


Chapter 9

Librarianship in the Era of Social Media: Understanding the Nexus

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ABSTRACT

The chapter presents the symbiotic relationship between library services and social media and its possible implications for the 21st century librarian. The 21st century librarian has witnessed huge changes in the field of library and information science. These changes in the library and information science domain have altered the forms of information and the nature of services but the basic role of the libraries – to cater for the information needs and demands of the users remains. As the popularity of social media is growing exponentially, librarians cannot stand aloof but ensure they exploit the benefits attached to using social media in libraries. With social media, libraries can attract their users and provide improved services while keeping them abreast on latest developments in the libraries. The chapter discussed how social media can be exploited for the benefit of the library clients. The chapter concluded by providing suggestions that will benefit the librarians and libraries to ensure improved symbiotic relationship between library services and social media.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is a set of computer tools housing people of different tribes, races and background who come together to share information in various formats. The formats include picture, text, videos, audios and multimedia files. Social media can also be defined as a conglomerate of electronic tools and services such as discussion forums, social media websites, blogs, social bookmarks and other tools that can be used to transfer information without geographical restrictions.

Social media inclusion and impact in librarianship can be linked to various services in the library which includes and is not limited to document delivery, circulation of resources, inter library loan and classification and cataloging of library resources. The breakout of social media in all facets of life including education, organizations and libraries presents various advantages to the librarian which can be used to effectively increase services rendered by all forms of libraries and information centres.

In their view, Veil, Buehner, and Palenchar (2011) opines that the centre of human communication at the moment lies on effective utilization of social media. Librarians have no option but to key into this revolution to ensure stream less and effective information transfer. The traditional role of the librarian which involves acquisition, subscription, processing, cataloging, preservation and storing of information for users can be greatly improved with effective utilization of social media. Various social media tools which librarians are now utilizing to improve library services include Facebook, Goggle+, Skype and LinkedIn.

Librarians can utilize social media according to Sahu (2013) for the announcement of new arrivals, reference services, ask-a-librarian support services, inter library sharing and loan, selective dissemination of information and customer relationship. Librarians cannot afford to fold their hands and ignore the avenue being created by social media for the improvement of overall library services. The benefits are enormous and utilization of these benefits will help to improve library services.

Through consultation from blogs, discussion forums and boards online, the librarian becomes involved in the interaction of users thereby leading to identification of users' needs and desires for effective information transfer and interaction. Despite all the advantages of social media available, poor internet connectivity, lack of awareness of social media tools and inadequate infrastructure are some of the challenges encountered by librarians in the adoption of social media and its use in libraries and information centres in developing countries like Nigeria based on the findings from the study by Akporhonor and Olise (2015) and Anunobi and Ogbonna (2012).

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

1. To examine the different social media tools available for librarians.
2. To access the purpose of using the social media in a library.
3. To examine the risks and challenges from Social media.
4. To know how to effectively apply social media to the library

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