Social Media and its Use in Library Functions

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Abstract: - *The paper gives an overview of the use of social media in libraries. It outlines the advantages of social media use by libraries, and shows how social media are being used. It also indicates further potential for use.*

Keywords: Social Media Tools, Internet

Introduction

This paper deals with various facilities and apps which are widely used now-a-days by librarians, readers, researchers and students for their specific objectives and aims. Social media has the potential to facilitate much closer relationships between libraries and their patrons – wherever users are based, and however they choose to learn about and access library services and resources.[1] From their survey, Tailor and Francis found that, over 70% of libraries are using social media tools, and 60% have had a social media account for three years or longer. 30% of librarians are posting their responses, information and supports almost daily.

Just a decade ago, social media was seen by many as having little relevance for use in a professional context by librarians. In recent years there has been a sea change in attitudes. Social media is now widely used by librarians to fulfil a variety of objectives.

Meaning of Library in the Context of Social Media

When we talk about library mobile apps, the "library" could mean several different things.

1. It could mean just the library catalogue.
2. Or that plus other services provided by library.
3. Or those plus other services available from the institution of which the library is one part.
4. Or it could mean ways in which library resources are made visible in applications constructed by those outside the library.[2]

Many library users are using the library services outside of the library premises, at their home or elsewhere through various devices viz: iPhones, iPads, Android phones, Blackberrys, etc. and making it their habit for study or research. Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, are very popular among the social media users, but the library facility users utilize library services mostly through specialist research networking sites such as Research gate band Academia.edu, along with these popular apps.

Objectives Fulfilled by Social Media in Libraries

Libraries use social media to fulfil a range of objectives, with most focus on promotion (visibility for and usage of the library service and resources). However, broadcast/ informational communications are increasingly being supplemented with two-way communications designed to solicit feedback (e.g. for collection development), offer real-time customer service and build engagement with users. Social media is also increasingly being seen as a collection management tool, offering flexible ways to present resources (e.g. YouTube for video delivery) and categorize them.

Outreach is also seen as important – for example, helping librarians increase their visibility and connections within the broader library community; also, for assisting in the promotion of the work of their faculty[3].

Opportunities in using Social Media for Libraries

1. Low cost: Because of the low cost, the social media facilitates the use of library for a wide range of people.

2. Unrestricted space use: Library services are delivered to the library members at their homes or preferred place, and they are not forced to visit the library premises, for borrowing books and reading material, or returning it, because the social media discharge these functions easily and without consuming more time.

3. It creates the opportunities to build a sense of community between the library and its users.

4. The social media use also supports for co-development of collections and help keep librarians updated on industry news and initiatives.[4]

These are the facilities that are created for wider library use by social media networks in the world today, but the challenges before library personalities are also great and time consuming. Considerable time is required to maintain an active social media presence, the pressure to respond instantly to service queries, the variability of skills across library staff for using social media effectively, striking the right tone between professional and personal, coordinating activities across the institution to avoid duplication, maintaining visibility for the library brand and

copyright issues relating to hosting library resources on social media sites.

It is difficult to predict what course social media use in libraries will take place, but today it seems a potential tool for library service. Opportunities are there, so also are challenges. It is up to us and our policy makers how to utilize them and face them.

References:

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