

INSULATING LIBRARIES AND USERS BY SOCIAL MEDIA, PARTICULARLY PUBLIC LIBRARY AND USERS

Dr. Lalitha aswath¹, Smt. Shilpa Rani N R²

¹Professor, DOS in Library and Information Science, Bangalore University, Bangalore-56

²Assistant Professor, DOS in Library and Information Science, KSOU, Mysore -570006

Abstract - *It's time for public library to enhance its services by coping up with social media / social networks. User's orientation towards information access is changing with a great velocity. Information technology is spreading its tentacles in all sectors and library is not an exception. Libraries are being challenged by technology and libraries have agreed to have technology as a boon to libraries. Public libraries are no exception and need not lag behind in adapting to new technologies, in serving its user community. Here an attempt has been made on one hand to provide the overview of role of social networks in enhancing and extending services instantly and effectively to user community on time and making users advocates of public libraries growth. And on the other hand tries to focuses on present and future role of social media in public libraries, and the necessity of getting adapting to social networks and major issues in getting into social networks.*

Key Words: Public libraries, Social networks, social wikis, web2.0, face book, twitter.

1.INTRODUCTION

Social media is a continuously growing computer mediated tool that has allowed people and institutions to come together and share / exchange. Based on which many online communities have been developed and libraries have become part of it. Individuals and institutions have realised the benefits of social networks and the result many social networks operate on the web, many individuals and organizations are visible on it. Many Academic and Public Libraries are already made their presence felt. Social media can assist public libraries to build common networks of their users, to promote products or services and to keep users updated with the latest news.

Social media provides a good number of opportunities for public libraries, but it's not free from challenges. Many social media networks are being in use for many years but achievement of best impact from social media in providing information services to users is yet to be proved. Social media can act as a bridge between users and library. Social media platform creates network of public libraries, which would keep literacy alive and enable users in rural areas to have access to the information sources of all kinds.

2.PRESENT STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA

His Highness Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III, Maharaja of Baroda, is considered as the pioneer in promoting Public Libraries in India since 1910. In India, now there are about 54,856 public libraries. There is no annual survey report available regarding the growth and decay of such libraries. Most of the public libraries were managed by voluntary organizations and could not continue for long due to lack of adequate financial support. It has been said that nearly 50% of such public libraries were started by voluntary organizations and were closed down after same period. Only those public libraries which were established and supported continuously by public funds, may be through library legislation or State Government support could survive.

3.PUBLIC LIBRARY LEGISLATION

Kolhapur princely state is the first to pass Public Library Act even before independence in 1945. And at present only half of the States in India have successfully passed the library legislation, However, in the coming few years, there is greater possibility for a library law being enacted in the remaining States. Out of these the passing of Public Library Law at Pondicherry State is in the front position¹².

Public library law was enacted in following states¹³

Sl No	State	Year
1.	Tamil Nadu	1948
2.	Andhra Pradesh	1960
3.	Karnataka	1965
4.	Maharashtra	1967
5.	West Bengal	1979
6.	Manipur	1988
7.	Haryana	1989
8.	Kerala	1989
9.	Mizoram	1993
10.	Goa	1993
11.	Gujarath	2000
12.	Odisha	2001
13.	Uttarkhand	2005
14.	Rajasthan	2006
15.	Uttarpradesh	2006
16.	Lakshyadweep	2007
17.	Bihar	2008
18.	Chattisghar	2009
19.	Arunachalpradesh	2009

4.DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Usenet and bulletin boards were started as social network services on the internet by like minded community to communicate among themselves. Often these enthusiastic computer programmes and internet users focused on technology and computer science and related topics of their interest. Such as role-playing games; a common feature of these networks sites was the chat room, a dedicated web space that let people send messages to each other and receive responses on real time¹⁴. Another early networking site to use the friends list was **LiveJournal**, which allowed users to post blogs for others to read. The list of services grew in number to include popular services such as **Friendster, LinkedIn and MySpace** by 2003. When Friendster announced in 2003 that it would begin charging user fees to use the website, many users left to join newer, non-fee-charging services, like **MySpace**. Since 1990's the definition of the concept of social networking is getting widened and services are being offered often networking in the non-traditional sense. For example, **YouTube**, which is a video streaming website, allows users to form groups dedicated to certain topics or themes, and registered users may also communicate through the website by sharing videos or posting messages. **Digg** is another site which allows users to share news stories or other items of interest, vote on them and make comments about posts. **Last.fm** is a site encourages users to share their favorite music with users by creating playlists that can be viewed by others; recommendations are then made for music as the user like. Another popular form of networking site is **massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs)**, ex- World of Warcraft

and Second Life, where users/players meet and interact on real time. Twitter, Facebook and whatsapp are major online social media plat forms used by large number of people. These plat- forms are gaining much importance in personal as well as professional lives of all categories of people.

5.PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

People from all walks of life are the users of public libraries. All public libraries have the aim of fulfilling informational, recreational and educational needs of their users. The public libraries in India in general and particularly in Karnataka are very slow in adapting to new technologies in improving their services compared to other category of libraries. Particularly, in the application of information technology to public library services still have to go a long way. There are many types of social networks available to take library services to users very instantly and very effectively, some of them are discussed below in relation to public libraries.

5.1.Facebook:

In February 2004 Mr Zuckerberg launched "The facebook", as it was originally known; the name taken from the sheets of paper distributed to freshmen, profiling students and staff. By September 2006, the network extended beyond educational institutions and made provision to registration with an email address. Users can now give gifts to friends, post free classified advertisements and even develop their own applications.¹⁴

OCLC reports that about 11% of larger public libraries have Facebook account by January 2011, and had more than 15,000 URLs with the word "libraries" in them¹⁵. Compare to other social networks Facebook is widely used and is called the king of all other social network platforms in marketing of library services. Advantages are more when public libraries create libraries Facebook page, with which public library's Facebook follower's share the library's content, and act as promoters of library by facilitating and extending its messages. Using Facebook to share or post any updates or events can bring new users to public library and they intern act as new ambassadors for the library¹⁶.

5.2.Blogging:

Blogs are electronic diaries created by individuals and institutions. It is very uncertain as to who actually invented / created the first blog. Still a controversial issue some will say Justine Hall began his photo blog in 1994 and some argue that it is Tim Berner-Lee should be credited for the creation of blogs. At present blogs have become easier and quicker modes of creating both personal and institutional web pages containing chronologically arranged items of information to store and to communicate.

It's easy to read and comment on the postings date wise. Blogs doesn't require sign up / sign in to post comments regularly. For many people blogs are like reading magazines as far as they are interested in learning a particular subject. Many may read blogs to keep in touch with their topic of the interest like news, gossip, sports and technology etc. they read blogs written by their favorite actor, cricketer or author etc. Public libraries can use blogs as an informal way of reaching public and connecting them to books. Librarians can use these blogs to write book reviews, or to describe an event or any national festivals, programs etc. many a times it's good to link their library websites with informational blogs to make users easy to access and create addiction to libraries.

5.3. Twitter and RSS:

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called "tweets". Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone, and Noah Glass and launched in July 2006¹⁷. Twitter allows people to stay connected via short messages delivered in multiple ways: cell phones, the Web, and instant messages. Posts are limited to write in 140 characters. According to the Twitter website, the purpose of Twitter messages is to answer the question "what's happening." Members have many options like they can choose whose messages they will receive. The site also maintain a blog to keep users updated about what the site team considers important, and it is not necessary to sign up for Twitter to access the blog. The site links to Google Blogger for those who want to create their own blogs. Widgets, buttons, and applications are available for mobile phones and websites¹⁸.

Similarly, **Really Simple Syndication (RSS)** feeds provide a method to publish updated blog entries, headlines, videos, and so on in an easily accessible format. The feeds allow users to subscribe to updates from popular websites and blogs. The user needs to download a reader or aggregator and then subscribe to a feed. Thus reader verifies the user's feeds regularly for new entries and downloads the entries by sending them to the user's e-mail. Public Libraries can use RSS feeds to send subscribers updates on programming, new acquisitions, or reviews¹⁹.

5.4. Wikis:

Wikis are similar to blogs. These are open web pages where anyone can register to it freely. Edit the content, access and change anything. Reliability is less in wikis because of open access and edits option available to everyone. Lack of editorship is a challenge to library community but need not avoid wikis because of this reason. However, find ways to understand and critically accept it on demand. Wikis can be used for social interaction among librarians and users in public libraries. Especially public libraries can design it as online study group to share

information ask details and librarians can answer through it. Record of these discussions may be archived for eternity. No doubt wikis serve as new forms of group study rooms for public libraries.

5.5. Book-Sharing Social Networks:

Book-sharing social networks are a comparatively new addition to the Internet world. LibraryThing began in 2005, and Shelfari and Goodreads launched in late 2006. These sites combine several social networking technologies. Besides creating a showcase for books, they allow for tagging, sharing, forming or joining groups, reviewing, and rating books. Many libraries use these social networking sites as a restricted platform for their book clubs, but there are also groups that anyone can join. Membership is free, and Shelfari, Goodreads or library thing are such three networks easy to join²⁰.

5.6. Streaming Media:

The streaming of video and audio media is another application to reach out to user community effectively. This is one way communication, reduces the burden of library staff and makes more interactive in delivering library instruction online by incorporating, media-rich facets. The static, text-based explanation combined with a bulletin to be downloaded is being replaced by more experiential tutorials. Many of these tutorials use Flash programming, screen-cast software, or streaming audio or video, and couple the media presentation with interactive quizzing; users respond to questions and the system responses to it. These tutorials are perhaps the first of its kind in library services to migrate into more socially rich Web 2.0. These could take the form of multi-media chat rooms or wikis, and users will interact with one another and the learning object at hand, much like in a classroom or instruction lab. As this media is created, libraries will inevitably be the institutions responsible for archiving and providing access to them²¹.

6. ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- ✓ To endorse specific and general library services to library users.
- ✓ Helps in providing instant updated information on time, like - alerting about new addition to collections, to send links of audio/video related to academics etc.
- ✓ Assists in providing feedback about library products and services
- ✓ Social network plays a vital role in encouraging relationships with library staff and users.
- ✓ Helps in reaching out to new prospective users
- ✓ Especially it's very easy for Marketing of information sources, products and services through social media.

7. ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL NETWORKS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- Lack of staff is a basic issue in public libraries. Insufficient manpower causes slow growth of any system.
- Lack of knowledge about Information Technology
- Lack of training is a drawback in creating and use of wikis, googledocs and twitter etc.
- Lack of infrastructure like computers and related facilities may result in continuation of manual system.
- Lack of strong Internet facility / no internet facility.
- Lethargy of staff to switch from manual to digital world.

8. PRESENT USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIBRARIES

Social media is becoming as important as bread and butter for everyday life. From sweeper to soldier, cleaner to CEO social media in one or the other way becoming inevitable and being used. Libraries must understand the pulse of user community while designing library extension programs.

Taylor & Francis sought to address some issues by conducting research to compile a white paper investigating how libraries are currently using and applying social media. It aims to provide a benchmark from which libraries can measure their own social media activity, and provides best practice recommendations which may inspire libraries to try new approaches. 61% of libraries are in use of social media for 3 years or more, 30% have social media interactions daily, 25% of libraries have more than 5 individuals updating their social media pages, 72% of libraries have no social media policy or plan in place and Facebook is the most popular social media channel being used.

9. FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Envisaging the future of social media is very difficult task at this juncture. Public libraries are slowly walking towards advanced technologies to retain user community. Hence to answer whether social media become more important or not is a difficult question. This topic has opened up intense debate on the future of social media. Though the key concern here is how it will impact on librarians and users. Always it's a big challenge to public librarians to retain their user community. Because handling all age groups under the same roof is a challenging job. Hence, Librarians have to merge social media activity with other communication channels to make it more closely linked to library services.

Librarians have to focus on excelling in the digital literacy to serve its user community and survive in the online world. Social media as a center part of communication with library users should be a routine factor for librarians. Web 2.0 and related technologies have place in connecting different age groups to the literature, provided librarians have the capacity to build the network and attract them to the same.

10. CONCLUSION

Today's generation whether educated or not use technologies for different purposes and in different ways. Websites, blogs, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook are connecting users to authors and literature. But in every step they need little assistance and encouragement to use. Here librarian can take advantage of the situation and act as bridge between resources and users with utmost patience.

It is very important to take feedback at regular intervals and make necessary changes according to the need. Combining users and their ideas, good books, interesting writers and an inspired / active librarian equals an excellent recipe for achievement of model library in the society.

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