

Chapter 36

Exploring Knowledge Sharing over Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The role of Knowledge Sharing (KS) in an academic environment, with the framework of KS has been explored in this chapter. The role played by social media (SM) as a technology for KS has been discussed. The different aspects of human attitude towards sharing have been expressed with the role of library professionals, in order to support the research activity of the students within the knowledge management cycle. Few examples like the use of blogs, Facebook, and YouTube in different types of institutions /organizations and the value, purpose and challenges are highlighted. The use of social networking tools by cataloguers as a necessity for current awareness information is also emphasized. It is found that the use of social media in education, health, and other domains is mostly used to enhance reaching out to users. The advantages of KS with the need for sharing of knowledge to enhance the role by the administrators in universities and by the professionals are provided. Further research in the field of SM by specific disciplines can be carried out.

INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Web enables people to gain access to information, create content and disseminate ideas more efficiently. It optimizes the social networks in which individuals are connected through widening communication channels and lowering costs (Barsky & Purdon, 2006). Social networking sites first emerged for Internet users to find long-lost friends and classmates, link with each other and share profiles. An increasing number of individuals have become members of one or more social networking sites leading to soaring membership numbers, largely because these sites are free and easy to use. Lately, these social networking sites have gained a foothold among companies, organizations, and even politicians who want to reach out to their target populations (Read, 2006). The wide application of social networking in different contexts appears to have included universities and libraries as well (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). It

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has been suggested that academic libraries could take the opportunity of using these social networking tools to disseminate information, market services and promote new releases (Burkhardt, 2010). Social media (SM) employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. The use of social networking is rapidly increasing at an alarming rate. Facebook had 150 million users early last year whereas the latest figures reveal the number of users to be 500 million (Chugh, 2012; Gordon, 2010). A growth of 350 million users in over a year demonstrates the increasing popularity of social networking. Some sites are for the general masses, like Friendster, Hi5 and Facebook. Other sites, like LinkedIn, are more focused professional networks. Media sharing sites, such as MySpace, YouTube and Flickr concentrate on shared videos and photos. Knowledge sharing (KS) can be considered an important process in organizations, because it is fundamental to generating new ideas and developing new business opportunities through socialization and the learning process of knowledge workers. KS among university students has been recognized as an important and interesting area of study in the academic world. With the increasing emphasis on collaborative work in organizations, universities have been structuring its curriculum to engage students in collaborative learning which allows them to reflect and teach more effectively (Walker, 2002). Such an approach has been proven to benefit students in terms of cognitive gains and positive learning outcomes (Rafaeli & Ravid, 2003). To increase the ability to manage KS within and across the organization is thus one of the major challenges facing contemporary organizations. The organizational value of employee knowledge increases when it is shared. Only when employees are willing to share knowledge with colleagues can organizations begin to manage knowledge resources effectively. KS among students is very important both for research and practice. A review of prior studies indicated that this topic has received considerable research attention (Khyzer et al., 2009; Oosterlinck, 2004; Parekh, 2009; Wangpipatwong, 2009; Yaghi et al., 2011). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the KS practices and the use of social media for it in different types of environment including libraries.

Knowledge Management (KM)

Knowledge is increasingly being seen as the most important strategic asset in organisations and an important resource for achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Davenport and Prusak (1998) described knowledge as a blend of experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experience and information. Knowledge evolves continuously as the individual and the organisation adapt to influences from the external and the internal environment (Siakas & Georgiadou, 2006). Knowledge management (KM) is defined as the process by which knowledge needed for an organisation to thrive is created, captured, shared and leveraged. Tiwana (2002) classifies KM in three different processes: knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization. Knowledge acquisition is the process of development and creation of insights, skills, and relationships. Knowledge sharing is the act of disseminating and making available knowledge that is already known and knowledge utilization is where learning is integrated into the organization. The recent KM literature has emphasized the importance of interactive KM technologies (manifested widely in virtual communities) in bringing the human side into the KM equation (Ardichvili et al., 2003). The most recent of these technologies are blogs, wikis and other social media collectively dubbed as Web 2.0 technologies or Web 2.0 platforms (Levy, 2009; Weinberger, 2007). It is argued that such technologies have distinct technical features that unleash passion for engaging in knowledge sharing and addresses drawbacks in the current technologies used within organizations.

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