

Chapter 14

Social Media Use in Academic Libraries: Applications and Implications in a Developing Country


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ABSTRACT

Social media use has become the norm in information services delivery. It holds the unique advantage of delivering service to users through social interaction. This chapter discussed social media use in academic libraries in a developing country: Nigeria. It examined the concept and definition of social media; it also discussed trends in social media usage in libraries. The chapter further outlined the types of social media tools used in libraries. It discussed the peculiar challenges of social media use in Nigeria and proffered solutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media, a term which is sometimes referred to as social media tools, has gained so much popularity over the past few years. In a study, Jacka and Scott (2011) argued that there is no single definition of social media. But some authors have tried to define the term. Social media can be said to be a medium of communication that is virtual, participatory and collaborative. Kaplan, and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as ‘a group of internet-integrated applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 (the platform) and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (the ways in which people make use of social media). Social media is an evolution of word of mouth that scaled up by leveraging the persuasiveness of the internet. Its major components are social networking, microblogs, blogs, RSS feeds, widgets, linking and posting, content rating, book marking sites, audio podcasting and video podcasting (Sajithra & Patil, 2013). Social media has been defined as website and applications used for social networking. It is sometimes said to mean the same thing as social network even though some authors have tried to differentiate social media from social network (Hartshorn, 2010). Social media is primarily used to transmit or share information with a broad audience, while social networking is the act of engaging people with common interest to associate together and build relationships through community (Cohen, 2009; Hartshorn, 2010). Bedell (2010) opines that social media is a simple system, a communication channel; it is not a location that you visit. Social networking is a two-way communication, where conversations are at the core and through which relationships are developed (Edosomwan et al 2011).

Social media have evolved over the years into what is obtainable presently and in recent times. The use of the telegraph to transmit and receive messages over long distances was the experience in 1792 (Ritholz, 2010) as cited by Edosomwan et al, 2011. Then, in the 1800s, the radio and telephone were used for social interaction (Rimskii, 2011; Wren, 2004). Phone phreaking was a popular term in the 1950s, a term used for the rogue searching of the telephone network. Phreaks were able to hack into corporate unused voice mailboxes to host the first blogs and podcasts (Borders, 2010). During the 1960s, the public saw the advent of email (Borders, 2010). It was originally a method to exchange messages from one computer to another, which are online (Mwangi & Wagoki, 2016). Although, there has been a lot of debates as to whether the email is social media, Sajithra and Ratil (2013) opined that the introduction of Email marked the beginning of the much more collaborative social media years later, even though Edosomwan et al (2011) opined that social media started with the telephone and not computer.

The 1970s witnessed further social media development; Multi-User Domain, a real-time virtual world with role-playing games, interactive fiction, and online chat have since emerged. The process of managing email list was automated and christened LITSERV in the 1980s. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was introduced in the late 1980s to ease the group discussions in a chat as well as data transfer. The 1990s witnessed the birth of private internet service providers which gave rise to personal websites, discussion groups and chat groups. This brought about the need for online media etiquette standard known as netiquette to serve as a control mechanism. The first social networking site, classmate.com was introduced in the mid-1990s. This was closely followed by the invention of blogs in the 1990s. The need to generate user contents gave rise to Web 2.0 (a term commonly associated with web applications) which was created in the late 1990s; this sprang into the early 2000s.

A web 2.0 site gives its users the free choice to interact or collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community. These include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, video sharing site etc. This was closely followed by Web 3.0 which could

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