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## University Libraries and Social Media

### The Case of the Postmodern Library, Kenyatta University

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**Abstract:** Die Post Modern Library (PML) ist die Universitätsbibliothek der Kenyatta University in Nairobi. Die Bibliothek bietet uneingeschränkten drahtlosen Internetzugang sowie weitere Dienstleistungen an, die die üblichen Möglichkeiten kenianischer Bibliotheken bei Weitem übersteigen. Insbesondere die Möglichkeiten des Web 2.0 werden eingehend genutzt. Der Facebook-Auftritt der Bibliothek bietet sich als sehr nützlicher Kommunikationskanal zwischen Nutzern und der Bibliothek an. In Kenia ist Bibliothek 2.0 ein entscheidender Mehrwert.

**Abstract:** The Post Modern Library (PML) is an academic library at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. The library provides its users with unlimited wireless internet access and various other services which are far beyond the usual possibilities of other libraries in the country. Especially the possibilities of Web 2.0 are emphasized. The library's facebook page is a very useful platform for communication between the library and the users. In Kenya, library 2.0 can make a big difference.

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### 1. Introduction

The Post Modern Library (PML) is an academic library at Kenyatta University and is in a newly constructed five storey building, fitted with cutting edge information resources. It houses over a million information materials, which are continuously increasing. It also has a seating capacity of over 6,000 and caters for more than 60,000 students. The library has its branches in the constituent campuses of Kenyatta University.

The Library has experienced tremendous growth since its beginning in the year 1972, when Kenyatta University became a constituent college of the University of Nairobi (University of Nairobi Act of 1970). The library was first housed in a two floor building, which was previously a Military Canteen, with a seating capacity of 200, a growing stock of 130'000 volumes and a few periodical subscriptions. With the increase in the number of books and users, the library was then moved to a more spacious one

storey purpose built library, referred to as the Moi Library in July 1984. The Moi Library catered for over 30,000 students with a growing book stock of 350,000 volumes. The Moi Library was completed in two phases: The first part housed the information materials and reading space, and the second was used solely as a reading area to ease user congestion.

It was soon realized that the library could not hold the exponentially growing population and information resources. This led to the construction of the Post Modern Library (PML), which was opened to the users in September 2011, but officially opened by H.E. the President, Honorable Mwai Kibaki on 7th October, 2011.

Throughout its development, Kenyatta University Library has been able to realize developments that truly suit its new status. These developments are:

- PML was the first public university library in Kenya to provide its users with unlimited wireless internet access.
- Integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into the Library operations and services. These include:
  - a) Automation of the library catalogue from manual to electronic by use of CDS-ISIS database management software in 2003 but later hosting it to KOHA in 2008.
  - b) The use of adaptive technologies to cater for users with special needs, which include JAWS (Job Access With Speech for Windows), NVDA (Non-Visual Desktop Access), Dolphin Pen, CCTV, Braille Embosser and Thunder.
  - c) Digitization of theses and dissertations using d-space, Greenstone and Procite.
- The Library carries out Information Literacy training continuously to both the university teaching staff and students, enabling them to access information resources, especially e-resources. During such sessions the users are trained on how to cite and reference using Zotero citation language. In addition to this, the university community is usually trained on how to use “turn-it-in” anti-plagiarism software, which is awaiting implementation by the university.
- PML is organized into subject libraries which correspond to the disciplines offered in Kenyatta University. These include:
  - a) Ground Floor, Education and Library and Information Science Library;
  - b) 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Social Sciences Library;
  - c) 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Humanities Library;
  - d) 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Science and Technology Library;
  - e) 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Research and Special Collections.
- PML contains instruction rooms on each floor, with a seating capacity of 40 users, they are mainly used for instructional courses in power point presentations.
- PML also contains group study rooms on each floor, allowing users to hold discussions that are not normally allowed within the library reading areas. These rooms are mostly used by undergraduates, when they are doing their group work assignments.
- PML has built-in reading carrels that are carpeted and equipped with a computer that is internet enabled. They can comfortably host 2 occupants at a time. They are extremely conducive to serious study and research. A fee of 100 Kenyan shilling per day is charged for the use of the facility.
- PML has computer labs on all floors except the 5<sup>th</sup>. Each lab has a total of 40 computers. They are all connected to the internet and are manned by ICT technicians who assist the library users to make full use of e-resources.
- A separate reading area for staff and post graduate students is available on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. This floor has computers placed around its circular design, in addition to this there is wireless internet access. It is manned by a member of staff who assists users to access its vast resources.
- On each floor, there are computers designated for OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogues) use only. They are meant to be used for searching the OPAC hosting bibliographic records of the PML holdings and the campus libraries as well.

## 2. Use of Social Media at PML

Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a phenomenal rate. Social media is a term that does not have a definite meaning. The best way to define social media is to break it down into two i.e. media and social. Media is an instrument of communication, like a newspaper or a radio, so social media would be a social instrument of communication. There is also a distinct difference between regular media and social media. Regular media can be thought of as a one-way. In that you can read a newspaper or watch the television, but you are limited on your ability to

give any feedback. However, social media is an interactive platform that allows immediate reaction to information shared.

Even as we break down social media, it is still a broad term, covering a large range of websites. But the one common link between these websites is that you are able to interact with the website and interact with other visitors. Examples of social media will include the following:

- **Social Bookmarking.** ([Del.icio.us](#), [Blinklist](#), [Simp](#)) Interact by tagging websites and searching through websites bookmarked by other people.
- **Social News.** ([Digg](#), [Propeller](#), [Reddit](#)) Interact by voting for articles and commenting on them.
- **Social Networking.** ([Facebook](#), [Hi5](#), [Last.FM](#)) Interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions.
- **Social Photo and Video Sharing.** ([YouTube](#), [Flickr](#)) Interact by sharing photos or videos and commenting on user submissions.
- **Wikis.** ([Wikipedia](#), [Wikia](#)) Interact by adding articles and editing existing articles.

The first recognizable social network site was launched in 1997. SixDegrees.com allowed users to create profiles, list their friends and, beginning in 1998, surf the friends lists. Each of these features existed in some form before SixDegrees, of course. Classmates.com allowed people to affiliate with their high school or college and surf the network for others who were also affiliated, but users could not create profiles or list friends until years later. SixDegrees was the first to combine these features.

From 1997 to 2001, a number of community tools began supporting various combinations of profiles and publicly articulated friends. Asian Avenue, BlackPlanet, and MiGente allowed users to create personal, professional, and dating profiles. Users could identify friends on their personal profiles without seeking approval for those connections (O. Wasow, personal communication, August 16, 2007). Likewise, shortly after its launch in 1999, LiveJournal listed uni-directional connections on user pages. LiveJournal's creator suspects that he fashioned these friends after instant messaging buddy lists (B. Fitzpatrick, personal communication, June 15, 2007). On

LiveJournal, people mark others as friends to follow their journals and manage privacy settings. The Korean virtual worlds site Cyworld was started in 1999 and added SNS features in 2001, independent of these other sites. Likewise, when the Swedish web community LunarStorm refashioned itself as an SNS in 2000, it contained friends lists, guestbooks, and diary pages (D. Skog, personal communication, September 24, 2007).

With the continuous improvement of the library, one of the significant changes during its automation was the incorporation of social media. Social media has become an essential part in the daily undertakings of our library. Two years ago we did not think we would need to use social media to be in communication with our users. However, with the constant growth and distribution of our student population and the ease of access to the internet, social media has become an essential part in keeping current and potential users well informed about our services. Our library has come to recognize that social media offers vast opportunities to engage with our users in initiatives that help our library grow and develop both its products and services. Our social media sites have been essential in the evaluation and improvement of our library and its services. We have also noted that the internet is more frequently used by young adults, thus the incorporation of social media. The current generation known as the Y generation is more of a digital generation as compared to the older generations. The selection of our social media sites was based on the popularity and frequency of use of the site. These sites have better formal communication channels than many of the other available sites. The main social media sites currently in use by our library are Facebook, Twitter and "Ask a Librarian".

### 2.1 Facebook

Facebook was officially launched in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and was originally known as "The facebook"; the name taken from the sheets of paper distributed to freshmen, profiling students and staff. Within 24 hours, 1,200 Harvard students had signed up, and after one month, over half of the undergraduate population had a profile. It became Facebook.com in August 2005 after the address was purchased for \$200,000. In September 2006, the network was extended beyond educational institutions to anyone with a registered email address. The site remains free to join, and makes a profit through advertising.

PML Facebook page was opened on 21st June 2011 and has been active since then. The page is

managed by five library staff who ensure it is regularly updated. The page currently has 4,642 followers, a number that is increasing daily. Our Facebook page updates on issues concerning primarily the library and its services, other important university activities and events, not forgetting events that may be of national importance as a way of promoting patriotism. This service has enabled users to get timely responses to their queries, interact with their colleagues in the university and its constituent campuses and also interact with other library staff. We have also noted that students from other universities have enrolled to our Facebook page. This is gratifying as we note that we are reaching more than just our clientele in our communication.

The University Librarian is given a monthly update on what is happening and any complaints that might have been brought forth. Our Facebook page has also been instrumental in showing our alumnis the developments that we have made as a library. It has enabled us to share pictures of the new library with people who may not be able to physically access it, especially our alumni.

Currently we are using our account to campaign for a peaceful election in Kenya that will take place on 4th march 2013. This is an important time in our country and we are trying to advocate for peace so that we do not have a recurrence of post-election violence that happened in 2007/2008.

## 2.2 Twitter

Our Twitter handle is also an important communication tool. Unlike Facebook, Twitter allows for a wider connection base, mainly to the university management. Although it is relatively new in usage, it is steadily gaining momentum.

## 2.3 Ask a Librarian

This is an email account that we use to answer questions from our patrons. The link to this account can be found on our official library website (<http://library.ku.ac.ke>). It is safe to say that this is our most interactive media site. Users who access our library and may have any queries have the opportunity to ask their questions directly via email. The email is checked three times a day to make sure that we minimize the response time. The University Librarian is also kept up to date on a monthly basis on the queries that are received, however, in cases where the queries might need special attention; the University Librarian will be informed immediately. Below are two examples of questions we receive and the responses we give to our users:

- **From Elvine to KU library**  
**Subject:** Chemistry  
**Question:** Can I access back issues for 100 Kenyan shillings (fundamentals to inorganic chemistry)  
**From KU library to Elvin**  
**Response:** You can access back issues online from the KU library website or through this link <http://digital-library.ku.ac.ke/h/>
  
- **From Teddy To KU library**  
**Subject:** Use of Library  
**Question:** I'm a MSC Finance student and so far we've not received the students ID. What's the process & requirement for registering with the library in order to start using the library services? I'm in City Campus and I don't know if this can be done from this side? Secondly, during the orientation there were passwords of various resources available in the e-library, how can I get those passwords?  
**From KU library to Teddy**  
**Response:** Thank you for your email. For a KU student to use the library, they need to come with their student ID. In your case you only need to come with your national ID and admission letter, until the student ID is provided to you. The only service you cannot access without your student ID is borrowing of library materials. For the E-library resources, you can get the password from any library within a KU campus.

## 3. Impact of Social Media in our Library

The incorporation of social media has been of increasing benefit to the library. Consequently, during the day to day running of the library, we are able to keep in constant communication with our users.

- In our library we have been able to use social media as a communication tool between us and our users that has enabled us to create a platform where questions asked are answered in a timely manner. With the usage of social media, our users have greatly benefited. Social media has come up as a cheaper means of communication that is instant and fast. We are also able to keep our users updated on the current happenings of our library. This means of communication is also boosted by the fact that most mobile

phones have access to the internet and users are able to log into social media sites anytime and anywhere.

- Secondly social media has also been a marketing tool for our library services and our information resources. Through our social media sites we have been able to enlighten users on the e-resources in the library, by sharing links and allowing users to directly access them online. People from different universities and countries are able to get information about our library, and may not necessarily need to be physically present to get assistance from our staff. This marketing strategy also enables us to reach potential users of the library and university as a whole. In a way, social media has put us on the international map.
- Thirdly social media has enabled us to modernize our library image and improve on our e-reputation. Since our library has been fully automated, lack of a social media platform would still leave us behind. Since we pride ourselves in being a postmodern library the incorporation of social media to our services is important as it enables us to maintain our status quo.

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