# Chapter 13
# Strategic Planning for Social Media in Libraries:
## The Case of Zimbabwe

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## ABSTRACT

*Like in any endeavor, adoption and use of social media requires planning. However, this is not the case in Zimbabwe. To assess the situation, a study was conducted among different type of libraries in the country. Purposive sampling technique was adopted. The objectives were to find out the libraries which had social media strategic plans, and, among those which had none, to establish the extent to which social media use policies and principles corresponded to the basic strategic plan model. Results indicated that adopted tools include Facebook, Wikis, YouTube, Blogs, Twitter, Skype, Flicr, Ning, and LinkedIn. Reasons for adoption included being trendy as well as to enhance the library's efficiency, and goals included to continuously avail information in a variety of formats to clients within a short space of time and to effectively market library services. However, no library had a written social media strategic plan. The principles and policies for using social media covered strategies for implementation, surveillance, and monitoring of platforms for accountability.*

## INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements of the 21ˢᵗ century have continued to usher in new information technology (IT) tools for information dissemination in all sectors in society. Reports abound on how some of these technologies, especially social media tools, have become preferential tools for library service delivery in both developed and developing countries because of their ability to

foster user-centered service. The tools are seen as offering a viable alternative that increases the value of service through interactivity and collaboration in real-time. Additionally, as pointed out by Luo, Wang and Hans (2013), libraries have adopted social media tools because this is where the users are. However, Mathews (2011) contends that the use of social media in libraries should not be about reaching a mass audience, but about "building brand loyalty . . . building an ambassadors program, a network of friends and allies . . . [for] enhancing the relationship with your core users" p.21.

Most studies, (e.g. Luo, Wang & Hans, 2013) especially in the developing world, have concentrated on establishing the types of social media adopted in libraries and the benefits of doing so. The authors did not come across any study that focused on the nature of planning and preparation that libraries undertake before adopting particular social media tools. However, the Internet is awash with social media strategic plans for libraries in the developed world. This paper, thus, contends that the adoption of social media tools in libraries in Zimbabwe has not followed a systematically laid down plan or strategy. The term social media used in this paper refers to Web 2.0 technologies that allow users operating in a social online environment, to generate content that includes text, audio, video or multimedia and to share it as well as to use other people's content. Social media falls into six primary groups: collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, the virtual game world and the virtual social world, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) cited by Steiner (2012, pp. 1-2). Steiner went on to add that these groups are in-line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) (2007) criteria for genuinely user-generated content, which are as follows:

1. It must include "content made publicly available over the Internet,"

2. It must "[reflect] a certain amount of creative effort," and

3. It must be "created outside of professional routines and practices".

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

The importance of strategic planning in the adoption of social media tools in libraries is highlighted by a number of authors (Choi 2012; Steiner 2012; Mathews 2011; Walker 2010), although others like Wolfe (2012) have called for the development of a philosophy on social media use in libraries than developing strategies. He argued that social media tools are fads that last, but for a while. Thus, where the adoption of social media is based on philosophy, it would be easy for libraries to drop the social media type which would have lost its luster and to move on to adopt an emerging technology that serves the library's purpose. However, a strategic plan helps a library answer questions on the why and how of the processes in a library and looks at the whole organisation or a large part, and is "not just a plan for one particular product, project or program" (Lins, nd). It is a means through which an organization or community sets the goals it wishes to achieve, and the steps it will take to reach those goals; and involves both long and short-term planning (Browne, Lanine & Deo, 2006). It differs from a policy which is a guideline, principle, rule, regulation or law that is used as a reference point in decision making or choosing the appropriate behaviour to follow. A policy can act as a code of conduct. The aim of policies is to foster consistence and a common understanding. A strategic plan, however, enables an organisation to establish its current status as well as to streamline its goals and to envision its development and the future performance of the whole organisation with respect to attaining its goals (Steiner 2012, p.1). The development of a strategic plan is guided by the organisation's mission, vision, values and culture. Referring to

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