby libraries can make use of Content Management Systems (CMS) which are widely used for creating, organizing and disseminating content. A content management system is equipped with the add-on social media tools which allow the user to publish, edit, modify and share content. The administration of the entire operations is from a central interface. CMS have a well-defined procedure and workflow management for a collaborative environment. Some examples of CMS include [HYPERLINK "https://themeforest.net/category/wordpress"](https://themeforest.net/category/wordpress) \t "_self" Wordpress, [Joomla](#), Drupal, Magento, Square space, and Wiki.

- **Social Bookmarking**

Dickson and Holley (2010) state that social bookmarking web sites have also emerged to encourage users to store their internet bookmarks and interact with users bookmarking similar web sites. Social bookmarking is a form of link management that lets users collect and label information resources for both their own use and for sharing with other users (Gilmour & Strickland, 2009). The bookmarks can be accessed from any computer or browser. After bookmarking, users tag their links with keywords that describe the web page's content so that a tag cloud of related web sites can be viewed, and the user can also view what other sources the users tagged have with the same keyword. This process is known as "folksonomy". The most popular social bookmarking web site is "Delicious". The site allows users to "friend" other users to see what they tag, and to view other web sites tagged with a particular keyword. Academic librarians can use social bookmarking to create resource lists for different departments and classes that can be viewed by students.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper, resource sharing has become a necessity for libraries to embrace in view of the current realities where funding of libraries continues to decline, and the information explosion currently being witnessed makes it extremely difficult for individual libraries to have all the available information resources in their stock. It is an established fact that Social media network applications have come to stay in the library. They are offering a lot of promising opportunities that can make libraries more visible and impactful to their users. While it is widely acknowledged that social media networks have proven to be useful in the outreach and promotional activities of the library, there is the need to harness the rich potentials of these applications in the resource sharing activities of the Library. With the many possibilities that ICTs have provided today in combating perceived challenges of sharing, the use of social media in facilitating collaboration and cooperation among libraries is a huge opportunity to bring libraries closer to their users. Libraries here in Nigeria are encouraged to adopt social media networks in all their activities and to leverage the many opportunities they provide. This is because the benefits of using social media networks are overwhelmingly advantageous vis-à-vis the challenges they might present.

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