

Chapter 8

Social Media and Library Services

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ABSTRACT

The chapter discussed the integration of social media to library and information services rendered in libraries. The authors paid more attention to how this is possible in Nigeria reviewing what other authors have done in related areas and the current reality in our libraries. The authors gave a background information of what social media, library, and library services are. The chapter is broken down into the following sub-headings for easier discussion and understanding: overview and types of social media that libraries can adopt, services rendered by libraries social media can be integrated into, benefits of social media to library services, challenges of social media use in Nigerian libraries, and the future of social media in a world of changing technologies.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media technologies has created new ways to seek and share information for millions of users world-wide. It has also presented new challenges for libraries in meeting users where they are within social spaces. The concept of library as a physical location where people must visit to get infor-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-9094-2.ch008

mation is rapidly changing to a social cyberspace where users access, communicate and contribute to existing knowledge.

Social media usage is becoming a common phenomenon in many organizations (both profit and non-profit). It is being maximally explored by organizations to promote their products and services and also reach a wider spectrum of clients. Libraries like other organizations have started embracing and incorporating social media to its services.

Social media are media for interaction that are internet-based. While social media are user-created online contents designed and deployed for opinion, knowledge, and for sharing information among various people (Yahaya, Aliyu & Adamu, 2016), social media refer to any of the evolving tools that enable online interaction among people, groups and organizations. Apparently, the lists of social media are unending, but the platforms that are beneficial to librarians and library services are central to this study. Such platforms include Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Blog, MySpace, Wikis, RSS feeds, Whatsapp, Podcast, The Library Thing, LinkedIn, Instagram, Online Professional Group, Slideshare (Alonge, 2012). Each of these platforms embody the typical features of a social media which, according to Olaniran (2014), are concept (art, information, or meme), media (physical, electronic, or verbal); and social interface (intimate, direct, social viral, electronic broadcast or syndication or print).

Diverse libraries in the country have felt the requisite to move with the era. With the tremendous evolution of the usage of social media, it became predictable that librarians must be versatile with the usage of these tools to intermingle with their patrons on the go. Considering the prevailing harsh economic situation in Nigeria, where libraries continually suffer dwindling budget, the social media have become a means for attending to our clientele in a more dedicated, interactive, and value-added means with less expense incurred.

Even as social media are being used for diverse purposes (Lindsay, 2011), its usage in libraries and information centres are specifically for marketing, branding, building customer relationships, enhancing reference services, and disseminating of library news (Jain, 2013). Consequently, the traditional library walls are getting dismantled through social media services. No wonder the burgeoning call for libraries to be present on social media with a thoughtful meaning (Simeaton & Davis, 2014). Of course, no other meaning applies here than that of utilizing the social media to endorse library collections, render information services, and exploit new spaces. Hence, social media, which are increasingly changing the way people connect with and share information nowadays, is also making ways for libraries to effectively communicate and interact with their numerous users (Akorhonor & Olise, 2015). So far, everything about social media incorporation into library services has only proved advantageous to librarianship (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012; Parveen, 2011). For instance, studies in university library settings have shown that patrons who do not visit their institution's physical library can be attracted to the same library through electronic information services configured on social media (Ayiah & Kumah, 2011; Dickson & Holley, 2010). While this draws implications for Nigerian libraries, it is important to know how far these social media are applied to entice their user publics.

Libraries are critical components of the society. They are the fulcrum upon which many activities revolve. In Nigeria and around the globe, libraries are seen as urbane and extremely developed information systems that populate a collection of information resources on all the knowledge areas trailed by all (Nwosu, Okeke & Ejedafiru, 2013; Usman, 2015). They are institutions saddled with the tasks of assembling and consolidating knowledge for operative use, and for making available the services and infrastructure that support it (Ranganadham & Babu, 2012).

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