Social Media and Academic Libraries: Current Trends and Future Challenges

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Abstract

Academic libraries are increasingly using social media to serve the users community because of the changes in rendering online information services, changes in adopting technologies, changes in social interaction, changes in service context, changes in procurement of information resources. Of late, academic libraries are using social media extensively for communicating with their library member groups. The development of ICT and social media plays vital role for collecting information and distribution of information.

Keywords

Social media, Academic libraries, Social network

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1. Introduction

Social network sites (SNSs) have increasingly become an important part of students’ everyday lives; however, to what extent are they playing a role in the academic lives of university students? University students are frequent users of social media; yet, limited research has applied in-depth investigations into the extent that students are embracing certain social media for informal learning.

Understanding how students are using SNSs outside of the conventional classroom mainly to support learning, may provide guidance about how social media could be integrated into the formal university context.

The emergence of Internet-based social media has made it possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of like-minded or same professionals about products and the companies that provide them. Thus, the impact of consumer-to-consumer communications has been greatly magnified in the marketplace. This article argues that social media is a hybrid element of the promotion mix because in a traditional sense it enables companies to talk to their customers, while in a non-traditional sense it enables customers to talk directly to one another. The content, timing and frequency of the social media-based conversations occurring between consumers are outside the direct control of managers. This stands in contrast to the traditional integrated marketing communications paradigm whereby a high degree of control is present. Therefore, managers must learn to shape consumer discussions in a manner that is consistent with the organization’s mission and performance goals. They include providing consumers with networking platforms, and using blogs, social media tools, and promotional tools to engage customers.

Digital librarians stand to gain a lot from engaging their users in conversations through the use of social media. Since digital librarians typically direct their energy toward the more traditional aspects of managing digital collections (e.g., curation, preservation, acquisitions, cataloging), they often lose sight of a fundamental concept of building a successful digital collection. The library collection is only a means to an end. Specifically, that "end" is the knowledge creation and it occurs through conversations facilitated by the librarian. A social networking program provides a way for digital librarians to develop rapport with users, extend general
awareness of the digital collection, and establish the librarian as a knowledgeable, helpful, and easily accessible source of authoritative information regarding a given subject area. When done poorly, however, it reinforces the idea that the library is disconnected from the most important conversations and discussions and contains little of relevance to the vast majority of potential users. Funders may trim a collection’s budget when they see a lack of real impact on users. When social networking, or some sort of marketing, is not engaged, the library’s risks becoming isolated and needing to rely upon the good will and interest of a chosen few to ensure its continued existence. By drawing on the concepts and concrete strategies described in the five principles above, digital librarians will be able to implement a successful social media program, and ultimately prove the value of their collections by establishing themselves as essential participants in knowledge-creating conversations.

2. Social Media Defined

Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation (social curation is collaborative sharing of Web content organized around one or more particular themes or topics), and wikis are among the different types of social media.

Defined broadly, social media encompasses communications and experiences that are: Distributed electronically by organizations and individuals Consumed on desktop and mobile devices, shared electronically and in print by diverse individuals discussed by an engaged population. Today, social media is commonly encountered in the context of online software applications like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Flicker where text, media, links, and opinions are shared, discussed, and redistributed.

3. Various Types Social Media Technologies

Social Media is the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as “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." Furthermore, social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of techno self-studies. Popular social media network is discus below.

3.1 Facebook

Facebook is social media network. It facilitates the information communication and images sharing and also instant communication purpose it helps the library readers. Online social networking, especially Facebook, has numerous pedagogical advantages for both lecturers and students “Social networking can support students’ indirect resources, thoughts, ideas, productions, writings, notes, etc. This kind of sharing can provide students with insights into the workings of other students”

3.2 Twitter

According to research survey, twitter is the most preferred social media channel for librarians because, it is quick, easy and concise and it is possible to schedule tweets. Twitter is a form of free micro-blogging which allows users to send and receive short public messages called tweets. Tweets are limited to no more than 140 characters, and can include links to blogs, web pages, images, videos and all other material online. You can start tweeting in 10 minutes, anytime, from your computers, smart phone.

3.3 WhatsApp

WhatsApp Messenger is a proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for smartphones and selected feature phones that uses the internet for communication. WhatsApp Inc. was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, both former employees of Yahoo. The company is based in Mountain View, California and employs 55 people. It is currently in the process of takeover after Facebook announced its acquisition of WhatsApp Inc. In addition to
text messaging, users can send each other images, video and audio media
messages as well as, their location using integrated mapping features.

3.4 YouTube

It is a video-sharing website, headquartered in San Bruno, California. The service
was created by three former PayPal employees in February 2005 and has been
owned by Google since late 2006. YouTube is popular in academic libraries for
creation of guides and induction and the video clippings are used for
demonstration purpose through which we train the readers regarding use of
library resources. Google Groups: This is a feature of Google application that
makes it easy to communicate with the groups of people such as project teams,
departments, office locations and special interest groups for send email to group
members, invite members to group meetings, sharing of contents and online
discussions and also question and answers purpose it is the best social media for
online mass communication.

4. Advantages of Social Media Technologies

- Facilitates open communication, leading to enhanced information
discovery and delivery.

- Allows students to discuss ideas, post news, ask questions and share links.

- Provides an opportunity to widen user contacts.

- Targets a wide audience, making it a useful and effective recruitment tool.

5. Disadvantages of Social Media Technologies

- Opens up the possibility for hackers to commit fraud and launch spam and
virus attacks.

- Increases the risk of people falling prey to online scams that seem genuine,
resulting in data or identity theft.
6. Conclusion

Organizing a public awareness forum such as library orientation, conferences, symposia, workshops to create awareness and educate librarians and users on the social networking services and applications. This will help to stimulate new ideas, sensitize and create awareness to utilize the library resources to maximum extent.

References


