



Application of Social Media for Innovative Library Services in South-Western Nigerian University Libraries

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the application of social media used for innovative library services by university library staff in South-Western Nigeria. A survey method was adopted with copies of questionnaire distributed to 354 library staff selected from the entire 36 university libraries located in South Western Nigeria. An in-depth interview was also conducted for heads of units in each of the libraries. The findings of the study reveal that social media application to library services is now prominent among university library staff in South-Western Nigeria. Facebook, Twitter, Blog, YouTube, LinkedIn, Delicious, MySpace and Flickr are the social media being used by the library staff. Facebook was found to be the most used site. In addition, the study affirms that selected libraries are using social media majorly to communicate with their users, provide reference services, disseminate information as well as news on library services.

Keywords: Social media, University libraries, Library service delivery, South-Western Nigerian.

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I. Introduction

It has been reported that the use of social media by individuals irrespective of their age is increasing and this is especially popular among young people and college students. The increase use of this technology has made many university students to reduce their dependence on traditional library (Farkas, 2007; Mathews, 2006; Milstein, 2009). Similarly, Stuart (2010) stated that the annual influx of new students who regularly use social media for personal live affairs provides for librarians, large number of users whose traditional communication channels within the institution have not already become entrenched. Bearing that in mind, libraries in the universities have opportunities to be leaders in their campuses and the community at large by coming to the realization that through social media platforms their services can be brought to the public. Going by the above reports, many university libraries are now making optimum use of the new Web 2.0 technologies to reach students in their chosen location so as to extend library services outside the four walls of the traditional library. Extant studies revealed that social media have had significant impacts on university libraries in the

developed countries (Muhammad & Khalid, 2012; Andrea et al. 2010; Mathews, 2006). It is assumed that the technology is also being explored by university library staff in Nigeria.

Observation by the researchers based on extant literature reveals that limited research has been conducted on the types of social media being used by Nigerian university libraries along with the purpose for using them. It has been reported that Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, MySpace and blogs are the major social media platforms being used by academic librarians in the developed world (Muhammad & Khalid, 2012; Andrea et al. 2010; Mathews, 2006). These tools are being used by these librarians mostly for marketing library services and for providing reference services. Conducting a related study in a developing country such as Nigeria, is expected to provide a picture of comparison with the developed countries to help address some gaps in literature in this area. Moreover, as librarians in Nigerian university libraries are beginning to incorporate social media into their services, there are issues that require investigation. These issues include the institutional preparedness towards application of social media to library services. Hence, this study examined application of social media used for innovative library services by university library

staff in South-Western Nigeria.

II. The Study Objectives

The main purpose of the study was to examine application of social media for innovative library services in South-Western Nigerian university libraries. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Determine the type of social media being adopted by the university library staff in South-West, Nigeria.
2. Examine the purposes of social media use by the library staff.
3. Investigate institutional preparedness to adopt social media.

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the study answered the under-listed research questions:

1. What are the types of social media being adopted by the selected library staff?
2. What is the purpose for using social media?
3. To what extent are the selected universities provide sufficient resources for social media adoption in their libraries?

III. Review of Related Literature

Libraries the world over are increasingly adopting social media to design services that allow them to reach users easily unlike before, in the virtual space, as acknowledged by a number of researchers (Tripathi & Kumar, 2010; Thanuskodi, 2012; Onuoha, 2013). Evidence in the ability of library sites in making the shifting over to a mobile platform was reported by (Kroski, 2008). As reflected in the Library Technology Report, the functionality of several university libraries mobile websites was summarized. The report illustrated that a wide array of service can be delivered through mobile websites. Such services usually reflect the needs of the library's user base. Libraries serving larger population of undergraduates may intend to target reference assistance, technology services as well as basic search features. For instance, the University of Richmond Library offers catalog search, real-time laptop and PC availability and ask a librarian services by emails, short message services SMS, or instant messaging IM. Another example is the University of Virginia Libraries' mobile website, which provides news and events along with other information about library exhibitions.

In a bid to provide services that are apt to the needs of library users as illustrated in the report, academic libraries are now making optimum use of social media to support their basic client-centred approach to service delivery. Mansor & Idris (2010) at the International Islamic University in Malaysia (IIUM) examined the level of awareness of Library 2.0 among librarians. Data was gathered from 46 librarians through a self-designed questionnaire. The results revealed that 33% of the respondents were not aware of Library 2.0 applications being employed in libraries while 67% respondents indicated they were aware. In a similar study, Thanuskodi (2012) in India, examined the level of awareness of Library 2.0. integration among Library and Information

Science professionals at Annamalai University. A survey approach was adopted and questionnaire was used to gather data from 60 library and information science professionals. The results indicated that 46.66% respondents were not aware of Web 2.0 applications being used in libraries while 53.33 respondents were aware. Based on the findings of these studies, there is no doubt about that the technology (social media) has made its way into the university libraries.

Several studies have shown how social media can be used to enhance library services. For instance, Tripathi & Kumar (2010) examined the use of social network in libraries of higher education institutions across different social and education culture using survey method. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from 277 university libraries. The findings demonstrated that social network has the capacity to improve library services to the users. Upon this finding, the researcher implored the library professionals to use social network to deliver traditional services in an innovative manner so as to address the information requirements of the techno-savvy users.

Abdul Aziz, Boon & Loh (2010) conducted a research on 'sowing the seeds: towards reaping a harvest using social web applications in Nanyang Technology University Library, India. The paper was presented at the 76th IFLA general conference held in Sweden. The purpose of the paper was to establish the rationale for university library exploration of social media tools such as blogs, Facebook, Flickr, and Google Analytics to reach out to its users. It was reported in the study that the library adopted social media in order to manage the changing pattern, use and expectations of different users. According to the authors, the projects have enhanced the library's traditional web portal and offered new opportunities for the library to engage its users. Thus, it was recommended that social media be integrated to carry out all library services.

Onuoha (2013) investigated the librarians' use of social networking for professional development in Nigeria through a survey research method. The population of the study comprised 1294 registered members of the Nigerian Library Association online forum. Through random sampling technique, the study drawn on 297 respondents which represent the sample for the study. Questionnaire was used to gather data and finding from the study revealed that librarians learn mostly by reading through the conversations of others and joining of the discussion groups. The study concluded that librarians usually rely on social media as means of professional development. It was recommended based on this finding that the use of social media application should be explored since doing so could contribute to professional and learning development. Looking at the studies above, it is clear that majority of them were conducted outside Nigeria. The only study conducted in Nigeria focused on use of social media for professional development. However, there are other innovative ways of using social media especially by the library staff which has not been reported in the literature particularly in the context of South-Western Nigerian universities.

IV. Research Method

A survey method was employed for the study and the sampling frame comprised all the librarians and IT staff in all the university libraries in South-Western Nigeria. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used as instruments for data collection. A four-point Likert-type scale was used with responses ranging from Strongly Agree SA 4; Agree- A 3; Disagree-D 2 and Strongly Disagree- SD 1. The U – Undecided option was excluded from the response in order to extract a specific response from the respondents. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a test re-test reliability method was adopted to determine overall reliability of each of the variables identified in the study. The reliability co-efficient returned an $r = 0.714$ through Cronbach Alpha. Collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics and weighted mean square (WMS).

V. Data Analysis and Results

The results of the survey are presented in a descriptive format. The survey was carried out from June 22nd to November 28th 2015 at the selected universities in South-West, Nigeria. Out of the 354 copies of questionnaire administered to the respondents, 265 were returned giving 74.9% response rate.

TABLE I
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 147 | 55.5 |
| Female | 118 | 44.5 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |
| Years of Experience | | |
| 1-5 | 109 | 41.1 |
| 6-10 | 76 | 28.7 |
| 11-15 | 39 | 14.7 |
| 16-20 | 20 | 7.5 |
| 21-25 | 7 | 2.6 |
| 26-30 | 6 | 2.3 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |
| Educational level | | |
| PhD | 18 | 6.8 |
| MLIS | 160 | 60.4 |
| BLIS | 42 | 15.8 |
| Diploma | 27 | 10.2 |
| Others | 18 | 6.8 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |
| Status | | |
| University Librarian | 3 | 1.2 |
| Principal Librarian | 5 | 1.9 |
| Senior Librarian | 20 | 7.5 |
| Librarian I | 70 | 26.4 |
| Librarian II | 75 | 28.4 |
| Assistant Librarian | 29 | 10.9 |
| Library Officer | 45 | 16.9 |
| System Analyst | 18 | 6.8 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |
| Unit | | |
| Cataloguing | 94 | 35.5 |
| Reference | 31 | 11.7 |
| Circulation | 53 | 20.0 |
| Serial | 25 | 9.4 |
| Collection & Acquisition | 21 | 7.9 |
| Bindery | 6 | 2.3 |
| Others | 35 | 13.2 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |

In Table I, the distribution, according to gender, shows that 55% of the respondents were male and 44.5% were female. This is an indication that librarianship is neither a male nor female dominated job in the study area. The table also shows that majority (84.5%) of the respondents have between 1-15 years of experience in the job while only (15.5%) have more than 15 years' experience. This is an indication that the selected libraries have more young librarians and IT staff than the old ones. In addition, it table reveals that most of the librarians (60.4%) have a master degree in library studies while 15.8% of them have a bachelor degree in library studies. Those with doctoral degree are only 6.8%. Others, that is, system analysts with certificate in computer and librarians with diploma in library study are 6.8% and 10.2% of the respondents respectively. These results also indicate that the selected libraries gave preference to librarians that have MLIS over those that have BLIS and Diploma certificates.

Moreover, the results show that the respondents were divided among different cadre of the library staff. They were; University Librarian (1.2%), Principal Librarian (1.9%), Senior Librarian (7.5%), Librarian I (26.4%), Librarian II (28.4%), Assistant Librarian (10.9%), Library Officer (16.9%) and System Analyst (6.8). This result indicates that different cadre of the library staff participated in the survey.

The table also shows that majority (35.5%) of the respondents work in the cataloguing unit while the least (2.3%) work in the bindery unit. This may be due to the fact that cataloguing is a technical unit of the library where the core works of librarians are being carried out. Those that work in the reference unit, circulation, serial, collection and acquisition and others are 11.7, 20.0, 9.4, 7.9 and 13.2 %, respectively. Majority of the respondents that picked others indicated they work in the e-library section.

VI. Research Question Analyses

Research Question 1: What are the types of social media being adopted by the selected library staff?

To answer this research question, the researcher used the responses to the ten items that measure the types of social media being adopted by the libraries. The results are depicted in Table II.

TABLE II
TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTED BY THE LIBRARIES (N = 265)

| Social Media | *Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Face book | 170 | 64.2 |
| YouTube | 39 | 14.7 |
| Myspace | 28 | 10.6 |
| LinkedIn | 24 | 12.8 |
| Delicious | 11 | 14.2 |
| Twitter | 105 | 39.6 |
| Blog | 49 | 18.1 |
| Flickr | 12 | 4.5 |
| Others | 28 | 10.8 |
| None | 68 | 25.7 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |

*Multiple Responses

The study revealed that majority (64.2%) of the library staff used Facebook followed by Twitter (39.6%). It was

revealed that about 25.7% of them have not adopted any of the social media services. The adoption of Facebook and twitter may be as a result of their being widely used by the library users. Percentage of the library staff that have adopted social media such as Blog, YouTube, LinkedIn, Delicious, MySpace, Others, Flickr are 18.1, 14.7, 12.8, 10.6, 14.2, 10.8, and 4.5%, respectively.

Research Question 2: For what purposes do the library staff use social media?

To answer this research question the researcher used the responses to the five items that measure the purposes of social media use in the libraries. The results are depicted in Tables III and IV.

TABLE III
PURPOSES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA (N = 265)

| S/N | Purpose | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|---|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | I use social media to communicate with users | 84 (31.7) | 102 (38.5) | 53 (20.1) | 26 (9.7) |
| 2 | I use social media to market its services | 69 (26.0) | 104 (39.2) | 68 (25.7) | 24 (9.1) |
| 3 | I provide reference services using social media | 61 (23.0) | 103 (38.9) | 77 (29.1) | 24 (9.1) |
| 4 | I use social media for posting resource reviews and information on new books and programs of interest | 53 (20) | 115 (43.4) | 72 (27.2) | 25 (9.4) |
| 5 | I provides library news through social media | 57 (21.5) | 115 (43.4) | 72 (27.2) | 21 (7.9) |

Note: Strongly agree and agree were collapsed to agree. Strongly disagree and disagree were collapsed to disagree.

The results in Table III show that 70.2% of the respondents agreed that they use social media to communicate with users while 29.8% disagree. Also, 65.2% of the respondents agreed that they use social media to market libraries services while 34.8% disagree. Furthermore, 61.9% of the respondents agreed that they provide reference services using social media while 38.1% disagree. Again, 63.4% agreed to use of social media for posting resource reviews and information on new books and programs of interest while 36.6% disagree. In addition, 64.9% of the respondents agreed that they provide library news through social media while 35.1% disagreed. These results indicate that the selected library staff use social media for communicating with users, marketing library services, providing reference services and disseminating of information. In terms of ranking the purposes of using social media, the result is presented in Table IV.

TABLE IV
RANKING OF THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

| Purposes | Weighted Mean Square (WMS) | Rank |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Communication with users | 2.91 | 1 st |
| Marketing services | 2.83 | 2 nd |
| Reference services | 2.76 | 4 th |
| Dissemination of information on new books and programmes | 2.73 | 5 th |
| News on library services | 2.78 | 3 rd |

The result shows that most of the library staff uses social media for communicating with their users as it was ranked first among other purposes, followed by the use of social media for marketing services which was ranked second. The use of social media for reference services, dissemination of information on new books and programmes as well as news on library services were ranked 4th, 5th and 3rd respectively.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the selected universities provide sufficient resources for social media adoption in their libraries?

To answer this research question, the researcher used the responses to the four items that measure the institutional preparedness towards adoption social media. The results are depicted in Tables V and VI.

TABLE V
INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS TOWARDS ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA (N = 265)

| S/N | Institutional Preparedness | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|--|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | My institution responds in a cooperative manner to the library suggestions to adopt social media | 56 (21.1) | 129 (48.5) | 64 (24.2) | 16 (6.0) |
| 2 | My institution commits significant amount of money on the library 2.0 project | 51 (19.2) | 105 (39.6) | 87 (32.8) | 22 (8.3) |
| 3 | My institution trains some library staff to prepare them for implementing library 2.0 project | 53 (20.0) | 122 (46.0) | 73 (27.5) | 17 (6.4) |
| 4 | My institution provides sufficient resources for library 2.0 project | 50 (18.9) | 123 (46.4) | 71 (26.8) | 21 (7.9) |

The results in Table V show that 69.6% of the respondents agreed that their institutions respond in a cooperative manner to the library suggestions to adopt social media while 30.4% disagreed. Moreover, 58.8% of the respondents agreed that their institutions commit significant amount of money on the library 2.0 project while 41.2% disagreed. 66% of the respondents agreed that their institutions trains some library staff to prepare them for implementation of library 2.0 project while 34% disagreed. Furthermore, 65.3% of the respondents agreed that their institutions provide sufficient resources for library 2.0 projects while 34.7% disagreed. Looking at the percentage of responses, it is clear that the percentage of agreed outweighed the percentage of disagreed. This implies that many of the selected universities provide adequate resources for successful implementation of library 2.0. This hereby provides answer to the third research question of this study. In terms of ranking the resources that are made available by the selected universities for library 2.0 project, the result is shown in Table VI.

In terms of preparedness, timely response to suggestions on adoption of social media and staff training for the implementation of library 2.0 projects were ranked 1st and 2nd respectively followed by provision of internet access (3rd) and financial commitment to library 2.0 projects (4th). This indicates that the selected institutions

do not commit significant amount of money on the library 2.0 project.

TABLE VI
RANKING OF INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS ITEMS

| <i>Institutional Preparedness</i> | WMS | Rank |
|--|------|-----------------|
| <i>Timely response to suggestions on adoption social media</i> | 2.85 | 1 st |
| <i>Financial commitment to library 2.0 project</i> | 2.70 | 4 th |
| <i>Staff training for library 2.0 project</i> | 2.80 | 2 nd |
| <i>Provision of internet access for library 2.0 project</i> | 2.76 | 3 rd |

VII. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that social media is very crucial in services delivery in academic libraries. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, Blog, YouTube, LinkedIn, Delicious, MySpace and Flickr are being used by the selected library staff, however Facebook was found to be the most used site. The report on the use of Facebook more than other social media sites by the libraries could be as a result of popularity which the platform enjoys in this part of the world. It could also be as a result of researchers' argument (e.g. Creese, Cribb & Spicer, 2008) that establishing a Facebook presence usually provide opportunities for librarians to expand their knowledge of the profession. This finding is consistent with the result presented by Atulomah et al (2011) who found Facebook to be the most used social media for work-related purposes by the respondents. Conversely, Cook and Wiebrands (2010) found that Twitter was found to be the network that offered professional information more than other social network as indicated by 68% of the study respondents.

Furthermore, the result shows that the library staff use social media to communicate with their users, and as provision of reference services, and dissemination of information on new books and programmes as well as news on library services to the users. This is in agreement with the finding of Linh (2008) who provided lists of different purposes for which the academic librarians use social media including general news, university news, library news and events, announcements of new books, databases and journals, research tools, suggestions, reference services and others.

The result which revealed that social media are used by the library staff mostly for communicating with the users is also corroborated by the social media literature (e.g. Bradley & McDonald, 2011; Hall, 2011). These researchers claimed that using social media for communicating with the users is one of the most important purposes of using the technology in libraries.

Results also indicate that there are several benefits and advantages associated with the use of social media as far as delivering of library services in the selected libraries is concerned. The respondents indicated that use of social media enhances their libraries' publicity, markets the libraries' services and resources, helps to reach out to more users and connect with other libraries which in turn promote library services. This finding is consistent with the findings of (Chu & Du, 2013). The researchers

discovered in a survey on librarians' opinions of the benefits and challenges of using social networking tools in academic libraries, the most frequently-mentioned benefits of using social media tools was promotion of library services.

In terms of institutional preparedness, the result shows that the efforts made by the selected universities to implement library 2.0 projects are not enough as they do not commit significant amount of money on the project. This is consistent with the report by Anwarul Islam et al. (2014) whose results showed that the universities' management did not always provide fund or approve new initiatives easily.

VIII. Recommendations

Considering the findings from this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Adoption of social media to library service should be institutionalized as this would increase the publicity of the university.
2. Facebook should not be used as a major social media channel to reach out to library users. There are other alternatives available such YouTube, Videos and others which the libraries can use instead of text-based contents posting only.
3. It is believed that majority of the university librarians are older workers in the libraries. However, numerous empirical findings have reported that older people are not receptive of social media (e.g. Lane et al., 2014), for successful implementation of library 2.0 projects. This category of library workers should be encouraged to be IT compliant. This can be achieved by training them on the use and advantages of social media.
4. For successful implementation of social media in the libraries, the universities administrators should provide appropriate support.

IX. Conclusion

Contrary to some reviewed literature that adoption of social media is not well explored by information professionals in Nigeria, this study concluded that the technology is now prominent among library staff in Nigerian university. This study discovered that social media such as Facebook, twitter, Blog, YouTube, LinkedIn, Delicious, MySpace and Flickr are being used for library services delivery. Among these social media sites, Facebook is the most used site and it is used for many purposes.

This study investigated social media' application in university libraries from the library staff' perspectives, however, the investigation can be carried out from several other perspectives. For instance, future research can investigate social media from the point of view of the library users and other information professionals.

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