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Innovate or Die: What the Social Media Means to Contemporary Library

Abstract

The advent of Information and Communication Technology with its offshoots of social media has affected every sphere of human endeavour. Indeed, the coming of ICT generally ended the honeymoon hitherto enjoyed by the paper libraries. With the rise of ICT and an active population of millions of social media users, libraries around the world are exploring the opportunities offered by the social media in carrying out their core library and information services to its varied online users. Using an exploratory approach, this study examines the application of the social media to the contemporary library. It finds out that libraries in the contemporary society must continue to innovate by appropriating useful elements of new technologies and social media to remain alive or die.

Key words: Innovation, ICT, Library, Social Media, Social Networks

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1.1 Introduction

Change, as it is often said, is the soul of human existence. Every aspect of human existence must, at some points, experience change in one way or the other. The importance of change is not hard to see because change brings about development. Change simplifies a complex task and helps in meeting an urgent need or interest. It helps in adaptation and the acquisition of new skills, knowledge or capacity. It also gives a new direction of doing things and meeting goals. It is in the light of this that people, organisations or societies try to change or adapt to changing times and conditions. But, people, organisations or societies not amenable to change lag behind in terms of development, remain redundant, unproductive and inefficient.

Behind every change, however, is innovation and creativity. It is innovation and

creativity which serve as the driving force of every change and adaptation. Over the years (and more than many may have anticipated) every sphere of human endeavour has come under change. In the contemporary society, the wave of change experienced in every aspect of life is triggered by the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which have reduced the world to what is termed the 'global village'.

The advent of ICT and its derivatives, such as the Internet, new media or social media, is one of the world's most influential technological innovations being appropriated in many fields of human endeavour. The Internet and, indeed, the social media is now the gateway of accessing information, education, knowledge and skill. Indeed, the ICT is being appropriated in libraries and information centres globally to ease the quest to gather, store, access and disseminate

information. The innovative appropriation of the social media to library and information services has, once again, postponed or, in the foreseeable future, cancelled the obituary earlier placed on public libraries by some scholars with the development or invention of machines, applications and tools to aid the acquisition, storage and dissemination of knowledge, such as, computers, software, e-books, pictures, audios and videos. As noted by Aghadiuno (2010) all these have altered the way traditional library practice is anchored. Similarly, Building Futures (2004) observes that changes in traditional library services and functions also mean changes in architectural design. In other words, the changes in the traditional library practices occasioned by the development in ICT have equally affected the operations of the contemporary library.

This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the role and importance of the social media in contemporary library, examining through exploratory approach how libraries deploy the tools of social media in carrying out their core library and information services to their diverse clientele in the contemporary world. The study attempt to show that, (though traditional library practices may still be relevant), more and more libraries and information centres around the world would continue to appropriate social media tools in carrying out their operations in order to remain relevant in the contemporary world.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

2.2 Conceptual Framework

A library, like a living organism, possesses the qualities to be 'born', to 'live' and to 'die'. But, unlike the living organism, the library has the qualities, at least in the foreseeable future, to live forever! A library which must live forever must be able to change or adapt to the demands of times and conditions. A dead library is one which no longer serves the needs of its users; its collections are filled with only old stocks; the

retrieval system is analogue; there is no internet connectivity; digital and virtual sources are absent; and, the management and staff lack initiative, skill and knowledge in ICT or, in some cases, possess skills or knowledge which is rendered obsolete by the ever-changing work environment or new technology.

The library cannot afford to be 'the same' from the past to the present and expects to serve any useful role or function in the modern society. Besides, libraries are repositories of knowledge. A repository of knowledge must be able to serve the needs and interests of its patrons. Unlike traditional libraries, contemporary libraries depend on emerging technologies to serve its customers. Garmer (2014, p.4) observes that:

Access to digital networks and digital literacy skills are essential for full participation in modern society. Economic, educational, civic and social opportunities are tied to a whole new set of knowledge and skills that barely existed a generation ago, and people without these skills or access to this information abundance are quickly left behind. Public libraries can be at the center of these changes: a trusted community resource and an essential platform for learning, creativity and innovation in the community. Public libraries have the DNA needed to thrive in this new information-rich, knowledge-based society.

A contemporary library must, therefore, appropriate positive elements of new and emerging technologies in order to adapt to the changing times and conditions otherwise it will outlive its usefulness and, consequently, die off. Incidentally, the new media or social media provides the library with platforms to carry out some of its roles and functions in the society to its teeming users.

2.3 Library and its Historical Evolution

It is important to examine the concept

of 'library' in an age of technologically driven innovation. From the literature, there are many definitions and views about what constitute a library. However, some of these definitions of library are gradually being altered by advances into ICT and other factors. A historical inquiry into the word library has shown that it was initially defined as a place where books are written or kept. The librarian, by this definition, was defined as the keeper or guard of books. The definition is, however, criticised by Ranganathan (1961), who observes that such a definition has fallen out of use since it does not mention the readers who patronise the libraries.

Library is often viewed as a building with a collection of books people physically walk in to read or study (Reitz, 2004). The definition is also criticised on the grounds that a place is no longer a compulsory requirement since electronic or virtual library does not need a physical space like paper libraries. For instance, while a virtual library may deal with the collection, organisation and management of large amount of information and knowledge online (Borgman, 1999), a digital library lacks physical presence except where the volumes of information physically reside (O'Donnel, 1995).

To Ikoku (1971), library is not an archive or a reading room, but the foyer of living ideas that permeate and animate all aspects of national life. Another popular notion about what constitutes a library is that a library is 'an exclusive collection of book'. This notion is wrong because, in the past like now, libraries have sections reserved as art gallery, children sport centre, among others. Olanlokun and Salisu (1993) define library as an agency, which engages in the collection, processing, preservation and dissemination of recorded information in the various formats most convenient to its target users. This definition, no matter how relevant, does not cover, for instance, personal library put up by individuals—and not agencies, such as a

government or institution. Ogunseye (1981) defines library in terms of the function it performs. To Ogunseye (1981), the role of the library in education involves the total apparatus used for the development of the individual. In the same vein, Omojuwa (1993) notes that library facilitates the individual to obtain spiritual, inspirational, and recreational activity through reading and the opportunity of interacting with the society's wealth and accumulated knowledge. Islam (2004), on his part, defines library as a learned institution equipped with treasures of knowledge, maintained, organized and managed by trained library personnel to educate members of society constantly and assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information.

According to Edoke (2000), library emerged when the need arose to safeguard, exploit and utilize records of civilization. Government, groups and individuals were in the forefront of collecting materials which they considered useful to the society. Public libraries were conceived in an age of information scarcity (Garmer, 2014). With the rise of the ICT, the entire world is considered a global village as information and developments from one corner of the world can be accessed and processed within seconds in another corner of the world at ease. Library collections need not to be in a four walls of the building to be accessed, as they can be retrieved through social networks or social media platforms.

2.4 Are Traditional Libraries Dying, Dead or Alive?

One of the presumptions that came up immediately with the advent of Information and Communication Technology was the death notice placed on traditional library practice. It was reported that, under the influence of ICT, public libraries would die soon because the ICT-based internet and other online media were going to replace the need

for the traditional library (Building Futures, 2004). But, as it would be seen, the prediction that ICT signalled the death of traditional library practice was premature, if not absolutely uncalled.

However, in a study by De Rosa et al (2007), it has been shown that most library directors in the US thought that libraries did not have a role in social networking. On the contrary, experiments conducted by Chu and Nalani-Meulemans (2008) and Taylor & Francis Group (2014) with Facebook and other social media platforms have demonstrated the potential use of social media in libraries. In addition, Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis (2007) have revealed how social media provide services such as library tours and promotion of resources to their clientele. In other studies, Kai-Wah Chu and Du (2012) show how 71% of libraries surveyed in Asia, North America and Europe were found to be using social media tools with a further 13% saying they planned to use them. At the moment, Taylor & Francis Group (2014) shows that over 70% of librarians now feel that the use of social media is necessary. These studies replicate the same need and reality of the application of social media by libraries within Africa. A study carried out by Idiegbeyan-ose, Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, Fagbohun and Esse (2016) show that librarians visited social media network sites primarily for the purpose of connecting and collaborating with friends and colleagues, carrying out current awareness and reference services to library users, etc.

The application of ICT in the library is now felt in all the core areas of library practice. Yet, the application of the ICT does not replace the essential roles played by the traditional librarian in the performance of his core library and information functions to the clients. The advent of ICT does not eliminate the need to walk into a library building and be guided by librarians to enjoy the best of time in the library. The fact that libraries are being

built more and more by governments with support from international organisations and public spirited individuals have again shown that the death of traditional library practice is not in sight.

Apart from that increase in the number of libraries, ICT required the use of the human factor to operate or run. In spite of the efficiency of the electronic or virtual libraries, the human factor is mandatorily required to operate the facilities or equipment. Although, the degree of manpower required to carry out a task in the library may decline as some of the jobs may be digitally done, the increase in the number of libraries would make up for the number of staff that would still be absorbed into the system as libraries grow in stocks and numbers.

3.1 What is Social Media?

The growing influence of social media is being acknowledged in every sphere of the society. The social media is appropriated in fields such as education, politics, networking, dating, marketing, banking, tourism, entertainment, journalism, communication and library, among others. But, what is specifically meant by the 'social media'?

The term social media may appear simple, but defining the term is not easy. The term applies to a wide range of activities, applications, technological tools and contents. It is capable of being defined in a narrow or broad sense. However, according to Chauhan (2013: p. 4), 'Social Media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.' The many platforms people use in sending information and ideas on the internet are online magazines, micro blogging, Internet forums, wikis, photographs or pictures, video, rating, podcasts, weblogs, social blogs and social bookmarking connected by the Internet or social media networks, such as Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Twitter, YouTube,

Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Flickr, among others.

According to Trampedach(nd), it is estimated that the social media hosts millions of blogs; millions of YouTube videos; and, billions of users, which include 1,590,000,000 Facebook users; 1,000,000,000 WhatsApp users; 900,000,000 Facebook Messenger users; 853,000,000 QQ users; 697,000,000 WeChat users; 640,000,000 QZone users; 555,000,000 Tumblr users; 400,000,000 Instagram users; 320,000,000 Twitter users; 300,000,000 Baibu Tieba users; 300,000,000 Skype users; 249,000,000 Viber users; 222,000,000 Sina Weibo users; 215,000,000 Line users and 200,000,000 Snapchat users (Nielsen Company, 2015). The statistics of contents posted on social media has shown that uploading of photos (55.1%), uploading videos (21.9%), installing application (23.9%), messaging friends (74.0%), writing a blog (30.8%), dating (18.3%), promoting a brand (9.8%), currently listening to favourite music (33.6%), and others (3.2%). With the daily increase in new accounts being open on the social media, the figures quoted here may be conservative, as Facebook alone has now 2 billion active accounts.

In terms of the amount of time spent on the social media, figures obtained by Nielsen Company (2015) have revealed that the audience spends 22 percent of their time on social networking sites, thus showing how popular social media platforms have become. However, the commonest social media tools used by libraries are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other academic sites. It is important, therefore, that contemporary libraries deploy the social media in carrying out their core functions to their clients.

3.2 Application of Social Media to Contemporary Library

Social media is applied in many areas of human endeavour. One of the major areas where the social media is applied is library and information services. As Sachin and

Auragabad (2014, p.116) have noted:

Social Media provide an innovative and effective way of connecting users. Features of Social Media enable users to generate interpersonal connections based on common grounds. Social Networking Sites(SNS), such as Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace and Facebook, Blinklist, Digg, Habbo, hi5, Tagged, Orkut, Flixter, Netlog, YouTube, Wikipedia set up personal communities, allow users to make persistent comments on the profiles of their friends and send private messages. These features make Social Media excellent in initiating interaction among users.

Although, not all the social media tools mentioned above are applied in the library, at the moment, social media tools like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have been identified and applied as ideal venues in which to explore mass personal and public communication. As noted by Walther, DeAndrea and Anthony(2010), social media allow individuals to post messages to a large, yet often interpersonal, mass audience, while receivers reply either interpersonally to the individual or through a mass message of their own. Some of the social media platforms and applications used in the library and information services are:

Facebook

One of the social media platforms patronised by libraries globally is Facebook. A look at the various social media platforms shows that Facebook is the most popular. It is regarded as librarian-and-user-friendly.

Facebook allows various applications, such as Academia.edu, Pinterest, JSTOR, Research Gate, World Cat, among others, on its platform which librarians can use and interface with users to know their library and information needs or interests. Libraries can also bookmark links of public and specialized library applications on Facebook in order to make search accessible to online library users.

Online library users can also send inquiries through the messaging features on Facebook about useful academic links and bookmarks and receive timely reply from the virtual librarians. In this age of ICT, with many organisations and individuals on Facebook, every library must demonstrate their presence on the social media by making their services accessible to end users.

YouTube

The modern library can explore the services offered by YouTube to provide tutorials, lectures, demonstrations and experiments to its patrons. Through the YouTube platform, audio or video recordings can be shared live, online or offline to users. YouTube can be utilised by teachers or instructors to explaining points and issues to students on various subjects. The presence of these video or audio materials enhances the understanding and learning of the students. In the same manner, seminars, workshops, papers, conferences, among others, could be presented or held through the use of YouTube. These instructional resources can be kept by the library for reference. The resources can be accessed for a fee or for free.

Twitter

Twitter is a social media platform with academic and intellectual potential to be utilised by libraries. Twitter is a micro-blogging service that distributes bite-sized chunks of text, usually of not more than 14 words, across multiple platforms, including mobile, instant messaging and e-mail (Mayfield, 2008). Messages are often status updates about what a user is doing.

As a micro blogging tool, Twitter is used in the library to keep staff and library users informed on the daily activities of the library. Twitter can be used to send updates on some of the recent collections, book awareness, safety campaigns, problems and challenges being faced by the library. Library

and information users can also tweet short messages on their concerns, challenges or problems. They can ask questions, send complaints and obtain prompt reply from the online libraries. Librarians can use this platform to provide important links and bookmarks where users can follow to get the desired information on any subject.

Blogs

Blogs are other social media channels that are now used by libraries to daily, occasionally or regularly update the public with some information about the activities of the library. Blogs are opened and managed by the bloggers, usually, owners of the blogs. Blog posts are usually short or long, depending on the subject matter, and are posted and shared or, where individuals follow the blog, through email. Digital librarians in some institutions create blogs where from time to time they post messages, share informative contents, articles and news on diverse subjects and receive feedback from users. The blog post sometimes provides explanations on many aspects of the library practice.

Wikis

This is a collaborative web page and online encyclopaedia for building web content. Wikis offers a platform for users to access, edit and contribute to content. This is a platform which the digital librarians can periodically visit. Wikis provide explanations and definitions on concepts, principles and theories for the intellectual development of the readers. The users can also share their concerns, views and contributions to the articles written on the platform. Although, its use now is not popular, libraries can explore it in order to constantly keep in touch with their audience or clientele, especially by explaining new concepts or shedding lights on library practice or technical concepts. All these go along to portray the libraries in a positive light to its users.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a channel where professionals in different fields and disciplines create profiles about their careers, work experience, among others. Librarians can utilise the reliable information provided on LinkedIn to link professionals, students, researchers in their areas of interests. LinkedIn can help libraries to find information that would be relevant to their operations. Such information could be on faculty, authors, historians or other sources.

MySpace

MySpace is a social platform which has features such as custom catalogues, calendar, search tools, blog features, among others, used by libraries to increase their services and presence on the web.

Flickr

It is a social platform which is used by libraries circulating new images of library collections, short publication information, beautiful covers of books and journals recently bought by the libraries. With the use of Flickr, library users come to discover new arrivals in the library stock. The display of brief information, book covers and other information about publications increases the desire and interest of the students, researchers and other library users to read the publications. Another importance of using Flickr is that it increases the patronage of students or researchers to the library's resources.

Library Thing

Library Thing is a tool which helps to make the presence of book ISBN numbers visible to online users once they are created. The numbers are sent to the Library Thing which generates identifiable codes for each of the ISBNs. The use of Library Thing helps in quick identification of ISBN, genuine ISBN, fake ISBNs, among others.

3.4 Classification of Social Media

There are different ways of classifying the social media use by the library, and with the rapid increase in the number of social media coming up daily, more and more social media platforms will come into use. However, the classification of social media depends on the type of website, function of site and social network.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Aichner and Jacob (2015) classified the social media into business networks, enterprise social networks, blogs, photo sharing, forums, microblogs, products/services review, social bookmarking, video sharing, social gaming, virtual worlds and social networks. In all, the following represent the social media utilised by the library:

Blogs: Blogs are usually created and managed by individuals or organisations for sharing of all categories of information. The two popular companies which allow organisations or individuals to own blogs are Blogger and BlogSpot.

Microblogs: Microblogs are social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter. They are called microblogs because they allow users to create and publish limited contents.

Business Networks: Organisations, groups and individuals sometimes utilise various social media platforms for business and commercial purposes. These social networks help business people build and maintain chain of networks and relationships for the purpose of selling their products or services. Libraries are also employing these social networks to market their library services and programmes.

Social Networks: Social networks include Facebook, Twitter, among others. They are social media networks used for creating and sharing online contents. Twitter is an online social networking and blogging service that allows users to create, send and read short text messages called 'tweets' of only 140 characters, while Facebook is a social media

platform designed for people to share and communicate personal or public information. Both are used by people, organisations and communities to network

Forums: Forums are created and maintained by organisations or groups to respond to complaints, queries, request, among others, brought by users of a particular service or product. This is a platform that libraries can utilise in the contemporary world to serve their clients.

Photo Sharing: Some social media sites are meant for sharing pictures and photo contents of the users, for example, Instagram, Flickr, MySpace, among others.

Products/Services Review: Companies and organisations sometimes created and managed social media platforms in order to attract wide audience and feedback. From time to time, these companies ask for feedbacks from the audience.

Social Gaming: Games services are social media tools which permit users to play, share or download games for fun and pleasure.

Social Bookmarking: Social media provides useful links to users on the social media. For instance, a post may contain various links, which if followed, may lead to the user being able to access the desired services or products. These bookmarks are stored on the computer and used the need arises.

Video Sharing: Some social media sites are used for sharing photos. Video-sharing sites, such as YouTube, allow social media users to watch or download thousands of videos for free.

Virtual Worlds: There are millions of virtual or digital information online which are provided by organisations, libraries or websites. The information is accessible by all users. It is in the light of this that some libraries are called virtual or digital libraries.

3.5 Role of Social Media in the Contemporary Library

The social media plays specific roles in

the operation of the contemporary library. As noted by the Taylor & Francis Group (2014), over 70% of libraries are using social media tools, 60% have had a social media account for three years or longer and 30% of librarians are posting at least daily. Below is a summary of how social media serve libraries and information centres:

- i. Social media helps in promoting, marketing and selling library products and services. Libraries globally are gradually employing the social media to promote their products and services. For brand engagement, statistics have shown that the New York Public Library, for instance, employs Google Hangouts and, as a result, is able to leverage a 30-day campaign featuring celebrity quotes that offered effusive praise for libraries into a 35% increase in average monthly library card sign-ups since 2012 (Dankowski, 2013). This eliminates the need for physical presence, reduces cost and saves time.
- ii. Social media helps in reforming and promoting the image of the library as well as its ICT-based capacity. To remain relevant in the contemporary world, libraries globally need constantly develop their capacity, increasing their connection, visibility, learning and teaching.
- iii. Social media helps in passing library news, press releases and service alerts to online library audience. Libraries maintain a strong presence on the social media through blog posts, tweets, among others, which contribute in keeping the public informed about the wide range of programmes or activities lined up at certain intervals.
- iv. Social media provides fast updates to online library patrons. In collaboration or partnership with libraries, information

centres, publishers, researchers, scholarly societies, universities and libraries with strong online presence, libraries bring diverse resources to their patrons and users. It is as a result of such collaborations that Taylor & Francis Group Online, New York Public Library's Reference and Research Services, among others, have brought thousands of online journals to some universities around the world.

- v. Social media is used by libraries to raise funds, sponsorships and donations for library's growth and development. As may be noted, the cost of funding a modern and functional library is quite high. Libraries around the world, sometimes, turn to public-spirited individuals, government agencies, corporate organisations, among others, for sponsorship,
- vi. Social media is deployed to foster interaction between library users and web contents. Libraries employ social interaction to create patronage from the traffic coming to their walls or social media sites.
- vii. Social media builds discussion groups for collaborative work as well as for the exchange of library resources and information. Through these exchanges, libraries build their capacity and learn new skills, ideas and techniques that improve their performance.
- viii. Social media is used by libraries to reach existing and potential library users. Because of the presence of most information seekers on the social media, some libraries often use these opportunities to connect with them. As a result, information about collections get to their users faster than who go into the actual library buildings.
- ix. Social media is used to increase the

relationship between the libraries and their patrons. Libraries are expected to perform certain community-based programmes for the benefit of their host communities. This makes the library to be well received and patronised in the community it is located.

Conclusion

In the paper, it has been argued that contemporary libraries globally are appropriating the opportunities offered by Information and Communication Technology and its other derivatives, such as the Internet, new media or social media, to perform some of the hitherto core services and functions of the traditional library. With the growing number of social media users, the presence of the libraries on the social media is important. It gives the library a platform to demonstrate the services and programmes they have and attract patronage from existing and potential clients. Libraries with strong followership on the social media would also reap the benefits of social interaction. As it is seen, developments into ICT have not replaced the need for the paper librarian. Although, it has somehow reduced some of the jobs that may be available, this does not significantly affect the employment opportunities available to the modern librarian who has adapted to the changing world of ICT by updating their skills, knowledge and capacity. However, librarians, like libraries, which fail to employ or adapt to the new regime of social media tools into their library services, programmes and activities are likely to be outdated and, ultimately, abandoned or not patronised in the near future.

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