

USING WhatsApp FOR SERVICE PROVIDING IN LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTRES**Mohd Shoaib Ansari***

* Librarian,
Govt. Kaktiya P.G. College,
Jagdalpur (Bastar),
Chhattisgarh, India.

QR Code

**ABSTRACT: -**

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) have changed life of people. The uses of internet through mobile phones and smart phones increased rapidly. Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) applications made them connected with each other. These applications are also useful for information generation, information gathering and information dissemination in a timely and cost effective manner. So, libraries have to make an effort to provide their services through mobile phones. WhatsApp is an MIM application which makes people connected in real time. It has no additional cost to message and data exchange among mobile devices. Libraries can use it as a tool for providing enhanced user services over user's Smartphone. This paper deals with the use and application of WhatsApp in the libraries, their benefits, usage and impact on library services.

KEYWORDS: WhatsApp, Library Services, Mobile Applications, Mobile Instant Messaging, MIM, Mobile Alert.

INTRODUCTION

Library is a growing organism and it changes its nature time to time. Use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has changed its services. ICT is rapidly changing the whole world and creating new challenges and opportunities. Mobile Communications are transforming how people search, receive and interact with information on a daily basis. These mobile tools provide portable access to the world

of information, across boundaries of subjects, discipline and organization.

The world's first Internet enabled mobile phone (smartphone) was the IBM Simon Personal Communicator. It was launched in the United States in 1993 and included a touch screen and allowed users to send faxes and write memos. Today world's 85% of mobiles are smartphones.

Smartphones are becoming a pervasive technology, not only in terms of the

number of people who own them, but also in terms of the relationship people have with their devices. The overwhelming behavioural evidence suggests that users are demonstrating an increasing reliance on mobile devices for information seeking, for more meaningful and significant purposes. A recent study by Google reveals that more than half of American smartphone owners use their phones to assist with information seeking, including for the purposes of looking up information for work, for study or for health related reasons (Google, 2011).

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is the one of the most interesting Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) applications on the market today. It is a cross-platform instant messaging application for smart phones. It enables users to send and receive location information, images, video, audio and text messages in real-time to individuals and groups of user at no cost. At present WhatsApp handles over 500 Million messages per day and half a billion people around the world are now regular, active WhatsApp users. Users are also sharing more than 700 million photos and 100 million videos every single day. It is one of the most popular paid for apps across all mobile platforms. It was acquired by Facebook on 19 February 2014. It was the largest acquisition of the world. In January 2015, WhatsApp introduced a voice calling feature to provide calling facility through WhatsApp.

WhatsApp requires a mobile internet connection and both parties (users) must have the software installed on their mobile phone. WhatsApp also provides additional social information to its users, e.g., contacts can see when their friends are online, when they are typing and when they last accessed the application. It also added privacy features to hide last seen, profile picture and status. Finally, WhatsApp provides delivery notifications, highlighting when a message is sent and when it's delivered to the recipient's device and seen by them.

WhatsApp accounts are based on a person's cellphone number and will automatically generate a list of contacts. WhatsApp generates this list by checking your regular contact list on your phone for contacts that also using the WhatsApp. WhatsApp accounts are identified by their phone number. When a new contact is added to the regular contact list on the phone, WhatsApp will also add this contact to the WhatsApp contact list. Users need an invitation to gain access to a group (to allow group chat). However, when a contact is added to the WhatsApp contact list no confirmation from that contact is needed.

WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app which allows you to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS. WhatsApp Messenger is available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia and yes, those phones can all message each other. Because WhatsApp Messenger uses

the same internet data plan that you use for email and web browsing, there is no cost to message and stay in touch with your friends.

SPECIFICATION OF WhatsApp

The operating systems which support to run WhatsApp on the mobile devices are as follows;

- iPhone (OS 3.1 or newer)
- Android (OS 2.1 or newer)
- BlackBerry (OS 4.5 or newer)
- Nokia Symbian S60 (3rd Edition Feature Pack 1 or newer)
- Nokia S40 (6th edition or newer)
- Windows Phone (OS 7.5 or newer)
- WhatsApp web (through web client)

BENEFIT OF WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a freely available app which can be used on different platform on smartphones and tabs. The major benefits of WhatsApp are as follows;

- **Cost:** WhatsApp advertises itself explicitly as a mobile messaging app which allows the exchange of messages without having to pay for SMS. One can send messages, pictures, videos, audios and location information without pay any additional charge. Whatsapp charge no money for the first year after that it charges US\$ 0.99 for one, US\$ 2.67 for three and US\$ 3.71 for five years.

- **Switching:** Whatsapp provides service by phone number registered by user. Users can easily switch their phone device, reinstall, or upgrade the software as long as their service remains by WhatsApp. User can also use a new contact number to switch from old number to new one. The messages and data received and sent by previous number will remain in the phone.
- **No limitation:** WhatsApp messages are free and not limited in terms of characters and content. Users can send and receive more messages as they want. They can send images, audios and videos with WhatsApp. Media of this type was most commonly associated with communication among groups in WhatsApp. Participants also can send webpage links, contact information and even location information.
- **Group sharing:** WhatsApp allow user to create a group or a broadcast list to send messages in bulk. A group can be created, where user share information, multimedia file with others. A broadcast list allows sending a message to the large population by a single click.
- **Privacy features:** WhatsApp is used primarily with close friends, friends and family because of its connection privacy. One requires a contact number to add people on Whatsapp. A

person has right to add or block a person and leave a group.

- **Immediacy of delivery:** WhatsApp is quicker and more immediate when compared to traditional messaging. It delivered messages in very less time. It also transfers multimedia files in less time comparing to other methods.
- **Visual feedback:** It has features to notify a person, whether his messages have been seen or not. WhatsApp uses ticks to convey delivery information to the end user. According to WhatsApp, 1 tick means that the message was sent from the end users phone, while 2 ticks means that the message was delivered to the recipients phone and 2 blue ticks means the message has been read by the recipient.
- **Multimedia files sharing:** WhatsApp support multimedia file sharing. It supports audio, video, images and location information along with messaging service. A person can send videos available in the phone or can record live video to send. Another important feature is, it has an audio record system which allows user to record and chat live.
- **Reliability:** WhatsApp is more reliable than traditional messaging services due to its feedback mechanism. One can easily assure whether his message has been delivered or

read by the recipient. There is no such mechanism was in traditional about delivery of messages. Sometime there is a delivery delay in traditional message, but not in WhatsApp.

- **Choice of Technology:** The most important feature of WhatsApp is, there is not any restriction to use a specific smartphone. It runs upon many operating systems. A person can use Android or Windows phone for using WhatsApp. This feature made it more usable and popular.
- **Calling Facility:** WhatsApp provide calling facility to its users. A user can make calls to the other WhatsApp user without paying call charges. It requires only data pack or Wi-fi network. This facility makes people more convenient to call each other all over the world without any boundaries.
- **Notification Mechanisms:** WhatsApp proactively notify users of incoming messages. These notifications are typically an audio signal, a vibration, or a visual signal. These notifications inform user about incoming messages. There is an audio notification also for message sending. A user got the audio signal to notify whether message send, received by the recipient or message has been seen.

In summary, WhatsApp has many features like, cost, multi operating system, instant messaging, sending multimedia files, low data consuming. These features made it an important tool for libraries. A library can use it as important tool for providing it services.

SERVICES WHICH CAN BE DELIVERED ON WhatsApp

Messaging applications changed people's life. They are very useful tool to communicate and share information among people. Libraries can also use these technologies to improve their services. Libraries can provide a wide array of services to interested users on Whatsapp:

- **Current Awareness Service (CAS):** Current Awareness Services (CAS) services assist the library users in keeping up-to-date with latest document additions in the library. A library can use WhatsApp to deliver CAS on the mobile of the user in real time. Library staff can take pictures of the book or journal along with table of content and send it to the library user. A user will aware about his library collection development without going into the library.
- **Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI):** SDI is a type of CAS which keeps the users in touch with the latest developments in the field of users' interest. In other words, it is a personalized service meant for the

individuals or a group of users having identical information needs. A library can create groups of users of different area of interest to provide them specialized information. A library can scan an article and upload it in the group so that, user can easily download them without losing time.

- **Reference service:** Reference and information services, refer to the personal assistance provided to users to find required information. A library can offer reference service through WhatsApp. Users can text to reference librarian before reaching library to ask the location of a document or an information source. Reference librarian provides them required information and user can collect his document from the library without wasting time.
- **Ask Librarian:** A user can interact with librarian on WhatsApp. Users can ask or chat to the librarian for simple questions that can be answered with a brief response or through interactivity. A user can get answer of the fact finding type of questions (e.g. ``how many calories are there in a big Mac?``, ``where is the Taj Mahal?``, etc.) correctly.
- **User Discussion Forum:** A group created by the library to provide SDI can be a good platform for users of common interest to share information, ideas with each other. They can

suggest documents to each other and library too.

- **Document Reservation:** Document reservation facility is provided by some libraries. A user can request to the library to hold a document which is issued to another user. When the document returned to the library. The library can send a message on WhatsApp to the user to inform him about its availability.
- **Abstract Service:** An abstract is a brief statement of the content of a document. It provides the basic information to the user to judge whether he wants to consult the original document or not. It is a summary of a publication or article accompanied by an adequate bibliographical description to trace the article. It is a very important service provide by libraries. WhatsApp can be a useful platform to deliver this service to the user on his personal device.
- **Library instruction:** Library instruction or orientation is a method to inform user about the library. Libraries can offer library instructional videos and rules and regulation on their WhatsApp contact. The library can also make a library tour video and send it to the users to make them aware about library. Users can learn about the different sections

like, periodicals, stack, circulation, textbook section etc.

- **Acquisition Feedback:** A librarian can ask suggestion from its reader to acquire best documents. Libraries can simply upload publisher's catalogue and people will suggest best books. Users can also send the new arrivals of their subjects. This will help them to procure the best document and it will save the finance of libraries.
- **Reminders and notifications:** A library can use WhatsApp for sending notification for items available for pickup, due date reminders, information on availability of library materials, provision of call numbers and locations to many users at the same time.
- **Library News:** Library usually organizes exhibitions and seminars time to time. WhatsApp is a strong medium to inform people about these events. Libraries can easily broadcast a message about these events to the user on WhatsApp. They will aware about these messages instantly.
- **E-book searching:** Library can provide WhatsApp based document searching facility for its user. User can ask for a document by a search term like; subject, author and title. If a user finds his required document, they can provide a list of documents and links of e-

resources. Users can access the document from the link.

- **Mobile collections:** Third-party content providers are partnering with libraries to deliver audio-books, audio language courses, streaming music, films, images and other multimedia that can be used on WhatsApp.
- **Reprography Service:** Reprography is a service for providing photocopies of articles, reports and books etc. A user can ask for photocopy of a document by WhatsApp and the photocopying process done, user can collect it from the library.

CONCLUSION

In the present age of information, the use of internet increases rapidly. The future of the internet depends upon the mobile technology because of the rapid increase of mobile users. It is the golden opportunity for the libraries and other information institutions to implement mobile based services. There are many tools and techniques through which libraries can easily provide services through mobile technology and there are many individual and institutions that are engaged in developing, monitoring and using mobile technologies in higher education. WhatsApp is an MIM application which can be used in libraries for delivering various services. It has many features like, multimedia sharing, instant message delivery, real-time audio

recording conversation and group messaging. The application of WhatsApp can change the nature of library services and its user friendly also.

REFERENCES

- Balas, J.L. (2007), "Of iPhones and Ebooks: will they get together?" Computers in Libraries, November/December.
- Husson, T., "Mobile Social Networks: Complementary Communication Tools for Online Social Networking", Jupiter Research.
- Strother, N. (2011), "US Mobile Marketing Forecast 2007 to 2012", Vol. 2, Jupiter Research
- Zelkowitz, M. V. (2011), "The Internet and mobile technology", Amsterdam: Academic Press.
- Church, K and Oliveira, R. (2013), "What's up with WhatsApp? Comparing Mobile Instant Messaging Behaviors with Traditional SMS", MobileHCI – Collaboration and Communication, available at: http://www.ic.unicamp.br/~oliveira/doc/MHCI_2013_Whats-up-with-whatsapp.pdf
- Wikipedia (2014), "WhatsApp", available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WhatsApp>
- Chowdhry, A. (2014), "WhatsApp Hits 500 Million Users", available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/amitchowdhry/2014/04/22/whatsapp-hits-500-million-users/>
- WhatsApp (n.d.), "WhatsApp Blog", available at: <http://blog.whatsapp.com/>