ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

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Abstract

Social Networking sites are one of the new technologies offering libraries the opportunity to reach out to its clients. Social networking is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users, including the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact with web world. In this paper, the author has intended to describe the possible advantages and benefits for librarians and libraries when using social media and also describe implications of social networking technologies in the field of library environment. In addition, an attempt has been made to illustrate different social software tools and their effective utilization in the social networking environment. *The use of this platform has affected the operations and service delivery of all organizations.*

Keywords: *Social Networking Sites,* Social Networking, Social Media, Library Environment.

1.0 Introduction Social networking sites are used by the hundreds of millions of people around this world. Through social networking sites in the present era younger generation comes to work with their social relationships and networks already intact. This generation is a smaller amount interested in building social relationships at work with people in the community. According to Boyd and Ellison "Web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within a system". Social networking sites, allows users to create a personalized account that includes the information like; date of birth, hobbies, preferences, education status, relationships status and personal interest, etc.

Social networking sites are an online platform that provides new venues to users to create a public profile and express themselves and with other users on the websites. Social networking websites usually have a new user input a list of online people community with whom they share a connection and then allow the people on the list to confirm or deny the connection. It is a website that provides a place for people community to share their personal views and activities with family members, relatives, friends and colleagues or to share their interest, Suggestions and discussions in a particular topic at international online platform. (Kumar).

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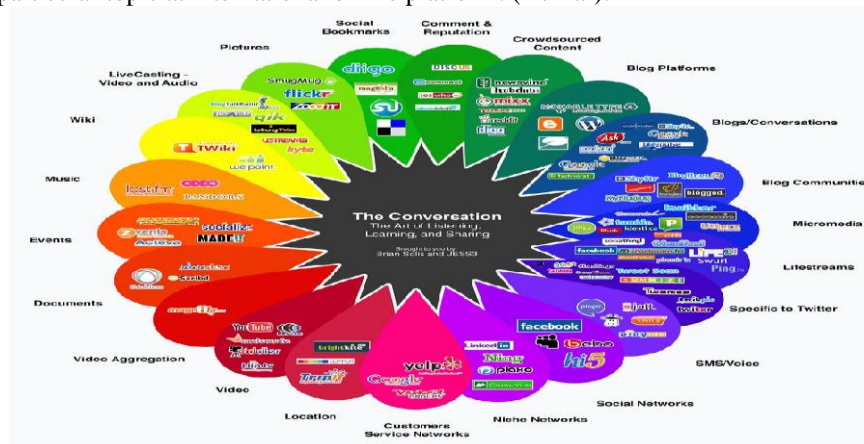
2.0 Social Network:

Social network is a broad term used to denote the blogs, user created videos and wikis. A social networking is an online service, platform or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social network or social relations among people who share interests and activities. Social networking often involves grouping specific individuals or organizations together. Social network provides a quick, low tech method to generate, maintain web based subject guides and act as communication tools to enable social interaction among LIS Professionals. Most social network services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the internet. They interact, share and exchange resources by social networks. It promotes free flow of information and sharing of resources beyond boundaries.

2.1 Social Networking Sites:

Social networking site functions like an online community of internet users. People use social networking sites for communication personally as well as professionally to contact with others. Social networking sites like Face book provides new venues for young LIS Professionals to express themselves and to interact with one another. It provides an unprecedented platform for them to dynamically farm, collaborative groups and creates, publish, exchange, share and cooperate any type of information. It makes use of web sites and LIS Professionals are using SNS closely followed by creating awareness, socializing, making friends and new arrival display is predominantly dominated by SNS closely followed by topic discussion and metadata linking.

Some of the prominent examples include: Face book, LinkedIn, Twitter, and MySpace. Social networking sites are two-way transparent communication that encourage a feedback mechanism; connecting people with shared interest. Social networking sites allow librarians to adopt a new role by placing themselves into a social realm with users. By reading blogs, group postings, and message boards, the librarian becomes an active participant, who is able to anticipate and advise patrons as needs arise. Linking to patron profiles also keeps the library within the consciousness of users, potentially increasing interaction. Courtney .In the social network site, the user is a participant, a co-creator, and a builder of knowledge. The dynamic nature of this technology enables users to have an open access to knowledge and contribute local content on the social network space.

3.0 Features of Social Networking Services

Social networking in the field of information landscape can be great contributor to the field of information poor society. It has several unique features that can serve the user community where availability of resource is a great challenge to library field. Library should experiment and come forward to accept this new budding technology. It has some major features like social collaboration, easy surfing, more participation, private messaging can be easily possible by communicating thousands networks, discussion forums, events management, blogging and commenting, media uploading, multimedia enabled, interactive and collaborative learning are some of the important features that you can see in social networking

4.0 Advantages of using social media

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.(Frederick)

5.0 Social Networking Tools and its Possible Implication in Library Environment

Social networking helps librarian to share information with patrons and students in the easiest way for digital library environment. Librarian can use in three broad activities in library and information services. The major three are Information communication, Knowledge distribution n and knowledge organization

5.1 Information Communication: In this process librarian can keep constant touch and effective interaction with staff, patrons, and faculty in online collaborative environment. The social networking tools that can be practiced by the library for the aforementioned purposes are:

- **MySpace:** MySpace (http://www.myspace.com) and Face book (http://www.facebook.com) are extremely popular social networking sites which primarily have a social function allowing people to make friends, talk online and share resources.
- **Face book**: Another social media site frequented by students, Face book is librarian friendly. Group communication among patrons can be possible in web 2.0.
- **Ning:** Librarian can use this tool to get connected with students, library associations, and more. You can also use it to share information with many people at a time.
- **Blog:** 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.
- **Meebo:** Network and assist students on Meebo, no matter what IM client they use. Online chatting or virtual reference service in library can impacted by professionals to clients.
- **LinkedIn**: This social networking site for professionals is a great way to get library patrons 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 patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections, new arrival, current content services of library.

5.2 Information Distribution: Information sharing is the major part and crucial area where professionals should looks seriously while considering and designing library activities in digital age. Patron's satisfaction should given first and foremost priority by providing right information at the right time in a right way from anywhere. Library professionals should rethink for implementing web 2.0 technologies in library services from early period.

- **Flickr**: This image distribution tool is a great way to share new image collections. Library can share photo collection of workshops; conference and different programme that are organized within the campus. You can create image sets with metadata, as well as take advantage of the many plug-in available for Flickr users. Flickr users can also help gather missing information about images.
- **YouTube:** Library video and e-learning tutorials, events and others video library services can be effectively promote and webcast through YouTube.
- **Teacher Tube:** Teacher Tube, which is a YouTube for teachers, presents an excellent opportunity for instructor-librarian collaboration. Instructors can guide students to helpful library resources, and vice versa.
- **Second Life**: On Second Life, you can create a virtual library with streamed media, discussions, classes, and more.
- **Wikipedia**: Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia updated by users. You can use this tool to share your knowledge by editing, or simply point library patrons in the right direction. You can also host your library websites on wiki software like PB Wiki.
- **PB wiki**: PB wiki is the world's largest provider of hosted business and educational wikis. It encourages collaboration from students, a way to showcase work, and offers a central gathering point for information. PB wiki offers controlled access, so you can give some editing privileges, while others can only read.
- **Footnote:** On Footnote, you'll get access to original historical documents, and can update them with your own content and insights. You can even find personal anecdotes and experiences you won't find in reference books.
- **Community Walk:** Community Walk offers a geographical way to interpret text and events. You can use it for instruction, such as showing someone where to find a book, or walk them through a historical and geographical timeline.
- **Slide Share**: Encourage faculty, staff, and students to share their slideshow presentations for the greater community to access on Slide Share. It's a great way to disseminate information among research community to the field of research and development (R&D) activities.

- **Digg: Digg** is a great way to find useful content that you wouldn't come across in traditional ways. Find stories here, then share them with others using Digg's blog function.
- **StumbleUpon**: Another way to find great content is with Stumble Upon. You can channel surf the Internet to find useful content, research tools, and more.
- **Daft Doggy**: If you've found a particularly good resource, you can use Daft Doggy to create a website tour with instructions, pointing out useful references and items of note.

5.3 Knowledge Organization: Social software can helps the professionals in KO environment for getting handy information which can be accessible with the social networking technologies in web 2.0 milieu. The below mentioned tools cab effectively in library and information centre for patrons as:

- **aNobii**: Social networking site like aNobii helps book lovers to share reviews and recommendations. It also prepare due date alerts, lending, and discussions.
- **Del.icio.us**: With this social bookmarking tool, you can create a custom directory for library patrons. Teach them to search by your tags, and it will be easy to find useful Internet research links.
- **Netvibes:** In Netvibes' new Ginger beta, you can create a public page that can be viewed by anyone. You can use it to help guide patrons to helpful internet sources, news feeds, and more. It can be integrated with many of the tools mentioned here, like Flickr and library blogs.
- **Connotea:** Connotea is a great reference tool, allowing you to save and organize reference links and share them with others. They can be accessed from any computer and offer integration with lots of other tools.
- **Library Thing:** This social cataloging network is great for librarians, and you can catalog along with Amazon, the Library of Congress, and more than 200 other libraries around the world. You'll get recommendations and easy tagging as well.
- . **lib.rario.us**: Another social cataloging site, you can put media such as books, CDs, and journals on display for easy access and tracking.(Mishra)

6.0 Social Networking Opportunities for Libraries

Social networking presents some important opportunities to libraries which include marketing of library
Services and reference services.

6.1 Marketing of library services – the growing population of patrons and librarians that make use of social networking is an indication that it is an ideal vehicle for marketing the services of libraries to patrons. Flickr is an excellent marketing tool which could be used by librarians to sensitize the users on general library services. Most students are not aware of the different services offered in the library such as reservation of books, reference services and Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI). Librarians can spread awareness of library services to those who may not be aware of these services via social media. Librarians can also develop subject-specific blogs and play a leading role in advocating the use of blogs for scholarly communication and commenting on research findings.

6.2 Reference Services – the use of social networking tools enable librarians to identify library patrons on the social cyberspace and pro-actively provide the type of information that would normally result from reference services. Social networking tools are not only being used as a vehicle for promoting services, programs and new resources but they are also used for reference service. Students are using tools like Ask a Librarian, meebo and twitter to ask questions in "real time" and this is assisting in promoting the library as a relevant, efficient and helpful place. Social networking tools like Instant Messaging (IM), Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) could be used to achieve a successful and sustainable reference services in an online social space by engaging in an online face-to-face interaction. This is particularly useful for distance learners who may call in from any part of the country with reference queries. Reference interaction has always been a conversation moving towards reference in the social environment is therefore a natural development that has been shown to be not only practically viable, but also to benefit the researcher. Using social networking tools for making the reference act a participatory one means that the client can be served by multiple sources and a variety of authoritative, scholarly perspectives resulting in an enriching wealth of information and experience observed that for librarians to effectively deploy these social media for reference purposes they must be versatile and knowledgeable in different subject fields to be able to match patrons with desired information.

7.0 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.

8.0 Future Roles of Librarians

Libraries play important roles in providing information for research and access to knowledge. In order to stay relevant in the socially networked environment and meet the growing needs of their users, libraries therefore need to pro-actively embrace the new technologies and face the challenges for better services delivery. Librarians are responding to the popularity of social networking sites and their expanding role Site in the creation, use, and sharing of information by engaging them as a central medium for interacting with library patrons and providing services to meet their information needs. The ways in which people communicate, acquire and share knowledge, will inevitably have an impact on the library, its services, and its staff .Librarians should follow the public conversations, posts, updates, and events of these key individuals, and pro-actively offer advice, resources, and help. He should act as an active participant of the social space and be able to identify the needs of the members of the library communities and to proffer solutions by offering information, links to the websites that are relevant to their information needs; and even direct offers of help. There is an urgent need for libraries to adopt the new social networking tools in their services as a strategy to embrace change while promoting a participatory role for library users in knowledge creation. The growing use of social networking tools calls for librarians to develop 21st century skills on digital technologies. Libraries can connect their social networking sites with their library Websites to links to their catalog, chat reference pages, research guides, calendar of events, news etc. Some of the roles of the social networking librarian include: understanding and articulating the nature of social networking sites, creating webpage and content, establishing friendly user interface over the network, creating online database management, evaluating and applying information, and assisting users with skill acquisition. Other skills for a social networking literate librarian include: searching and navigating the web, creating social network space, teaching, and providing quality online library services.

9.0 Identity management

– Librarians should be able to examine profiles of users to mirror their information needs and match them with the library collections.

- **Network awareness -** Should be able to share views and create awareness of the different social network sites and their uses.
- **Expert search** – The 21st century librarian should be an expert in web navigation; able to find friends of friends, and potential library users with common interest.
- **Contact management** – Librarians can cross-link people and ideas among the conglomerate of different groups.
- **Context awareness** – should be diversified in knowledge and able to link information to people's profiles.

  o The important characteristics of social networking (SN) in libraries are:
- **Participatory** - Users have the opportunity to actively engage in the construction of knowledge rather than being passive consumers of content;
- **Educative** – Users are kept abreast of the latest developments and can have open access to   knowledge;
- **Collaborative** –SN ensures knowledge sharing, establishes communication link with experts and allows users to develop a team working skill;

- **Fascinating** – It is inspiring, interesting and users can be engrossed in the use of social network sites; some users garner information with these sites in an easy and unencumbered manner; and
- **Flexibility** – Easy content creation and sharing, easy to update files and personal contact.

10.0 Library as Educator

Libraries should play important roles in educating patrons about the new technologies and the social networking skills. We can educate our users on new skills and competencies needed to flourish in the new environment. Users need to know how to navigate the web as new method of learning requires a form of connectivity with other people as knowledge is no longer acquired in a linear manner. Librarians can and should educate patrons on the use of these social networking tools to adapt to new ways of accessing, communicating and sharing knowledge. Brilliant use of the social cyberspace promotes opens access to knowledge. (Parveen)

11.0 Challenges of Social Networking

- **Lack of Awareness –** Most librarians in the developing countries are not aware of social networking services, even the few that are aware are still struggling to find out the productive uses of these sites for library services. Users are also not aware of the protocols involved in social communication. Many students and possibly even some of the academic staff may be unaware that there is a subject specialist in their discipline. It is important for librarians to initiate contact with clients and experiment with developing a "public self". This points to the fact that Face book is usually seen as a vehicle for unserious communication
- **Bandwidth problem** – Most institutions have limited bandwidth to support this practice. Poor connectivity can frustrate effective online participation.
- **Technophobia** – Many librarians and users are afraid of handling computers. 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 institutions in
- developing countries. The few available technologies are in moribund conditions that may not support remote access to information.
- **Unreliable power supply** –The low supply of electricity discourage people from participating in the online forum.
- **Lack of training of staff** – Most librarians lack the 21st century skills that could be required to adopt the social networking tools for effective library services.
- **Government intervention:** There is little or no intervention of the government in the area of ICT in library services.
- **Copyright Issue –** The free access to information where people copy, paste and edit without acknowledging the authority is a serious challenge to copyright management.

12.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has tried to examine the concept of social networking and its application to library services with particular reference services. From the above discussions and analyses it has been established that access to Internet connectivity and computers are on the increase. It is understandable that Twenty-First century users is not interested in printed work; for librarians to make libraries interesting innovations such as social networking site should be introduced to attract them to the library environment. Social networking sites would help establish a cordial relationship between librarians and patrons; market the library's services; announce library programmes on the wall and so on. This technology provides the enabling platform that goes beyond the traditional service delivery by allowing patrons to interact in real time with librarians in the comfort of their hall of residence or homes. Librarians must acquire the necessary skills in information technology to meet the challenging demands of social networking sites.

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