



Analysis of the questionnaire results to professionals of Portuguese public libraries on the social mission of the public library on Facebook

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Abstract: This work presents the results and the analysis of the questionnaire conducted among 99 professionals of Portuguese public libraries with Facebook page/profile at the beginning of the year 2014. It is part of a wider research - case study, using other techniques for data collection on the impact of Web 2.0 on the social role of Portuguese public libraries on the Facebook platform. The main purposes of the survey are to analyze how professionals from libraries explore the Facebook platform regarding the social mission, as well as collecting and analyzing their opinions/perceptions about the social mission of the public library and how Facebook contributes to develop it. The questionnaire was structured in six thematic sections: 1. Identification of the respondent 2. Characterization of the human resources of the library; 3. Use of Web 2.0 technologies by the library 4. Use of the library Facebook page 5. Opinion about the presence of the Public Library on Facebook 6. Opinion about the social mission of the public library on Facebook. The questions are closed type with multiple choice and with evaluation table. Open questions were used in order to better assess the respondents' opinion. This questionnaire was designed in the online system eSurvey Creator.

Keywords: Portugal; Facebook; Public Library; social mission of the public library; Questionnaire.

1. Introduction

There is a wide variety of descriptive studies designated by the term *Survey* (Coutinho, 2011). In this category, we include the questionnaire survey that aims to verify theoretical hypotheses and to analyze correlations that those hypotheses suggest (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 1995). The questionnaire is a specific technique for collecting data that can be used in various methods of investigation (Pickard, 2007).

In this study, the self-report questionnaires were used with a set of questions about a topic and we collected opinions, interests and factual information. They were administered by email. The data collection was obtained through questionnaire survey to professionals responsible for managing/editing the Facebook pages of Portuguese public libraries. With this data collection tools, there was the intention to access the unknown aspects (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 1995) and to find relevant information for conducting the study.

Besides the identity of the actors and institutions where they work, we intended to know the issues which characterized their social behaviors, reasons, beliefs and values about the issue of the social mission of the public library and the use of the Facebook (2004). In this sense, the questionnaire was exploratory, because the main objective was to provide clues for future study, and further describe the reality to study (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 1995).

The questions were of the closed type, except for two open type, which will not be discussed in this article because its analysis would occupy a great extension. This questionnaire was multiple-choice to reduce the possibility of the answer to be ambiguous. There was no concern about the sample for the collection of data by questionnaire because there was the intention of hearing all those responsible for public libraries/administrators of the Facebook page/profile (Kirkpatrick, 2011). The questionnaires were designed in the *eSurvey Creator* (2013) online system. The statistical treatment of the data from the questionnaires was worked with *eSurvey Creator* and with the *Microsoft Excel*.

The questionnaire was divided into six sections: 1. Identification of the respondent and the library; 2. Characterization of the library - human resources; 3 Characterization of the library - Web 2.0 tools; 4 Characterization of the library - Facebook; 5 Opinion on the presence of the Public Library on Facebook.; 6. Opinion on the social mission of the public library on Facebook.

In this work, only some results of block 5 and 6 will be briefly presented. The questionnaire was sent by email to 107 Portuguese public libraries on Facebook on the 28th January 2014. We obtained a total of 99 valid answers to the questionnaire, corresponding to 92.5% of the public libraries on Facebook. All data presented relate to March 2014.

2. Results

2.1 Characterization of public libraries and Facebook page/profile

The 99 Portuguese public libraries on Facebook represent a universe of 33% of all Portuguese public libraries, spread over various geographical regions of Portugal and Islands and match various types of libraries, which are determined according to the number inhabitants of the county to which they belong (Portugal. Direção-Geral do Livro e das Bibliotecas, 2009).

From the respondents who administer the Facebook page/ profile, 53% have both a leading position in the library and 47% have other functions. Concerning the specific training in management Social Networks, 54% of the 99 administrators of pages/profiles do not have specific training and to 37% of the respondents the knowledge about Social Networks are from Webinars and Workshops, and 9% have academic training in this area.

Regarding the type of presence on the social network, 81% of the libraries do it through a page, 19% with a profile. Two libraries indicate that they also have an open group and a library indicates that it has a closed group. Not all libraries have a guidance document with the editing rules defined for posting on Facebook, 16% of libraries confirm its existence, against 83% who say they do not have editorial and management guidelines.

2.2 Opinion on the presence of the Public Library on Facebook

The question on the opportunities of the presence of the public library on Facebook was placed indicating 20 predefined opportunities, which were classified by respondents on a scale of 1 (not important), 2 (little important), 3 (important) and 4 (very important) The items considered by libraries on average are shown in Table 1.

Facebook Opportunities	Average
Internal Communication	2.33
Using the intelligence and the collective, volunteer knowledge to create content (crowdsourcing)	3.10
Publishing general news	3.26
Mobilizing people for solidarity campaigns	3.36
Promoting social events	3.44
Spreading (republishing) the contents of the library website	3.44
Promoting social services	3.52
Promoting the community participation online to develop democracy	3.53
Communicating with users who do not visit the library physically	3.58
Amplifying the civic engagement with the local community	3.58
Improving the reference service	3.62
Collecting feedback from users about the library	3.71

Marketing	3.72
Providing resources from the library	3.73
Broadening the channels of communication with users	3.74
Strengthening the interaction between library and users	3.82
Dynamizing culturally	3.82
Sharing information	3.88
Promoting library events	3.93
Promoting library services	3.94

Table 1: Average of items classified as opportunities for public libraries on Facebook

In response to the question about whether the opportunity to use the contacts established in the social network interfere or not in improving relations with other institutions, the community, with library users, among others, we obtained the average results shown in table 2. The 18 facets for classification have been preset in the questionnaire.

Opportunities of Facebook contacts	Average
Concluding that a % of users registered in the library does not have Facebook profile	2.86
Realizing that a % of users registered in the library does not have access / internet at home	3.05
Realizing the lack of interest of the users of the library by Facebook	3.12
Noticing the lack of participation of users on the library page / profile on Facebook	3.15
Establishing partnerships with institutions	3.27
Establishing partnerships with individuals	3.31
Increasing collaboration of library users among them	3.37
Working cohesion between the users of the library page / profile	3.45
Revitalizing the public space online	3.56
Working the library cohesion with the services users	3.57
Knowing better the public of the services developed by the library	3.57
Establishing new relationships with the community in the area of intervention of the municipality	3.60
Increasing dialogue with users	3.61
Strengthening the sense of community, the collective identity	3.63
Building trust (the library in its community)	3.63
Increasing collaboration with library users	3.66
Enhancing online communication library - users	3.67
Increasing the visibility of the library to new audiences	3.85

Table 2: Average of items classified as opportunities to use the contacts established on Facebook

2.3 Opinion on the social mission of the public library on Facebook

In this group of questions, the topic of the social mission of the public library on Facebook was addressed and what publics it should achieve to perform this task.

In table 3, the 21 predefined facets of the social mission of the public library on Facebook are presented. The respondents rated them on a scale of 1 (not important), 2 (somewhat important), 3 (important) to 4 (very important). The averages of those opinions on the social mission of the public library on Facebook can be observed in the table.

Facets of the social mission	Average
Promoting peace / international understanding	3.16
Ensuring Human Rights	3.30
It is a change agent in the community	3.31
Preserving civil rights	3.32
It is the meeting place of the community / community center	3.34
Giving social support (school books stock)	3.37
Cooperating with local, national and international partners	3.39
Being the center of lifelong learning	3.43
Being the center of personal / self-training development	3.44
Promoting intercultural dialogue	3.45
Fighting illiteracies	3.47
Contributing to the active role of the citizen	3.48
Promoting digital inclusion	3.51
Stimulating the exchange of contents	3.58
Contributing to the sense of community (integration)	3.59
Promoting social inclusion	3.61
Improving the relationship between the library and the users	3.61
Promoting services targeting community	3.64
Offering other spaces beyond the physical space	3.66
Allowing free access to information and services	3.72
Dynamizing the local culture	3.73

Table 3: Average of the opinions on the facets of the social mission of the public library on Facebook

Following the previous question, it was questioned what publics should be considered to fulfill the social mission of the public library on Facebook. In this question, 15 types of audiences were predefined to rate. The average of the opinions are presented in Table 4.

Types of Public	Average
Public distinguished by gender	3.42
Public of ethnic minority	3.42
Senior public	3.47

Public with few economic returns	3.49
Public affected by the current economic crisis	3.49
Public hospitalized / temporarily unable to come to the library	3.5
Public with special needs	3.51
Immigrant public	3.52
Public with special needs (motor difficulties)	3.53
School children	3.55
Young public	3.55
Unemployed public	3.56
Adult public	3.56
Public isolated in space	3.63
Ordinary public	3.69

Table 4: Average of opinions about the public to consider in the social mission of the public library on Facebook

3. Discussion

3.1 Characterization of public libraries on Facebook and Facebook page/profile

The case study includes a population of 99 Portuguese public libraries with page/profile on Facebook, from a universe of 107 libraries surveyed in Facebook in January 2014. The population involved in the study is very satisfactory (92.5%). From the analysis of the questionnaire regarding the characterization of the 99 public libraries that have a presence on Facebook, 46 % of the libraries are type BM1 (Portugal. Direção-Geral do Livro dos Arquivos e das Bibliotecas, 2013) which means that half of these libraries are located in communities with fewer than 20.000 inhabitants. In the first instance, this audience may be easier to reach and follow due to the proximity that can be created between civil society, educational and charity institutions, and cultural associations, among others. Theoretically, in an online community created through the Facebook pages / profile, around the public library, a similar situation could happen. This aspect will be studied later.

In previous studies (Alvim, 2011) (Alvim & Calixto, 2013), a similar number of library pages / Facebook profile was found, and it appears that the universe is pretty much the same since the beginning of 2013.

The administrators of the libraries Facebook page/profile do not have specific training in the management of Social Networks (54%). That means that half of the Facebook pages/profiles of Portuguese public libraries are run by individuals who know little of this reality.

3.2 Opinion on the presence of the Public Library on Facebook

In the question about the opinion on the opportunities of the presence of the Public Library on Facebook, the facets of the social mission of the public library were also

included. There was the intention to find out whether respondents see them as opportunities to implement them in the virtual sphere and to act subsequently in accordance with the social mission.

The items *Marketing* (3.72) *Sharing information* (3.88), *Offering the library resources* (3.73), *Promoting the library services* (3.94) did not obtain rating in value 1 (not important) and 2 (little important). The respondents rated these items exclusively with value 3 (important) and 4 (very important). These results show that respondents value the traditional library services (sharing information and offering resources), as well as the promotion and the marketing of the library and its services to present themselves online in the social network.

The items which obtained higher averages: *Promoting the library services* (3.94) and *Promoting the library events* (3.93) belong to the area of Marketing and imply promoting-raising the status of the library and its events.

The item *Internal Communication* obtained the lowest average (2.33), which demonstrates that the respondents may not have a concrete idea about the possibility of using Facebook as a tool for internal communication within their services. Indeed, only one library said to have a closed group on Facebook for internal communication among all employees.

No average of value 4 was obtained. Some of the items were close to the average 3.94 and 3.93 (*Promoting library services* and *Promoting library events*), but no facet was unanimously accepted by all as a great opportunity of Facebook.

The first facet associated with the social mission of the public library appears in 5th place (in a group of 20 items, table 1): *Strengthening the interaction between the library the users* (3.82). The items with social facets only come ranked 11th and following: *Amplifying civic engagement with the local community* (3.58), *Promoting the online participation of the community as a mean to develop democracy* (3.53), *Promoting social services* (3.52) *Promoting social events* (3.44), *Mobilizing people to solidarity campaigns* (3.36) (table 5) .

Facets of social mission	Average
Mobilizing people for solidarity campaigns	3.36
Promoting events of a social nature	3.44
Promoting social services	3.52
Promoting the participation of the online community as a mean to develop democracy	3.53
Amplifying civic engagement with the local community	3.58
Strengthening the interaction between the library and users	3.82

Table 5: Facets of the social mission of the public library on Facebook

The average rating of these items on the opportunities of Facebook for libraries identifies the facets of the social mission with a low average (Table 1 to 5). All social facets are rated in a interval that can be considered median. This set of 20 opportunities of the social mission of the public library were little recognized.

The item *Strengthening the interaction between the library and users* is the only one of this group of facets of social mission that is in the top five of Table 1. It reveals that the respondents place their trust in this social network to interact more with their users.

Table 2 presents the averages about the opportunities that the contacts of the social networking bring to the library. The 18 items presented are potential opportunities obtained in those contacts established on Facebook.

The item with the highest average (3.85) is to *Enhancing the visibility of the library to new audiences*. It was found that the lack of knowledge about the online audience of the library page is a reality - the item *Concluding that a % of users enrolled in the library does not have Facebook profile* (2.86) and about the public that attends spaces of the Internet - the item *Realizing that a % of users enrolled in the library does not have access / internet at home* (3.05) - are the least ranked items. The respondents expressed ignorance about these issues, which presuppose the existence of studies for the public of each library. Even the research work that exists in Portugal is limited to very general public (Haddon, Livingstone, & EU Kids Online, 2012) (Sequeiros, 2007) (Quick, Prior, Toombs, Taylor, & Currenti, 2013) or to specific sectors of the public or to specific libraries (Sequeiros, 2010) (Bezerra, 2011). These results demonstrate a desire of the respondents and their libraries to reach new audiences and they reveal the intention of the presence on Facebook as an opportunity to increase the visibility and the recognition of online library.

The item *Improving online communication library - users* (3.67) comes in 2nd place. In this set of items, it may be seen as the essential function of a public library in the online space, in this case through Facebook.

The items classified with high averages are related to the opportunities acquired in the physical space with the users present and in the online library space: increasing collaboration between library and users, building confidence, strengthening the sense of community, increasing dialogue, establishing new relationships with the community, working cohesion, among others. These are very rich facets covering the two spheres of the library activity (in person and online).

The items that relate exclusively to the online sphere obtained averages less than 3.56 (*Revitalizing the online public space*, *Working cohesion among users of the library site /profile*, *Perceiving the low interest of the users of the library in Facebook*, *concluding that a % of users enrolled in the library does not have Facebook profile*, *Realizing that a % of users enrolled in the library does not have access / internet at home*).

3.3 Opinion on the social mission of the public library on Facebook

The first aspect addressed in the questions about the social mission of the public library on Facebook was to know if the library in this online space can fulfill this mission. 21 predefined facets of the social mission are presented in table 3.

The facets with the highest average *Streamlining the local culture* (3.73) and *Allowing free access to information and services* (3.72) are traditional facets of the general mission

of public libraries. The more specific opinions on the social mission of public libraries had lower averages and do not stand in the first places in the table 3.

In the third place on average it comes the item *Offering other spaces beyond the physical space* (3.66). This so valued opinion (66%) is the recognition of the excellence of the online space provided by Facebook and the recognition of its social importance.

The second aspect of the opinion about the social mission of the public library was which public to consider in the Facebook page / profile for fulfilling that mission. Table 4 presents the facets and the averages.

The highest average was assigned to the *General Public* (3.69). It demonstrates that the majority of the respondents do not know the public online and chose a generic audience for their Facebook posts.

The facet *Public isolated in space* (3.63) was second in the overall average. It is an expectable situation because Facebook approaches online audiences who for some reason cannot move to the library - personal difficulties, motor disabilities, geographically displaced, among others.

The facets *Public affected by the current economic crisis* and *Public with few economic returns* had very low averages (3.49), which demonstrates that libraries are giving little significance to these public recently affected by the Portuguese socioeconomic framework in financial crisis. The same is not applied to the *Unemployed Public* (3.56) which is in 3rd place in the rating. This audience is recognized and distinguished. The facet *Public senior* was averaged 3.47. It was devalued perhaps because it is a public that does not access to new technologies and does not have Internet at home. This situation will be studied later.

4. Conclusions

This work is part of a wider investigation on the impact of Web 2.0 in the social mission of Portuguese public libraries observed in the social network Facebook. The Web 2.0 technologies and the social networks are free platforms to divulgate content and potentially generating shared information. They can be platforms of intensive use in times of economic crisis because their use has not increased costs and they can be great tools to prosecute the social mission of the public library. The case study focuses on the Portuguese public libraries on Facebook.

In future work we intend to relate the questionnaire data with the data collected through interviews to leaders of the public libraries and the data obtained from observation of the pages/Facebook profiles of libraries, to build the research conclusions. Thus, the conclusions of this survey are still fragmentary and inconclusive about the case study. Anyway, we collected unknown data, relevant information and clues for further work.

The percentage of 92.5 % of responses by those responsible for the libraries to whom the questionnaire was sent, is very satisfactory attending the large number of questions and their complexity (we required an opinion on the subject), aggravated by the time needed to fill it in. (approximately 20 minutes).

The data collected in the questionnaire show the opinions of those responsible for the administration of the Facebook page / profile, and 53 % of these have a leader role in the library and 37% have some training in the management of social networks. This dual situation gives some reliability and objectivity to the answers placed.

Concerning the opportunities of the presence of the library on Facebook, the opinions focused on the items *Promoting the library services* (3.94) and *Promote library events* (3.93). They are items which reflect libraries turned on to themselves, for marketing their services and events. The opportunities of the Facebook to improve civic engagement with the local community, to communicate, to create links and networks, among others (Garcia Giménez, 2010) were undervalued.

It was expected that the leaders of the libraries that were surveyed, in time of economic crisis and social recession in Portugal, could develop opinions more focused in the social opportunities, in the facets that aim to improve the state of well-being of populations and to reduce social exclusion. In the answers analyzed, the facets of the social mission of the public library are placed second by the ideas already very widespread and vulgarized on the mission of the public library and the free access to information and promotion of the culture.

The opinions about the Public to achieve in the social mission focus on the general public and the adult audience, devaluing the public affected by the crisis or the public with few economic returns. The public affected by social and digital exclusion are hardly mentioned, and even the ones referenced, as the ethnic minorities, had little relevant averages. Also this matter should be better investigated in the future. The sociological research on public of the public Library is one of the tasks that should be promoted. We must investigate whether the results observed in the opinions of the respondents are the result of inadequate training or of the lack of awareness of the professionals working in public libraries, which are still focused on the issues of information, the provision of informative resources, the promotion of reading habits and in the literary and cultural activities. This topic has been raised in the conclusions of the 13th Meeting National Network of Public Libraries (Calixto, 2012) that pointed to a devaluation of the social function of the public library by professionals.

So there is the need to disclose, update and train professionals to work the social mission of the library because they have a wide field of work in the area of citizenship, integration and social cohesion, and of the claim of a role that can generate social capital through inclusive actions, using the human and training resources that they have to improve the quality of life for users. These services may be online by taking advantage of the technologies and of the open and free programs like the social networks.

It is time to rethink the social mission of the public library. Despite the political and ideological constraints to which they are imposed, they may draw social procedures that do not dilute the rights of citizens, strengthen the concept of the common good and the concept of democracy, increase the share capital (Audunson, Vårheim, Aabø, & Holm, 2007) aiming to improve the quality of life of communities (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010), working the concept of libraries for all, engaging in the social and digital inclusion

(Muddiman et al., 2001). The public libraries on Facebook can be a strength for the social change.

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