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# Social Networking Technologies in Libraries and the role of Librarians as agent for Repositioning Nigerian Education

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## Social Networking Technologies in Libraries and the role of Librarians as agent for Repositioning Nigerian Education

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***Abstract** - The introduction of social network as a medium of communication on the Internet, followed by its widely acceptance by users, its viability, integration and penetration into different spheres of human endeavor gives it high popularity among other means of information communication and dissemination. Enterprises that embedded social media in their productions, processes and marketing (blogs, forums, wikis, and communities) are realizing the potential of these circles in improving their productivity and efficiency. Social networking is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users, including the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact with web world. Social networking technologies in the web 2.0 have enhanced teaching and learning process within and outside the four walls of the classroom. Thereby making librarians as an agent for repositioning the educational system of the country. In this paper, the authors has intended to describe the possible implications of social networking technologies in the field of library and information services in the web 2.0 milieu. In addition, an attempt has been made to illustrate different social software tools and their effective utilization in the social networking environment. Finally, the author has cited some stunning examples of library being run in the world using the web 2.0 technologies, and recommending possible ways to enhance service delivery in the library using social networking technologies.*

**Keywords:** Web2.0, Library 2.0, Social Network, Education and Digital Library 2.0

### Introduction

Information and Commutation Technology (ICT) has ushered in a histrionic change in the realm of information communication in the recent time. New change that has been crept into the field of library and information sciences through the emerging technologies in the process of repositioning their operational set up. As organizations worldwide thrive on modern technologies, the application of web 2.0 domain in the field of Library information and communication has no exception. The web 2.0 domain has been introduced as an experimental field to be accepted and implemented for rendering virtual digital library services to library patrons.

Social Network Websites usage has inevitably become a growing global phenomenon, Information has now been made available in varieties of technological applications i.e. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter etc. which is now bridging the digital divide between the undergraduate students and the desired information at a relatively low cost with easy and equitable access, for instance, good number of lost contacts have been re-gained; re-connecting old classmates, co-workers, college mates, families etc.in concomitant with John, et al. (2016) states that “Social network is a powerful tool that provide veritable platform for quick information communication, knowledge sharing and collaboration among friends, colleagues, affiliations and even between superior officers and their subordinates”. Social Software is quite lucrative before librarian 2.0 to accept, analyze and apply this new booming technology for the maximum benefit of the user 2.0. Professional competency needs to be developed among library professionals to be readily equipped with these social networking tools such as RSS, Wiki, Blogger, flicker, Library Think, Elf and so on. With the introduction of this domain, the credibility and value of librarians will get a boost. For this, the user needs to be empowered over web 2.0 technologies and services which can be applied for life- long learning in the scenario of information landscape.

Boyd & Ellison (2007) define Social Networking Sites as web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. There are many social networking tools in existence, but it is worth noting that there are some that are mainly applicable in libraries today. This is what this study has mainly put into consideration.

Dickson and Holley (2010) note that the common social network tools used in academic libraries are the mainstream websites like blogs, wikis, social media websites and social bookmarking websites.

Studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that Social Media has not been exploited in African academic institutions to support teaching, learning and research. This may be as a result of lack of knowledge and skills involved in the use of these new media, as well as awareness of their educational benefits. Again, the lack of guidance on the use of social media for educational purposes results in disinterest and appreciation of social media tools in terms of their potential uses and benefits in education. On the other hand, librarians as information providers for research also lack some core social media skills, and in some cases are far behind users in terms of these skills to engage in the social media revolution (Christopher, et al. 2015).

### **Social Networking: A Conceptual Approach**

The term “Social Networking” refers to a range of web-enabled/it-enabled software programs that allow users to interact and work collaboratively with other users. It includes ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact, share film reviews, comments, blog entries, favorites, discussions, events, videos, ratings, music, classified ads, tag and classified information and more. A social network allows individual to join and create a personal profile, then formally connect with other users of the systems as social friend. It can be expressed as social connecting sites among the social user in web 2.0 domain. The potential of social networks to be relevant to information seeking and sharing from the more specialist web 2.0 sites.

The introduction of social network as a medium of communication on the Internet, followed by its widely acceptance by users, its viability, integration and penetration into different spheres of human endeavor gives it high popularity among other means of information communication and dissemination. Enterprises that embedded social media in their productions, processes and marketing (blogs, forums, wikis, and communities) are realizing the potential of these circles in improving their productivity and efficiency (Omeluzor & Bamidele, 2014).

Social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd, 2007).

The newly proposed Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006 states the term “commercial social networking website” means a commercially operated Internet Web site that allows users to create web pages or profiles that provide information about themselves and are available to others users; and offers a mechanism for communication with other users, such as a forum, chat room, email, or instant messenger (Fitzpatrick, 2006).

Social network analysis views social relationships in terms of nodes and ties. Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and ties are the relationships between the actors. There can be many kinds of ties between the nodes. In its simplest form, a social network is a map of all of the relevant ties between the nodes being studied (John, Egbeyemi, Ukangwa & Izang, 2015).

In this study therefore, Web 2.0, Library 2.0, Social Networking Technologies and Social Media are used interchangeably to describe the same concept and these include a number of tools and technologies, ranging from wikis, blogs, and syndication feeds to social and virtual networking (Lwoga, 2014). These terms have lately been applied to “Library 2.0” because it has become a standard technology that is used in the delivery of library services. Library 2.0 is a “change in interaction between users and libraries in a new culture of participation catalysed by social web technologies” (Holmberg et al., 2009). Library 2.0 enables libraries to change and provide demand-led services by concentrating on the needs of users already using the library and non-users who the library may reach out to bring into the library (Lwoga, 2014).

Chua and Goh (2010) classified Web 2.0 tools used by libraries into four categories. These included information acquisition tools that are used to gather information from sources outside libraries (e.g. blogs and wikis), information dissemination tools that are used to distribute content and information to patrons (e.g. RSS feeds), information organization tools that facilitate storage and subsequent retrieval of information (e.g. social bookmarking and tagging), and information sharing tools that facilitate the bilateral flow of information between libraries and patrons (e.g. social networking and media sharing sites).

### **Web 2.0 in Library**

Web 2.0 is the collection of server-based solutions that have allowed the web to become a publishing platform (Abram, 2005). Instead of the traditional one-way form of web authoring, these solutions invite all Internet user to share, collaborate, and contribute in the process of website development.

Reviewing the works of a number of authors on web 2.0 applications in academic libraries, Boateng and Liu (2013) identified a number of web 2.0 tools and grouped them into several categories: Real simple syndication (RSS)- an XML-based format usually used for content distribution of news and news headlines on a website; blog- a website that usually has a collection of brief posts, articles, essays, photos, or other writings and is cared for by an individual or an organization; Wiki-a tool for the collaborative creation of a community document, a document that is authored, edited, and modified by the collective endeavours of multiple authors”;

Podcast/vodcast-Podcast-digital audio file which has been converted to an audio file format (most commonly mp3) that enables it to be posted to a website and downloaded from there to a computer or digital music player”; A vodcast is the video matching part of a podcast; Instant messaging (IM)-IM is a live online communication between two or more people using text-based short messages; Social bookmarking / tagging-Social bookmarking is a method for internet users to store, organize, search, and manage bookmarks of web pages on the internet with the help of user-driven metadata (uncontrolled vocabularies); Social Networking Sites (SNS)-web-based services that allow people to:

1. Create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system;
2. Make a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and

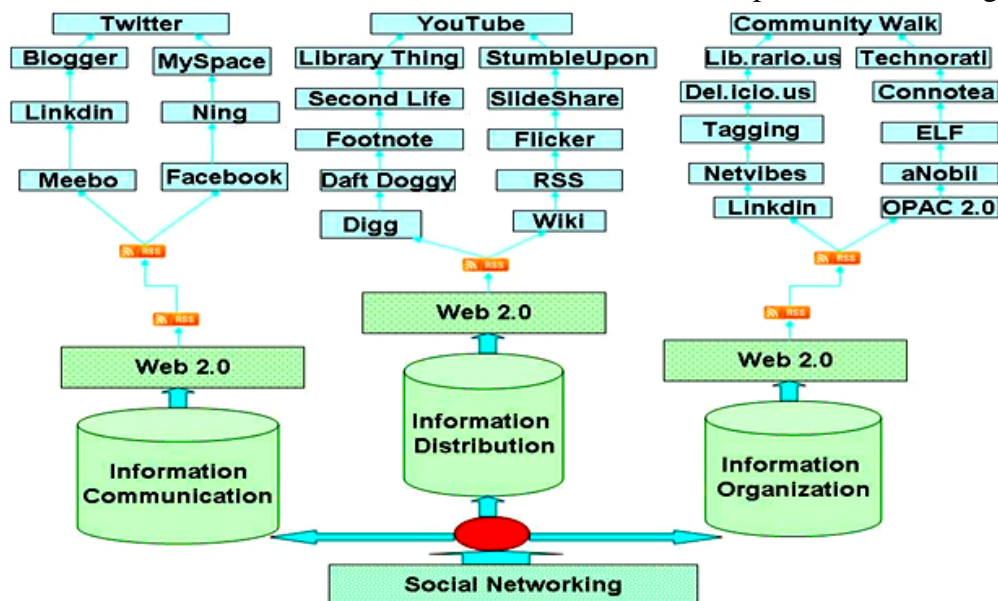
View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system'Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an "architecture of participation," and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences(O'Reilly, 2005). 'Web 2.0' simply refers to the emergent generation of web tools and applications. Since its debut in 2004, the Web 2.0 phenomenon has made a significant impact on the information landscape. Social software tools, technologies associated and its services can be given in a brief figure-1 as:

Web 2.0 Web Sites	Web 2.0 Technology	Explanation of Service
Podcast Maker, Procast, Odeo	Podcasting	Multimedia authoring and syndication
MediaWiki	Collaborative Authoring	Open editing and tagging
Flicker,Slide, Zoto	Photo and Image Management	Open image access and tagging
Delicious, Blinklist, Stumbleupon	Social Tagging	Democratic website ranking
Digg, Newsvine, Gabbr	Peer Producing News	User decide what is news
YouTube, Google, Video, Metacafe	Video collections	Video Uploads
Blogger, WordPress	Blogging	Personal authoring and publishing
Joomla, Drupal	CMS	Web design and management
MySpace, FaceBook, Xanga	Social Netwoking	Connect single user with hub of friends
GoogleDocs, Rallypoint	Collaborative Writing	Online word processing
Google, Yahoo Answers, IMDB	Customized Search Engines	Targeted searches
Wayfaring, Frappr,HouseMaps	Mapping	Sharing personal maps

## Practicing Social Networking in Library Services

Social Networks or social software can be used for providing user centric service in social library environment. User attitude towards library is changing day by day. User wants most practical and speed information in e-learning age. But providing quick and easy retrieval information to user is a great challenge to library. Therefore library should find and search some new techniques for impacting valuable information to the user. Virtual Reference Desk (VRD) can be performed by wikipedia. You can plan, design and disseminate information to patrons by KM Wiki. Marketing of library services can be possible by using social software tools like Podcast, YouTube, Blogger, SecondLife, Ning etc. Catalogue some of your library books on library thing. Library can host their personal websites in PBwiki or blogger. Library version can be possible by secondlife. Start a library podcast and interview students, teachers, patrons and members of the community. Digital video library can be framed by using the most successful tool like YouTube in Library. Impacting and planning online course curriculum in online learning environment by PBWiki. Support just-in-time reference, since students may find it easier and more comfortable to communicate with a librarian through this medium than in traditional ways. Take online assistance by implementing chat reference i.e. IM in library. Library assignment and teaching scheduled through social software tools like Joomla. Professional can put their collections on flicker. Footnote.com may be used to learn about history of library. After all it will be helpful to provide the means to learn more about students, which can help libraries, better meet their needs.

The above mentioned social software tools and services can be represented in the fig-2 as:



2. Fig-2: Web 2.0, Social Networking and Tools

### Librarians Use of Social Media for Service Delivery

According to Christopher, et al (2015) Social media are interactive and communication tools that are used by individuals, organizations and institutions for different purposes. It can be used for social interactions or for educational purposes. Dickson and Holley (2010) in their study outlined that with the popularity of web 2.0 and social networking platforms, libraries have embraced them as methods of promoting themselves within their user community. It

therefore implies that libraries use social media to promote their contents and reach their user community. It is important to note that in this 21st century, librarians should be proactive in order to satisfy the needs their user community. The authors further outlined that videos can be used for classroom instructions and academic librarians can also post photos of library staff to provide virtual library tour. This is an indication that majority of librarians have understood the use of social media in reaching out to students and as a means of providing Current Awareness Services and Selective Dissemination of Information effectively. In the study of Ruleman (2012) it was discovered that 59% of students and 41% of faculty download add-ons and toolbars, but 33% of students and 30% of faculty are interested in library extension toolbars. The author also discovered that students are interested in SMS-library services.

On the other hand, Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma (2013) in their study on the use of social networking sites (SNS) by librarians discovered that majority of the librarians studied use SNS to find useful research materials, interact with friends and communicate with each other. It shows that librarians have realized the need to use social media for teaching. They should also advocate using social media to teach users information literacy skills. This implies meeting our users where they are through the use of social media. In addition to the above Madhusudham (2012) in his study discovered that SNS is used by librarians to search for relevant materials and also find other researchers. Other authors such as Roblyer et al. (2010) in their work highlighted that SNS are used by librarians to market the library services since many of the students are on Facebook. Moreover many academic libraries have found these SNS as an avenue to key in and get students interested in their services. Other purposes of using social media as identified by the authors include faculty uses which are perceived as an attempt to foster positive relationship between the lecturers and students. It should be recalled that, interacting using social media is less formal and it creates a friendly environment between the students and faculty members, such interactions will motivate the students and encourage effective learning. Such interaction encourages the students to ask questions and express themselves more than in the classroom especially the shy ones.

Furthermore, Bosch (2009) studied into the use of Facebook at the University of Cape Town and found out that Facebook is used for connecting members of student societies, student groups and halls of residence. Other purposes of using Facebook as identified by the author include; sharing information about social events, pictures and videos; academic purposes such as finding learning materials on the internet; sharing information about holiday programmes; and sharing lecture and study notes during holidays. This study shows students' understanding and use of social media to enhance their academic work. It is important that both librarians and academics also utilize these social media more for teaching and learning since students have understood the importance of Social Media in their academic work as opposed to the negative uses of these sites. A proper direction by librarians and faculty will reduce the negative use of these social media.

Libraries use social media to market library services through provision of current awareness services; wider access to information and knowledge; dissemination of information; quick and ready access to information; easy updating of information and services (Johnson, 2001 as cited in Wasike, 2013). Mutula (2011) suggests other purposes of social media which include enabling knowledge generation and use; enhanced interactivity between users and librarians; facilitate seamless communication and feedback loop; library services to where the user community is already in need; create an information-sharing culture; enrich the information services with multimedia experiences; create library environments that are fun to work and



use; empower users to contribute library content; and facilitate the users to participate in the management of the libraries by making suggestions.

### **Challenges Faced by Librarians on the use of Social Media for Library Service Delivery**

Librarians as academic staff and information expert are expected to be pioneers in the use of emerging technologies in both teaching and delivery of library services to members of the academia. However, a study by Ivala and Gachago (2012) shows that students use social media such as Facebook and blogs in their everyday lives more than their teachers. It was evident that university teachers (librarians inclusive) have not utilized these technologies to the same extent as their students. This revelation means that students live in separate reality from their teachers. Issues bordering on apathy, lack of awareness, phobia and desire to embrace this new technology inhibit use of social networking in most libraries especially in developing countries (Ezeani and Igwesi, 2012).

Most library staff in the developing countries are not yet aware of social networking services and the few that are conversant with social media sites have not fully utilized it in library service delivery. McGee and Diaz (2007) cited by Ivala and Gachago (2012) infer that teachers do not use social media because they are not typically motivated or rewarded by institutional incentives to change their practice.

Another challenge observed by Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) is the issue of insufficient bandwidth. According to them, it was frustrating and most university only go for a higher bandwidth during accreditation time. Fulk *et al.* (1990) pointed out that whether or not one will use information and communication technologies are largely dependent on the attitudes, comments and behaviours of colleagues. Nonchalant attitude towards technological tools, acquisition of substandard technological products and lack of maintenance culture must be overcome in order to utilize of social media which will invariably impact library service delivery. Erratic power supply hamper utilization of technological tools in most developing nations of the world. Nigeria is witnessing a change in the power sector, though, it still witness unstable power supply. This has always been a problem to the advancement and effective use of electronic information resources, social media and other Internet based resources (Omeluzor, Madukoma, Bamidele, and Ogbuiyi, 2012). Opeke and Onuoha (2013) in their study found out that non-use of OSN was associated with discouragement to erratic power supply.

Lack of training of staff in the use of computer and associated technologies was identified by Opeke and Onuoha (2013) in their study as a challenge that hinders effective service delivery in libraries. Most library staff lack skills that is required to adopt social networking tools for effective library services. It is important to train librarians to manipulate the technologies that these tools are housed.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

There is a great deal of potential inherent in social networking software's (SNSes) for professional development and professional networking purposes. This is particularly true for the library and information industry which is already embracing web 2.0 technologies across many of its core activities. Social Networking Sites are new technologies offering promising new outreach options for academic librarians. They provide a new platform for reaching and educating students beyond the traditional library building and web site by allowing students

to access librarians and the library's resources without leaving the comfort of the websites they use the most (Dickson & Holley, 2010). Our study has been able to demonstrate that social media tools can be used as a platform to reposition Nigerian educational learning process through the application of social networking technologies. Last but not the least large encouragement and user empowerment on technologies used in web 2.0 should give the prime priority so that thinking on implementing social software in library may be possible. The possible implication of social networking can be successful by conducting maximum research and experiment on social networking from different point of view on library. Librarian is the sole custodian to accomplishment the task of planning, organizing and implementing social networks in Library and Information Centre. In this context sufficient training and more expertise need to be gain by him to furnish an absolute shape to social networks in the library. Wasike (2013) affirms this view by suggesting that successful librarians in the social media environment need to be aware of emerging technologies. He continues that librarians must be willing to learn, hence "walk the talk" by becoming leaders in lifelong social media learning activities.

On the basis of this study, the following recommendations are being proffered to academic libraries to implement or improve their social media services to reposition the educational processes:

1. The development of Social Media Policies to enable academic libraries use social media as effective communication channels to achieve research goals. This is an important requirement that librarians in African academic institutions need to have to ensure that social media tools are fully utilized for research.
2. It is also recommended that existing or new dedicated Social Media librarians be appointed to coordinate social media activities of academic libraries. From the studies reviewed and the authors' experiences, it is clear that staff that have the skills to use social media are lacking in these libraries.
3. The study proposes that academic librarians must view Social Media as a complementary tool to improve their research support and advocacy role. For example, young researchers could be trained in the use of social media applications in their research works. In the end, these researchers could become social media advocates for researchers and research groups in their institutions.
4. There is a need for academic librarians to keep up to date with emerging trends in research and information provision and how social media can be used to meet the requirements of new research trends.
5. The study also recommends that social media could be used to reach out to remote and distance learners. For example, online workshops through social media are recommended for research students. Youtube, Slideshare and Facebook could be used to broadcast workshops and tutorials, as well as communicate with its remote research students.
6. There is an urgent need for academic librarians to keep up with new social media tools in order to effectively employ them to support research activities. For instance, the librarian could empower research groups with skills for collaborative social media tools for research.

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