

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL TO IMPLEMENT THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATORY LIBRARY SERVICE IN REALITY

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Abstract: 'Participatory Library' is an emerging concept in the field of library services which can be very beneficial for both the library and its users. User engagement is one of the latest trends in library and information science which can help in implementing the concept of 'Participatory Library'. In this regard Social Media can be considered as a tool as it plays an important role in our daily life to communicate and connect with our friends, peers even with different organizations pages containing latest information. Different Social Media platforms can help the library to amplify their services by directly engaging their users in sharing knowledge, disseminating information, conducting library outreach programmes, collaboration with other libraries, Libraries can use the social media platforms to receive the users feedback about their services and suggestions to improve their services as well. Direct engagement of the users to library services may encourage them and can attract more users, ensuring that the library is the best place to seek the right information in the right form and use it in the proper way. Accessibility of different information sources is very easy in this age but using Social Media library can prove that it is still a relevant place to seek information in the correct manner.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Media Platforms, Library Services, User Engagement, User Engagement Strategies, Participatory Library

1.0 Introduction

The popularity of social media in daily life made this platform reach out to mass people easily and quickly. Today social media has become one of the primary ways to be connected with friends, peers and many areas of personal interest. Many organizations such as cultural and social institutions and even many industries are using the social media platform to achieve their targeted goals. In this context as libraries are considered to be an integral part of society, it is high time for the libraries to use social media effectively in innovative ways to increase their network and engage users to build a stronger community and retain as valuable source of information in the age of social media. The massive scale up of web 2.0 has influenced libraries to utilize new technologies to fulfill their purpose by using a range of different social media platforms through innovative ways. To cope with the new societal trends, the library has to be part of the high tech , interactive services with human touch facilities provided by social media beyond the periphery of the library, then only it can grow and sustain. By following the recent trends to engage communities or being part of the community libraries are able to promote their services and events or interact with the communities which supports an emerging trends or concepts in the field of library services which is the "participatory library", which encourage user engagement with library the core library services through interaction, participation, collaboration, user-centered content etc. Therefore, social media platforms are the most efficient and significant platform for libraries to encourage participatory library services through engaging their users and can sustain with the emerging technological changes happening worldwide.

Previously, when the concept of social media was just emerging the use of this platform in the libraries was confined to connecting with their users and sharing information. From a study by De Rosa, Cantrell, Havens, Hawk and Jenkins (2007) revealed that many librarians were not sure about the fruitfulness of social media by sharing information, about the privacy and future of different social media tools during their early stage. So after the evolution of special media platform and grandeur presence in our daily life libraries started exploring the platform 24*7 to provide the service and constantly be able to evaluate and rectify their services, programs and events. In this way active participation of library users can be possible over static participation. It can be said social media can be an excellent medium for participatory library systems or user engagement in library services.

2.0 Objective of the Study

The ultimate objective of the study is to explore how social media platforms can be used to engage library users to implement the concept of “Participatory Library” concept using the recent trend of ‘user engagement’ in the digital age where any information is available in a click away.

3.0 Methodology

Various research articles have been studied to collect information on usage of social media platforms in engaging users for successful implementation of participatory library concept in reality.

4.0 Literature Review

The emergence of social media platforms upgraded library services from conventional in-person engaged services to virtual services where libraries can communicate, promote their services and engage with their user on the go. The idea of participatory library services is to involve library users in decision-making processes, service development, and content creation. This literature study investigates the advantages, difficulties, and current practices of using social media to realise the idea of participatory library services. Both academic and public libraries have supported participatory service through the use of social media platforms. **Smeaton & Davis (2014)** explained the usefulness of social media by engaging users to create a participatory library service. In their study they explained a methodology to classify the social media content to assess participatory service delivery. Exemplary practices in social media use are highlighted. In another study **Smeaton & Davis (2014)** explored that social media facilitates participatory networks and has great impact in library service through virtual mode. Instead of focussing on the circumstances that enable staff to utilise social media to effectively reach users, research on social media has concentrated on tool utilisation. This study closes the gap by investigating the organisational culture that permits employees to use social media to create a participatory library service. **Abdullah et al., (2015)** investigated the benefits of including social media in library services which helped in communicating with the library users, understanding their needs and engaging library users. Social media helps in expanding the libraries profile at national and international level and maintains positive on campus relationships with main stakeholders by engaging them in library activities (**Chatten & Roughley, 2016**). **Shafawi & Hassan (2018)** investigated that social media uses "high tech," "interactive," and "human touch" features to serve the user community beyond the physical walls. It is also capable of fostering networking and user engagement by providing the platform for user interactions. The study suggests a framework for assessing social media participation in order to help libraries choose the most effective platforms. The study by **Das & Sarkar (2021)** investigated the usability of Facebook and WhatsApp for providing services to the library. Users can communicate with each other using text, image, voice, and video messaging using Facebook and Whatsapp comfortably. According to **Masizana & Salubi (2022)** Social media aids in increasing awareness and visibility of library services, and users interact with libraries to get immediate feedback. Social media engages users, gives immediate input, and promotes library services, all of which improve participatory services. **Datta, S. (2024)** examines the merits, drawbacks, and present practices of using Facebook to promote libraries. The largest social media network in the world, Facebook, offers libraries a strong tool for promoting materials, events, and services.

5.0 Idea about Social Media

Needless to say we all are aware of the term social media or social networking sites. It refers to a web enabled platform where users can create, interact and share their content with a wide range of audience. “Social Media, communications on the Internet (such as on websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Social networking and social media are overlapping concepts, but social networking is usually understood as users building communities among themselves while social media is more about using social networking sites and related platforms to build an audience.”(Gregersen, 2019)

6.0 Popular Social Media Platforms

- **Facebook:** Most popular platform used world wide, and it is very convenient for libraries to communicate with their user at ease. Though Facebook libraries can share news, events, provide updates and efficiently connect with its users. Using Facebook Live facility libraries can broadcast their events and connect with the users in real-time.

- **Instagram:** This platform has become very trendy to new generations and leveraging its facility libraries can share photos and videos of library events, book displays, collections, exhibition and reading recommendations. By utilizing instagram features of story sharing, it can share temporary content and can collect feedback through polls, quizzes and other interactive features.
- **YouTube:** It is a video sharing platform and very effective tool for libraries to create and share video content such as, book talk, virtual storytelling, author interactions, library tour, library orientations and many other related services. Through subscribing to the library YouTube channel users can watch, comment and share videos of their interests.
- **X:** A microblogging platform which libraries can use to share short messages, new book release, new book arrival, share library news, and participate in relevant discussion with other library or literary community through tweets and hashtags.
- **LinkedIn:** It is a social media platform for professionals that libraries can use to connect with other library professionals, share professional development opportunities and job postings, and promote library services to businesses for sponsorship.
- **Pinterest:** It is a visual discovery platform for libraries where libraries can create visually appealing contents like reading list, book recommendations, library resources and many more to attract users linking with the library website or WEB-OPAC.
- **Blogs:** Creating library blogs librarians can periodically post information and particular issues where users are allowed to contribute to the content to receive instant reaction from the users.

7.0 Positive Impact of Social Media in Library

By utilizing social media platforms, libraries can enhance their services effectively. Few positive impact of social media in library are mentioned below:

- Promotion of library services
- Help libraries to reach wider audience and increase their visibility
- Attract potential library users
- Helps to grab attention of new users
- Increase community engagement through direct interaction between users and libraries and helps in building a stronger community..
- Provide quick access to information
- Virtual organization of events helps users to attend from anywhere beyond the library wall.
- It helps in promoting distance learning and lifelong learning by sharing information of new books and related resources or by conducting virtual training and workshops.
- It facilitate knowledge sharing
- Social media allows accessibility and inclusivity of all users whatever their ability or background may be.
- It provides the platform to gather feedback from the users and evaluate their services by conducting online polls, surveys and accumulate comments to rectify the areas of services.
- It helps libraries to stay updated about new trends by connecting with other libraries, organizations and individual users which can help to improve their services.

8.0 Negative Impact of Social Media in Library

Besides having numerous positive impact there are few oblivious negative impact of social media in library are there such as:

- Addiction to social media may consume more time and reduce productivity for extensive screen timing can hamper time management.
- Information explosion i.e. availability of huge information can consume more time of users and they may end up with confusion of selecting wrong information.
- Privacy and security are the most important concerns using social media as it requires personal information to use it.
- Misinformation over social media and inability to check fake or authentic information may lead the library users in some uncomfortable zone.

- Social media is the platform of cyberbullying and online harassment, library users can be the victim of it without having proper knowledge of using the social media righteously.
- Increased interaction over social media reduces the face to face interaction which can cause social and mental distancing and users can suffer from it.
- Copyright Infringement is another issue over social media where library users knowingly or unknowingly share copyrighted material and may face legal problems.

9.0 Library Guidelines to the Library Users for Effective Use of Social Media

Social media has taken an important part of outreaching library services. Even though there are various negative impacts of social media that can cause destruction to the library user, for that reason the library must provide some guidelines for effective use of social media. Those guideline are:

- Identification of misinformation and fake news. Libraries always encourage collecting information from authentic sources, users have to follow that. To identify actual information library must conduct media literacy, information literacy, critical thinking skills which helps in identifying misinformation and fake or false information.
- To access social media users have to share their personal information, there is a risk of misusing personal information and security threats. In this regard libraries must train the users about privacy settings, risk factors in sharing personal information and guide them to behave responsibly to protect their personal information.
- Libraries must have guidelines and proper policy to act against cyber bullying or online harassment of its users and ensure a safe and reverential online space for using library services over social media.
- To discourage being addicted to using social media, the library must promote and organize workshops on digital well being and become responsible online users to manage time and shorten screen time.
- Through conducting offline events the library can also foster personal interaction and community engagement to prevent social and mental distancing.
- Copyright infringement over social media can cause trouble to the users. Libraries must educate their users about copyright laws and fair use policies of e-content to elevate responsible content sharing.

By providing these guidelines and encouraging library users to maintain these rules can enhance the library services over the social media by practicing user engagement in library services.

10.0 User Engagement Strategies to Enhance Library Services through Social Media

With the advent of time it is obvious for everything or everyone on earth to be adaptive with the present trends and there is no exception with the library services. To cope up with the new technological environment conventional library services have adapted many new tricks and techniques to reach out its users and try to still be an effective place for fulfilling the quenching thirst for knowledge of its users. In the present context we are discussing the new concept 'participatory library' or user engagement in library services using social media. Use of social media helps libraries and its users with their utmost satisfaction to communicate and collaborate in library services to enhance the library services beyond the library wall. Here are some facet discussed about library user engagement utilizing social media:

- Being active on popular social media platforms discussed above by updating contents, news, highlighting services, announcement of programmes and events helps users of the libraries to be updated and engaged.
- Providing customized services through interaction, anticipating demand, approaching users asking their requirements, offering guidance and orienting library users on a regular basis fosters an engaging environment and support.
- To capture user attention, sharing of timely and relevant information related to their requirements such as book release, asking for book recommendation, classified news, reading lists, upcoming events and much related information can help libraries to practice participatory library services which supports enhancing library services.
- Conducting interactive sessions by actively answering users' query, comments, messaging and mentioning them creates an engaging environment.
- Encouraging users to share their reviews, book recommendations, particular parts of a book to read and discuss increases the engagement of library users.
- Conducting virtual events and programmes like quiz, live question answer session over social media platform, creating book clubs, conducting reading challenges by engaging quiz coordinator, author,

library staff and users enhance the users engagement in library services and supports knowledge sharing.

- By involving users to create content for the library or planning an event enhance the users engagement through collaboration with core library activities.
- Cheating social media contents according to the requirements of the users by seeking their feedback and promptly responding to their queries making them believe that the users opinions are valued helps an active engagement of library users.
- Sharing photos or videos of internal library activities like book shelving, organizing new collections, book processing, and engagement of staff in different internal library services helps the users to connect with the library in a more personal way.
- By creating library related hashtags and encouraging users to use it when they read some books by different authors or genres can boost a sense of community building and easy content discovery.

Regularly monitoring and practicing these user engagement aspects will help libraries to enhance their services over social media.

11.0 Conclusion

Undoubtedly the use of social media to attract potential users to the library helps them discover a new avenue to use the library. And engaging them with the library through social media shows a new possibility of sharing knowledge, community engagement, collaboration, share or hashtag news and interaction between user and libraries adds value to the library and also proves that still the library is a convenient place with a new dimension in the digital age. Engaging users or practicing 'participatory library' concepts promotes the library services and also supports the relevancy of social media to enhance library services in this digital age.

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