

Developing the Use of Social Media in Libraries

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***Abstract** - Social media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of people throughout the world. In the recent years, having a presence on social media becomes especially important for libraries. This study aims to present the definition of social media, explain the benefits of using social media, introduce social media platforms that libraries are using. Additionally, the methods to measure the effectiveness of using social media in libraries are also given in the study.*

Keywords: Social media, Social networking, Social media analytics

Introduction

Social media has brought competitive advantages and opportunities to increase work efficiency for organizations and individuals who use them. There are varieties of social media platforms with millions of people accessing and using every day for purposes of sharing and receiving information. Social media is considered as a cheap, powerful tool for libraries to reach library users, target specific audiences, and give them a chance to interact with libraries. Libraries often use social media to promote library collections, services, events, keep the library in the mind of library users, and assist in finding out what their love.

It is not difficult to recognize the importance of using social media, questions arise with regard to how libraries can best avail of this resource? How libraries can manage their social media platforms, and measure the success of efforts using social media in libraries? These questions will be answered through this study.

1. Social media: definition and benefits

1.1. Definition of social media

The various definitions of social media have been offered but there remains a lack of a formal definition. The oft-cited definition by Andreas M. Kaplan and Micheal Haenlein, “Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Andreas M. Kaplan & Michael Haenlein, 2000, p.61). This definition refers to digital technologies emphasizing user-generated content and the interaction.

Several more complex definitions of social media have been given. David M. Scott, an American online marketing strategist, defines “Social media provides the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online. Social media differs from socalled mainstream media in that anyone can create, comment on, and add to social media content. Social media can take the form of text, audio, video, images, and communities” (David Meerman Scott, 2015, p.56). Joseph Thornley, CEO and co-founder of Thornley Fallis,

identifies “Social media are online communications in which we shift instantly and easily between the role of audience and creator – without needing to know how to code. We do this by using social software that incorporates functions like publishing, sharing, friending, commenting, linking and tagging” (Joseph Thornley, 2019).

Another definition of social media has been offered by Michael L. Kent – a professor of Public Relations at University of New South Wales. He defined that social media as “any interactive communication channel that allows for two-way interaction and feedback,” further specifying modern social media are characterized by their “potential for real-time interaction, reduced anonymity, a sense of propinquity, short response times, and the ability to ‘time shift,’ or engage the social network whenever suits each particular member” (Kent, M. L., 2010, p. 645). This definition partially has defined social media by describing differences between social media and traditional media.

Generally, social media can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that built on the ideological and technological of Web 2.0, that allow users to communicate, create, edit and share contents. The contents can be text, photo, video or sound, or a mixture of all these. Besides, we need to clarify two terms that sound similar: “social media” and “social networking”. Social media is the superset and is how we refer to the various media that people use to communicate online in a social way. Social media include blogs, wikis, video and photo sharing, and much more. A subset of social media is social networking, a term refers to how people interact on sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and similar sites (David Meerman Scott, 2015, p.56).

1.2. Benefits of using social media in libraries

For library, social media helps:

- *Communicate with users*: social media offers an accessible way to engage with library users and potential users, invite others to contribute and contribute to online discussions. The two-way communication that now exists between libraries and users can be helpful for collecting and responding to feedback of users quickly, thereby libraries can identify user needs easily,
- *Marketing and promote*: social media is used to provide information about new acquisitions, events happening at the libraries, library products and services in order to attract users, and built the library brand on a small budget,
- *Cost effective*: setting up accounts and getting started are free,
- *Save time*: libraries can reach, support users immediately through the networks, so that they can save working time and respond to users quickly,
- *Connect and collaborate with other libraries*: libraries can share online information resources through social media to create useful online information resources which can satisfy the information needs of users. In addition, they can share experience with others to improve their professional qualifications, and promote library images to other libraries.

For library users, social media helps:

- *Access, select library products and services easier*: users quickly update all information about library, information resources, products and services through social media. Thus, they can decide how to use libraries, products and services suitable to their needs,
- *Send feedback through a variety of ways*: one of the greatest strengths of social media is the users' interaction with librarians. It is no longer a one-way flow of information

from librarians, social media gives users an opportunity to tell their needs, expectations or dissatisfaction with library. If users have concerns about something, they can ask questions and receive responses quickly as well.

In sum, social media is a powerful information dissemination tool for libraries. Social media offers a way for libraries to promote their activities, resources, products and services while allowing a two-way dialogue with users. Social media brings users closer to the library. Moreover, social media gives library a chance to reach out to people who may not have considered library as a resource for their information needs.

2. Social media platforms for libraries

Social media is still expanding. The number of libraries which adopt social media is increasing as well. Researches in the Library field have showed that Facebook and Twitter are the most popular Web 2.0 applications in libraries (Gary Collins, Anabel Quan-Haase, 2012), with increasing interest in visual platforms such as YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest (Ian McCallum, 2015). Detailed introduction to all social media platforms is impossible due to the large amount of platforms. Therefore, the following section mainly focuses on platforms that are the most used in libraries.

2.1. Facebook

Facebook has grown to an impressive social network giant with users around the globe. During the fourth quarter of 2019, Facebook reported almost 1.66 billion daily active users. Overall, daily active users accounted for 66 percent of monthly active users. With over 2.5 billion monthly active users, Facebook is the most popular social network worldwide (J. Clement, 2020).

Many libraries are using Facebook because a majority of library users are already using Facebook. Libraries are sharing about library news, for example what's happening at the library, what will happen, and what recently happened. Libraries are also sharing excited posts and tips for using library resources to make users interact with library's Facebook contents. In particular, a survey of Estonian librarians revealed that Facebook "is being used mainly for announcements; it is reduplicating libraries' website" (Jaana Roos, 2013).

2.2. Twitter

Users of Twitter can share their thoughts in posts limited to 280 characters and users are also able to upload photos or short videos. The real strength of Twitter is the direct communication in real-time. The posts to the platform (tweets) can be tagged with hashtags in order to put the posts in public categories. Thus, public discussions about trending topics are made possible. Twitter is one of the most popular social networks worldwide. As of the first quarter of 2019, Twitter has 330 million monthly active users (J. Clement, 2019). Twitter is a popular "breaking news" tool, so that many libraries share on Twitter current information and news about a timely news event.

2.3. YouTube

The biggest and most popular video sharing platform is YouTube where users can upload, view and share videos. With the subscription feature, YouTube users can subscribe to

YouTube channels created by others. Available in 80 languages, YouTube is the 2nd most visited site in the world, people are now watching 1 billion hours of YouTube content every day (Salman Aslam, 2020). Therefore, if libraries post videos, there's a big chance people will follow library channel, comment, like library videos.

Nowadays libraries often share references to help users learn something fast through YouTube. For example, how to use databases, what software library has to offer and how to use it, etc. YouTube is also a place to post library-related instructional videos. Specifically, academic libraries are using YouTube videos for teaching information literacy skills (Majid, S., et al., 2012). Besides, YouTube also fits into the building digital collections in academic libraries (Allan Cho, 2013).

2.4. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the largest professional social network (more than 350 million users in over 200 countries and territories). Unlike social networks that people use to keep up friendships, LinkedIn's mission is to connect the world's professionals and make them more productive and successful (David Meerman Scott, 2015, p.255). People use LinkedIn to post job history, resume and to connect with like-minded people. A LinkedIn user can reach out to others for job or can create a group for focused discussions.

Libraries often use LinkedIn to connect with the professional community in their service area. They also post useful business and finance-related content on library's LinkedIn page, discuss marketing books, and offer books to the group.

2.5. Pinterest

Pinterest is a platform to share images and videos. Pinterest allows users (pinners) to upload images, capture images from the Internet, and re-pin images posted by others to create topic-themed virtual pinboards. Although Facebook, Twitter can also be used for sharing photos, but unlike Pinterest, neither site functions as a place to purposefully collect photos from the Internet. By providing functionality that allows users the ability to collect, organize, categorize, and share images, Pinterest fills a gap that other social network platforms do not (Elaine Thornton, 2012).

Libraries use Pinterest to pin interesting contents that they found or that is happening in the library. They also pin new books. Particularly, academic libraries are advised to utilize Pinterest as a tool for "promoting library services and getting in touch with student users" (Chu, S. & Du, H. S., 2012, p.64). By doing those simple things, libraries can attract followers to their subject boards.

2.6. Instagram

Instagram is a mobile social network that allows users to edit and share photos as well as videos. As of June 2018, the mainly mobile photo sharing network had reached 1 billion monthly active users, up from 800 million in September 2017 (J. Clement, 2019). It is currently one of the fastest growing social network sites globally.

Libraries often take photos or record short videos then add comments and hashtags to each photo, video to make them more findable. Moreover, libraries usually share photos of what's happening at the library, fun or behind-the-scenes photos on Instagram.

2.7. Flickr

One of the most established and oldest photo sharing platforms is Flickr which allows users to share photos in high quality. In 2015, Flickr announced they had over 10 billion images on their site, and as of March 2019, Flickr has over 90 million monthly users (Craig Smith, 2020). Flickr is a photo and video hosting site which acts as a storage warehouse for pictures produced by the account owner. Flickr is not a place for gathering images from the Internet. Flickr is also simple to use for libraries. Set up an account, upload photos to make libraries come alive online by sharing how it looks through photos and videos.

3. Manage library's social media platforms

Actually choosing the suitable platforms for libraries is easier than developing and maintaining the presence on social media. Thus, libraries should have human resources and measure the impact of their social media platforms in order to manage them effectively.

3.1. Decide who is in charge

The task of creating status updates, replying to comments and questions will be easier if there is more than one person responsible for the works. Therefore, library can consider to create a social media team. This team should include:

- *Services staff*: services staff such as reference librarians or circulation staff are the ones who actually interact with users. They work directly with users, so that they know the answers to many library-related questions that come up.
- *Marketing, communications*: staff from this area have experiences reaching users with social media, and they can explore strategies that can be leveraged to increase connections with library users.

Especially, academic libraries have liaison librarian who communicate regularly with faculty members and students by social media tool. They also provide library instruction sessions, organize events and exhibits, etc. Hence, they should be put in social media team as well. Previous studies have shown that one of the problems in managing social media is lack of policy, guideline (Shakeel Ahmad Khan & Rubina Bhatti, 2012; T.L. Bui & K.S.M. To, 2016). Thus, it is necessary to develop a social media policy, in which covering issues related to contents on social media, social media posting schedule, guidance related to moderating and managing comments that users have made on the library's page, etc.

3.2. Measure the effectiveness of using social media

The measurement will help libraries know if the work they are doing with social media is making a lasting, positive impact on library's purposes, and where improvements might be needed. There are two approaches to measure the effectiveness of using social media platforms in libraries. The first approach is measure by the library using social media analysis and the second approach is measure by users based on the framework for website evaluation.

3.2.1. Measure by the library using social media analysis

To accomplish this task, the library need to understand types of data analysis techniques commonly used to assess social media platforms. The types of analytics on different social media platforms vary greatly. For example:

Facebook: Facebook analytics section is called Page Insights, which provides several tabs of analytics about visitors to the Facebook page such as Overview, Likes, Reach, Page views, Posts, People, etc.

Twitter: Twitter provides two sections of analytics (Tweet activity, Followers) and an export function.

YouTube: the main analytics page of YouTube provides an overview of what's happening on YouTube channel as views, minutes watched, earnings; engagement levels; views and minutes watched on top ten videos. Besides, library can download spreadsheet version of YouTube analytics by using the download report button.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn gives indicators for tracking the effectiveness such as Updates, Reach and Engagement, Followers, Follower Trends, How You Compare, and Visitors.

Flickr: this platform provides a thirty-day views graphic and view counts for today, yesterday, and all time on photos, videos, albums.

Pinterest: a Pinterest for business account provides analytics that can be used to track growth and interest in pinterest activity. On the main page of analytics, we can find a date-range function and overview graphs. These graphs show pins, repins, impressions, reach, clicks, and visitors. Other menu options include most recent, most repinned, and most clicked.

In short, almost popular social media platforms offer various types of analysis that library can track to monitor performance and trends. However, taking advantage of those numbers can be a challenge. In practically, David Lee King, director at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, has grouped those numerals into five metrics (David Lee King, 2015, pp. 29-32). They are:

- *Activity metrics:* activity metrics are simply how many posts, pins, videos, photos that library has created and posted during the month. Library can count individual posts for each social media platform and then add the totals together. The activity metrics are important to see what librarians are doing in each social media platform.
- *Audience metrics:* audience metrics focus on growth trends by counting how many followers each social media platform has gained. If add each individual platform follower together, library can track how many new followers were gained across all platforms for the month. The metrics show growth over time, trends in growth. If there is suddenly a lot of growth in a social media platform, or if library notices a slow drop-off in new followers, it is a signal that library needs to examine that area further to find out what's happening.
- *Engagement metrics:* engagement metrics measure activities that people actually do on library's social media platforms. Those activities include things like clicking Like, sharing a post, clicking a link embedded within the post, repinning a pinterest post, watching a video, or leaving a comment.
- *Referral metrics:* libraries also want to attract more visitorsto their website through social media. In this case, referral metrics indicate how many referrals from a social media platform direct a visitor to library's website. This may be through a post/tweet/link and can be tracked by Google Analytics.
- *ROI metrics:* typically, ROI (Return on Investment) is used to assess the value or benefit of an investment based on investment costs and profits. In non-profit institutions, specifically in libraries, ROI is hard to track. When reporting ROI for social media, libraries should focus on actual work being done in the library. For example, is posting to social media platforms resulting in more books being checked out? Is it getting more people to library programs? Is it getting people to library website?.ROI can also help to evidence how the cost savings. In this case, the analysis is simpler. For example, the reduction in the costs of developing the quality of

services, the cost of conducting a survey through social media by comparing this cost of taking surveys on paper, doing telephone interviews in the library, etc.

- Basically, social media metrics represent the tangible outcome of monitoring, measuring, reporting, calculating contents from social media. They are very useful and relevant for libraries. A measurement the effectiveness of social media will help libraries in achieving the set objectives of providing services, publicizing library activities, reaching out to the users irrespective of their space and time.

3.2.2. Measure by users based on the framework for website evaluation

While creation of library's social media platforms may be relatively uncomplicated, it can be difficult to create a higher-quality platforms that engages users. It is important to know assessments of users on those platforms because this can influence both user perceptions of the library and library use. Moreover, library's social media platforms can be considered as an access points for information resources, products and services of the library. Therefore, those platforms can be assessed by the framework for website evaluation. This framework comprises five categories constituting the main qualities of website in libraries, including: design, navigation tool, library contents, library services, and use of Web 2.0 technologies (Charlene L. Al-Qallaf & Alaa Ridha, 2019).

- *Design*: the main principles in designing website for libraries are solid information architecture, clear navigation systems, strong visual appeal, understandable terminology, and user-centered design (Becker & Yannotta, 2013). Thus, library's social media platforms should be maintain uniformity in their design to communicate effectively without confusing or overwhelming users.
- *Navigation*: navigation is considered one of the main criteria for a site's usability because users always want to access the information that they need quickly.
- *Contents*: this section covers evaluating contents, such as general information about the library, library resources, reference sources, databases, instructional tools, etc.
- *Services*: technological advancement is instrumental in integrating library services into a Web-based environment. This environment provides ways for librarians to asynchronously or synchronously engage with their users, whose information needs it must aim to fulfill. Additionally, Web-based services can include library exhibits and newsletters.
- *Web 2.0 tools*: this is an ability allowing users to access the library's resources and services through social media platforms they use most. It makes the library become more visible for users to connect anywhere and at any time.
- In general, users just prefer the contents that are relevant, easily understood, updated regularly, and organized in a logical sequence, allowing for quick and easy access to the desired information. Therefore, libraries should know how satisfied they are from the library permacance on social media.

Conclusion

Social media has been used by libraries all over the world as a communication tool to reach out library users and provide them information at their own time and space. This study has introduced the concept of social media, has explored the reasons why libraries apply social media, and has discussed the most relevant social media platforms that libraries often use. In fact, managing library's social media platforms is more difficult than establishing it. Nobody is interested in something boring or irrelevant to them. Libraries need to create contents consistent with users preferences. The content posted and user interactions on social media

should always be controlled, measured regularly. In the near future, if used properly, social media can be a core tool providing the primary means to bring libraries and their users closer together.

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