A Conceptual Overview of Social Media and Library Collaboration in The 21st Century

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Abstract

In the field of librarianship, social media is rapidly becoming the instrument of choice for communication between libraries. In this 21st century, effective collaboration is no longer an option for libraries but certainly a necessity as the world around libraries is changing rapidly. This paper looks at the conceptual overview of social media and library collaboration in the 21st century. The paper briefly discusses the problem statement of subject matter with the view of determining the problems associated with social media and library collaboration in the 21st century. It examines the concept of social media and its definitions, what library collaboration is all about. It aims at establishing the relationship between social media and library services; determine the use of social media in library collaboration in the 21st Century and identify the challenges of using social media in library collaboration. The paper concludes that social media is helpful in many ways to libraries, as it has improved access to information, enhanced the capacity to classify and utilise information, promoted freedom to access information and enhanced information sharing amongst libraries, library users and information seekers. It has also revolutionized socialization and knowledge sharing in library collaboration and services

Keywords: *Social media, Social media network, Library, Library collaboration, Library services.*

1.1 Introduction

The emergence and spread of a sub-set of information technologies referred to as social media is said to be one of the recent most impactful information technology phenomena (Kane et al, 2014; Kapoor et al., 2017). Social media is said to be a set of online platforms that permit users to create, share, and exchange information and ideas. It is a platform that has progressed over time, from early text-based forums to more sophisticated platforms like Facebook and Twitter. There are different types of social media, which includes social networking sites, blogs, micro blogging platforms, video-sharing sites, and content communities.

Boyd and Ellison (2008) stated that social media have been defined in a various ways, which includes as a platform to create profiles, make explicit and traverse relationships. The above definition has been cited over 13,000 times according to Google scholar. Other definitions, which identified social media as the set of functionalities or building blocks by Kietzmann et al, (2011) has

3,000 citations. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), nomenclature of social media splitting the field into six distinctive categories such as Blogs, Social Networking Sites, Collaboration Projects, Content Communities, Virtual Social Worlds, and Virtual Game Worlds also have 11,000 citations on Google scholar.

Collaboration, on the other hand, is the process of working together to achieve a common goal. It can be seen as a joint effort of multiple individuals or work groups to accomplish a task or project. In an organizational setting, collaboration typically involves the ability of two or more people to view and contribute to documents or other content over a network (Techtarget, 2016). According to Association for Intelligent Information Management (2023), collaboration is a working practice whereby individuals work together for a common purpose to achieve business benefit. It enables individuals to work together to achieve a defined and common business purpose. Collaboration relies on openness and knowledge sharing but also some level of focus and accountability on the part of the business organizations.

The rise of social media has transformed the way libraries communicate and interact with their users. Social media provides an opportunity for libraries to engage with their users and to collaborate with other libraries and organizations in new ways. It provides a platform for libraries to connect with each other and with external organizations, to share resources and expertise, and to collaborate on projects and initiatives. It also allows libraries to engage with their users and to solicit feedback and input on library services and programs.

Collaboration among libraries also presents challenges. One of the primary challenges is the coordination of efforts among the participating libraries. Collaboration requires effective communication and coordination to ensure that everyone is working towards the same goal and that resources are being used efficiently. Different types of collaboration include intra-library collaboration, inter-library collaboration, and collaboration with external organizations. The benefits of collaboration include increased efficiency, improved service delivery, and the ability to pool resources and expertise.

The advent of social media has created new opportunities and challenges for libraries and library professionals. Social media seems to have become a driving force in the expansion of library services. New concepts like Google meet and WhatsApp interactive tools have also been introduced to library collaboration and information service sharing amongst participating libraries. The use of social media have caused a great infusion of data into lives of adults and have in turn caused them to assume creative roles in their social lives in addition to their personal lives. Facebook, WhatsApps, Instagram, Imo, etc, have become common place in all the nooks and crannies of the planet with great impact on all activities, including library collaboration. In the field of librarianship, social media are rapidly becoming the instrument of choice for communication between the libraries.

There is no doubt that social media, properly managed can have liberal effect on library services delivery. However, observation suggests that social media may also pose some challenges in library collaboration as it requires considerable time commitment from library staff, which might not always be there. It can also require technological expertise in customizing applications to provide access to online catalogues for collaborative purposes. Also, levels of interest in and skills with using social media vary enormously across libraries and collaborating libraries need to work hard to maintain engagement amongst them. Finally, internet connectivity, technological infrastructure and government restrictions on the use of social media may restrict access. The

above points out the problem statement associated with social media and library collaboration in the 21st century.

2.1 Literature Review
2.1 Social Media Explained

Social media is regarded as a form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and contents (Agichten et al, 2008). Tang and Whinstoney (2012) defined social media as a means of interaction among people through which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities (Computer-aid) and other related network. Lee (2013) defined social media as a forum where individuals, group business interacts only with the purpose of meeting certain needs.

According to Fitore (2017), social media refers to activities, practices and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media. Social media can as well be defined as a group of internet base applications that is built on ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of users generated contents (Kaplain & Haenlein, 2010). Social media can be referred to as online forum where individuals and firms interact with one another with the intention of influencing others, passing information or expressing ones' feeling in other to achieve a set objective. Social media usage has grown exponentially in recent years and it has become an integral parts of the consumers lifestyle (Muhammed, 2017).

Social media refers to online media that facilitates communication through the use of feedback engaging the users' active in the generation and improvement of the content, it is opposed to the traditional media, which delivers content but doesn't allow the users to modify the content. Social media could be viewed as a group of applications powered on the internet and built on ideas similar to the foundations of Web 2.0 technology which allows the generation and interchange of information or other content generated by the users of such media. According to the above assertion, social media is divided into several dimensions which include: blogs (individual/community), collaborative project sites, virtual worlds (social/game) and social networking sites.

A technocratic definition of social media refers to 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 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Modern technology has played a significant role in the gradual transformation of social interactions among people. As a result of the emergence of web 2.0 technologies, social networking websites are readily accessible and provide the users with connection to virtually everyone around the globe. Now people spend more time on the social media communicating through social platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, etc and inadvertently leaving the traces of their contacts, which are readily available to the managers of these social media (Katona, Zubcsek, & Sarvary, 2011). Consumers create user generated content from social media and these have turned out to be among the highlights of online interaction transmissions (Lenhart et al., 2010).

Social media is more than just a means of seeking information. Social media are used to connect with others, for business or commercial purposes, to make new friends, reawaken old friendships. Social media is networking of information or knowledge using 21st century gadgets like smart phones or computer through the means of platform and it is shared among community or group of

people that have the same ideology.

2.2 Concept of Collaboration and Library Collaboration

Collaboration can be said to be a vehicle that can lead to the development of life-saving remedies and technologies that create a more equitable, habitable planet. In a layman's understanding, It is a situation whereby individuals or group of people come together and put resources together to achieve a certain goal. It is a partnership; a union; the act of producing or making something together and can take place between two people or many people, strangers or best friends. It is a process in which entities share information, resources, and responsibilities to jointly plan, implement, and evaluate a program of activities to achieve a common goal. Collaboration concept is derived from the Latin 'collaborare' meaning "to work together" and can be seen as a process of shared creation, thus a process through which a group of entities enhance the capabilities of each other (Camarihna-Matos & Afsarmanesh, 2014).

Association of Intelligent Information Management (2023) defined collaboration as a working practice whereby individuals work together for a common purpose to achieve a profit. Collaboration at the conceptual level involves **awareness**, where individual become part of the a working entity with a shared purpose; **motivation**, where individuals drive to gain consensus in problem-solving or development; **self-synchronization**, where people decide as individuals when things need to happen; **participation**, where people participate in collaboration and expect others to participate; **mediation**, where people negotiate and collaborate together, and find a middle point; **reciprocity**, where people share and expect sharing in return through reciprocity; **reflection**, where people think and consider alternatives; and **engagement**, where people

proactively engage rather than wait and see.

In this 21st century, effective collaboration is no longer an option for libraries but certainly a necessity as the world around libraries is changing rapidly (Pinfield, Cox, &Rutter, 2017). Nowadays, universities are facing financial cutbacks, pressures for accountability, and changing nature of the library users which always lead to increasing client expectations particularly around the student experience. Therefore, rapidly changing technologies, in areas such as social media and mobile technologies, are impacting on how, where, and when students and faculty access library services. More fundamentally, the services university libraries have traditionally provided can be seen as under threat. As such, libraries must join hands to connect together to provide all the necessary information for their users (Hickman, 2017).

Muhammed (2022) stated that collaboration by libraries can help to avoid duplication of effort and provide efficient savings, streamline work processes and free up time for more value added activities. It can also increase the profile, visibility, credibility, and influence of the library and library staff internally and externally. On occasions, library staff learn new skills and behaviours during collaboration work and these can subsequently be applied to the individual's work in his/her own department or institution.

Library collaboration is an undeniable thing to do, primarily to deal with changes in a very dynamic academic environment. Decreased budgets and changing environments in higher education are motivating librarians to consider collaborating with other campus entities (Ferer, 2012). According to ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee (2010, 2012), decreases or stagnation in library budgets continue to be a trend at schools across the country; many libraries are trying to do more with less and are being asked to assess their services and demonstrate their value to the campus

community.

Library collaboration can be internal as it helps to provide a more joined up service delivery, with a single user interface to different services or a reduction in the number of times data input is required. Involvement by library users in the collaborative process can help to identify new and enhanced services that are relevant to users' needs and more user friendly, with university staff and students often becoming more familiar with library services through involvement in the process. External collaboration in particular can help to provide a wider range of services than the partners could provide individually.

2.3 Social Media and Library Services

Obi, Okore and Kanu (2019) pointed out that in academic community, especially in the library parlance, social media can also be referred to as these modern words "resources sharing" "knowledge sharing" "consortia", "library co-operation", "networking" "library collaboration", "library partnership", "library linkages", "library association", "interlibrary loan" "document delivery", "open access service" web 2.0, 3.0, 4.0 and "library alliance". Social media offers librarians a way to promote library services directly to young adults, and any member of academic community instead of waiting for users to seek out the library (Lucky, 2018).

In the field of librarianship, social media are rapidly becoming the instrument of choice for communication between the librarians and the users and for interactions among the users in academic field themselves, class and examination schedules, assignment, lecture materials, among others are frequently posted on social media often engendering extensive creative interactions among the participants (Lucky, Erimieleagbon, & Hope, 2014). There is no doubt that social media, properly managed can have liberal effect on library services delivery.

Mahadeva, Shashikiran and Sharma (2017) asserted that social media has the potential to facilitate much closer relationships between libraries and their patrons; wherever users are based, and however they choose to learn about and access library services and resources. These tools are accelerating, and they will likely play an increasingly important role in library service provision and outreach in the future. Social media helps in capturing potential users to the library. It offers more than just traditional ways of marketing the library services. It helps in promoting the library resources and to create collaborative network with users, through which knowledge sharing and distant education systems. It helps create community over social media and engage visitors by posting questions about what they think, and what all changes they expect to see in the page as well in the content. It is an interesting way to create interest and bring people together for the promotion of new events (Devan, 2020).

Social media provides a range of possibilities for libraries to provide services out from traditional ways and means as modern life has been influenced greatly and massively by the internet. Owing to the amazing advancement of services given through the internet, libraries and information centers have to change and perform efficiently to convene the information needs of modern users. Libraries must use the modern social media tools to enhance and thrive in this age of the internet. Currently, libraries are adopting these tools in their services to satisfy the information and research needs of the users. Social media applications in libraries drive to convene the growing and varying prospects of library clients (Altaf, Iqbal, Ramzan, Masrek, Mohamad& Ahmed, 2021).

Anwar and Zhiwei (2019) pointed out that social media will help library professionals to make their services effective and efficient. Social media will establish a bridge between library users and library resources. Similarly, the fourth law of library

sciences told about the saving of time of library users. So, the present age of ICTs social media is a powerful tool to engage the library users from remote locations to the library resources and services. It can be said that there are number of factors of using social media in the libraries and information centers. So, those factors can be interaction with potential library users, marketing of library sources and services, sharing and receiving the information, searching for new library users, save the time of library users, achieve the library goals and objectives, create an effective environment, improve the library images, etc

2.4 Use of Social Media in Libraries collaboration in the 21st Century

Social media platforms provide libraries with the opportunity to collaborate with other libraries and organizations in new and innovative ways. Social media platforms are ideal for collaboration because they provide a platform for communication and information sharing. They also enable libraries to reach out to potential partners and to engage with users in new and exciting ways. Using social media effectively enables libraries to connect with users in a space that they already occupy, while bringing added value to existing activities. An app known as FreeBook provides libraries with suggestions on how librarians, and academics, can use social media to improve audience engagement, create a community of users, and enhance the libraries profile, all of which is in light of social media in the library (Veletsianos, Rishi, Bandyopadhyay, Fallon & Walton, 2016).

Social media tools enable libraries and researchers to communicate, network and share documents with other libraries and researchers regardless of locations, and at little or no expense (Hobson & Cook, 2011; Skarzauskiene, Tamosiunaite&Zaleniene,

2013). According to Quadri and Idowu (2014), librarians in Nigerian universities as well as tertiary institution libraries are now realizing the potentials of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Skype and Google etc. Social media can bring many advantages for libraries including the opportunity to raise its professional profile, the freedom to interact with library users and the ability to connect and collaborate with different libraries. The Taylor and Francis Group (2014) report found that one of the most common uses of social media by libraries is providing customer service and sharing resources with other libraries. The challenge here though, is timeliness of response. One of the key characteristics of tools like Twitter is its immediacy, but this is difficult to maintain when most librarians operate within a traditional working pattern. For many libraries, an important aspect of using social media is to build a collaborative network of resource sharing.

In collaborating with each other libraries, libraries use social media to promote all kinds of events and services, share and promote library resources/collections, showcase their library guides and exhibition guides. They can as well share complaints from their various users as regards to their services, proffer suggestions, enquiries and feedback, retrieve information and actively interact with the content as well as its creators. Libraries use social media to support collaborative work substituting old documents or PDF documents and to enhance delivery of service, and contribute to professional development.

The application of Web 3.0 in libraries has also revolutionized information generation, processing, organisation, discovery, retrieval and dissemination. Wanjiru (2009) asserted that social media applications in library collaboration have enhanced information sharing, information literacy, service delivery and supported

teaching, learning and research. Olajide et al. (2017) opined that social media platforms enable library services to be accessible to users without requiring that users should come physically to the library. These platforms also permit libraries, and related institutions, and users to cooperate and work collaboratively.

Collins and Quan-Hasse (2012) asserted that social media platforms are utilised by libraries to market services to current and prospective library patrons and information seekers. Anari (2013) added that numerous libraries are embracing social media platforms to establish and maintain an environment of cooperation and interaction and to create a favourable platform for sharing ideas and experiences with others. According to Ezeani and Igwesi (2012), libraries are using Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter and other social media networks to interface with their heterogeneous clients and other libraries on real time. Library users are also using social media platforms to ask librarians in other libraries about reference questions as well as feedback mechanisms. They are also exploiting social media platforms to share ideas and experiences with other library professionals.

2.5 Challenges of using Social Media in Library collaboration and Services

Challenges associated with using social media in libraries include the following:

1. Social media can require considerable time commitment from library personnel.
2. Social media can require technological expertise, for example customizing applications to provide access to online catalogues.
3. Levels of interest in and skills with using social media vary enormously across libraries.
4. There are limited funds to support more advanced social media usage/ features and the training that would be required to enable this.

5. A library needs to work hard to maintain engagement with library users and attract popularity (followers, likes and so on)
6. It can be difficult to maintain library branding for content/resources made accessible via social media
7. There are potential copyright issues when using social media such as YouTube to build collections
8. Internet connectivity, technological infrastructure and government restrictions on the use of social media may restrict access.

Conclusion

The advent of social media platforms has influenced communication and connections among people globally and in recent time improve library collaboration. It is helpful in many ways to libraries, as it has improved access to information, enhanced the capacity to classify and utilise information, promoted freedom to access information and enhanced information sharing amongst libraries, library users and information seekers. Social media has also revolutionized socialization and knowledge sharing in library collaboration and services. In spite the numerous uses of social media in library collaboration as well as services, there are challenges that are militating against its effective use, which includes amongst others; requiring considerable time commitment from library personnel, technological expertise in providing access to online catalogues, variation in level of interest in and skills with using social media across libraries, limited funds by some libraries to support more advanced social media usage/features, including the training that follows.

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