

The Role of Social Networking Sites to Promote Library Services

Ravi Ranjan Kumar

Research Scholar, Department of library and information science, Rabindranath Tagore University,
Bhopal, Raisen, 464993, Madhya Pradesh, India

Abstract

Social media platforms have become essential communication tools, attracting users with their unique ability to provide real-time information. Daily, the number of social media users continues to grow. Through these technologies or networking applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Telegram, Tumblr, Twitter, and others, individuals can share their thoughts, feelings, images, documents, and videos with one another. This paper explores the use of social media to promote library services. The goal of this research is to leverage social networking and its applications to enhance proactive training and raise awareness among teaching faculty, students, research scholars, and library information science (LIS) professionals regarding the significant importance of incorporating social networking within library services in our digital age.

Keywords: Social Networking sites, Library services, Social Media use, Web 2.0, Social Network

Introduction

The digital era has broadened the roles of librarians, allowing them to provide patrons with a diverse array of information and services that extend beyond the traditional library setting. To effectively address the informational demands and expectations of users in this digital landscape, modern innovations such as smart device, mobile internet, and social media have introduced new challenges for librarians. Consequently, librarians must rethink their strategies for serving customers in order to keep pace with evolving technological trends.

In today's rapidly changing information environment, utilizing social network platforms for managing, sharing, and distributing information can significantly enhance user engagement and boost library usage. Users can access library services from anywhere, at any time, shifting the provision of library services from the physical space of the library to the limitless expanse of the internet. By leveraging social media outlets like blogs, WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn, librarians can offer a variety of services, including resources that foster learning, promote cultural growth, and compile lists of available materials.

Statement of the Problem

This research focused on utilizing social media platforms to enhance library services.

1. To identify which social media platforms can effectively promote library services.
2. To investigate how librarians employ social media platforms to market library services.

Research Questions

The primary research questions include:

1. Which types of social media platforms can be utilized to promote library services?
2. What is the significance of social media in advertising library resources?

Social Media Platforms and Library Services

In this study, social media platforms are considered the independent variable, while the library services provided by librarians represent the dependent variable. The dependent variables comprise librarian activities and library resources, which include lending services, recommendation services, reference services, indexing, abstracting, and user training. Additionally, they encompass various materials like books, periodicals, newspapers, maps, websites, CDs, and VCDs. The independent variables include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and blogs.

1. **Facebook:** Facebook is a social networking site that allows user interaction. Once a member joins, they can participate in discussions, share messages, photos, and resources within groups formed around various themes. Librarians can promote their services by sharing information about their library's location, website, newly acquired items, and student engagement in specialized discussions. With 2.2 billion active users as of January 2018, predominantly younger individuals, Facebook offers an opportunity for librarians to communicate exciting updates and resources via the library's page.
2. **WhatsApp:** As a social media platform offering free instant messaging and voice services, WhatsApp allows users to share documents, audio notes, video calls, and more (Tech Crunch, 2015). Librarians can instantly respond to user inquiries, making it possible for individuals to access library support even outside regular hours for urgent information, including written materials.
3. **Twitter:** Users can share and respond to messages on Twitter, a platform known for its real-time news updates. Its straightforward functionality is invaluable for librarians aiming to connect with and engage library patrons (Waddell and Barnes, 2012). Users can tweet updates and responses immediately.
4. **LinkedIn:** As a prominent social media network focused on professional connections, LinkedIn enables users to connect based on shared interests and professions. This platform allows librarians to enhance their professional networks and exchange insights and ideas. Libraries can also leverage marketing tools to promote their offerings.
5. **Telegram:** Telegram is a free online tool for sharing content, including images, audio and videos. It represents an excellent venue for promoting library resources by allowing libraries to create profiles and showcase materials (Jain, 2013).
6. **MySpace:** MySpace, similar to Facebook, is a renowned social networking platform where users can create profiles to find friends, join groups, and share views, images, and videos. Libraries can gather customer feedback on the services they provide. Examples of libraries using MySpace include the Black Forest Library (<https://myspace.com/schwarzwaldlibrary>) and the Birmingham Public Library (<https://myspace.com/birminghampubliclibrary>).
7. **NING:** This web-based service permits users to create their profiles within social networks and join various other networks. Librarians utilize these platforms to engage with users and library associations, sharing information about library services.

8. **LIBRARYTHING:** An online application tailor-made for library tasks, LibraryThing simplifies book cataloging and connects users with similar interests. Many libraries now utilize this service, which allows users to catalog up to two hundred books and enrich the library's OPAC, thereby facilitating current publications delivery to users. It is widely embraced by libraries, publishers, authors, and individuals.
9. **FLICKR:** Flickr serves as a social medium designed primarily for photo sharing, offering unlimited storage. Libraries can use this platform to share brochures, posters, information bulletins, and other visuals with patrons. Yahoo powers Flickr.
10. **SECOND LIFE:** This social platform provides a virtual space for sharing videos, voice recordings, and 3D images. Libraries can use Second Life to engage users with streamed media, discussions, and classes.
11. **Google+:** Google+ is a social media tool akin to Facebook, allowing users to add, invite, post, edit, and upload videos. Libraries can leverage this tool to share information with groups about services such as News & Events and new offerings, along with video tutorials.
12. **TEACHER TUBE:** Similar to YouTube, Teacher Tube is a video sharing site meant for educational content. Librarians can use it to provide various educational materials for library users and add valuable content for students.
13. **WIKI:** This essential tool plays a significant role in knowledge management. It assists libraries in connecting users with information about their holdings, such as library resources and reference materials related to different library sections.

Advantages of Promoting Library Services on Social Media

Social media platforms serve as effective channels for sharing information, obtaining quick feedback, and marketing various programs; thus, they can be utilized to promote services. The advantages of leveraging social media for library service promotion include:

1. **Enhancing Two-Way Communication:** When library users share their experiences regarding how social media impacts them or how they engage with the library, librarians can utilize this feedback to improve their services. Social media networks enable librarians to gather insights from patrons and clarify major concerns (Pierson, 2011). In the context of library services, Villoldo (2012) noted that library staff engagement with users has flourished due to the adoption of social media platforms.
2. **Boosting Library Patronage and Activity:** As of January 2018, over 2.2 billion individuals were users of Facebook, and there were approximately 3 trillion internet users globally (BlogginBasics101, 2018). When a library maintains a presence on Facebook, the friends of those users are able to view and potentially join in on library-related activities. Comments or posts made by a library visitor on the library's page allow others connected to that individual to discover the library's events and offerings, potentially prompting them to become users as well. Additionally, interactions on blogs and tweets can be shared widely, allowing both library patrons and anyone interested in the library's services to access information.
3. **Cost-Effective Marketing:** The costs associated with registering and maintaining a presence on social media platforms are typically low (Villoldo, 2012). This allows librarians to promote library services affordably, reaching not only their current users but also millions of potential users both locally and internationally.

Methodology

In this study, the researcher employed a descriptive survey method, selecting 47 college students from Patna District as the sample population. A structured questionnaire consisting of two parts was distributed to the respondents. Part B focused on the social media platforms that could be promoting library services, while Part A gathered demographic information. The collected data were organized into tables, and descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the information using simple percentages based on frequency distribution.

Analysis and Presentation of Data Findings

The information provided below was gathered during fieldwork and utilized to address the research questions.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Male	26	52
Female	19	38
Total	47	94

Table 1 shows that 26 (52 %) of the respondents are male while 19 (38%) respondents are female.

Table 2: Different kinds of social media platforms utilized by participants

Social media platform	Frequency	Total	Percent
LinkedIn	18	47	36
Facebook	35	47	70
WhatsApp	42	47	84
Twitter	31	47	62
Instagram	38	47	76

Table 2 illustrates 35 (70%) respondents use Facebook, 31 (62%) use Twitter, 18 (36%) use LinkedIn, 38 (76%) use Instagram and 42 (84%) use WhatsApp. Most respondents are still new to the latest social media such as Twitch, Google+ and Threads.

Final Thoughts

Given that a majority of students and library patrons are frequently active on social media, this research indicates that librarians could leverage these platforms to advertise library services. As social media increasingly becomes the primary space individuals engage with, surpassing the traditional library setting, librarians have the opportunity to utilize these networks to interact with users and potentially generate revenue from their engagement.

Recommendations

The research recommends the following to promote effectiveness use of social media platforms by librarians to promote library services;

1. All library facilities ought to provide access to technology and internet services. Library administrators can collaborate with non-profit groups, university leadership, and even funding source

to acquire modern computers and internet subscriptions for their libraries.

2. In libraries, guidelines should not only address information and communication technologies but should also include provisions for how librarians and even non-professional staff can use social media.
3. Librarians must be exceptionally careful and attentive when using social media to promote library services , It can be quite challenging to retract something once it has been posted online.

Reference:

1. Ayu, A.R.R., & Abrizah, A. (2011). Do you Facebook? Usage and applications of Facebook page among academic libraries in Malaysia. *The International Information & Library Review*, 43(4), 29-34.
2. Chauhan Mehul (2013). Use of Social Media in Libraries (PPT), Redefining Libraries to Create Next Generation Libraries, www.slideshare.net, 1-40. (Accessed 3-7-2014.)
3. Dora Yu-Ting Chen, Samuel Kai-Wah Chu and Shu-Qin Xu (2012). How Do Libraries Use Social Networking Sites to Interact with Users, *Information Technology and Libraries*, 20(4), 11-19.
4. Kaplan Andreas M., & Haenlein Michael, (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media, *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 61.
5. Nielsen B. V, (2012). Featured Insights, Global, Media and Entertainment, State of the media The Social Media report, 11(3), 23-29.
6. Pawar Snehal S., (2014). Social Networking Sites and Libraries, *Proceeding of Interdisciplinary International Conference on Relevance of Higher Education for the Development of Human Resources: Jalgoan*, 410.
7. Wakude Siddhartha N, (2014). Impact of Social Networking Sites on Human Being, *Proceeding of Interdisciplinary International Conference on Relevance of Higher Education for the Development of Human Resources: Jalgoan*, 387-388
8. *International Journal of Digital Library Services IJODLS | Geetanjali Research Publication* 37 Vol. 6, April - June 2016, Issue - 2 www.ijodls.in ISSN:2250-1142 (Online), ISSN 2349-302X.
9. Nandez, G. and Borrego, A., (2013). Use of social networks for academic purposes: A case study. *The Electronic Library*, 31, 6, 781–791. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EL-03-2012-0031>