IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

Social media is key to 21st century communication with library users, and enables the academic library to pursue its mission and goals online, while promoting library resources and services. Social media is now widely used by librarians to fulfill a variety of objectives in libraries. This paper describes the social media networking in various library dealings. Now a days everyone is connected with each other by means of various social networks like Orkut, Google, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. This became an effective medium to share the knowledge and skills of the users and library professionals. From the traditional searching process for the books in the libraries the interactive usage of social networking can be now addressed as part of the library system. These sites are one of the new technologies offering libraries the opportunity to reach out to its clients. Day to day increase in the number of libraries adopt the social media and they widely used by librarians and to fulfill a variety of objectives.
Keyword: Social media, Libraries, Library services

INTRODUCTION

Social media provides more opportunity to reach our community, target specific audiences, and give them a chance to interact with your library. Social media is an instrument on communication. It is a broad term and covers a large range of web sites which enable people to interact with other visitors. Social media aids in different diversities are Social news (egg. Dig, Propeller), Social Bookmarking (egg. Del.lcio.us, Simpy, Blinklist), Social Networking (egg. Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn), Social Photo and Video Sharing (egg. YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr) and Wikis (Wikipedia), etc.. The whole libraries are assists with connecting

people with information and this is what social media is really all about. Social media helps in reaching out to our communities and providing them information that they need in a very accessible way.

Currently social media used in different libraries such as Wikis, Flickr, or Blogs for publishing historical photos and ask people to identify people, places, or events pictured. Different libraries use Wikis for content creation and to create a collaborative relation between library and the community. Social media in libraries is the way of advertising library, its brand product and services via web 2.0 technologies. By using social media libraries can engage with their clienteles and enable them to participate in the production of library products. Social media includes networking web sites like Facebook, MySpace, micro blogging web sites like Twitter and other media like blogs, podcasts, photos and videos. By posting library material via social media on library page, it can be used by the variety of locations on the Web. In this paper focus on details about social media's intentions, reasons advantages and future.

Social Media and objectives

In Social media a website that doesn't just give you information, but interacts with you while giving you that information. This interaction can be as simple as asking for your comments or permitting you votes on an article based on the ratings of other people with similar interests. Regular media as a one-way street where you can read a newspaper or listen to a report on television, but you have very limited ability to give your thoughts on the matter. Social Media, on the other hand, is a two-way street that gives you the ability to communicate too.

Objectives

Libraries use social media to fulfill a range of objectives, with most focused on promotion (visibility for and usage of the library service and resources). 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 example, helping librarians increase their visibility and connections within the broader library community; also, for assisting in the promotion of the work of their faculty. 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, and librarians with their growing experience of using social media tools are well-placed to help develop institutional capabilities.

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Reasons for using social media

Librarians have several objectives that they are using social media to help them achieve, which can be summarized as follows:

- To seek opinion on the library and its services for self-evaluation purposes, to encourage debate and to instigate an opportunity to respond to library user feedback;
- To reach library users in their homes or 'virtual spaces' as today's modern online library is no longer solely relying 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 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 both users and also with other institutions and industry contacts.

Major social media channels
Here we discuss about some famous and most used social media sites in libraries are:

Facebook

The study interestingly demonstrates that library user response on social media was inversely proportional to the type of content most frequently posted by librarians. Although posts from librarians that shared links and content from other Facebook users were the least frequently posted type of content, library users responded to these more than they did to the posts about library information, which the librarians posted about the most.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp Messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for smart phones and selected feature phones that uses the internet for communication.. In addition to text messaging, users can send each other images, video and audio media messages as well as, their location using integrated mapping features. Whats App group created by academic libraries can work as discussion forums to increase the reach of libraries.

MySpace

If we want to go where the students are, one of the best places to find them is MySpace. Other libraries have taken advantage of this site's calendar and blog features to improve their presence. With a little help from your IT department, we can also include custom catalog search tools.

Blogs

By creating a blog, you'll be able to disseminate information to lots of people at one time. Whether you're updating students on new collections, or just conversing with library staff, blogs are a powerful tool, especially when combined with RSS. Students and staff can also post there blogs to share the information and such blogs can be very effective in academic libraries.

Ning

Use this networking tool to get connected with students, library associations, and more. We can also use it to share information with many people at a time.

Wikipedia

One of the most important search engine at the disposal of users. We can call it as growth engine in academic libraries instead of search engine. The use of Wikipedia in academic libraries can reinforce the available resources along with printed material.

LinkedIn

This social networking site for professionals is a great way to get library administrators connected with the people that can help them find information. Whether that's you, faculty, authors, historians, or other sources, they can find them in your LinkedIn network.

Twitter

Use Twitter, a micro blogging application, to keep staff and administrators updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections, or even just scheduling.

YouTube

Spread the word about library events, share citizen journalism, and more on YouTube. We can see how other libraries are using YouTube by checking out the youtube .

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Flickr

This image distribution tool is a great way to share new image collections. We can create image sets with metadata, as well as take advantage of the many plugins available for Flickr users. Flickr users can also help gather missing information about images.

Library Thing:

A tool that enriches the library OPAC. Once an account is created, a list of books with ISBN is sent to Library Thing which sends back a piece of code which is pasted into the footer of the Library OPAC. Librarians can utilize this to send a list of current publications to users.

Advantages and Disadvantages of using social media

Advantages

Advantages and benefits for librarians and libraries when using social media are seen to be:

- Financially the costs of using social media are perceived to be low;
- It requires little training;
- It promotes library services and disseminates news quickly, delivering this information more directly to library users;
- It increases engagement and interactions with library users;
- It helps gather feedback to enhance user services;
- The promotion of library holdings via social media can help increase usage of content;
- It enhances communication both within the library and with other departments;
- It can be used for outreach activities through onward sharing, well beyond the institution itself, helping build connections and reputation more broadly.

Number of opportunities relating to use of social media by the library, the most significant opportunity amongst those presented was seen to be:

(a) to raise the professional profile of the library,
(b) followed by the freedom to connect regularly with users and
(c) the opportunity to collaborate with other departments within the organization.

Disadvantages

Here are some disadvantages for librarians and libraries when using social media are seen to be

- Too many social media tools to learn
- Electricity failure
- Slow speed of Internet
- Lack of time to use social media
- Lack of privacy and identity theft
- Confidentiality of information
- Lack of knowledge how to use it
- Inadequate funding for libraries
- Inadequate library staff
- Low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media
- Inadequate training opportunities for library staff
- There are potential copyright issues when using social media such as YouTube to build collections.

Social media policies

Librarians are divided on the benefits of introducing formalized social media policies and plans. There are some clear differences of opinion across librarians in how much social media can or should be centrally controlled. Some believe that representing the library as a professional function with a consistent tone is the priority, while others believe that a more human approach is important, with individual staff free to bring their own ideas and personalities to social media activities. Those in larger institutions are finding that a level of organization and scheduling is required to avoid duplication and ensure a reasonably constant flow of communications and interaction is maintained. Generally, it's felt that libraries should concentrate on best practice and guidelines rather than overly-prescriptive plans and policies.

Competence

There is limited information available on the overall effectiveness of social media within the library in terms of achieving specific measureable goals. Frequencies of postings and responsiveness have also been linked in several studies to high user engagement. It was difficult to prove return on effort and that the time required doing this was a major barrier to more comprehensive analysis of impact. Some libraries are beginning to use social media management and reporting tools like Hootsuite to assist with this, but the lack of any common framework for evaluating social media impact in the library in a more structured way means that benchmarking opportunities are limited. Several recently published studies

have begun to propose a framework for evaluation, so it is likely that assessment against commonly agreed metrics will become an increasingly important part of social media activity within the library in the near future.

Challenges of using social media

Challenges associated with using social media in libraries include the following:

- Social media can require considerable time commitment from library staff;
- Social media can require technological expertise, for example customizing applications to provide access to online catalogs;
- It can be a challenge for librarians to use an informal but presentable tone, or deliver social media content in a bilingual or multilingual region;
- Levels of interest in and skills with using social media vary enormously across library staff;
- There are limited funds to support more advanced social media usage/ features and the training that would be required to enable this;
- A library needs to work hard to maintain engagement with library users and attract popularity (followers, likes and so on);
- It can be difficult to maintain library branding for content/resources made accessible via social media;
- There are potential copyright issues when using social media such as YouTube to build collections;
- External factors such as Internet connectivity, technological infrastructure and government restrictions on the use of social media may restrict access.

On the subject of an appropriate quality for social media communications, most participants in our focus groups agreed that while it was important to maintain a professional tone, it was equally important to show a fun side at appropriate moments too, enabling the library to connect with its users in a human and engaging way, to supplement more formalized communications.

Future for social media in the library

In general terms, there is agreement that it is difficult to predict how social media and its use will evolve, so the priority for most of the librarians is to remain experimental and flexible. There is little doubt that use of social media is well on its way to becoming an integral part of how people communicate with each other in the 21st century. A more integrated future is imagined, with library services and collections becoming more deeply embedded with

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external sites. Some librarians see their role becoming one of helping users find paths through complex content, and directing them towards making useful connections as efficiently as possible potentially by merging smart applications and human crowdsourcing, with the smart component drawing on the human element by using social sources to retrieve information that is personalized and relevant to a specific user. Not surprisingly, an overwhelming 88% of respondents to our survey felt that social media would become more important to the library in the future.

CONCLUSION

Here we concluded that social media is used by libraries to deliver a blend of customer service, news and updates, content/collection promotion, dissemination of the institutions' research output, provision of educational tools and resources and for building relationships both within and outside of the institution. Social media has the potential to facilitate much closer relationships between libraries and their patrons. Current usage of social media by the library community generally remains ad hoc and somewhat experimental, but the uptake of these tools is accelerating, and they will likely play an increasingly important role in library service provision and outreach in the future.

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