

Application of Social Media Networking (SMN) To Library and Information Service Delivery in Nigerian Academic Libraries

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Abstract: *The paper expounds the meaning of social networking as a process of building relationship among group of people with common interest and ideology. Social networking is achieved through the use of social media. Social media is an essential tool for library to explore in its unquenchable passion to pervade society with relevant and current information. Social media offers a powerful and pervasive communications platform that is radically changing the way we interact. With its viable feedback mechanism, social networking could assist library to respond to queries, current awareness, SDI, new arrival, send out reading list, alert on overdue among other services. Brief Historical Trace of social media were stated. Publications of a university's research findings and intellectual contents are easier shared with social media. The challenges on the use of Social Media Networking (SMN) for Library Service Delivery were discussed as Copyright issues which is a common challenge when making use of social media to disseminate information and this is not restricted to information disseminated in print format alone but it also cuts across information disseminated in audio and video format. Cost of carrying out library services using social network sites could be enormous and other challenges were discussed in the paper. It was recommended that social media should be made accessible to user information needs of online users to help libraries get closer to the society.*

Key Words: social media networking (SMN), library and information service delivery, Nigerian academic libraries

INTRODUCTION

Social networking simply means a process of building relationship among group of people with common interest and ideology. Social networking is achieved through the use of social media. The emergence of social media in Nigeria especially among the youth populace was principally for the purpose of socializing. This is the use of Internet-based social media sites to stay

connected with friends, family, colleagues, customers, or clients. Social networking can have a social purpose, a business purpose, or both, through sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, among others. It is an evolutionary development of online participation where group of people with common interest and goal interact, communicate, share and contribute information among each others on social cyberspace. Social networking is therefore a new way of providing library service through Internet technologies; it is a two-way system of getting useful information through interacting and communicating with people of like minds (Danbaki, Mohammed, Gado & Ikegwuro, 2020).

Many libraries are unaware of the effect of social media in library service delivery especially in meeting the needs of 21st century library users. Gnad (2013) in Omeluzor and Bamidele (n.d) identified social media as an incredible marketing tool for any business to deploy. It was the reason why Burkhardt (2010) in Omeluzor and Bamidele (n.d) noted that social media provides another vein to market new library products or initiatives. He further stated that, because of the ubiquity of social networking, libraries can leverage the tools to interact with faculty, staff, and students in new ways. The social media includes; Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Watsapp, library thing, Flicker, Wikis, Blogs, Ning, and Myspace among others. Social networking is a two-way communication medium for exchange of ideas, information, collaboration, teaching and learning. Toit and Mulatiningsih, (2013) in Omeluzor and Bamidele (n.d) advocated that understanding social media tools should be part of librarian's skills since it facilitates information sharing. Toit and Mulatiningsih also noted in Omeluzor and Bamidele (n.d) that Media Libraries used some social media including Facebook and Twitter to communicate and send out information to the library users.

The emergence of social media must have been borne out of adequate information sharing among colleagues and scholars who may be carrying out research and therefore would always share information anywhere through such platform as well as to be in contact with other colleagues. On the other hand, social media provides updates on every bit of happenings around the world once it is shared; it also enhances businesses both local and international. Robinson (2012) also observed in Omeluzor and Bamidele (n.d) that social media offers a powerful and pervasive communications platform that is radically changing the way we interact. With its viable feedback mechanism, social networking could assist library to respond to queries, current awareness, SDI, new arrival, send out reading list, alert on overdue among other services. However, there are questions begging for answer. Is social media effectively used in library to achieve desired goals; does use of social media improve or hamper library's processes and services; can effective use of social media support library processes and services?

Social media is an essential tool for library to explore in its unquenchable passion to pervade society with relevant and current information. Robinson (2012) reviewed from in Omeluzor and Bamidele (n.d) the impacts of social media in the workplace and identified increased transparency, constant multidirectional flow of information, enhanced collaboration and shift in power from hierarchical to network among other capabilities. Considering these capabilities of social media, this paper therefore tends to ascertain the application and utilization of social

media tools for the delivery of library services by librarians in Nigeria to library users in this information communication and technology (ICT) driven age.

Universities all over the world are held in high esteem as ivory tower where researches are carried out in various fields of study to support the society and to improve lives. In these universities, libraries are established to support learning, teaching, research and community service. Libraries perform these functions through information acquisition, organization, dissemination and provision of access to information. A library is an organized institution and their services are targeted at identified audience. In the past, libraries devised several methods to inform and deliver services to its users on current and emerging developments in the society. Such means include but not limited to selective dissemination of information (SDI), current awareness services (CAS), and posting on notice boards among others (Omeluzor and Bamidele, n.d).

Recent demands by library users to access real-time information and the desire by libraries to keep its users current has made it inevitable to utilize other means of communication. One of such means is social networking media. Social networking, also known as social media whose membership is growing daily at exponential rate is one of the medium of communication that cost little or nothing to implement compared to other means of communication like radio, television and newspaper. The term 'social networking' and 'social media' are used interchangeably in this work. They are meant to mean the same thing (Omeluzor and Bamidele, n.d).

Concept of Social Media

Social media have been defined in a variety of ways. Social media is the general name given to every form of social interactions while social network is a subset of it. Burke (2013) as stated in Onifade (2021) specified that social media is the media (content) that one uploads whether a blog, video, slideshow, podcast, newsletter, or eBook. Consider social media as a one-to-many communication method. Though people can respond and comment, the owner owns the content and has to produce (write/record/create) the media yourself. Dewing (2012) in Onifade (2021) further indicated that social media refers to the wide range of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. Cohn (2011) as cited in Onifade (2021) indicated that social media and social networking have been instrumental in many major events around the world. It is fair to say that social networking is a subcategory of social media. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue, on the other hand, is a social structure with people who are joined by a common interest.

Brief Historical Trace of Social Media

Digital Insights, (2013); Rafiq, (2011) in Hundu, Akut and Tok (2016) asserted that Social Media provides several opportunities to reach and interact with the community. Hence, Social Media and Social Networks have grown astoundingly over the past few years. According to a recent Social Media statistics, there are over 1.15 Billion Facebook users compared to 700 million in 2011; over 500 million Twitter users compared to 250 million in 2011; over 238

million LinkedIn users compared to 115 million in 2011 and there are over 500 million Google Plus users opposed to 25 million users in 2011. There are over 1 billion monthly visitors on You Tube; 4.2 billion people use mobile device to access Social Media sites; more than 23% marketers are investing in blogging and social Media 2011. A majority of 60% of consumers say that the incorporation of Social Media makes them more likely to buy product and services. Seventy four (74%) of marketers believe Facebook is important for their lead generation strategy. Forty (40%) of marketers use Google+, 70% desire to learn more and 67% plan to increase Google+ activities. Social Media generates almost double the marketing leads of trade show, telemarketing or daily mail. Like other organizations, increasingly, all types of libraries around the world are moving towards Social Media and Social Networking through various platforms; Blogs, Facebook, YouTube twitter, Myspace, Pinterest, Google Plus, Instagram, Mashup, Flickr, LinkedIn, and Wikis.

Digital Insights, (2013); Rafiq, (2011) in Hundu, Akut and Tok (2016) expressed that Social Media is being used worldwide for diverse purposes in libraries and information centers: marketing, branding, building customer relationships, reference services, quick dissemination of news. Thus, the importance of advocating for a policy for the incorporation of social media in the provision of library services cannot be overemphasized. This paper aimed at advocating for a policy for the incorporation of social media in the provision of library services

Social Media Networking and Library Services

Publications of a university's research findings and intellectual contents are easier shared with social media. This is possible by creating a page, for example 'blog', for such purpose and upload research publications that will be accessible to a wider audience on the Internet. A systems librarian could as well upload research publications on the University's repository and link it to social sites for wider accessibility. Social networking are avenue to reach out to a wider audience, no wonder why most publishers and marketers and even universities these days create shortcuts on their websites with an appeal (i.e. follow us Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, etc.) This gimmick is a marketing strategy to hold to their customers' loyalty. Libraries therefore can leverage on these platforms to provide services to its clientele. It is also very important to state that Google has several apps to support library services; one among them is Google Drive that supports publication and sharing of research findings (Omeluzor and Bamidele n.d).

Therefore, according to Hundu, Akut and Tok (2016), social media policy if put in place and implemented would offer new opportunities for improved library service such as the following:

- Attract more library users considering the fact that this is its era. Generally speaking social media has a lot of appeal to the youths.
- It will improve in-house operations like selective dissemination of information (SDI) and current awareness service (CAS) offered by the library. For example, library can select certain information and send to users based on their research interests using social media platforms.

- Social media will offer marketing and public relations and also feedback opportunity for the library. This will help in building a good relationship between the library and clientele.
- It helps trigger knowledge revolution where the reading culture is poor as the social media will help in easy knowledge sharing.
- It increases Library Users: The online community is opened to all as long as there is internet connectivity. In Facebook, for instance, the activities of a friend or fan of a library page are known by friends connected to that friend or fan. Hence, when a fan of a library page comments or likes a status/post put up by the library, others can come to the knowledge of the promotional activities carried out in a library. This can motivate a friend of a library fan to join the library. Also, social media can increase library patron's satisfaction with the library. This is not to say that the services rendered in the library should not be effective otherwise promotion of such services would not attract more library users. NLA in Khan and Bhatti (2012) revealed that the National Library of Australia uses a variety of social media for notifying news, relevant items from collection and library events. Facebook is used by the library to inform the library users about major events, activities and recent acquisitions through posting photos, videos and links to resources about the library. Library uses YouTube for sharing videos of many of the events held at the library. Presentations and talks organized on different topics by the library are disseminated via podcasts.

Holley, (2010) in Onifade (2021) declared that common types of social media devices were considered based on their popularity and widely used among libraries to provide accessibility and successful delivery to library users, such as; YouTube, Whatsapp, Flickr, Facebook, Weblog, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Library Thing among others. Few among social media devices selected as instruments for Library services provision are discussed

i. **YouTube:** Hadagali, Kenchakkanavar, and Tadasad (2019) in Onifade (2021) described YouTube as a popular instrument that has been seen as a potential and capable instrument for delivering library services to the users in all kinds of libraries particularly physically challenged library users. Most of the libraries nowadays use YouTube for sharing videos on events, lectures, special talks, library tours, seminars, training, etc. The study conducted by Garoufallou and Charitopoulou (2011) in Onifade (2021) observed that YouTube is a widely used social media devices by the students to do the following: → To help the librarians to post videos on conferences, workshops, library events, library tours, or bibliographic instruction for the benefit of users. → It helps in users' education/bibliographic instruction videos can be shown during the class hours on how to use a test, tool, database, search engine, formula, etc. → YouTube allows the librarians to save favorite subject-related videos and also enables them to create a playlist and share them among the users. YouTube however, according to Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) in Onifade (2021) helps institutions in Nigeria, to communicate important highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences, and workshops to library users.

ii. **WhatsApp:** Hadagali, Kenchakkanavar and Tadasad (2019) in Onifade (2021) stated that Whatsapp is one of the popular and commonly used social media devices, this is a device where Instant messages can be gotten and it allows users to send text messages, images, videos, etc. to each other for free. WhatsApp allows and gives rooms for a lot of thing such as: → To attach files through. Word document, PDF, PPT, etc. → WhatsApp allows the users to stay

updated on library events. → WhatsApp enables the librarians to post news about the library, images, and videos of the library orientation program and library events. → It also allows librarians to interact with the users through discussion groups, image tagging, and receive comments, feedback, and suggestions to improve the Library services. → It allows the librarians to provide the most important services i.e. 'Ask a Librarian' without being physically present in the library.

iii. **Flickr:** Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) as cited in Onifade (2021) expressed that Flickr is another common and popular social media device known for image sharing application which is being widely used to share images within groups or communities. Flickr is popularly known as a photosharing application that also enables users to post videos (Dickson and Garoufallou and Charitopoulou (2011) as stated in Onifade (2021) submitted that Flickr was the second most preferred Web 2.0 instrument used by students Flickr also do the following things to disseminate library services to patrons in the library: → Flickr allows the librarians to upload and share images of the library events/programs / and activities to the users → It enables to tag images with keywords. These tags will further be useful for locating the relevant images. → It helps Librarians to create discussion groups and post-academic / subject-related photographs. → It enables the librarians to post videos on the virtual tour of the library. According to Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) in Onifade (2021), Flickr can be used as an instrument to share and distribute new images of library collections. Cover pages of new arrivals of both books and journals can be disseminated to users through 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.

iv. **Facebook:** Ellison et al., (2007) as cited Onifade (2021) expressed that Facebook is a for-profit corporation and online social media service founded by Mark Zuckerberg sometime in February 2004. Facebook allows its users to create an online profile, add friends and enable them to post and view each other's profiles. Facebook is one of the widely used social media devices used mainly for interaction and sharing. Using Facebook applications following library services may be provided to the end-users: → Facebook applications enable the librarians to access the contents of the library catalog without actually going to the library and visiting the library's website. → Facebook can be used to share academic activities, essentially for providing information literacy programs/orientation to users- new intake students → Facebook enables the librarians to provide information to the users on the events, activities and programs, new arrivals of books (through posting videos and providing links) → Facebook links the users to online tutorials on how to use a device, education programs, etc. → It helps to advertise library events and create online library study groups for the users. → Facebook facilitates access to question paper banks, wherein the user can make use of the question papers without geographical limitations. Facebook is librarian-friendly with many applications like JSTOR search, World Cat, and many more. Librarians can interact with users to know their information need. Libraries try to link some of these specialized library applications to Facebook.

v. **Weblog:** A weblog is a website that is common, popular, and usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other materials such as graphics, or videos. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order (Wikipedia.org) Boxen (2008) in Onifade (2021) defined a Blog as a webpage consisting of user-supplied content in reverse chronological order. Web publishing has become easy because

of its simplicity in publishing the contents and records the comments by the other persons. Web publishing has become easy because of its simplicity in publishing the contents and records the comments by the other persons. Hadagali, Kenchakkanavar, and Tadasad (2019) expressed in Onifade (2021) identified the following library services that may be rendered through the library to the users using Weblog: → Weblogs enable user interaction which further allows students to provide feedback on the services provided by the Librarians. → Librarians can flash the news about the library events/programs/activities which take place at the library to users. → Weblogs allow Librarians to create different subject guides to fulfil the demands of the students. → Librarians can create blogs detailing the programs of the projects undertaken on the renovations occurring at the library. → A weblog can be used to interact with users offering their own choice of contributions like debate and interaction. → Librarians and users can get current information about various subjects (through alerting services) in general to specific through weblogs. it could also be used to market library services.

Pinterest: Dudenhoffer (2012), Szkolar, (2012) and Gallardo, (2013) as cited in Jain (2013) revealed that Pinterest is a free; graphical and an emerging Social Media tool. It is “an online pinboard that allows you to organize and share things”. Pinterest provides great venues to market library resources. A library can make its own profile and create boards, pinning photos and video showcasing the library. The Westerville Library has an extensive collection of boards and pins, such as, Unexpected Library Marketing, and Quotes About Reading because they provide fun visuals into the world of libraries. In rural Missouri, Central Methodist University (CMU) college library markets its popular DVD collection, through a pinboard, which is very helpful to students and it cuts down on repetitive questions asked from library staff and provides an excellent visual representation of what is in the collection.

Twitter: Twitter and IM (Instance Messaging) can be used by the libraries to market library reference/research services. Libraries can use Blogs to keep their users current with developments in the field of librarianship. Professional Networking sites, i.e., LinkedIn can be used by the libraries to create professional connections and to market library services among other professionals working in different libraries of the world and can also solicit their ideas and professional experiences. By using social media libraries can spread news about the events in other libraries. By using social media libraries can publicize new acquired material and service alerts. Different applications of social media are useful for libraries for obtaining their patron's feedback and to ensure the maximum engagement of their users in the production of their products and services. Social media is a fine tool for marketing library services among new generation users and to creating user-centered libraries.

Ning: The adoption of Ning makes it possible for librarians to get connected with library users and their associations. The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) had employed Ning platform in discussing topical issues among the members (Danbaki, Mohammed, Gado & Ikegwuro, 2020).

Ifijeh (2014) in Idiegbeyan-ose, Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Esse (2016) stated some of the ways in which Social Media Networking have enhanced library and information services as follows:

Reference Services: It has been made easy through the use of social media. For instance, through the platform of Facebook, a user can have direct access to the reference librarian and

ask queries and is sure to get response immediately or almost immediately. The response to queries could also be made richer through audio responses on platforms like facebook. The Skype platform could even give the user and librarian the opportunity to see each other and interact better even without coming to the library.

Current Awareness Services: Ezeani & Igwesi (2012) in Idiegbeyan-ose, Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Esse (2016) observed that utilisation of social media or SNS in LIS has brought about ease also in the process of carrying out current awareness services. Library professionals can simply place information on new arrivals, orientation programmes, electronic resources and online resources available in the library on the sites. Most library users who will ordinarily not read such information would be interested in them now because they are publicised on social media and most of the library patrons will always visit these social media.

Reservations: In the aspect of reservations and renewal of loans, instead of coming to the physical library building, the library user can send messages to the circulation librarian through any of the most convenient social media; he can even go as far as making a call also through any of the media platform like Skype or facebook (Okusaga, Akalumhe, Sulaiman & Ekeh, 2021).

User Education Programmes: This service can be done virtually and hosted on the library's website or even placed on YouTube for users to have access. This saves library profession and clientele the rigours of organising orientation programmes within the four walls of the library. With the use of social media, orientation and user education programmes can be done virtually.

Marketing of the Library Services: Marketing of library services is also made easy through the use of social media platforms. Pictures of the library facilities, various sections, available resources and professionals can be placed on the library's facebook page or on Flickr. This will entice reluctant library users to maximise these available resources.

Selective Dissemination of Information: This specialised library service could also be enhanced through the use of platforms like LinkedIn. This is because LinkedIn captures the area of specialisation of the user and this allows the librarian to source for resources that will benefit the clientele. The value added to the services of the library by the use of social media cannot be overemphasised hence Taylor & Francis (2014) in Idiegbeyan-ose, Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Esse (2016) noted some advantages of adopting social media in the process of carrying out library housekeeping functions. Some of these advantages include: (a) It ensures feedback from users thereby enhancing library services evaluation (b) It increases usage of library's content (c) Cheap publicity of events, programmes and services (d) To ensure connection and interaction with other librarians (e) It requires little or no training as the interfaces involved are very user friendly

Challenges on the Use of Social Media Networking (SMN) for Library Service Delivery

Ifijeh (2014) as stated in Idiegbeyan-ose, Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Esse (2016) expressed that it is pertinent to note that there are some challenges involved with the use of Social Media Networking (SMN) in libraries. Ifijeh identified some of these challenges as:

Copyright issues: It is a common challenge when making use of social media to disseminate information and this is not restricted to information disseminated in print format alone but it also cuts across information disseminated in audio and video format. Librarians may infringe on some authors' copyright if they are not well knowledgeable in the process of making information accessible on social media, hence it is paramount that information professionals even in the bid to satisfy information needs should not go beyond the dictates of the copyright law.

Skills: Technical competence is a point that cannot be overlooked when using SMN and this could sometime pose as a challenge as some library professionals may not possess needed skill to function effectively in this area. Taylor & Francis (2014) in Idiegbeyan-ose, Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Esse (2016) reiterated that high level of expertise is required when using social media; they noted that in some instances the library professional may require skills for customising applications that aid in the process of accessing online catalogue.

Cost: Cost of carrying out library services using social network sites could be enormous. The cost here includes cost of purchasing and maintaining needed infrastructure and equipment, remunerations for technical staff, cost of regular training, cost of bandwidth, electricity, etc. **Time consuming:** Use of social media or SNS for carrying out library services can be time consuming; this is because any information professional that wants to be effective and efficient enough in quenching the information thirst of his clientele would need to spend a lot of time on the internet. Clients could get frustrated if they send in a query and do not get the needed response in good time; hence to avoid this, the librarian would always have to spend hours on the internet answering queries

Technophobia and Technostress: Despite the level of infiltration of ICTs in library and information profession today some information professionals still have that inert fear of technology. They would rather stick to the manual means of carrying out library services. Also, there is the challenge of technology related stress; information professionals that make use of ICT tools for a long period of time usually experience this kind of stress. Isiakpona & Adebayo (2011) as cited in Idiegbeyan-ose, Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Esse (2016) explained that technostress is usually caused by the use of obsolete technology, power fluctuation, slow network, poor sitting position, poor computer proficiency skill, etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reviewed Literature showed that Social media is integral to marketing library resources and services. It offers more than just traditional ways of marketing library services. It allows user to create, connect, converse, contribute, vote and share information. Social media is helpful in

accessing information needs of online users and helps libraries to get closer to the users. Different applications of social media are helpful for marketing library services among online community. With the help of Facebook, libraries can advertise their different upcoming events. Libraries can also market their different programs conferences workshops by uploading their videos on the YouTube. They can also share and upload the pictures of different library events and services by using Flickr. Libraries can use Facebook to share the information about their new arrivals and editions of books. RSS and Blogs can be used to market library services among distance learner. With the help of RSS, libraries can republish and syndicate the contents on the Web. Libraries can promote services, collection, events and resources by using social media. Twitter and IM (Instance Messaging) can be used by the libraries to market library reference/research services. Libraries can use Blogs to keep their users current with developments in the field of librarianship. Professional Networking sites, i.e., LinkedIn can be used by the libraries to create professional connections and to market library services among other professionals working in different libraries of the world and can also solicit their ideas and professional experiences. By using social media libraries can spread news about the events in other libraries. By using social media libraries can publicize new acquired material and service alerts. Different applications of social media are useful for libraries for obtaining their patron's feedback and to ensure the maximum engagement of their users in the production of their products and services. Social media is a fine tool for marketing library services among new generation users and to creating user-centered libraries (Khan and Bhatti 2012). Thus, it is recommended that social media should be made accessible to user information needs of both online users to help libraries get closer to the society.

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