Social Networking and its Impact of Libraries

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Abstract: Today world is shrinking socially more in virtual environment and it is very easy for the people to create, share or exchange information, ideas and other their day-to-day activities related pictures/ videos among the virtual communities and networks. This paper depicts an overview of social media and its use in libraries as tool for information sharing and to provide information services. This paper also highlights the impact of social media on information consumers, librarians and libraries. It will be a helping guide to users to make use the most of social media tool and avoid potential pitfalls. It also suggests the implications appropriate for global level practice based on available published guidance.

Keywords:Social Media; Social Networking; Information Services; Information Sharing; Libraries

1. Introduction

The popularity of the Internet has led to increased usage of social media networking sites, which are becoming an integral part of information sharing and communication among the various stakeholders (Jefferson University Experience, 2011). The results of survey conducted by the Neilsen Media Group indicated that social networks and blogs accounted for one in every four and a half minutes people spent online worldwide (Wire, 2010). It also highlights that, people throughout the world spend a staggering 110 billion minutes on social network sites and 75% of all people visit social media sites (even if they are not members) (Local Relationship Management, 2010). Indeed, the popularity of social networking is highly demonstrable by the number of people using those (Cheung, Chiu & Lee 2010). The applications of social media have been used globally as a communication tool. Social media is gaining popularity among the library & information science professionals and are actively utilizing its potential to enhance information sharing and to improve information services. Thus, there are a number of successful initiatives led by library & information sciences professionals. But, there are number of potential risks involved in use of social media due to its open accessibility. On the other hand, the increasing usage trend of these networking technologies have compelled libraries to include this tool in their conveys.

2. Definition of Social Networking

According to Computing Dictionary (Social Network, 2011) social networking site as any website designed to allow multiple users to publish content of them. The information may be on any subject and may be for consumption by friends, mates, employers, employees just to mention a few.

Powell (2009) defines social networking as a community in which individuals are somehow connected through friendship, values, working relationships, idea and so on.

Seufert et al (1999) defines social networking in terms of knowledge networking as signifying a number of people, resources and relationships among them, who are assembled in order to accumulate and use knowledge primarily by means of knowledge creation and transfer processes, for the purpose of creating value. The concept of social networking is one of the tools of Web 2.0, which also forms the basis of library 2.0.

It can be inferred from above said definitions that the term social networking can be referred to as a web platform where various types of people and professionals can connect and interact with each other.

3. Classification of Social Media

According to Wikipedia, "social-media technologies can be of many different types like magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Technologies include blogging, picture-sharing, blogs, wall-posting, music-sharing, crowd sourcing and voice over IP, to name a few (Social Media, 2014).

Kaplan and Haenlein (Kaplan & Michael 2010) divided the social media mainly into six different types as given below:

1. Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia)

2. Blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter and Tumblr)

3. Content communities (e.g. YouTube and DailyMotion)

4. Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook)

5. Virtual game-worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft)

6. Virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life)

4. Social Networking in Libraries

The library is an organization, which collect information resources with the specific purpose of obtaining, preserving and making them available to their users. The efficiency and effectiveness of the library as a tool of Research and Learning is determined by the success of providing relevant and timely information to their users. Previously, the success of any library was measured on the basis of their traditional services, completeness and balance of collection. In recent times, the focus has changed towards technology driven delivery of information services. O'Brien (1996) and Dadzie (2007) emphasized that information must have the following qualities, so that it can be maximum utilized: relevance, accuracy, timeliness, currency, completeness, clarity and cost effectiveness. The traditional library system and its structures are proving unsatisfactory to respond quickly enough to technology driven environment. However,

change is not desirable but also mandatory as technology has much potential that cannot be ignored. The biggest change in today's patrons from those in the past is their intense reliance on technology such as cell phones, computers, and access to the Internet etc (Ayiah, 2014).

Libraries and other business organizations are using social networking platform to interact and reach out to their clients. This platform has been embraced by libraries in their service delivery even though resources available to them abound. Students also use this platform to share information amongst themselves on any subject and topic. The use of these tools has been affirmed by Bell (2007) that Academic libraries do not only use social media for communication purposes, but had adapted their research strategies to this environment.

Yale Science Libraries, Adelphi University Libraries, Carnegie Mellon University Libraries, Cambridge University Library and Norwegian University of Science and Technology Library are just a few examples of the International University Libraries with social networking websites.

The social media websites are mostly used to (Ayiah, 2014):

1. announcement of the library programmes
2. give students the opportunity to ask questions related to the use of the library
3. teach basic searching tools
4. paste new books on the social media website to inform the library community
5. send information about updates to clients
6. ask a Librarian

Academic Libraries in India can also respond to the needs of modern day patrons by applying efficient technologies such as social networking, mobile application, and online check in/check outs to their information service delivery.

These developments in the operations of library service delivery should encourage Indian libraries to reinvent itself to respond adequately to this call by investing in technologies that have direct effect on the operations and information delivery service of the library. To achieve this, Indian libraries must upgrade library staff skills in information Technology (IT) so as to be able to understand and use Social Networking sites to their maximum (Ayiah, 2014).

5. Benefits of Social Networking Sites to Libraries

Social networking sites have its own advantages to Librarians and Clients. Some of the benefits are as follows (Ayiah, 2014):

- Social networking sites will facilitate collaborations and promote effective communication between Librarians and their clients.

- It will generate a flow of information excluded from search engines and Library Catalogues.

- Social networking sites will lead future delivery of information to meet search queries

- The crucial aim of librarians is to make library resources available to clients so if social networking sites will help achieve this goal then it should be pursued vigorously.

- Social networking sites wall linked to a library's web page has the potential of reaping great results by attracting and serving Distance Education Students. Watts, Dodds & Newman (2002) stress that it is through social networking sites that any person is capable of communicating and delivering a message to a distant target person.

- It will help Librarians and Libraries to keep pace with technologies and compete effectively with the developed World.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for adoption in an effort to improve library services by librarians to patrons (Ayiah, 2014):

- It is advocate that librarians should formulate policies on the use of social networking sites and adaptation it in the library environment. Such a policy should be designed in a way to include: a designated member of staff at a senior management level, with appropriate professional qualifications, to be responsible for the planning, implementation, operation and monitoring of services of the social network site of the library.

- Expertise should be sought from libraries of other countries who have implemented these technologies for assistance in the design for the Indian Libraries.

- Periodic evaluation of the social networking sites should be carried out to determine areas requiring attention. Evaluation is important because it helps to match objectives of the social networking sites with performance.

7. Conclusion and Social Media Guidelines for Professionals

Electronic communication has altered the way we interact with one another, organizations, and products. The use of social media technologies can be helpful tool for the librarians and their clients but these technologies have both advantages and disadvantages also. It is suggested that these technologies be used and adopted carefully and social ethics should be taken care before adoption. Today's student is not interested in printed work in most of the cases; 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 will work to establish a cordial relationship between librarians and clients; market the library's services; announce library programmes on the social media website and so on. These kinds of technologies provide the libraries an enabling platform that goes beyond the traditional service delivery and allow library clients to interact in real time with librarians in the comfort of their homes. Librarians must acquire the

necessary skills in information technology to meet the challenging demands of social networking sites (Ayiah, 2014).

The ever-changing digital landscape can bring uncertainty to professionals when it comes to appropriate online conduct. The tips below are guidelines on how to create a constructive, effective, and authentic online interactive platform of information sharing and dissemination whether on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn YouTube, or any other social channel (Social Media Guidelines, 2014).

1. **Build your brand** – The information provided on the social website should be authentic and in proper manner, so that the brand value of organization be there.

2. **Transparency** – Identify yourself, write in the first person, and don't be afraid to show your personality. Own your voice. Social media is all about continuous dialogue. Be smart, post smarter.

3. **Honesty** – Do not make false or misleading comments/statements. If you make a mistake, take responsibility for it. It's ok! It's better to own it and clarify than to deny or ignore and open yourself to further criticism.

4. **Respectfulness** – Exercise discretion and confidentiality when referring to others, including coworkers and clients.

5. **Add value** – Stick to what you know. Post meaningful comments, and aim for quality. Interested in gaining new knowledge? Ask! Someone will likely post back to you!

6. **Be diligent** – Check your sources. Separate opinions from facts. Know the difference between offering suggestions and offering advice. Offering advice could lead to liability.

7. **Stay engaged** – Stay informed, post regularly, and respond to comments in a timely manner.

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