Chapter 18
Ethical Issues Arising from Social Media Use in Libraries

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines ethical issues arising from social media use in libraries. The chapter discusses the background to ethical issues in the use of social media in libraries and provides various definitions on social media. The chapter looks into the various ethical issues in social media use in libraries, considers the factors affecting ethical debate, and provides recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Advances in technology have transformed the way we live, how we work, and how we interact. Social media include web and mobile-based technology platforms providing an opportunity for information exchange, dialogue, and communication (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). The strong consumer interface, temporality, and accessibility poise social media to be the next technological wave in information provision. The advent of social media has taken public things that once were considered private and actively protected as such. Today, however, attitudes have changed and users of social media regularly post personal information such as their

names, email addresses, employer, schools attended, photos, events they have attended or plan to attend, home addresses, telephone numbers and birthdates. Some websites call for interests, hobbies, favorite books or films, major life events, and even relationship status. Social Networking sites are one of the new technologies offering libraries the opportunity to reach out to its clients. The use of this platform has affected the operations and service delivery of all organizations.

According to Sadeh (2007), 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. Social connections have become

very important and have improved the library profession tremendously in Nigeria. According to Suraweera et al (2011) social networking refers to a process of relationship building among a group with a common interest. Social media emerged in Nigeria principally for the purpose of socializing.

The different libraries in the country have felt the need to move with the times. With the exponential growth of the use of social media such as the Facebook, MySpace, twitter, You tube, it became inevitable that librarians must learn the use of these tools to be able to keep their ever growing and sophisticated patrons. Libraries have started to use these tools to interact with their patrons on real time. In fact, given the present economic scenario in Nigeria, where library budgets have been constantly on the decline, the social media have become a means for serving our patrons in a more specialized, interactive, and value added way without incurring undue expenses. These media are used mostly to provide current and up to date information to clients, provide links to other open source library resources, and give information about new arrivals in the case of books through the link to the library world cat and through the updated list of journals (Ezeani, 2012).

Social media are primarily Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings. According to Rogers (2009), Social media is information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies. At its most basic sense, social media is a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. It's a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologue (one to many) into dialog (many to many) and is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media has become extremely popular as it allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal and business. The term most often refers to activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio. Most

of these tools started as business applications and were designed for real time communication before finding their ways to education, learning and every sphere of human endeavour. Another of such tool is that of instant messaging. Social media are not simply a one-way avenue for a stream of information, but a two-way engaging process that allows for feedback, criticism, and conversation. It has a utility in the future of research dissemination and a place in professional practice.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As it is now an accepted fact that Libraries have undergone a mini revolution in the way that they operate and provide information services to users, a vast amount of literature on various aspects of social media and social media tools is being generated and published in learned journals. Therefore A brief review of related literature is made here for a succinct assessment process. The literature focuses on social media, web 2.0, its tools, and ethical issues facing librarians using social media.

Social Media

Social media involves social relations amongst people who have some type of relationship or affiliation (Wellman, 2001). Social media is made up of two different words; media and social: media is an instrument of communication, for example, radio or television; social media would therefore be an instrument of communication but with a social aspect to it. It does not only provide information, but also provides a forum for individuals to interact with each other. Social media opens up a whole new world of communication where the user is the focus (Oriedi, 2011).

Social media come in many shapes and sizes. From wiki platforms to Twitter, these communications strategies are increasingly entrenched in our modern world. Whereas many academics look with scepticism and scorn on web platforms

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