Chapter 15
The Impact of Social Media to Library Services in Digital Environment

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ABSTRACT

The developments in Web technology are creating more friendly, social, and fun environments for retrieving and sharing information and one of such is social media networking websites. However, it has been observed that despite the promise of social networking sites, limited libraries are adopting them for rendering services to their patrons and this consequently results in limited patronage and response from the users. To address this challenge of limited usage of social media by libraries and to engage more users in libraries' Social Networking Sites (SNSs), this chapter attempts to create awareness on the usefulness of SNSs to libraries. The discussion in the chapter focuses on the meaning of social media and SNSs, their impact on library services particularly in the digital environment, the features and types of SNSs available, etc.

INTRODUCTION

The developments in web technology are creating more friendly, social and fun environments for retrieving and sharing information and one of such is social networking websites. These sites typically allow users to create a "profile" describing themselves, exchange public or private messages and list other users or groups they are connected to in the same way. Social media or Social networking sites have

impacted nearly all library services including circulation user services, serials, collection development, library loan and document delivery, classification and cataloguing services, etc Social networking sites (SNS) are helpful for stirring up interactions among users (Tella et al., 2013). Social networking sites (SNS) provide an innovative and effective way of connecting users (O'Dell, 2010). Features of SNS enable users to generate interpersonal connections based on common grounds (Greenhow & Robelia,

2009).SNSs, such as Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace and Facebook, set up personal communities, allow users to make persistent comments on the profiles of their friends and send private messages (Hoffman, 2009). These features make SNSs excellent in initiating interaction among users (Burkhardt, 2010). The number of libraries which adopt SNSs is increasing. In a 2009 survey, researchers found that SNS was only adopted by a few academic libraries (Xu, Ouyang, & Chu, 2009). After no more than 2 years, another survey revealed that Facebook and Twitter have become the most popular Web 2.0 applications in libraries (Mahmood & Richardson Jr, 2011). Existing research mainly focuses on the ways SNSs are used in libraries and the librarians or users' attitudes towards libraries using SNSs. Little research has been done on how to use SNSs to interact with library users effectively. Similarly, the effect and impact of SNSs on libraries have not been so much reported. This study focuses on how effective is the interactions between libraries and users on libraries' Facebook, Twitter and Weibo, etc.

Despite the increasing adoption of SNSs by libraries, user engagement is low on libraries' SNSs. Researchers observed that there were only few responses from users on a number of libraries' fan pages (Jacobson, 2011). Libraries' Twitter accounts only got a few followers (Stuart, 2010). On this note, it is considered imperative to create more awareness on the impact of SNSs to libraries to increase its usage among libraries and clients. It is expected that doing so will increase the library and user uses of SNSs. To address the challenge of engaging users on libraries' SNS and to provide well informed suggestions, this discussion focuses on the impact of SNSs on library services particularly in the digital environment.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn are websites that are frequently talked about in the news, online, and in conversation. When trying to define social networking, one might think of beautifully decorated webpages that describe someone and what they like to do for the purpose of making friends. But a social networking definition cannot be complete without talking about the other aspects of these websites.

Social networking websites are a collection of webpages that are user generated using a form. The information put into the form is then published on a generated page. From that point on, the user can customize the page, add pictures, video, MP3s, and other media that are the choice of the user. But social networking sites are not just for regular people looking to make friends. According to Computing Dictionary (2011), social networking site is any website designed to allow multiple users to publish their own contents themselves. The information may be on any subject and may be for consumption by friends, mates, employers, employees just to mention a few. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking sites as 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, view and navigate their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Powell (2009) defines social networking as a community in which individuals are somehow connected through friendship, values, working relationships, idea and so on. Webopedia (2014) described *social networking site* as the phrase used to describe any Website that enables users to create public profiles within that Web site and form relationships with other users of the same Web site who access their profile. Social networking sites can be used to describe community-based Web sites, online discussions forums, chatrooms and other social spaces online. Asides of these definitions, there are still many more definitions of SNSs depending on the perception of individual.

However, it is important to note that there is some overlap and integration with social media and social networking. Social media experts at SocialMediaExaminer.com, say that Facebook,

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