

A Case Study to Implement University Library Services through Social Networking Sites

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Abstract

Today in the age of information technology, millions of people are addicted to social networking sites to core communication and share common interests and experiences rather than using phone, text-video messages etc.,. Libraries have long been providers of services to gain knowledge. Library services are no longer restricted to physical buildings. By implementing library services through social networking sites, one can expect library service anywhere and anytime from a multimedia device. This innovative knowledge provides library service parallel to entertainment and includes sharing knowledge, information among the mammoth uses of social networking sites. There will be vast number of people to organize and participate in collective action.

Keywords: Social networking sites, innovative, university library

1. Introduction

While much of the media attention on online social networking has focused on young people's use of sites such as Facebook and MSN, the current survey found that online social networking was being used by people across the age range with 81% of adult aged 31 to 50 years and 56% of adults over 50 reporting that they use these sites. Increased social participation provides benefit to people's self- esteem and mental health suggesting that taking part in online networking is likely to lead positive outcomes for people.

Broadcasting a question to one's social network is one way to find information online; other common methods include using a search engine or emailing a question to a particular person. The term *social search* refers broadly to the process of finding information online with the assistance of social resources, such as by asking friends,

reference librarians, or unknown persons online for assistance. Social search may also involve conducting a search over an existing database of content previously provided by other users, such as searching over the collection of public Twitter posts, or searching through an archive of questions and answers, such as in the Answer Garden System[1].

Nowadays, it is vital for the future of university libraries which are the core of society, and university to develop innovative services by information and documentation services, because it is only achieved through the universities which are established under their roof to obtain, prove, reach, preserve, and transfer the information required by the universities, and their partners while performing education-training function.

a. What is Innovation?

Innovation is the synthesis of new ideas and thoughts which will re-construct or re-combine present things. Innovation covers all processes which are conducted to develop new or improved product, service or production method and to make this useful. Developing new and improved product or service comes from new ideas. Innovation is a continuous activity. Therefore ideas and results which are put forth, developed to work and providing competition power and values to the institute should be again and again evaluated and commonly used.

b. Creativity and University Libraries

Libraries as a living organism are non-profitable service businesses. Therefore, they are affected by the developments and changes in the world. Like any other institution, the libraries also should meet response to the needs of the group to which it provides service and meet their needs in accordance with the change. While the services of libraries are evaluated and their performance is calculated, “user satisfaction” is considered as key criterion.

There are two main components of the user satisfaction: remote access to the information required by the user and quality service expectation. As a result of these two factors, universities should design the variety in information services and sources according to the needs and expectations of the user.

c. Possible implementation in academic libraries.

- Libraries can create a page to reach to new users.
- Social networking could enable librarians and patrons not only to interact, but to share and change resources dynamically in an electronic medium.
- For building network among the interested group in discussing the common interest User content can be added to the library catalogue, including user’s book reviews or other comments.

2. Social network sites

In 2007, the three defining features of a social network site appear to be the profile, the connection lists, and the functional ability to traverse those connections. As social network sites have evolved, the salience of these features has shifted. Most notably, the role of the profile has changed, as media streams have increasingly taken a more prominent role and the activity of “updating” has become less burdensome. Meanwhile, the articulation of contacts has become more central, both because of the rise of media stream and because of third-party technologies that incorporate the “social graph” as a way of organizing content, in contrast, the act of traversing did not change from a technical perspective, but became less central overtime. [4]

Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, twitter and YouTube now are house hold names, but they are only a few of the hundreds of social network sites currently operating. Facebook now claims more than 350 million active users worldwide, more than the population of the United States. Social network sites in total have now equaled e-mail in terms of usage by computer owners, according to a Nielsen survey. With the explosive growth of social networking come uncharted liability landscapes for both individuals and businesses. [5]

3. Library users through a social media

Over time more and more people in the library ventured into the social networking site world and by September 2008 some of the main social networking practices that staff was actively involved in were the following:

- A number of staff had created personal Facebook profiles
- Three senior members of staff also created a Facebook Business page in July which can be used by other library staff members as well as students and teaching staff at the university. They envisage adding the library catalogue as soon as that application becomes available.
- A “Book of the Month” blog was undertaken by the Special Collections Section
- Various staff members at the Veterinary Library have active wikis.
- A dedicated Library 2.0 Wiki was created as an initiative of the e-Service Steering Committee of the library.
- Various videos of library activities were placed on YouTube thus serving as a vehicle for marketing and creating awareness.
- Gaming had been developed as a tool for information literacy training at the Main Campus library as well as at the Medical Library.
- Skype was introduced as a basic facility on all library computers – students and help-desk staffs are expected to actively use this facility. [6]

Dora Yu-Ting Chen et al. Found out how libraries interact with users on SNSs, the sampled posts were summarized in percentage based on their interaction types (see Figure 1). The figure showed that more than half of the sampled posts were information dissemination. Knowledge sharing, accounting for 28.34% in the sample, was carried out substantially by libraries, though it was not as outstanding as information dissemination. In comparison, the communication between

Libraries and users were not conducted as frequently as knowledge sharing and information dissemination (Accounting for 15-46%). Finally, knowledge gathering was executed most rarely on libraries' SNSs, only accounting

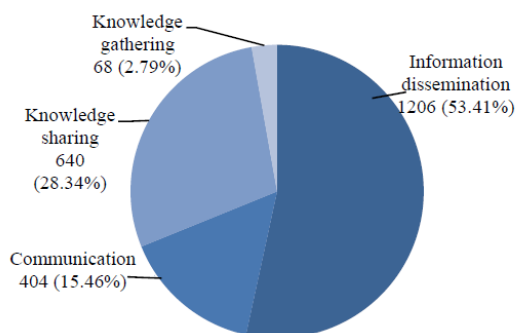


Figure: 1 Interaction on libraries

User engagement under the different types of interaction was explored by comparing the means of user responses among posts of different interaction types [7].

According to C. Choi's results of the survey suggest that some Australian libraries are already including social media in their strategic planning and that LIS staff at these libraries are supported to do work-related social media tasks in official capacities. This suggests that these libraries have already got social media tasks embedded into their organizational structures in some form. 70.6% of respondents thought that having social media as part of a library's strategic plan was either very important or important (see Figure 2) [8].

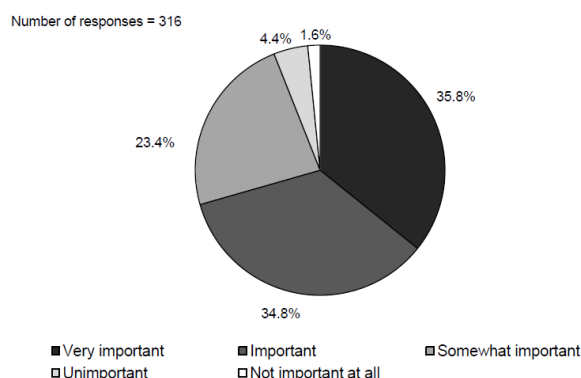


Figure: 2 Importance of social media in library strategic plans

As a library considers new social media tools there are a few factors to consider. If you determine your measurable goals at the outset of implementing the new tool you will be better off in the long run. If you'll need to justify the use of a social media program to management or others you might consider a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. [9] Christian suggested

that social networking should be considered a supplement to other tools. The potential of social networking lies within transparency and the ability to create awareness between students – potentially across institutions and nations [10].

4. Challenges before Using Social Software in Libraries

User participation is the key for the successful implementation of social software perception in the virtual world. Therefore library should think and crack the challenges to stand as good social partner in the online collaborative environment. The following challenges should mull over while implementing social software in library as:

- **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.
- **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.
- **Conviction:** Having good arguments to proof why these tools are useful (needs another post). For example, they can even reduce the information overload. From my experience they clearly involve more work in the beginning, but additional value comes quickly by tagging or exchange experiences in blog posts. Idealistically, after a while, communication only shifts but is more efficient and creative.
- **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.
- **User Participation:** In the beginning usually only few users participate; that's why a critical mass of contributors is important.
- **Resources:** Be aware the tools are cheap and easy to install, but do not underestimate the resources you need. Facilitation for a blog or a wiki is very important especially in the beginning, so users are not frustrated in their first steps.
- **Patience:** To incorporate social networking tools to an organization takes time. A few months can pass by before participation reaches a sufficient level, but on the mean time the process is exciting.
- **Training:** Social networking tools might be easy but many people from the organization are totally new to the applications. Things such as tagging, RSS or basic upload functions have to be often explained.
- **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 (e.g. screen cast) is decisive for users to participate.

- **Software:** Implement a solution on your own server or rely on an application service provider. To which extent your organizational communication has to be internal? What can be exchanged within networks of partner or even in public?
- **Privacy, IPR, copyright issues of social software:** JISC highlighted these issues as being pertinent to the teaching and learning community and they are similarly relevant in the context of library developments. Storing personal data on remote systems raises obvious privacy issues, but IPR and copyright issues also need exploring.
- **Technical and institutional barriers:** The JISC report also highlighted technical barriers to using social software in educational establishments. Certain social software may conflict [11].

5. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES TO LIBRARIES

Social networking sites have its own advantages to Librarians and Clients. Some of the benefits are as follows:

- Social networking sites will facilitate collaborations and promote effective communication between Librarians and their patrons.
- It will generate a flow of information excluded from search engines and Library Catalogues.
- Some writers as cited in Scale (2008) suggest that social networking sites will lead future delivery of information to meet search queries.
- The crucial aim of librarians is to make library resources available to patrons so if social networking sites will help achieve this goal then it should be pursued vigorously.
- Social networking sites wall linked to a library's web page has the potential of reaping great results by attracting and serving Distance Education Students. Watts et al (2002) stress that it is through social networking sites that any person is capable of communicating and delivering a message to a distant target person.
- It will help Librarians and Libraries to keep pace with technologies and compete effectively with the developed World [12]

6. Conclusion

The outcome of this case study refines the knowledge of implementing social networking sites to university library. The findings have revealed that social networking sites have attracted at most user response for libraries. Social networking sites provide quality services and user interaction efficiently. Finally, this study also find out that users can communicate, share knowledge and university library can effectively provide services through social networking sites.

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