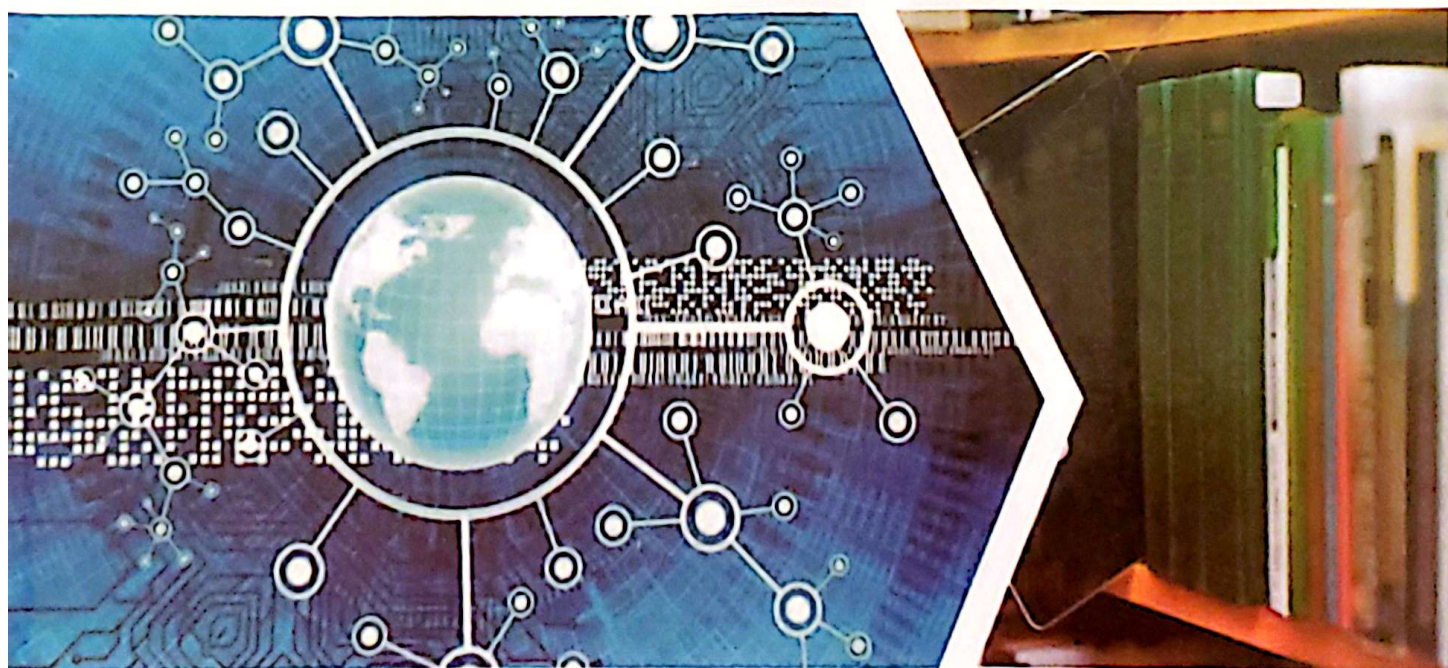


MODERN PRACTICES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE: **THEMES, TRENDS AND ISSUES**

**Festschrift in Honour of
WILLIAM ABIODUN AKINFOLARIN, CLN**



Edited by:

Pearl C. Akanwa
Tunde K. Omopupa
Rotimi A. Egunjobi

► Johnson A. Akerele
► Lucky O. Urhiewhu
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USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LIBRARY SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE INFORMATION AGE

Nafisa RABIU, Jamiu O. MUHAMMED & Muritala O. MUHAMMED

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools have been widely adopted for library services in modern era. They have impacted and significantly changed the ways libraries and librarians render services to their users, and have enabled librarians to address users' queries and provide answers that meet the information needs of library users. The need for ICT-mediated library services have become more pronounced in the Information Age, where the defining characteristic among individuals is the knowledge and information they have. In Nigeria, ICT tools such as computers, Internet, Intranet, databases and social media are used to render services in libraries (Popoola and Rabi, 2017). Through the social media, for instance, library users are inundated with information on various topics, however, libraries remain the source of trusted information and users tend to trust more whatever information comes from the library (Quadri and Onaolapo, 2017). With social media, users can interact with library staff and get their queries answered without necessarily visiting the library physically.

The Concept of Social Media

The term social media is broadly used to describe a group of Internet tools including web publishing, content sharing, social networking, instant messaging and Wikis. They refer to internet-based channels by which information is sent and received by subscribers through the use of computers. According to Buettner (2016), social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share, or exchange information, ideas, pictures, videos, career interests in virtual communities and networks. More specifically, social media are web-based applications, platforms and technologies that make it possible for people to interact and share contents with one another through the Internet. They allow the creation and sharing of

information among people of similar interest and social interaction (Cabiddu, De-Carlo, and Picoli, 2014). Social media are a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological/technological foundations of Web 2.0 - an application that allows users to interact freely, share and discuss information using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, video and audio (Kaplan and Haenalein, 2010). Neti (2011) noted that the term social media is derived from two words – social and media. 'Social' has to do with the interaction of individuals within a community while 'media' refers to advertising and the communication of ideas or information through publication/channels. Nevertheless, most definitions of social media center around content creation; content sharing; and interaction between individuals and groups.

The Concept of Library Service Delivery

Libraries of all type have witnessed significant and tremendous changes in service delivery in recent years. These changes, which are mostly brought about by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have impacted on the mode of providing information services in libraries. The traditional systems and techniques of information dissemination to library users have given way to electronic or virtual means of communication, thereby improving the service delivery of libraries in recent times. Kumar and Edwards (2013) describe library service delivery as a task provided by professional librarian to users, which include but not limited to instruction on how to access and use library materials; reference services, which provides quick or in-depth answers to user queries; and materials delivery services, which provide users with access to library materials online. It may also include items delivered to users' doorsteps.

Xu, Kang, Song and Clarke (2015) opine that library service delivery involved resources and activities provided by libraries to address the information needs of users. These include circulation services, reference services, online information services, inter library loans, and information literacy skills training. These are professional tasks rendered to library users in anticipation of or on-demand to meet users' information needs. It is pertinent to note that these services, which are rendered in modern

day library practices, can only be achieved with high skills in the use of ICT. The 21st Century library practices is shifting paradigm from manual practices as the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in services delivery is taking the librarianship profession to another level.

With these developments, library service delivery has expanded to include direct and indirect services provided by libraries and information centers to their users in-person and virtually. Some of the essential library services identified by Rubin (2017) include: instruction on how to access and use library materials; circulation Service; reference service; online reservation of books; recommendation of library material; Current Awareness Service; inter-library loan service; photocopying and printing Services; orientation and information sessions; Selective Dissemination of Information; audio-visual and multimedia services.

Varieties and Characteristics of Social Media

Social media are differentiated by their interactive features available to users from around the globe. The key focus of social media is to bring people together to interact with one another and encourage the sharing of personal information and ideas through personal web pages. The open membership feature of social media enables anyone to become a member of the platforms (Benson, Amaechi & Onouha, 2017). The authors identify the following as some of the characteristics of social media and related to library users:

1. **Educative:** users are kept abreast of latest developments and have open access to knowledge.
2. **Participatory:** users have the opportunity to engage actively in the construction of knowledge.
3. **Collaborative:** it ensures knowledge sharing, establishes communication link with experts, and allows users to develop a team working skill.
4. **Flexibility:** easy content creation and sharing, easy update of files and personal contact
5. **Fascinating:** it is inspiring and interesting to use. Some users garner information with these sites in an easy manner

Types of social media

There are different types of social media reported in literature. Kane, Alavi, Labianca and Borgatti, (2014) highlighted different types of social networking sites. These include: Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace; web publishing such as blogging; content sharing such as Youtube, Flickr and Instagram; voice over Internet applications such as Google Talk and Skype; instant messaging such as WhatsApp and Messenger; micro-blogging applications such as Twitter, FriendFeed and Tumblr; cloud storage Applications such as Dropbox, iDrive and Skydrive; academic social networking such as Mendeley, ResearchGate and MethodSpace; and audio sharing applications such as Podomatic, SoundCloud.

Social Media Use for Library Service Delivery

The success of any library is measured by how well it is able to satisfy the information needs of its users, therefore, libraries apply various technologies including the social media to their services in order to meet the varying needs of their users. The following are the social media tools that are used by libraries to render library services:

- ▶ **Facebook:** Facebook is a social networking site (SNS) that enable people from different parts of the world to connect, interact and share information through the Internet. Facebook can be used to render library services to users through interaction with users through the library's Facebook page. Zarmohzzabieh, Samah, Omar, Bolong and Kamarudin (2014) assert that people spend a large amount of time on Facebook every day. This implies that, librarians can answer queries of a large number of users. This medium can also be used to interact with library users for effective service delivery.

- ▶ **Twitter:** This is a micro blogging tool that allows users to send information (called tweets) in just 140 characters or less. Libraries can use Twitter to share information to a lot of users at the same time. According to Folley (2014), Twitter can be used to ensure that a group of people called followers are continually updated on latest information provided by a user they are following on the platform. Twitter is now being used by libraries as a new way to make impact on the users.

► **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a social media type that connects people and enables them to contribute and disseminate information. It allows registered users to maintain a list of contact details of professionals with whom they share some level of relationship. It's a tool that librarians can use to link users with specialists in their field of interest. It can also be used for selective dissemination of information (SDI) and other current awareness services that are part of library services. LinkedIn is regarded as the largest professional social network with over 300 million members in over 200 countries (Madukoma, 2017).

► **Pinterest:** According to Marshall & Shipman (2011), Pinterest is described as a "virtual pinboard" where people can "organize and share the beautiful things" found on the web. Launched in March 2010, Pinterest gained significant traction in late 2011, receiving 4.5 million unique visits in October and November, 2011. It is now one of the most popular social media websites, surpassing many other established sites. Pinterest users organize objects by selecting an image from the webpage where the object exists using a browser bookmarklet (or by uploading an image from their computer). This technological affordance makes it easy to reuse and share images. Images uploaded via the bookmarklet contain a link back to the source website, but perhaps not to the original, as images may be used and reused several times on the Web. Pinterest also has many social components such as: users add boards to subject categories, 'repin' objects from other users to their own boards, "like" or comment on objects, and "follow" boards and other user's activity. As opined by Zou, Chen and Dey (2015), Pinterest has been identified as a unique new visual discovery social medium where people can upload images and collect ideas from different library users. The ability to discover users' need can greatly help libraries to engage more users through strategic interactions. With Pinterest, libraries could upload pictures of newly acquired collections to the users. The feedback from this could equally improve the service delivery of librarian.

► **Telegram:** This platform "is not just easy to be handled but it can also give users the option to access it through any type of communication device such as smartphones, tablets." (Iksan and Saufian, 2017). Telegram

is also available through the desktop computer which makes it more flexible for users who want it on larger displays, rather than a smartphone. Another good quality of the Telegram is its user friendliness and simplicity. Telegram is one of those user-friendly mobile phone applications that are very easy to be handled by the users. Libraries now use telegram to receive queries and disseminate online resources. This is very useful because it can accommodate a large number of users at the same time.

► **YouTube:** Established by three former PayPal employees – Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim in February 2005, YouTube now operates a Google product after its procurement in November 2006 by Google. YouTube allows users to upload, view, rate, share, add to playlists, report, comment on videos, and subscribe to other users. It offers a wide variety of user-generated and corporate media videos. Available content includes video clips, TV show clips, music videos, short and documentary films, audio recordings, movie trailers, live streams, and other content such as video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos. Most content on YouTube is uploaded by individuals, but media corporations including CBS, the BBC, Vevo, and Hulu offer some of their materials via YouTube as part of the YouTube partnership program. Unregistered users can only watch (but not upload) videos on the site, while registered users are also permitted to upload unlimited number of videos and add comments to videos. Videos deemed potentially inappropriate are available only to registered users affirming themselves to be at least 18 years old, (Kandala 2019). Literature revealed that majority of youth above 18 years use the social media, cataloguing and classification, library user education, general information dissemination can be done through YouTube.

► **Instagram:** Instagram is a free, online photo-sharing application and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012. Instagram allows users to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app. Users can add a caption to each of their posts and use hashtags and location-based geotags to index these posts and make them searchable by other users within the app. Each post by a user appears on their followers' Instagram feeds and can also be viewed by the public when tagged using

hashtags or geotags. Users also have the option of making their profile private so that only their followers can view their posts (Li & Agarwal 2017). As with other social networking platforms, Instagram users can like, comment on and bookmark others' posts, as well as send private messages to their friends via the Instagram Direct feature. Instagram is not only a tool for individuals, but also for businesses. The photo-sharing app offers companies the opportunity to start a free business account to promote their brand and products. Companies with business accounts have access to free engagement and impression metrics. According to Instagram's website, more than 1 million advertisers worldwide use Instagram to share their stories and derive business results. Additionally, 60% of people say they discover new products through the app (Ferrara, Interdonato & Tagarelli, 2014). Libraries can use Instagram to disseminate current awareness information to large number of users at the same time

► **Snapchat:** Snapchat performs a special role as a social media tool. This platform is not so much a traditional social media platform as it is an **image messaging app**. The mobile apps, which is available for both Android as well as iOS, is used to send photos and videos that have been created and edited (often with drawings and animation) on smartphones or tablets. The trick here is that the sent images and recordings automatically delete themselves 10 seconds after they are viewed (Bayer, Ellison, Schoenebeck & Falk 2016). It is often referred to as ephemeral social interaction media. It should be noted, though, that there are ways to recover and save these images. This app is particularly popular among teenagers, a fact that can partly be attributed to a host of playful features the programme offers. Snapchat has gone through some major developments over the last few years. It is 'My Story' function that enables users to publish pictures that have been loaded in sequential order so that they tell a story. These can then be accessed over a 24 hour-period after which they are then automatically deleted. Additionally, conventional text messages as well as video calls are also possible (Utz, Muscanell & Khalid 2015). Libraries can use snapchat to render services to users by sending important pictures videos and text messages.

► **WhatsApp:** WhatsApp is the most popular instant messaging

platform among Nigerians. Users can send messages to individuals or groups using text, pictures, videos and voice messages. It uses phone number rather than username or password. It serves as an alternative to SMS and can be used for reference services and current awareness service in the library. Users can allow WhatsApp to connect to their phone contact list so that contacts can be transferred to the app. If applied to library service, it will bring effectiveness to library service delivery as it can give room for interaction between librarians and users. This opportunity will enable the users to send their queries to librarians, and if any misunderstanding arises, follow up comments will take care of it.

Comparison of Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms or social networking sites are designed to meet the specific needs of people or tasks. A social media user may need to put into consideration certain circumstances before he can choose appropriate social media platform that is suitable for their need. Professional librarians also need to consider the nature of the users before choosing a platform to connect with them. This is further explained by Kenny and Zysman (2015) who opined that there are certain things librarians must consider before deciding on a social media platform to use, and that the best social media platform option(s) for a task will yield a better result. The following considerations were suggested:

- a. The targeted audience
- b. age and gender of the user
- c. the income and education level
- d. the goals and achievement behind using a platform.

For instance, a professional librarian may use YouTube for user education or to teach his colleagues aspects of librarianship. This will enable him to reach many people across the globe. User education within and outside the library system can also be achieved through the use of Telegram as it can accommodate up to 500 participants or more at a time. For reference librarians, platforms such as Skype can be very handy in connecting with and answering users' queries. Libraries can also achieve Selective Dissemination of Information services through the use of WhatsApp. Some

of these peculiarities among various the social platforms are revealed in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Various Social Media Platforms by Peculiarities

Social Media Type	Year of Establishment	Categories of Users	ICT Device Applicable	Social Interaction Target	Social Media site Focus	Acknowledgements and Exposure Opportunity
Facebook	2004	Adult and Teenagers	Smart phones, PC, etc.	Instance response interaction, group platform interactions.	Business advertisements, celebrants, public opinions, news and other social engagement.	Like, share or comment on content
Twitter	2006	Elites	Smart devices	After twit comments	Public opinion and social engagements	Twit and retweeting of followed comments
LinkedIn	2002	Elites and career opportunists (Business and employment Oriented social networking site)	Smart phones, PC, etc.	Interactions among job seekers and employees	Share comments and addresses to circular activities	Direct links from content posted
Pinterest	2010	Organisations, Industries, etc	Smart f4wsp hones, PC, etc.	Comments on products and discussions.	Sharing of interesting products/websites, fashion, lifestyle and travels,	Likes, comments, repins
Telegram	2013	Instant interactions among group members in organisations education, employees, etc.	Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Windows, mac OS and Linux.	Instant and voice messaging over Internet Protocol	Users can send messages and exchange photos, videos, stickers, audio and files of any type for business, news, entertainments, etc.	Instant message, voice message and indications whether user is online or not.

YouTube	2005	Young and old generations. For entertainments and business promotion	Smart phones, tablets and computers	No instant interaction. Users can view, rate and play videos after uploading.	Video clips, TV show clips, music videos, short and documentary films, audio recordings, movie trailers, live streams.	Allows users to upload, view, rate, share, add to playlists, report, comment on videos
Instagram	2010	Younger generation, mostly females	Smart phones, tablets and computers	Celebrants, social engagements and business showcases.	Photo and video-sharing social networking service	"Like", "comment" and "bookmark" others' photos and videos
Snapchat	2011	Younger Generation	Smart phones, tablets and computers	Snapchat is primarily used for creating multimedia messages referred to as "snaps"; snaps can consist of a photo or a short video	Users interaction with virtual stickers and augmented reality (pictures)	React to "Snaps"
WhatsApp	2009	Adults and younger generations for business, news, entertainment, etc,	WhatsApp works on androids and smart phones. Special applications are available to run it on window and other device.	Group member chats. Most people of the same idea, mission and vision.	It allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other media	Instant message, voice message and indications whether user is online or not.

Table 1: self-designed social media comparison Table

Effects of Social Media on Library Service Delivery

The use of social media in performing library functions has improved library service delivery to users. Social media tools provide librarians with the opportunity to try new methods of packaging and delivering library services (Popoola and Rabiou 2017). Some of the positive effects of social media on library services as indicated Uzoigwe (2017) include:

1. Social media are the most cost-effective means to reach out to a large number of users. This will enable libraries to attend to large number of users at the same time;
2. They enhance quick identification of users' needs, demands, expectations, complaints enquiries and a quick response to users' queries;
3. They encourage large scale professional collaboration, cooperation and access to huge volume of information;
4. They remain the most effective platform to promote and market information resources and services;
5. They attract new users and convert loyal users to library advocates;
6. They assist librarians to acquire new skills of information technology; and
7. They improve the corporate image and relevance of the library and librarians as they move from collection librarians to information managers.

Challenges of Social Media Use on Library Services Delivery

Despite the various advantages that could be attached to using social media to render library services, several challenges could hinder their use by libraries. While some librarians do not consider using social media in rendering library services as necessary, in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, some of the challenges that hinder the use of social media for library services include lack of awareness, irregular internet access, poor connectivity and low bandwidth, technophobia, inadequate support by government, copyright issues, irregular electricity supply, and inadequate maintenance culture (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012; Chaptula & Majawa, 2013; Popoola and Rabiou, 2017).

Conclusion

The use of social media for library service delivery in the information age is achievable. Considering the advantages attached to the use of these technologies, libraries and librarians should engage users through the platforms. The social media has become an indispensable tool to most library users, and librarians stand a chance of meeting the users' information needs by connecting with them through the social media platforms. Social media eases accessibility and dissemination of information, however, the challenges to deploying social media need to be given adequate attention for success to be achieved. Thus, it is important that libraries engage in the use of social media tools, setting up rules to be followed and ensuring that the rules are adhered to by librarians and users. In order to effectively provide library services to users using social media technologies, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

- i. Libraries should provision of constant power supply and Internet connectivity to facilitate the use of social media for service delivery by librarians;
- ii. Librarians should be trained on the technical know-how of various social media tools;
- iii. Libraries should develop their social media use policies to serve as rules of engagement for librarians and library users while using social media platforms in delivering library services.
- iv. Special consideration should be given to social media platforms that has the potential to meet the target of the library users.

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