

## SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR EFFECTIVE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES: AN OVERVIEW

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**ABSTRACT-** Use of Social Media Networking Sites (SNS) by Library and Information Centers (LIC) is no longer a novelty as each and every library and information professionals these days have a Facebook, Twitter or MySpace account to keep students updated and involved. The present generation is very crazy about exploring Social Networking Sites for establishing quick and convenient communication among friends and colleagues. Therefore, social networking sites have been regarded as instrumental tools for ensuring fast and effective communication. There are some prominent organizations that are really performing some wonderful and innovative practices using social networking sites. This paper discusses about popular social networking sites, their possible implications in library and information services and other such parameters. The study will be very much useful for libraries and library professionals to gain necessary knowledge and skills for effective use of social networking sites in delivery of better library services and promoting the library resources in days ahead.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Social Networking Sites, Web 2.0, Library and Information Centers, Facebook, Twitter etc.

### INTRODUCTION

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are widely gaining its popularity. Now-a-days every educational institutions, commercial organizations, governmental agencies etc. are using social media platforms to reach out their students, teachers, stakeholders and to understand their concerns and opinions. Unlike other traditional media, social media is more interactive and it enables one-to-one conversation. However, it requires a well thorough policy and action plan to address issues like authorization to speak on behalf of department/agency, technologies and platform to use to communicate, scope of engagement etc. Like other organizations and institutions, Library and Information Centers can also build up a social networking profile to reach out their stake holders and promote their resources and services and provide a better service as well.

Social Networking helps the library and library professionals to connect with their users virtually and to make a social connection. Marketing in libraries is not a new phenomenon at all. Marketing is not only applicable for profit generating organizations but also applicable for non-profit organizations in a way for marketing the services and satisfy the users and stakeholders. Reaching out users is a best practice for library and information centers to promote the library resources and services to the users that have value for them. Library marketing involves identifying user information needs, matching these needs with appropriate information resources and satisfying user proactively. As users satisfaction is the main goal of any library, to maximize the usage should be the motto of every librarian. The present study is an attempt to highlight the possible implications of Social Networking Sites for effective library services.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Mishra (2008) in his study described the possible implications of social networking technologies in the field of library and information services in the web 2.0 milieu. Penzhorn (2009) and Rogers (2009) vividly illustrated about the importance of implementation of social network tools for daily

work routine and about the future use of these tools. Dickson & Holley (2010) stated that American college students are heavy users of social networking such efforts provide academic libraries with outreach possibilities to students who do not use the physical library. Suraweera et al. (2010) stated in their study about the best implications of Social networks for better library and information services. Ayiah (2011) revealed that students endorse the linking of social networking site to the Library's web page to facilitate collaborations between the library and the University community. Jabr (2011) in his study revealed that students are personally achieving the basic competences required to access social networking applications by themselves or through friends while the University highlights the importance of the constantly adapting technologies efforts to improve successful practice and to be engaged with universal knowledge. Ezeani & Igawesi (2012) revealed that libraries in Nigeria have been challenged like never before to render more proactive and more value added services to meet the ever changing needs of library patrons. Tella & et al. (2013) revealed that academic librarians are making use of SNSs on a weekly basis and partially on a daily basis. Many potential benefits of SNSs were indicated both to the librarians and their libraries such as creating opportunity to connect with people across the globe, which includes those that have never been seen and those that one is not sure of coming in contact with. Jain (2014) in his study discussed about the most widely used social media tools and opined that social media is well-recognized and well-accepted forum for marketing library and information resources and services. Blessing & Florence (2015) revealed that blogs and facebook are the most commonly used social media to promote library and information resources and services. However challenges such as privacy concern problems, low level of technology penetration should be looked over.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives behind the present study are;

- To identify the Social Media or Social Networking Sites prevalent for library services,
- To know the possible implication of Social Networking Sites for library services, and
- To explore the possible benefits of using Social Media in library services.

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING: THE CONCEPT**

Social networking site is a phrase used to describe a website that enables users to create public profiles within that website and to connect with other users of the same website who access their profile. Social networking sites can be used to describe community based websites, online discussions forums, chatrooms and other social spaces online.

According to Computing Dictionary (2011), Social networking site as any website designed to allow multiple users to publish their own contents. The information may be on any subject and may be for consumption by friends, mates, employers, employees just to mention a few.

Boyd & Ellison (2007) stated that social networking websites allow individuals to: (1) construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. They also noted that these websites vary in terms of features and membership. Some websites allow photo/video sharing, while others allow blogging and messaging. Participation in blogs has been regarded as social networking because blogs support formation of social connection through blog-roll activities.

Boroughs (2010) states that social networking websites allow users to share interests and communicate with others.

Barsky & Purdon (2006), on the other hand, points out that social networking websites collect data about members and store user profiles that are meant for sharing. These websites are offered for free and allow users to create personal pages filled with content like images, music and videos

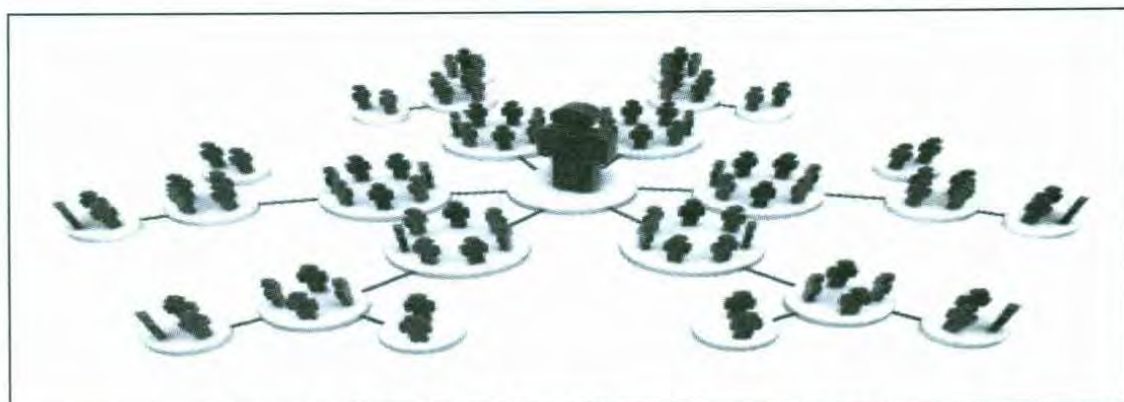
easily. These social networks also allow members to share web pages with friends and search for new friends who have similar interests.

Taylor-Smith & Lindner (2009) states that wikis, blogs, chat rooms, instant messengers, message boards and social bookmarking are technology applications that have been used to facilitate members' interaction, and thus, have been referred to as social networking tools.

**Table 1. Popular Social Networking Sites and its Library prospects**

<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Launched on</b>	<b>Founder</b>	<b>Related to Library Information Centers</b>
Blogs	August,1999	Google	Blogs allows to library or librarians to post messages periodically, to share information on content specific. The member can write articles, news on topical issues and post it and expecting views and opinion from others.
Wikis	January,2001	Ward Cunningham	Wikis is a content based social network. It is free online encyclopedia that offers a platform for users to access, edit and contribute to the content published. This is a collaborative web page for member creator and users.
LinkedIn	May,2003	Reid Hoffman and his friends	LinkedIn is a professionals' connected social network, in which a librarian can get connected with library specialists in their particular field or via LinkedIn. Library and library professionals can use this social network to provide specialized services such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).
MySpace	August,2003	Tim Vanderhook and Justin Timberlake	MySpace is a popular social networking sites among the academicians. Libraries have taken advantage of this site to post, calendar, custom catalog search tools, and blog features to improve their presence among the users online.
Facebook	February,2004	Mark Zuckerberg and his friends	Facebook is a most popular social networking site which is more users friendly. This site is more interactive with users by instant messaging, liking, wall posting etc.
Flickr	February,2004	Ludicorp	Flickr can be used to share and postings of images and videos. Libraries can take the best use of it by sharing cover page of new arrival books and journals etc.
YouTube	February,2005	Steven Chen, Chad Hurley, Jawed Karim	YouTube is a popular social media used by students, teachers and research scholars. Any academic events such as inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops are disseminated via the YouTube.

Library Thing	August,2005	Tim Spalding	Library Thing is a tool that enriches the library OPAC. Once an account is created, a list of books with ISBNs is sent to LibraryThing which sends back a piece of code which is pasted into the footer of the Library OPAC. Librarians can utilize this to send a list of current publications to users.
Ning	October,2005	Gina Bianchini and Marc Andreessen	Ning is also a popular social network that allows the librarians to get connected with library users, library associations, and more.
Twitter	July,2006	Omid Kordestani and Jack Dorsey	Twitter is a micro blogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities of library like updated collection and many more. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update.



**Figure 1. Social Network Architecture & users' connection**

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING: TYPES**

Social networking sites are primarily organized around users' profiles and those that are organized around collections of content. However it is important to remember that services differ and may be characterized by content.

### **Profile-based Social Networking**

Profile-based services are primarily organized around member's profile page. Library and Information Centre can have a page like this to connect with its users. It contains primarily information about the individual library or information center including pictures, numbers of connected users etc. Facebook is best example of this type of social networking site. The member library communicate with its users in various ways like leaving text, embedded content or links to external content, wall postings, comment or evaluation etc.

## **Content-based Social Networking**

Flickr is best example of Content-based social networking site. In these services, the user's profile remains an important way of organizing connections but plays a secondary role to the posting of content like images and videos. Libraries can take the best use of it by sharing cover page of new arrival books and journals etc.

## **White-Label Social Networking**

White-Label Social Networking is such type of social networking, which allows the member library to form its own mini-communities within the site. Users can create their own community to support specific interests, events or activities. Setting up and running a social networking service also means increased responsibility/liability of the individual creator or host for onsite activity.

## **Micro-blogging**

Twitter is a prominent SNS for Micro-blogging services. It allows the member to publish short messages publicly or within contact groups. The service like "status updates" is very popular in this type of SNS. These SNS can be checked within the site, read as text messages on phones, or exported to be read or displayed elsewhere.

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING: WHY IN LIBRARY ?**

The following points demand for the implications of social networks in library and information Services, these are;

- Exchange information and views among students, researchers, faculty members and library professionals.
- Work online with users.
- Building an open access resources in the library.
- Promoting Library Services and resources.
- Instant Messaging etc.

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING: POSSIBLE LIBRARY IMPLICATIONS**

The basic library activities can be categorized under three broad categories. The three major categories of activities are 1) Information communication, 2) Information distribution, and 3) Information organization.

**Information Communication:** Social networking sites allow the library and information centers for easy virtual communication. In this plat form users will be constantly touched with their library personnel. A healthy collaborative interaction will be possible with staff, patrons, and faculty members. The social networking tools that can be used for information communication in library and information centers are, MySpace, Facebook, Blog, Meebo, LinkedIn and Twitter etc.

**Information Distribution:** Effective distribution or delivery of information depends on your technology. Now the medium of delivery has changes. Users are asking about electronic content, faster delivery, transferable device etc. So, Social media will help the libraries to distribute information services in a faster way. Library professionals should rethink for implementing social network technologies in library services from early period. The popular social networking sites are, Flickr, YouTube, TeacherTube, Second Life, Wikipedia, PBwiki, Footnote, Community Walk, SlideShare, Digg, StumbleUpon and Daft Doggy.

**Information Organization:** Social software can help the library and library professionals for organization of handy information which can be accessible with the social networking technologies in web 2.0 milieu. Information is published through message, view comments, news, wall posting, status etc. in social media. The below mentioned tools can be effectively used like aNobii, Del.icio.us, Connotea, LibraryThing and lib.rario.us for organization of such information.

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING: BENEFITS**

Present day libraries are well equipped with latest technology. Day by day the users approach is changing with the pave of time. Our users are asking services on social channels. So, we need to be techno savvy with these newly developed social media. It will save their time, virtual access of the libraries and so on. Our library portal should be mobile friendly. Libraries will use YouTube videos and other videos as a marketing channel and as an education medium. Libraries are using social media to educate rather than just to market resources and services. These followings are some ways how the social networks benefit the users;

### **Virtual Communication**

Social media is another way to get in to contact with library users virtually. Connecting with large numbers of library users through notice, emails are less attractive than posting a message in Facebook, or group forum to reach our users virtually. It's a change in our way of thinking since many of us still do not agree with this new trend.

### **Respond to Positive/ Negative Feedback**

In any users' service, the main motto is users' satisfaction. Our patrons may talk both good things and bad things about our service. One of the most important tenets of user service is to be responsive to our users' concerns or praise them. Recognize them and show that they are interested in and care about their opinions. There's no controlling what is said about our library anymore, but we can influence the message that comes across.

### **Branding Resources and Services**

All libraries are already marketing its services or events using traditional media: fliers, bookmarks, announcements in calendars of events, newspaper advt., press releases, etc. Social media is simply another form of media that we can use to get our message out there. Millions of people use social networks and likely a large percentage of the population you serve does too. We are missing out a lot of eyes if we avoid social media.

### **Understanding Users Better**

Social media allows conversations with our users in a two-way interaction. These conversations often reveal important insights. Simply talking with our users allows us to get to know them better, and more importantly to serve them in a better way. And connecting with our users via social media will definitely increase their participation. We shall be surprised at what we learnt.

### **Saves Time**

Connecting with library stake holders via social networks is more time saving and increases library staff hours. Social media have helped libraries in providing quick updates to users and provide a forum for quick and speedy feedback from library patrons.

## **CONCLUSION**

Application of Information Technology, Web 2.0 tools, Social Media in library and information services has greatly affected the information communication, information dissemination and information organization process of the libraries. These collaborative trend of social networks will help the library and information centers to address the requirement of users with no time wasting, virtually and numbers of sources. A Virtual Reference Desk (VRD) can be performed by using Wikipedia<sup>5</sup>. Library can inplement Facebook, YouTube, Blog to promote library resources and services. Librarians need to be techno savvy and collaborative. So it is remarkable, "You can have the best technology in the world, But if you do not have a community who wants to use it and who are excited about it, and then it has no purposes".

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