Chapter 24
Social Media and Library Collaboration:
Analysis of Government Libraries (Kaguvi Building)

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ABSTRACT

The use of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp has become an integral part of everyday communication in Zimbabwe. These platforms allow libraries and librarians to work collaboratively. Anchored on the diffusion of technology theory, this chapter analyzed the availability of social media in the Ministry of Health and Child Care Library, Ministry of Environment Library, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development Library, and Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency Library. The researcher interviewed six library professionals and found out that government librarians are using social media platforms to promote access to information and support freedom of information. The study noted that government libraries are still facing challenges such as lack of administrative support and lack of clear collaboration policies. These challenges are affecting collaboration initiatives. Accordingly, the researcher recommended managers to support their libraries with financial resources if government librarians are to effectively apply social media in their work areas.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media platforms has influenced communication and connections among people (Olajide, Otunla, & Omotayo, 2017). Social media is beneficial in many ways, for example, it has improved access to information, enhanced the capacity to classify and utilise information, promoted freedom to access information and enhanced information sharing. This rise of social media has also revolutionised socialisation and knowledge sharing. Web 3.0 platforms are useful for information and knowledge sharing. Social media enables information and knowledge exchanges among individuals, groups, families and

communities of practice (COP), communities of interest (COI) and many other networks or associations. In Zimbabwe, most people engage with social media platforms using information and communication technologies (ICTs). Huan and Eric (2010) opine that social media platforms have enabled users to build and reinforce connections among people and have transformed traditional communities to information societies, where the creation, handling, dissemination and control of information have developed into a critical political, economic and socio-cultural action.

The application of Web 3.0 in libraries and related institutions has also revolutionised information generation, processing, organisation, discovery, retrieval and dissemination. Wanjiru (2009, p. 97) asserts that social media applications have enhanced information sharing information literacy, service delivery and supported teaching, learning and research. Olajide et al. (2017, p. 80) opine that social media platforms enable library services to be accessible to users without requiring that "users should come physically to the library". These platforms also permit libraries, and related institutions, and users to cooperate and work collaboratively.

This chapter, thus, ascertained the availability of social media platforms at the government libraries housed at the Kaguvi Building in Harare, Zimbabwe, namely the Ministry of Health and Child Care Library (MoHCCL), Ministry of Environment Library (MoEL), Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development Library (MoTIDL) and Zimbabwe National Statistics (ZimStat) Library. Collins and Quan-Hasse (2012) assert that social media platforms are utilised by libraries to market services to current and prospective library patrons and information seekers. Anari (2013) adds that numerous libraries are embracing social media platforms to establish and maintain an environment of cooperation and interaction and to create a favourable platform for sharing ideas and experiences with others. According to Ezeani and Igwesi (2012), libraries are using Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter and other social media networks to interface with their heterogeneous clients on real time. Library users are also using social media platforms to ask librarians about reference questions as well as feedback mechanisms. They are also exploiting social media platforms to share ideas and experiences with library professionals.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is premised on the diffusion of technology theory, proposed and popularised by Everett Rogers (1962). The theory explains the "adoption, application and spread of new media technologies or ideas in a community over a period of time through social structures" (Okuonghae, 2018, p. 9). According to Rogers (1962, p. 15), diffusion refers to "the course of action by which an innovation is spread through certain channels over time among the members of a social system". The theory, which envisages that social media provides information and influences judgment, is also dependent on the conditions which increase or decrease the likelihood that members of a given culture will adopt a new idea, product or practice. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) explicate that the idea behind the diffusion of technology theory is that, for a new idea to spread there must be an awareness stage, interest stage, evaluation stage, a trial stage and an adoption stage. This theory is relevant to this chapter, because the application of social media platforms in government libraries and other information centres is a key element in the diffusion of these platforms.

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