"Social networking: a powerful tool for the lis professionals in digital era"

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Abstract: Social networking is a social structure that allow user to interact and work collaboratively with other users. Today social networking websites are most popular as well as widely used among people of all age group to share interests, information, activities, ideas, thoughts, experiences, or real-life connections. Online social networking platforms have givev a new direction in promoting library products and services. Social networking is becoming more important for libraries and many libraries are finding that when they use properly it can be a great tool to save effort, money and promote library services and collections. There are many social networking tools available today, and some are so widely known like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, LIS link. However, most of the organisations, including library and information centres have realised the importance of social networking in their organisations so that social networking can be apply inside the organisations. Now it is time for LIS professionals to embrace a new embedded technology into their day-to-day activities. The aim of the paper is to assess the role of librarians and information science professionals relating to the use of social networking sites in the libraries. The paper also discusses about the Social Networking Services and their types. In this paper, the author has intended to describe the possible implications of social networking technologies in the field of library and information services in the web 2.0 milieu. In addition, an attempt has been made to illustrate different social software tools and their effective utilization in the social networking environment. It offers a balanced overview of the pros and cons of using social media and discusses a sensible social media policy that will help guide organizational activities.

Keywords: Social Network, Web 2.0, Social Networking Services, Social Networking Tools, LIS Links, Facebook, Twitter

1.   Introduction

Social networking is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users, including the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact with web world. It refers to a process of relationship building among a group of people who have a common interest. It is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities. The use of social networking systems is increasing rapidly and people are now connected to each other on through different devices like computers, laptops, I-phones, notepads, tablets, android phones and other compatible devices (Chidnandappa, S. & DharnendraPrabhu, U. 2006).

Social networking tools are helpful for stirring up interactions among users. Social networking tools allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events, and interests with people in their network. Users can create their own profiles, make friends, participate in chat rooms, and hold private conversations. There are many different social networking tools available today, and some are so widely known like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter (Paul, Kumarjit. 2012, p.78-80). Social network tools have exploded over the last decade and library professionals have started to question and explore how this technology can be used in libraries. These tools enable library &

information science professionals to pull themselves out of the dark ages of the pre-Internet era and push themselves into the current information environment. Social networking tools also provide opportunities for library and information science (LIS) professionals to connect and learn from one another by developing a Personal Learning Network. Social networking service is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. Social networking services can be divided into two categories as Internal Social Networking and External Social Networking.

2.   Why Social Networking?

Social networking has become one of the most important parts of our daily life which enables us to communicate with each other. Social media is a great way to protect and build our digital reputations. Social networking tools make it possible for us to be proactive in maintaining, building and protecting your personal brand and help spread word-of-mouth about our books. Social networking is very informative, entertaining and it also aware us about various situations or events which are going on in the society or in the world at large (Paul, Kumarjit. 2014, p.53-55). Social networking facilitates us to also enhance our viewpoints as it enables us certain interactive learning activities also. Social networking is a

platform where our creations and thoughts are presented to a huge lot of masses.

2.1 Opportunity to Meet New People

Social networking provides an opportunity to interact with new people around the world. Users can access to millions of profiles from around the world through social networking tools. Before the advent of social networking tools like Facebook, Orkut, LIS links etc., chat rooms were the only way to interact new people on the internet. But, the main disadvantage of chat rooms was that you may not be able to know the person with whom you are interacting with. The introduction of profiles on social networking sites allowed people to know more satisfactory information about a person like educational background, working background etc. before they interact with them.

2.2 Create Groups and Share Interests

The Internet is a great place to shake off shyness, meet new people from around the world, and form friendships with people who share your interests and passions. Social networking tool is a platform where people are either interested in meeting new people as well as people share similar interests. Most of the popular social networks sites allow users to create groups. These groups allow people to share their interests and hobbies. A group acts just as a club whose membership is open to anybody who share similar interests. It is very useful way to create groups and start targeted to those who share your interests and become friends with the group members. It will be much easier to make friends with someone who shares a mutual interest in the things you do, than a complete and total stranger.

2.3 Free and Easy to Use

Social networking tools has some major features like social collaboration, easy surfing, easy participation, discussion forums, events management, blogging and commenting, media uploading, multimedia enabled, private messaging can be easily possible by communicating thousands networks, interactive and collaborative learning are some of the important features that we can see in social networking. Most of the highly popular social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LIS links all are free which are mostly make their money through advertisements.

2.4 User-friendly in Nature

Popular social networking sites are built in such a way that they are very much user friendly, multimodal user interface. Most of the sites are designed in such ways that are very easy to navigate and require very less knowledge of the internet. Infect they offer a better way of connecting with new people than other internet channels like bulletin boards and emails. Users can create their own profiles, make friends, participate in chat rooms, and hold private conversations. Users can access their profile anytime from anywhere. Social networking tool inspires active participation and makes users more scope to build him user friendly to the information system (Brandignity).

3. Advantages of Social networking

Some of the important advantages of using the social networking sites by the Library and Information professionals are noted below:

➢ The main advantage of social networking site is that it helps in establishing connection with people, friends and relatives. It tend to have an open membership means that anyone can join in and also to focus on a particular topic or interest.

➢ The social networking websites can be accessed from any part of the globe. This helps the students to establish communication with LIS professionals through which they can improve their knowledge.

➢ Social networking sites helps in sharing one's view, share pictures, share interests and lots of other stuffs.

➢ Through these sites the LIS professionals can establish contact with entrepreneurs, corporate people and can gain valuable information from them.

➢ It helps students in interacting with one another and share ideas or thoughts which helps in improving student's creativity.

➢ Through social networking sites like Facebook, LIS links and LinkedIn one can become a member and can also post relevant information about their organization.

➢ Social networking sites can be used to enhance library services through advertisements, promotions of new technologies.

➢ Anyone can create professional groups where doctors, lawyers, librarians, students, poets, writers, social workers etc. can communicate and express themselves by exchanging messages, comments and exchange ideas.

4. Disadvantages of Social Networking

Although it is true that there are a lot of advantages of using social networking tools

yet it has few disadvantages also. Some of the disadvantages are noted below:

➤ One of the major disadvantages of using social networking sites are sometimes users get addicted to it. They used to spend hours in those social networking sites which can obviously degrade the professionals' organizational performance.

➤ Organizations need to take security precautions when creating passwords and sharing password related information with inside employees.

➤ Social networking tools used in the professional environment are not always successful. Communicating with such technologies creates a relaxed feeling in among the individuals in the professional environment.

➤ Some professionals may tend to use to these social networking sites till mid night or even more which can obviously lead to health related problems such as headache, back pain, eyesight problems etc.

➤ Social networking arise a gap between people who have familiar to computer technology and people who do not occupy knowledge in computer.

5. Application of Social Networking Tools in Library Environment

Library & information science professionals always want to be able to share information resources with patrons, students and faculties in the easiest way possible, and social networking offers a great way to do just that. Social networking tools help LIS professionals to share information with patrons and students in the easiest way for digital library environment (Mishra, C. 2008). LIS professionals can use social networking tools into three broad activities in library and information services. These three activities are Information communication, knowledge organization and Knowledge distribution. These are mentioned below:-

5.1 Information Communication:

Tools	Its Applications
Facebook	Facebook as an outreach and marketing tool. It is where LIS professionals today are doing much of their communication with one another. This makes it a natural choice as a medium for use by others wanting to reach them. Many LIS professionals on Facebook published profile updates, create professionals groups and expressed their interests as they related to their jobs and educational backgrounds.
Twitter	Customer service via this micro blogging application, often takes less time as well as less money than a dedicated call center. Twitter is not only a more interesting platform than phone or email, but gives staff a better picture of their impact on others. Twitter can be use to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections.
Orkut	Many school libraries around the world BAN orkut or other social networks. But many more LIS professionals take this tool as an opportunity. There are orkut accounts for libraries and that act as an information and publicity tool. Students are computer savvy today. For converting a traditional library environment into modern library environment this tool acts as a boon to attracting more users.
LIS Links	This particular tool is designed for the LIS professionals by the LIS professional. It is the most popular and biggest professional social network in the field of Library and Information Science in India. Now it is the India's First and Largest Social Network for Library and Information Science Professionals. LIS link provides a platform for the librarians to offer latest news or information for the users, Provides information regarding events, announcements, jobs/vacancies, Book reviews, information about new books and Internet Resources, Provides discussions with subject experts.
MySpace	MySpace also has an area where LIS professionals can post their blog entries. They can use this tool to advertise and promote library and information products and services as well as to communicate with your clienteles. Because of its popularity and its different classic features, internet marketers, online entrepreneurs, publishers, and vendors use this tool as a platform of their marketing and advertising strategy.

Blogs	Blogs are increasingly used by LIS professionals as promotional, alerting and marketing tools; providing a useful method of promoting new services, alerting users to changes and offering advice and support. By creating blog library professionals can promotes library events and programs, post new book reviews and book award lists, create an online book discussion area by asking readers to recommend books to others. They can also be able to disseminate information to thousands of people at one time.
LinkedIn	For LIS professionals this social networking site is a great way to get library patrons connected with the people that can help them find information. Whether that is, faculty, authors, historians, or other sources, they can find them in your LinkedIn network. This is a platform where the all kinds of professional community engages, interacts, connects and refers.
Ning	It helps us to create a safe and secure place online for like-minded people. Library professionals can use this tool to get connected with clienteles, library associations or organizations at various levels, and more. They can also use it to share information with many people at a time.

5.2   Information Distribution:

Tools	Its Applications
Flickr	Flickr is the photography-based social networking site. It is an image distribution tool to organize photos as well as share them with the world. It has the ability to join a virtually endless number of photography groups, one could join centered around nearly every topic imaginable, and more are formed every day. Library professionals can use this tool to share captured images of various workshops, conferences and other programes that are organised with-in the campus. They can also create image sets with metadata, as well as take advantage of the many plug-in available for Flickr users.
Wikipedia	LIS professionals can use this tool to provide general knowledge or a basic explanation of something useful information to the user because it is very quick and easy to find relevant information without spoiling valuable time thorugh a bunch of google searches. The best thing about using wikipedia for research is that most of the pages provide sources which will take us to other sites.
SlideShare	SlideShare is a community tool that delivers global distribution for sharing presentations. It is a Web 2.0 based slide hosting service. LIS professionals can use this tool to upload and share PowerPoint, PDF, or Open Office presentations. Anyone on SlideShare can find presentations on their topic of interest. Users can tag presentation, and download or embed them into their own websites or blogs.
You Tube	YouTube is one of an emerging class of tool that allows its users to form communities and share around their content. E-learning tutorials, events and others online library services can be effectively promoted and webcast through YouTube. LIS professionals can use this platform to post personally developed videos of nearly any variety online from animation to personal recordings or other library service relevant recordings.
Teacher Tube	A free community for sharing instructional videos, audio, documents, photos, groups and other blogs for teachers and students. LIS professionals can create and share virtually any video with library clientele trough this tool. It provides an excellent opportunity for instructor-librarian collaboration. Instructors can guide students to helpful library resources, and vice versa.
Second Life	Second Life is a platform for those whose imagination has beyond limit. LIS professionals can use this tool to create a virtual library with streamed media, discussions, classes, and more. They can also share their virtual properties and services with one another.
PBwiki	PBwiki is a personal wiki that provide a personal amount of spaces for its users really useful for keeping track to do lists, project ideas etc. It provides a controlled access platform that means only the registered user can have editing privileges, while others can only read. It encourages collaboration from students, a way to showcase work, and offers a central gathering point for information.

Community Walk	CommunityWalk allows us to make our own map of more than one address. It offers a geographical way to interpret text or events. LIS professionals can use this tool for improving better library services in terms of clientele satisfaction through making instructions, such as make a map and showing users about how to reach the library, how to reach the different sections of the library, where to find a book, where is the reference section, or walk them through a geographical timeline.
Stumble Upon	It is the new way to discover new and interesting stuff from across the Web. It is a tool that finds and recommends web content to its users. LIS professionals can use this tool to discover highly rated web pages, photos and videos that are personalized to their tastes and interests.

5.3   Knowledge Organization:

Tools	Its Applications
Library Thing	This social cataloging network is great for librarians, and you can catalog along with Amazon, the Library of Congress, and more than 200 other libraries around the world. You'll get recommendations and easy tagging as well. Web 2.0 software to display special groupings of books and connect them to other readers' choices. Useful to promote a piece of the library collection.
lib.rario.us	A place that allows LIS professionals to catalogue and share the things such as their personal books, CDs, DVDs, Journals and music collections online for easy access and tracking. Once they add them or tag them, they become a part of larger community where they can discuss about what they collect, read, and watch.
lib.az.us	A powerful tool for online collection development training for small, rural libraries in each section i.e., overview, policies, needs assessment, weeding etc. offers basic, sound information, links with details, specialized vocabulary if needed.
Netvibes	A personalized dashboard publishing platform for the web. People prefer this tool to publish all aspects of their daily digital lives. Its common uses are brand monitoring for guide clients and customers across internet media sources all in one place, e-reputation management for tracking newly born trending topics, information product marketing for drag and drop publishing interface.
del.icio.us	It is a most popular social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing and discovering web bookmarks. With this social bookmarking tool, LIS professionals can tag each of their bookmarks with freely chosen index terms; create a user directory for library patrons, links with similar topics together to form a stack page.
aNobii	Online reading community tools built by readers for readers which allow its users to catalogues their books and rate, share their library through other social networking tools like facebook and twitter, review and discuss them with other readers, find readers with similar interest and browse their shelves through online library.

For LIS professionals, user satisfaction should be the first and foremost priority and they have to collect and disseminate the right information to the right reader at the right time in a right manner from anywhere. Information distribution is the major part and crucial area where LIS professionals should take a look seriously while considering and designing library and information activities in digital age. These tools make it easy to collect, organize and share information from anywhere. Social networking tools can helps the LIS professionals to organized knowledge resources in library environment for getting useful handy information which can be accessible with the information and communication technologies. With these social networking tools, it is much easier than ever before to stay in touch, organized resources, share ideas/thoughts, find people engaged in different field in different region and well-connected.

6.   Conclusion

Social networking tool has given us a great way to protect and build our digital reputations. These tools enable library professionals to pull-out themselves out of the dark ages of the traditional pre-Internet era and put themselves into the today's ICT era. The success of any social networking sites ranges from tiny to big mainly depends on its users interests, contributions, and motivations along with information and communication technology which is the backbone that makes our life become easier to communicate and exchange ideas/ thoughts/ information to fulfil a particular community requirements. Today with these tools it is very easy of searching conversations, the ability to set alerts to help us monitor our names, the constant availability of learning opportunities, job opportunities and many more ways to communicate and interact with others. The popularity of social networking sites has come with its unique features that are frequently used by the users of many organisations, no matter in which organisation or who are the users.

In India, the practice of using social networking tools as a platform for rendering services to the users of the libraries are still at very low level. A suitable plan and strong evaluation needs to be look while implementing social networking tools in libraries. The possible implication of social networking tools can be successful by conducting maximum research and experiment on social networking from different point of view on libraries. In libraries, librarians' or library authorities are the sole custodian to accomplish the task of planning and implementing of social networking on libraries. Library users should have possess some knowledge of using social networking and sufficient training should be provided to library staffs also to accomplish the task of successful implementation of social networking in libraries. LIS professional should also be aware of the cyber laws as they can provide awareness program relating to the effective use of the social networking.

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