



## **Social Media Use in Libraries and Information Services in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors CAD and GSM designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author DSMG managed the analyses of the study. Author PUI managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study was carried out to review the use of social media in Nigeria libraries and information services. The review dealt extensively with the dynamics social media brought into library services in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The technological advancement of the 21st century brought by advent of social media has great impacts on library and information services in Nigeria just like any other place across the globe. There is need for the professionals in library science or services to change their service delivery to end users along the line of social media usage with emergence of social sites such as Facebook, Myspace, Flickr, YouTube, Library Thing, Ning in which information can be easily sourced from by users Libraries in Nigeria are therefore facing challenges regarding the ability to provide proactive and more value added services to meet the ever changing needs of the end users. The reviewed article therefore made an attempt to examine the present scenario in library services delivery in Nigeria tertiary institution with these new and emerging social media technologies as well as looking at challenges facing Nigerian tertiary institution libraries in the use of these social media and to identify possible solutions to these challenges. The study concluded that to some extent social media utilization has been introduced by librarians in tertiary institutions

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libraries in Nigeria and that usage of social media by librarians in promoting library and information resources and services cannot be overemphasized. The study also discovered that lack or inadequate finance, poor power supply, lack of training of library staff on social media usage and limited bandwidth in the institution as the major challenges facing the usage of social media in Nigerian tertiary institution libraries. The study therefore, recommends that adequate finance should be promptly provided by the parent institutions to the libraries to enhances the use of social media to promote library and information resources and services in Nigerian tertiary institution libraries.

*Keywords: Libraries; social media; information services; Nigeria.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Library professions in Nigerian tertiary institution and the country at large have witnessed great improvement through social connections/networking's. Social networking simply means a process of building relationship among group of people with common interest and ideology. Social networking is achieved through the use of social media. The emergence of social media in Nigeria especially among the youth populace was principally for the purpose of socializing. Anyanwu, Ossai-Onah and Iroeze [1], reported that Nigerian undergraduates have knowledge of social media tools but are not using them for their academic purpose, rather they are using them for socialization purposes. The geometrical and exponential growth experience in the usage of social media in the country and among the students in Nigerian tertiary institutions have resulted in the need for libraries to move along with the trends of time. It therefore become imperative that librarians in the country must get themselves acquainted with the rudimentary of such social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in order meet the needs of their ever growing and sophisticated library users. Libraries have adopted the usage of these social media tools In interacting with readers, researchers and other users especially considering the present economic meltdown in Nigeria, where budgetary allocations to libraries have been perpetually on the decline, therefore social media tools have become the means of serving our library users in a more specialized, interactive, and value added way without incurring unnecessary expenses. Services rendered by libraries include lending, referral, referencing, indexing and abstracting. However, the awareness of the availability of these resources and services in various libraries in Nigerian tertiary institutions by the users to some extent determined the level of their satisfaction with such resources and services. The important channel through which these services and

resources can efficiently be fast tracked by librarians is through the use of social media platform. The fact that the basic values of the libraries are gradually heading towards information change at a time where internet connectivity is so necessary and the needs of information seekers are becoming more agitating by the new trends of information search. No doubt, social media platforms are potential tools for promoting tertiary institution library resources and services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This change in information seeking behavior has engineered libraries to explore new means of providing information and interacting with their users more frequently and with ease. It is no longer news that libraries are evolving to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century information seekers. The trend is that libraries are exploiting different technologies to re-establish connections with their users who have resorted to the internet. To keep up with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment, tertiary institution libraries are incorporating various concepts to provide the needed services in order to retain their relevance. Social media platforms (SMP) are among the new concepts that libraries are engaging to interact with their teeming users.

## 2. A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Social Networking

This is the use of Internet-based social media sites to stay connected with friends, family, colleagues, customers, or clients. Social networking can have a social purpose, a business purpose, or both, through sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, among others. It is an evolutionary development of online participation where group of people with common interest and goal interact, communicate, share and contribute information among each others on social cyberspace. Social networking is therefore a new way of providing library service

through Internet technologies; it is a two-way system of getting useful information through interacting and communicating with people of like minds.

## 2.2 Social Network Space (SNS)

This is a space where people with common interests, goals and ideologies are able to interact, communicate and share useful information efficiently and speedily with each other via a huge variety of social networking sites.

## 2.3 Social Network Platforms (SMFs)

A social platform is a web-based technology that enables the development, deployment and management of social media solutions and services. It provides the ability to create social media websites and services with complete social media network functionality. Social network platform like Facebook, YouTube, Podcast, LinkedIn, Blog, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instant Message have evolved over the years. These are useful for the promotion of library resources and services and for the speedy collection of feedbacks from library users. Promoting library services with social media helps libraries to not only advocate the library but also brings library users to become library advocates. In line with this, Anyanwu, Ossai-Onah and Iroeze [1], in their research on the social media tool mostly utilized by the undergraduate discovered that 'Facebook ranked highest (89.2%) in the list of social media utilized by undergraduate. This was closely followed by twitter (46.3%). The study further reveals that majority of the undergraduate utilized social media tools to share information with fellow students, communication with friends and establishing relationship with friends from other institution'. Ezeani and Igwesi [2], observed that 'with the exponential growth of the use of social media such as the Facebook, MySpace, twitter, YouTube, it is now inevitable that librarians must learn the use of these tools to be able to keep their ever growing and sophisticated patrons'. An article by Vucovich, Gordon, Mitchell, and Ennis [3], also investigated the effectiveness of social media for reaching patrons. Similar to Vucovich et al. [3], the librarians surveyed by Chu and Du [4], reported social media as very useful for marketing library services, engaging with patrons, and collecting patrons' comments. For the authors, the findings demonstrated that librarians, as a whole, are becoming more

positive towards social media and more engaged with patrons online.

## 3. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social networking sites are online platform employed by people to build social relationships with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections [5]. They are also known as social networking services or social media. Social networking services vary in format and the number of features which may incorporate a range of new information and communication tools that can be operated on desktops, laptops, mobile devices such as tablet computers and smart phones. They may feature digital photo/video/sharing and diary entries online (blogging) [6]. Social networking sites provide a space for interaction to continue beyond personal interactions and they are computers mediated interactions that link members of various networks and may help maintaining and developing new social and professional relationships [7]

Social networking sites allow users to interact, share ideas, digital photos and videos, posts, and to inform others about online or real-world activities and events with people in their network. While in-person social networking involves the gathering of people in a village market or square to discuss issues and events concerning the village has been in existence since the earliest development of towns [8], the web on the other hand enables people to connect with each other's without gathering physically and people who live in different locations, ranging from across a city to across the world can connect each other's. Depending on the social media platform, members may be able to contact any other member. The success of social networking services can be observed with their dominance of the society today, with Facebook having a massive 2.13 billion active monthly users and an average of 1.4 billion daily active users in 2017 [9]. LinkedIn, a career-oriented social-networking service, generally requires that a member personally know another member in real life before they contact them online. Some services require members to have a pre-existing connection to contact other members. Social networking sites allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system and to articulate a list of other users with whom they interact with and also view and traverse their list of connections and those made

by others within the system. Social media can also be seen as forms of electronic communication through which people interact among their peer groups in order to create, freely share, exchange and discuss information, ideas, personal messages, and other content about each other and their lives using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio, utilizing online platforms while they are connected to the Internet [10]. Boyd and Ellison [6], described social networking sites as “web-based services” that enable users to build and edit a profile, link with their friends and be able to view and interact with their families connections.

Social Network Sites (also called Social Networking Services or Social Networking Communities), are those Internet systems that have at their heart the personalized profile. Some of the prominent examples include: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and MySpace. Social networking sites are two-way transparent communication that encourage a feedback mechanism; connecting people with shared interest. Social networking sites allow librarians to adopt a new role by placing themselves into a social realm with users. The dynamic nature of this technology enables users to have an open access to knowledge and contribute local content on the social network space. Some of these Social Networking Sites (SNS) popularly used by librarians in Nigeria to meet the information needs of the users include:

### 3.1 Facebook

Facebook be used in libraries as a way of promoting the library through creating library homepage. Libraries can advertise their services on the homepage. The location of the libraries, website information, newly acquired materials and other relevant information's can be displayed on the library Facebook homepage. Farkas [11], opined that through linking the library's website to Facebook page, it can acts as a portal to the library. Facebook can be an effective way for academic libraries to connect and interact with their user community, Libraries can inform their users about the library's programmes and services through posting updates on Facebook and the followers' can engage with the library by commenting on posts and sharing them with their friends. Facebook is a social networking site built for social interaction and sharing. It was exactly this characteristic, which made libraries and librarians reluctant to the idea

of employing it. Many authors attempted to introduce the concept of social networking sites to librarians and highlighted the possible uses and benefits of Facebook for libraries. Breeding [12], gave a thorough introduction to the use and characteristics of Facebook as an example of social network site that may be of interest to libraries. Roncaglia [13], identified the beneficial effects of using Facebook in school libraries. He specifically, discussed the need of creating a library profile on Facebook instead of just adopting Facebook for exchanging information only. Rothman [14], suggested the development of a Facebook social networking site intended for just libraries and librarians in order to ensure trustworthiness and reliability to patrons. Farkas [11], proposed the adoption of Facebook by library's to promote library services to student. Jennings and Price [15], on their part discussed the use of Facebook in library environments. Jain [16], opined that Facebook platform can be used as a marketing tool to attract patrons who have forgotten or are unaware of some existing grey literature in the library collection.

### 3.2 Blog

A blog can be described as a user developed website where entries are similar to journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order. Kaplan and Haenlein [17], describe blog as the social media-equivalent of personal Webpage with different variations such as personal diaries describing the author's life to summaries of all relevant information in one specific content area. A blog can be used for promoting library information resources and services such as dissemination of information, building library image, internal and external communication, highlight new and valuable recently added materials. Ekoja [18], opines that blogs are very helpful in promoting library services such as listing new materials acquired, stating, opening and closing hours and displaying other library events and programmes. Blogs can be used by librarians in posting news and events concerning the library. Librarians can also use blogs periodically in posting messages and sharing information on subjects or issues of interest to the institutions, government and public domain which allow users to comment or contribute to the subject matter. Dickson and Holley [19], observed that blogs usage in libraries of tertiary institutions encourages interaction among users through their comment feature that allows students to provide feedback regarding the information provided by the library.

### 3.3 Twitter

Twitter relies on messaging service using cell phone, instant messenger, such as Yahoo Messenger or MSN Messenger, or through specific websites. It allows the user to send messages to friends and family quickly and easily. Based on the ease of posting and sharing information on Twitter makes it an essential tool for libraries to reach their users as observed by Waddell and Barnes [20]. Librarians in Nigeria can use this platform to give users firsthand information on issues of great interest to the citizens such as election reports. Users of twitter can send instant messages (IM), make complaints or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot [2]. Nigerian tertiary institution libraries can use Twitter accounts to notify users of new relevant items from collection and events. Twitter which is a micro-blogging site according to Mannan [21] enables the librarians to give updates on day-to-day activities of the library to their users and patrons, while instant feedback on library services from the users can use also be obtained through twitter by the librarians

### 3.4 MySpace

MySpace is the largest networking sites and populated by people of every age, religion and ethnicity, but primarily used by people under the age of 25 year [11]. MySpace has provided great opportunities to Libraries in reaching out to patrons, especially the younger set. MySpace had increased communication between libraries who adopted it and the elusive teenagers and college groups. Adoption of MySpace has put libraries within easy reach of patrons who normally spent a lot of time on MySpace. According to Farkas [11], students uses non academic search engines such as MySpace when doing their homework thus library functioning in such space might be just the reminder for the students that they need to use library resources in their next paper. MySpace can be used by libraries to post calendar, custom catalog search tools and blog features to improve their presence. Alford [22], suggested different methods and the way social network sites such as MySpace could be employed to promote marketing services in the libraries by librarians.

### 3.5 Ning

The adoption of Ning makes it possible for librarians to get connected with library users and

their associations. The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) had employed Ning platform in discussing topical issues among the members.

### 3.6 Wikis

Wikis is a free online encyclopedia that gives a background knowledge and definition of terminologies and concepts. It allow users the opportunities to access, edit and contribute to content. It is a collaborative web page for developing web content.

### 3.7 LinkedIn

LinkedIn allows Librarians to get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest. The platform allows librarians to render specialized services to library users such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).

### 3.8 YouTube

One of the possible uses for YouTube is a storehouse for instructional videos with a link that could take the viewer to the library's Web site for more information. Library can film its various services, load them to YouTube, and then make the link available on its Web site for its patrons. Events such as important as highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops can be disseminated via the YouTube. Academic libraries have turned to sites such as YouTube to host and promote their video tutorials due to increase in the use of social media among their patrons. YouTube "allows billions of people to discover, watch, and share originally-created videos [23]. More and more libraries are setting up their own YouTube accounts. According to a 2011 survey conducted by the Primary Research Group, 51.22 percent of public libraries and 42.22 percent of college and university libraries maintained one or more YouTube accounts [24]

### 3.9 Flickr

Flicker is an image-hosting online community, which has captured a great deal of attention from image enthusiasts, photographers, and technologists. Flickr is being used by an increasing number of public libraries to provide access to collections and services for their communities. Public libraries are also using Flickr to build community engagement by adding context and their own stories to images. Librarians can use this tool to share and

distribute new images of library collections. Cover page of new arrivals of both books and journals can be disseminated to users via Flickr. It can also be used to enlighten users on topical issues, Smeaton and Davis [25], contended that Flickr can be a very powerful and engaging tool for libraries that are prepared to invest the time to create, connect and post images in a strategic way, taking the time to develop relationships and post images which are appealing and that will create engagement. Flickr according to Ezeani and Igwesi [2], is an excellent marketing tool which could be used by librarians to sensitize the users on general library services.

#### **4. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

Social media have become a dependable platform for the dissemination of information, forum for feedback mechanism, for research and of course for promotion. It is therefore not surprising that libraries all over the world have embraced the use of social media for promoting their services. Social media like MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Wiki, and Ning as discussed above are useful networking sites for promotion of library resources and services and for the speedy collection of feedbacks from library patrons. Alidu [26], outlined the benefits of social media as means of promoting students' zeal in the use of academic library. Benjamin [27], reported that social media serves as good learning devices and their absence can be very disastrous to the teaching and learning process of our teachers and students. The benefits of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in Nigerian tertiary institution libraries include:

##### **4.1 Platform for Open Access to Knowledge**

Social networking sites are platforms for promoting open access to knowledge. Open access is the term used to refer to resources that are openly available to users with no requirements for authentication or payment. In an open access platform, users are not charged for accessing articles or other resources, and they can read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to full texts of these resources freely, provided they do not violate copyright rules [28]. Social networking allows users to search, browse, filter, find, collaborate; access knowledge openly and also contributes to web content.

##### **4.2 Marketing of Library Services**

The growing population of patrons and librarians that makes use of social networking sites is an indication that social media is an ideal vehicle for marketing the services of libraries to patrons. Flickr is an excellent marketing tool which could be used by librarians to sensitize the users on general library services. Most students are not aware of the different services offered in the library such as reservation of books and reference service Librarians can spread awareness of library services to those who may not be aware of these services via social media.

##### **4.3 Reference Services**

Social networking tools usage by librarians allows them to identify library patrons on the social cyberspace and pro-actively provide the type of information that would normally result from reference service. Social networking tools are not only being used as a vehicle for promoting services, programs and new resources but they are also used for reference service. Students can use tools like Ask a Librarian and Twitter to ask questions in "real time. Social networking tools like Instant Messaging (IM), Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) could be used to achieve a successful and sustainable reference services in an online social space by engaging in an online face-to-face interaction. This is particularly useful for distance learners who may call in from any part of the country with reference queries. Reference interaction has always been a conversation that is moving towards reference in the social environment is therefore a natural development that has been shown to be not only practically viable, but also to benefit the researcher. [29], reported that social networking tools usage for making reference act as a participatory means that the client can be served by multiple sources and a variety of authoritative, scholarly information.

##### **4.4 Saves Time**

Adoption of usage social media for promoting library and information services saves time and library staff hours. Social media have helped libraries in providing quick updates to users and provide a forum for quick and speedy feedback from library patrons. More so, social media makes it easier to reach a large number of library patrons in the most time effective manner.

#### **4.5 Enhances Fast Two-Way Communication**

One of the most important tenets of customer service is to be responsive to users concerns or praise. Recognize them and show that the library is interested in and care about their opinion. There are no control measures to what is said about a library but librarians can influence the message that comes back. This is where social media come to play as it creates a forum for feedback in library promotion. Monitoring the comments and questions of library users give the library immerse power to offer clarification on issues and potentially make improvement. Villoldo [30], affirms that communication with the library user is the most beneficial service derived from the use of social media by libraries and librarians. Facebook and LinkedIn have the capabilities to promote synchronous or asynchronous interactions and communication among users.

#### **4.6 Increases Library Users**

The online community is opened to all as long as there is internet connectivity. The linkage and interaction among users of social media invariably resulted in more people patronizing library that are functional on networking sites. For example the activities of a friend or fan on a library page on Facebook may influence other users link to the fan to want to know more about the promotional activities carried out in such library. This can motivate a friend of a library fan to join the library.

### **5. CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTION LIBRARIES**

There are so many challenges facing the usage of social media among the Nigerian tertiary institution libraries such as lack of required finance to acquire social media equipment and to pay subscription fee. Another issue confronting the libraries is lack of awareness, most librarians in these institutions are not aware of social networking services, even the few that are aware are still struggling to find out the productive uses of these sites for library services. Users are also not aware of the protocols involved in social communication. Many students and possibly even some of the academic staff may be unaware that there is a subject specialist in their discipline. Another problem confronting these

institutional libraries is the problem of having limited bandwidth to support this practice which may resulted into poor connectivity which can frustrate effective online participation .Many of the librarians in these institutes are not technologically driven and may not have the required knowledge to use social media or may be afraid using computers since they are used to using traditional library services. Lack of maintenance culture is also identified to be a serious challenge in the usage of social media in most of the libraries. Maintenance culture is seriously lacking in most of these institutions which makes few available technologies to be in moribund conditions that may not support remote access to information. Power supply in the country as a whole is unreliable which discourages many people from participating in the online forum. Another problem that limit the usage of social media in Nigerian tertiary institution libraries is lack of training of staff in recent developments and advanced technologies required for them to be able to adopt the use of social media. There is also little or no intervention of the government in the area of ICT in Nigeria. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are faced with problem on how to meet up with the increasing academic demands of users which necessitate the need for alternate channels on increasing the number of sources of information and information providers such as the internet, Google, World Wide Web (www), gmail and yahoo. According to Emmanuel and Osulale [31], while tertiary institutions in developed countries provide free or inexpensive internet access to students, the situation is different in Nigeria where students' are faced with serious constraints such as high cost of internet connectivity, lack of interest in utilizing internet services, low patronage of internet service, paucity of well-trained library staff on the utilization of social media platforms, poor attitude towards social media platforms, low bandwidth and constant epileptic power supply in accessing internet connectivity. Onuoha and Ajike [32], identified slow internet speed, power failure and lack of confidentiality in social cyberspace as the challenges facing the use of social media by Nigerian libraries Ezeani and Igwesi [2], listed lack of awareness, bandwidth problem, lack of government intervention technophobia, unreliable power supply, lack of maintenance culture, lack of training of staff and copyright issue as some of the challenges facing the use of social media in most of the Nigerian tertiary institution libraries.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that to a very small extent social media is been utilized by librarians in libraries in Nigeria tertiary institution libraries with Facebook been the most use social networking site employed mostly by the libraries. The usage of social media is also found to be beneficial to these libraries through saving of time and allow more users to have access to required information timely and accurately. However, the usage of social media among these libraries is faced with challenges such as lack of finance, limited bandwidth, lack of proper training of library staff in the area of using social media, low level of technology penetration, unreliable power supply and poor network connectivity It therefore become important for Nigerian tertiary institution libraries to look critically into ways of tackling these problems in other to be able to maximizes the benefit of using social media and to be able to reach out to 21<sup>st</sup> century users better, communicate better with feedback and comply with innovations in this computer world. The study therefore recommends that there is a need for a pro-active awareness and training to educate both the librarians and the users on the invaluable importance of utilizing social networking in library services. Adequate technology and internet facilities should be made readily available in all the tertiary institution libraries and adequate finance should be promptly provided by the parent institutions to further enhance the use of social media to promote library and information resources and services in these libraries.

## DISCLAIMER

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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