

Chapter 28

Role of Social Networking for Information Seeking in a Digital Library Environment

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses how to use social networking tools for information seeking in a digital library environment. Social networking is an evolutionary development of online participation, where people of common interest communicate, share and contribute content on the social cyberspace. The role of social networking for information seeking in libraries, most especially digital library is still evolving and cannot be over-emphasized. There is the need for libraries to exploit the advantages presented by these new media in providing better services. Social networking tools enable librarians and other information professionals to communicate, network and share documents with many clients regardless of location, and at little or no expense and viz. The chapter looks at: information seeking / search process; digital libraries; social networking as a concept; relationship between web 2.0, library 2.0, social media and social networking; role of social networking in digital library environment; role of information professionals in using social networking; social media platforms in digital library environment; challenges and prospects of integrating social networking with digital libraries and ways to improve the use of social networking for information seeking and dissemination in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Social Networking can be seen as an evolutionary development of online participation, where people of common interest communicate, share and contribute content on the social cyberspace. As seen by Adigun, et.al (2015), Social networking also referred to as Social Media, is a new way of providing library and information services through new Internet technologies, with emphasis on 'user-centred', two-way interaction and communication of information. The term social networking or media encompasses all Internet-based or mobile applications which operate for the purpose of collaboration, where participants can connect, create, comment, view, share, rate, discover, profile, and exchange user-generated content (Bradley & McDonald, 2011 cited in Onwuchekwa, 2015). According to Oladokun (2015), for reasons of its resourcefulness, adaptability and expediency, social networking has become an integral part of modern world, and constitutes a very dynamic aspect of the mass media that has not only grown in popularity, but also become mainstream. Amuda (2015) who cited Michael (2010) also defined social networking as the wide range of Internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges or join online communities such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, Delicious, Flickr, Live Journal, etc. Though the definitions of social networking or media are diverse and relative, all laid emphasis on two-way interaction, content creation and sharing as well as user-centeredness.

Every human being is engaged in information seeking in one form or the other either to augment an existing knowledge or to discover new ones and it has been well documented that information seeking and use varies by discipline, profession, task, situation, and context. Where an individual encounters a problem or task for which their current knowledge is inadequate, they may engage in information-seeking in order to change their knowledge state.

Digital libraries on the other hand are constructed by and for a community of users, and their functional capabilities support the information needs and uses of that community in which they are to be found. They are a component of communities in which individuals and groups interact with each other, using data, information, and knowledge resources and systems. In this sense they are an extension, enhancement, and integration of a variety of information institutions as physical places where resources are selected, collected, organized, preserved, and accessed in support of a user community. The content of digital libraries includes data, metadata that describe various aspects of the data (e.g., representation, creator, owner, reproduction rights), and metadata that consist of links or relationships to other data or metadata, whether internal or external to the digital library (Borgman, et.al, 2001).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information Seeking/Search Process

Every human being is engaged in information seeking in one form or the other either to augment an existing knowledge or to discover new ones. Where an individual encounters a problem or task for which their current knowledge is inadequate, they may engage in information-seeking in order to change their knowledge state (Belkin, 2000 in Heath, 2008). Seeking information is one of the most common activities people perform on the Web (Haythornthwaite, 2001 cited by Oladokun, 2015) as well as in the library whether digital or not. Search engines such as Google attempt to support this process using complex algorithms that take account of the content of documents and their patterns of linkage to other documents

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