



Social networking tools and services for libraries

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Abstract

By rapid development of the information and communication technology, the web-based services in particularly social networking services are lets the user interact and work collaboratively. The aim of this paper is to describe usability of social networking in libraries from various aspects. The study also identifies the perception among the library staff with regard to the usefulness of those applications as well as available sources from where they could learn about those social media applications.

Keywords: social networking, social networking sites, libraries, social networking tools

1. Introduction

In the era of information technology, users are more progressive and advanced in usage of technology. The user community is using variety of social networking sites for academic or entertainment purpose. The social networking sites are becoming significant part of users for their personal and professional growth and development. In the era of information technology the social networking sites are becomes more popular in libraries to provide the advanced and higher service to user community.

The use of social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter has become a popular and integral part of everyday communication in India. People are fundamentally social beings, both in our private lives and in our professional interactions. Young generation people are very enthusiastic users and majority are engaging on a daily basis with social networking services via a computer or smart phone. Nowadays, the importance of social networking services has become a major issue within society, as well as a significant study topic for many researchers. Social network sites integrate digital communication; in addition, the most important characteristic of social networking service is that they enable users to make their social networks visible and build connections among individuals.

2. Objective of the study

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

- To identify the different social networking sites used in libraries for promoting better library services.
- To study the benefits of social networking in libraries.
- To study the types of social network used by the libraries.
- To study the effectiveness of the social networking tools for information sharing and dissemination of library services.
- To identify the reasons for using social networking tools for library services.

3. Literature Review

Subrahmanyam and *et al.* (2008) [1] showed in study that

participants often use the Internet, especially social networking sites, to connect and reconnect with friends and family members.

Fox and Naidu (2009) [13] revealed the issues related to confusing terminology, inadequate feedback and error messages, and improper link location impacted user performance and satisfaction.

Christopher (2012) [8] examined the effectiveness of different forms of Facebook advertising in promoting the collections and services of academic libraries. In this study several Facebook advertising campaigns conducted by an academic library in Hong Kong are presented and analyzed.

Xie and Stevenson (2014) made a study on application of social media in digital libraries and examined types of social media and application of social media in digital libraries.

Jadav (2014) in his paper examined academic librarians' perspectives on using social networking services for library collaboration. He also studied application of social networking services in libraries and how academic librarians are approaching emerging social networking services in the technological era.

Kumar (2015) in his paper discussed the concept of social networking and its applications in academic library services.

Sahoo and Sharma (2015) in their paper mentioned that how the social networking tools are helpful for different libraries in the digital era to meet the user's needs and demands. They also studied types of social networking services and benefits of social networking sites for the libraries.

Islam and Habiba (2015) conducted a study to examine the use of social media in marketing of library and information services in Bangladesh and total numbers of 46 academic libraries were selected for the research sample. The study revealed that most of the libraries use Facebook and LinkedIn for marketing of library and information services.

Mustafa (2016) [11] mentioned that social media act as promotional tools for the academic library services and found that facebook and twitter are more prominently used social networking sites by the libraries in promotion of library services.

Kumari (2016)^[9] mentioned that how academic library service can be implemented through social networking sites and more specifically examined the role of Facebook in enhancing the academic library services.

4. Social networking services

Social networking service is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. A social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events, and interests with people in their network. Boyd & Ellison (2007)^[11] has defined Social networking services as: Web-based services that allow individuals to:

1. Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,
2. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and
3. View their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Social networking service generally exist for one of two purposes: socializing around digital objects and/or topics of shared interest or developing and utilizing business and/or professional networks.

5. Social networking tools

Social networking tools helps academic librarian to share information with Research Scholars and students in the easiest way for academic library environment. Academic Librarian can use in three broad categories for serving the user in library and information services. The major three are Information communication, Knowledge distribution and knowledge organization.

5.1 Information Communication

In this process librarian can keep constant touch and effective interaction with staff, patrons, and faculty in online collaborative environment. The social networking tools that can be practiced by the library for the aforementioned purposes are:

- a. **LinkedIn:** This social networking site for professionals is a great way to get library patrons connected with the people that can help them find information. Whether that's you, faculty, authors, historians, or other sources, they can find them in your LinkedIn network.
- b. **Twitter:** Use Twitter, a microblogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections, new arrival, current content services of library.
- c. **Facebook:** Facebook is most popular social media and is used by all age group in the society. Now it becomes much popular in libraries because of its user friendly nature and library professional can use facebook to a great extent to share and collaborate information among peers.
- d. **Blog:** By creating a blog, you'll be able to disseminate information to lots of people at one time. Whether you're

updating students on new collections, or just conversing with library staff, blogs are a powerful tool, especially when combined with RSS.

- e. **Meebo:** Network and assist students on Meebo, no matter what IM client they use. Online chatting or virtual reference service in library can impacted by professionals to clients.
- f. **Ning:** Librarian can use this tool to get connected with students, library associations, and more. You can also use it to share information with many people at a time.

5.2 Information Distribution

Information sharing is the major part and crucial area where professionals should looks seriously while considering and designing library activities in digital age. Patron's satisfaction should given first and foremost priority by providing right information at the right time in a right way from anywhere.

- a. **Wikipedia:** Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia updated by users. You can use this tool to share your knowledge by editing, or simply point library patrons in the right direction. You can also host your library websites on wiki software like PBWiki. VI.
- b. **PB wiki:** PBwiki is the world's largest provider of hosted business and educational wikis. It encourages collaboration from students, a way to showcase work, and offers a central gathering point for information. PBwiki offers controlled access, so you can give some editing privileges, while others can only read.
- c. **Flickr:** This image distribution tool is a great way to share new image collections. Library can share photo collection of workshops; conference and different programme that are organmised with in the campus. You can create image sets with metadata, as well as take advantage of the many plugins available for Flickr users. Flickr users can also help gather missing information about images.
- d. **YouTube:** Library video and e-learninf tutorials, events and others video library services can be effectively promote and webcast through YouTube.
- e. **Teacher Tube:** TeacherTube, which is a YouTube for teachers, presents an excellent opportunity for instructor-librarian collaboration. Instructors can guide students to helpful library resources, and vice versa.
- f. **Slide Share:** Encourage faculty, staff, and students to share their slideshow presentations for the greater community to access on SlideShare. It's a great way to disseminate information among research community to the field of research and development (R&D) activities.
- g. **Digg:** Digg is a great way to find useful content that you wouldn't come across in traditional ways. Find stories here, then share them with others using Digg's blog function.
- h. **Stumble Upon:** Another way to find great content is with StumbleUpon. You can channel surf the Internet to find useful cntent, research tools, and more.
- i. **Community Walk:** Community Walk offers a geographical way to interpret text and events. You can use it for instruction, such as showing someone where to find a book, or walk them through a historical and geographical timeline.

5.3 Knowledge Organization

Social software can help the professionals in KO environment for getting handy information which can be accessible with the social networking. The below mentioned tools can be effectively in library and information centre for patrons as:

- a. **Library Thing:** This social cataloging network is great for librarians, and you can catalog along with Amazon, the Library of Congress, and more than 200 other libraries around the world. You'll get recommendations and easy tagging as well.
- b. **Lib.rario.us:** Another social cataloging site, you can put media such as books, CDs, and journals on display for easy access and tracking.
- c. **Anobii:** Social networking site like aNobii helps book lovers to share reviews and recommendations. It also prepare due date alerts, lending, and discussions.
- d. **Delicio.us:** With this social bookmarking tool, you can create a custom directory for library patrons. Teach them to search by your tags, and it will be easy to find useful Internet research links.
- e. **Netvibes:** In Netvibes' new Ginger beta, you can create a public page that can be viewed by anyone. You can use it to help guide patrons to helpful internet sources, news feeds, and more. It can be integrated with many of the tools mentioned here, like Flickr and library blogs.
- f. **Connotea:** Connotea is a great reference tool, allowing you to save and organize reference links and share them with others. They can be accessed from any computer and offer integration with lots of other tools.

6. Application of Social Networking Services in Libraries

Social networking services for collaboration in libraries applies through various aspects which deals with collaborative partnerships, the partners in library collaboration and the types of work. By examining where and how librarians already collaborate, this analysis will provide a foundation for evaluating tools used in academic library collaboration. Detailed about the collective aspects of social networking services as below.

- a. **Information Exchange:** Information exchange fall into small-scale collaborative activities, including exchange of informal ideas about concepts and technologies, and also formal categories of collaborative tasks engaged in by academic librarians.
- b. **Resource Sharing:** The resource-sharing category of collaborations includes interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing arrangements, cooperative collection development efforts, and cooperative resource management programs.
- c. **Sharing Services:** The sharing services category focuses primarily on public services functions such as reference and instruction. It includes efforts between librarians within individual institutions and externally, between librarians and vendors and with government entities.
- d. **Work-Related Project Collaboration:** Work-related tasks include consortia partnerships. In this long-term groups seeking to establish priorities and standardize practices across member institutions in a particular consortium, as well as short-term groups focused on

particular shared projects or concerns for particular functional areas. Aside from consortia, work-related project collaboration also appears as participation on committees from local to international levels and as work with donors and friends of the library groups.

- e. **Resource description and standards of practice:** The final category of collaborative tasks, establishing rules for description and standards of practice, encompasses creating and refining classification rules and instituting broad standards of practice.

7. Challenges for social networking in libraries

1. **User Orientation:** Developing a web-based communication culture needs orientation. Blogs are totally different from a workflow based intranet. Therefore a policy can help to explain the advantages and also show the limits of interaction.
2. **Organization Support:** To have a commitment from the management for collaborative web tools. A shift to horizontal transparent communication opens new venues to present the organization's life. It is also necessary to have support for the change management process.
3. **Resources:** Be aware the tools are cheap and easy to install, but do not underestimate the resources you need. A facilitation for a blog or a wiki is very important especially in the beginning, so users are not frustrated in their first steps.
4. **Culture:** The need for an open, transparent, horizontal working culture. It is not always a prerequisite but it is conducive for effective and creative online knowledge sharing. For example, a wiki needs a certain degree of trust; not everyone wants to sit hours to check the amendments on a document.
5. **Technical and institutional barriers:** The JISC report also highlighted technical barriers to using social software in educational establishments. Certain social software may conflict.
6. **Usability:** Invest time in design and how to create visually your applications. Usability is very important because users shall take advantage of all features offered. For example many wikis especially lack usability. Therefore a design, documentation and help section is decisive for users to participate.

8. Advantages

The main advantages of social networking in libraries are as follows:

- Social network allows user to create, connect, communicate, to contribute, vote and share
- Information.
- Teaching faculty of Library and Information Science may get share information with their students on social Networks, Face book that will help to embark their wide knowledge to the student's community outside the classroom.
- Social network can provide right information to users very quickly.
- It creates a platform to fulfilling needs of distance learners.
- Social network can provide a better services than the

traditional ways in which libraries are providing their services.

- The popularity of social networks is increasing among the educated people especially adult youth in college and universities and by LIS Professionals.
- Social network can provide right information to users very quickly.
- Facebook helps students or research scholar to develop practical research skills that they need in a world where knowledge construction and dissemination make increasing use of online information network.

9. Disadvantages

The disadvantages of social network in libraries are as follows:

- Lack of adequate knowledge among staffs about its operation.
- Lack of time for the library professionals to use social network.
- Lack of training opportunities for library staffs.
- Low bandwidth of Internet and ICT infrastructure in the library.
- Chances of lack of privacy and identity theft.
- No adequate fund required for libraries to acquire such type of technology.
- Shortage of insufficient library staffs for handling such technologies.
- Low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media.

10. Conclusion

The possible implication of social networking can be successful by conducting maximum research and experiment on social networking from different point of view on library. Librarian is the sole custodian to accomplish the task of planning, organizing and implementing social networks in library and information centre. A suitable plan and strong evaluation needs to be look while pioneering social networks in library. User required to aware and sufficient training should be imparted to staffs to accomplish the task of planning social software in library. It is found that Libraries are using emergingsocial networking services to cope with digital environment and to meet the information needs of the user in the 21 st century. Libraries are using latest technology and social networking tools to meet user expectations. At the end, there should be a proper balance between traditional library services as well as modern library services to keep a balance to satisfy the both the types of users.

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