QUALITY ENHANCEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIBRARIES

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Abstract

This paper focused on how Libraries can leverage on social networking and Social Media skills to provide dynamic library service for quality improvement. The unprecedented technological advancement of the 21st century, no doubt has impacted on library services globally and in India in particular. The Social Media hype has gradually crept into the library profession with social sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube, Library Thing, it has become evident that our services will need to change to meet the growing needs of our end users. Libraries in India have been challenged like never before to render more proactive and more value added services to meet the ever changing needs of our patrons. This paper is therefore, an attempt to examine the present scenario in library services delivery with these new and emerging technologies. Challenges faced by Indian libraries in the use of these Social Media are investigated and possible solutions proffered.

Keyword: Quality Enhancement, Social Media, Libraries.

Introduction:

Higher education system in India has been expanded in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. The Government of India has focused on increasing the access and ensuring equity during successive plan periods. The resultant growth, though impressive, failed to ensure desired Quality in Higher Education. Only a few Higher Education Institutions earned a reputation for high quality services. Globalization has resulted in significant changes in the knowledge economy and ushered new conditions for the provision of higher education to cater the skill requirement all across the globe. Under these circumstances, focus on quality enhancement of higher education in India assumes greater significance. This paper analyses the Quality Enhancement through Social Media in Libraries. The major quality concerns, the government initiatives and challenges for enhancement of quality of higher education in India.

Quality Enhancement:

Quality enhancement is a process of augmentation or improvement. Now Quality enhancement perspectives, it has two strands: first it is the 'enhancement of individual learners; the augmentation or improvement of learners' attributes, knowledge, ability, skills

and potential. Now for a library networks is play very important role for Quality enhancement in education system. Also the social connections have become very important and have improved the library profession tremendously in India. Social networking refers to a process of relationship building among a group with a common interest. Social Media emerged in India principally for the purpose of socializing. The Facebook initially was used only for social discussions, however over time, particularly by the turn of the 21stcentury the grouping of individuals into specific groups emerged. Professional groups started to spring up and within time the library profession had its own group with the sole purpose of sharing ideas and gathering first hand information regarding the profession. Undoubtedly, as a growing economy the use of these media often meet with challenges which are succinctly discussed in this paper and strategies for the enhancement of library services through these media have been proffered.

Social Media:

Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. The largest social media networks include Facebook, Instagram, Social media typically features user-generated content and personalized profiles**.**

*"*The best way to define Social Media is to break it down. Media is an instrument on communication, like a newspaper or a radio, so Social Media would be a social instrument of communication.

In Web 2.0 terms, this would be a website that doesn't just give you information, but interacts with you while giving you that information. This interaction can be as simple as asking for your comments or letting you vote on an article, or it can be as complex as Flixster recommending movies to you based on the ratings of other people with similar interests.

Think of regular media as a one-way street where you can read a newspaper or listen to a report on television, but you have very limited ability to give your thoughts on the matter.

Social Media, on the other hand, is a two-way street that gives you the ability to communicate too

Definition & Concept

"Social Media are primarily Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information **among human beings."**- *Wikipedia*

"An umbrella term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words and **pictures."** - *Anvil Media*

Here's what they defined it as…

- ➢ Social Media is like going to a large party. Put on your best outfit, try to be entertaining, don't put own foot in mouth

- ➢ Social Media = Sharing Caring Conversations Online

- ➢ A place to hang out and communicate with your own networks of contacts, friends and peers about stuff that interests you

- ➢ Social Media = The facilitation and practice of engagement and conversation online

- ➢ People. Technology. Communication. Ideas. Choice.

- ➢ It's new groups of online media which share things like openness, 'connectedness' participation, conversation and community

- ➢ Definition of Social Media: Media that allows discussion and interaction, as opposed to broadcast only.

- ➢ My definition of Social Media 'the Internet's original purpose-not a new phenomena' but there are other forms of 'offline'

- ➢ Talking online with people you don't know in the hope that they'll become customers!

- ➢ A set of websites that allows users to directly interact with each other

- ➢ The definition of Social Media du jour is, simply, '140 characters or less'

- ➢ This year's equivalent of WAP portals

- ➢ Places where people go connect with other people. I guess the 'love' column in London

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To understand the respondent's attitude towards the use of social media as a library resources and services.

2. To analyze the role of Social Media in library and services.

3. To understand the role Social Media for Quality enhancement in libraries.

Role of Social Media and Libraries:

To attract potential users of the library by making announcements, providing reference service, networking with other libraries, promoting general library services, providing quick updates to users and their query and to develop communities. It was inquired from the

respondents that what should be the purpose of social media usage in libraries and information centers. Participants of the study strongly agreed that social media should be used for marketing of library product and services and to build discussion groups and collaborative work. They were agreed that it should be used for fund raising, to spread news and service alerts, to provide quick updates to online users and to push library news and press release among online users

- Marketing of library product and specific adult programs and services
- Marketing specific children's and youth services programs
- To modernize the library image and e-reputation
- To push library news and press release
- To provide quick updates to users
- To build discussion groups and collaborative work
- To spread news and service alerts

Social Web and Important Guidelines:

It is easy to confuse Social Media with social news because we often refer to members of the news as "the media." Adding to the confusion is the fact that a social news site is also a Social Media site because it falls into that broader category. But social news is not the same thing as Social Media anymore than a banana is the same thing as fruit. A banana is a type of fruit, but fruit can also be grapes, strawberries, or lemons. And while social news is Social Media, social networking and wikis are also Social Media.

Websites and Social Media:

Now that we have answered the question of what is Social Media, we can move on to Social Media websites. Because Social Media is such a broad term, it covers a large range of websites. But the one common link between these websites is that you are able to interact with the website and interact with other visitors.

Social Media websites:

- **Social Networking**. (Facebook, Hi5, Last.FM) Interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions.
- **Social Photo and Video Sharing**. (YouTube, Flickr) Interact by sharing photos or videos and commenting on user submissions.
- **Social Bookmaking**. (Del.icio.us, Blinklist, Simpy) Interact by tagging websites and searching through websites bookmarked by other people.

- **Social News**. (Digg, Propeller, Reddit) Interact by voting for articles and commenting on them.

- **Wikis** And these websites are not the only Social Media websites. Any website that invites you to interact with the site and with other visitors falls into the definition of Social Media

Quality enhancement through social media in libraries:

*Facebook***:** Most popular now because it is librarian- friendly, with many applications like JSTOR search, World Cat, and much more. Librarians can interact with users to know their information need. Libraries try to link some of these specialized library applications to Facebook.

*MySpace***:** In Academic institutions where the students are; libraries have taken advantage of this site o post, calendar, custom catalog search tools, and blog features to improve their presence.

Blogs: Here, librarians can periodically post messages; share information on a particular subject or issue, and allow users to contribute to content. They can write articles, news on topical issues and expect an instant reaction from their users

*Wikis***:** Is a free online encyclopedia that gives a background knowledge and definition of concepts. It offers a platform for users to access, edit and contribute to content. This is a collaborative web page for developing web content.

*LinkedIn***:** Librarians can get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest via LinkedIn. Librarians can use this platform to render specialized services such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).

*Twitter***:** A micro blogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update. Librarians can use this platform to give users firsthand information on the on-going national elections. Users can send Instant Messages (IM) on complaints or ask questions on a

*YouTube***:** In institutions in india, events such as important highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops are disseminated via the YouTube.

*Flickr***:** Librarians can use this tool to share and distribute new images of library collections. Cover page of new arrivals of both books and journals can be disseminated to users via Flickr.

Library Thing: A tool that enriches the library OPAC. Once an account is created, a list of books with ISBNs is sent to Library Thing which sends back a piece of code which is pasted into the footer of the Library OPAC.

Librarians can utilize this to send a list of current publications to users. The Changing Library Environment Today, libraries are using the latest technologies and trends to make their services popular and user friendly. The concept of a library as physical place where one can visit to get information is rapidly changing to a social cyberspace where users access, communicate and contribute to existing knowledge. This is because the modern library of the 21ˢᵗ century is characterized with collective knowledge creation and enabling technologies; and also a movement away from the old stereotype, conventional and one directional library services to users to a more dynamic, two-way communicational network environment

Social Networking in libraries: a Platform for Open Access to Knowledge:

Social networking sites are constantly promoting open access to knowledge. Open access is the term used to refer to resources that are openly available to users with no requirements for authentication or payment. It is a model that presents free access to publications. In an open access platform, users are not charged for access to articles or other resources, and are free to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to full texts of these resources, provided they do not violet copyright rules, search, browse, filter, find, collaborate and have online open access to knowledge and contribute to web content

Social Networking Opportunities for Libraries: Social networking presents some important opportunities to libraries which include marketing of library services and reference services.

Marketing of library services – the growing population of patrons and librarians that make use of social networking is an indication that it is an ideal vehicle for marketing the services of libraries to patrons. Flickr is an excellent marketing tool which could be used by librarians to sensitize the users on general library services. Most students are not aware of the different services offered in the library such as **reservation of books**, **reference services** and **Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).** Librarians can spread awareness of library services to those who may not be aware of these services via Social Media. Librarians can also develop **subject-specific blogs** and play a leading role in advocating the use of blogs for scholarly communication and commenting on research findings.

Reference Services – the use of social networking tools enable librarians to identify library patrons on the social cyberspace and pro-actively provide the type of information that would normally result from reference service. Social networking tools are not only being used as a vehicle for promoting services, programs and new resources but they are also used for reference service Students are using

tools like Ask a Librarian, and twitter to ask questions in **"real** time and this is assisting in promoting the library as a relevant, efficient and helpful place.

Future Roles of Librarians: Libraries play important roles in providing information for research and access to knowledge. In order to stay relevant in the socially networked environment and meet the growing needs of their users, libraries therefore need to pro-actively embrace the new technologies and face the challenges for better services delivery. Librarians are responding to the popularity of social networking sites and their expanding role in the creation, use, and sharing of information by engaging them as a central medium for interacting with library patrons and providing services to meet their information needs. The ways in which people communicate, acquire and share knowledge, will inevitably have an impact on the library, its services, and its staff. Librarians should follow the public conversations, posts, updates, and events of these key individuals, and pro-actively offer advice, resources, and help

He should act as an active participant of the social space and be able to identify the needs of the members of the library communities and to proffer solutions by offering information, links to the websites that are relevant to their information needs; and even direct offers of help. There is an urgent need for libraries to adopt the new social networking tools in their services as a strategy to embrace change while promoting a participatory role for library users in knowledge creation. The growing use of social networking tools calls for librarians to develop 21st century skills on digital technologies. Libraries can connect their social networking sites with their library Websites to links to their catalog, chat reference pages, research guides, calendar of events, news etc. Some of the roles of the social networking librarian include: understanding and articulating the nature of social networking sites, creating webpage and content, establishing friendly user interface over the network, creating online database management, evaluating and applying information, and assisting users with skill acquisition. Other skills for a social networking literate librarian include: searching and

navigating the web, creating social network space, teaching, and providing quality online library services

1. **Identity management –** Librarians should be able to examine profiles of users to mirror their information needs and match them with the library collections.

2. **Network awareness** - Should be able to share views and create awareness of the different social network sites and their uses.

3. **Expert search –** The 21st century librarian should be an expert in web navigation; able to find friends of friends, and potential library users with common interest.

4. **Contact management –** Librarians can cross-link people and ideas among the conglomerate of different groups.

5. **Context awareness –** should be diversified in knowledge and able to **link information to people's profiles. The important characteristics of social**

6. **Participatory** - Users have the opportunity to actively engage in the construction of knowledge rather than being passive consumers of content;

7. **Educative –** Users are kept abreast of the latest developments and can have open access to knowledge;

8. **Collaborativ**e –Social Network ensures knowledge sharing, establishes communication link with experts and allows users to develop a team working skill;

9. **Fascinating –** It is inspiring, interesting and users can be engrossed in the use of social network sites; some users garner information with these sites in an easy and unencumbered manner; and

10. **Flexibility –** Easy content creation and sharing, easy to update files and personal contact.

Conclusions:

Libraries should play important roles in education patrons about the new technologies and the social networking skills. We can educate our users on new skills and competencies needed to flourish in the new environment. Users need to know how to navigate the web as new method of learning requires a form of connectivity with other people as knowledge is no longer acquired in a linear manner. Librarians can and should educate patrons on the use of these social networking tools to adapt to new ways of accessing, communicating and sharing knowledge. Brilliant use of the social cyberspace promotes opens access to knowledge for quality enhancement.

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