

Chapter 5

Social Media: A Librarian's Tool for Instant and Direct Interaction With Library Users

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ABSTRACT

The use of social media around the globe is increasing at an exponential rate. 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. This trend is important for libraries. Being part of the community, libraries need to capitalize the potential of social media for instant and direct communication with their members. The librarians are gradually showing a positive attitude towards social media tools. The objective of this chapter is to review the social media use by libraries around the globe. The chapter also provides specific recommendations for social media use in libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Using World Wide Web, people can access information, create content and share ideas. The Web 2.0 powered social networking sites provide people innovative ways to connect and communicate (Barsky & Purdon, 2006). The membership of these sites has increased exponentially because these sites are free and easy-to-use. During the last decade, the use of social networking sites has increased at workplace and an increasing number of organizations have established their presence on social networking sites (Read, 2006). Social networking sites have been used in a variety

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of applications and contexts including universities and libraries (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networking sites present unique opportunities for academic libraries to connect with their users for instant communication and dissemination of information and provision of various services (Burkhardt, 2010). The social networking sites tools have provided academic libraries opportunities to transform the physical library into an open space. This open space provides information accessible by all at any place at any time. Some of the most commonly used social networking sites in most academic libraries include bookmark sites, media sites (e.g. Facebook), YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Viber and Tango. These social networking sites can be categorized based on how the information is acquired, disseminated, organized, and shared. These social networking sites present a lot of benefits and relevance of their usage in academic libraries (Agyekum, Arthur, & Trivedi, 2016).

It is important for libraries to establish their social media presence to take full advantage of alternative communication channels provided by social networking sites. Due to their significant role in the community they serve, libraries want to connect, share and serve the community. Social media is one of the most significant way they can use for this purpose. Social media has made it very convenient for libraries to connect with their members without investing time and effort in traditional marketing or publishing activities which were costly and limited in scope. Social networking sites provide librarians an opportunity for instant and direct communication with their members.

This chapter will explore social media use in libraries. After introduction, section 2 provides a brief overview of the social media statistics in the world to show the dramatic uptake of social media. Section 3 examines various case studies of social media implementation in the libraries across the globe to establish a practical way to get started in social media. Section 4 provides specific recommendations about social media use in libraries including social media etiquette, social media policy guidelines, and as important resources for the implementation of social media in libraries. Section 5 provides the concluding remarks.

SOCIAL MEDIA AROUND THE GLOBE

The use of social media around the world is increasing at an exponential rate and currently around 29% of world population is active user of these sites. With around 50% of world population, which approximately is 3 billion people, using Internet, the membership of social media sites equals roughly 2 billion people. This statistics itself is representative of the fact that social media has become pervasive in the

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