

Use of Social Media in Marketing of Library Services

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Abstract: - *Many libraries use social media for marketing library product and services, for sharing library news and events, video conferencing, advertisement and research work. This paper briefly describes various social media, indicating how they can be used by libraries. It gives guidelines and tips for effective Social Media use.*

Keywords: Social media, library marketing, twitter, blog, flicker, pinterest.

1. Introduction

Social media has the possibility to help create closer relationships between library and information centres and their customers wherever users are based, and how they choose to learn about and access library services and resources. In the present time, libraries and information institutions are facing unprecedented change and challenge. It is very difficult for library professionals to manage and share their resources with others manually. For solving these problems, many technological developments has been introduced for creating new forms of information, new sources of information and new ways of providing information, thus bypassing traditional institutions like libraries. The concept of services has also changed, from basic to value-added, from

personnel-assisted to self-service, from in-house to outreach, from free to priced, from reactive to pro-active, and from mass customization of individualized service. Libraries have always connected people with information; now social media is beginning to play an important role in marketing of information to library users and in branding the library as a community hub where marketing is a key function of social media. In the recent time, Web 2.0 applications in libraries have acquired growing reputation worldwide; it appears that the library must think about marketing its services more regularly through the internet, taking advantage of Web 2.0 applications to get better access to its users and to promote information services. Social media is a powerful new form of communication.

2. Definitions of Social Media

Social Media has been defined in several ways:

2.1 Oxford Dictionary (2013) defines Social Media as “websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in Social Networking”.

2.2 According to Bradley (2012) the term Social Media refers to “the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue”.

2.3 Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) have described Social Media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”.

2.4 Brian Solis, one of the most published authors in new Media, defines Social Media as "the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism, one-to-many, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers”

2.5 Based on the above definitions and the author’s own understanding Social Media can be described as a group of web-based and mobile applications that allow users to share and create knowledge in a real time social interaction. It is user-centric, multi-purpose and it is not time and

location bound. Social Media consists of various user driven marketing channels, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube, Flickr. It has a number of benefits over traditional marketing as displayed in Table (1) below:

Table 1: Traditional versus Social Media marketing

Traditional Marketing	Social Media Marketing
Time consuming	Time saving
Expensive	cost-effective
Monotonous	Exciting & stimulating
Limitation to reach the community	Reachable to the community instantly
Static	Creative
Limited means for marketing	A range of Social Media channels for marketing
Allows little or no interaction with user community	Brings librarians closer to users and vice versa
Allows little or no interaction with user community	Brings librarians closer to users and vice versa
One-way	Collaborative
Passive	Interactive
Time-bound	No time limitation

It is apparent from the above Table (1) how Social Media has transformed traditional marketing to beyond the library walls any time anywhere.

3. Most widely used Social Media platforms

Social Media provides more opportunities to reach the user community, target specific audiences and give users a chance to interact with library. Statistics of Social Media usage in libraries shows that there are nearly 700 million active Facebook users, over 100 million LinkedIn members, 5 billion+ images on Flickr, 24 million pages on Wikipedia, 300 million Twitter users posting over 7,000 tweets per second, over 2.9 billion hours of YouTube watching per month. Libraries can market their services and products using different Social Media platforms; for example, publicize their different upcoming events and newly acquired information materials through the Facebook. Different programs such as, conferences and workshops can be marketed by uploading videos on the YouTube. The pictures of different library events and services can be shared using Flickr. Blogs can be used to market library services among distance learners. Twitter and IM (Instance Messaging) can be used to market a library's reference/research services. Using such tools, libraries can publicize newly acquired material and create service alerts.

In marketing library and information services, the most-widely used Social Media platforms are the following:

3.1 Facebook: Facebook is the most popular Social Media platform for creating library awareness and marketing. Facebook is a popular

and free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Facebook can be used for marketing libraries and information centers in several ways. Through the Facebook page/account librarians can draw users attention to useful hidden treasures of the library that library users have forgotten or are not aware of, such as grey literature. If time is limited Facebook can be populated via other platforms such as Twitter feedback, the library calendar, a library Blog. OPAC search can be embedded on the Facebook page for ease of library users. Using Facebook user community can be made aware about all the library events by creating descriptive hashtags that can be used on sites such as Twitter and Facebook and encourage people to attend and live Blogs or tweet.

3.2 Twitter: Twitter is the second most popular Social Media platform. It is a micro-blogging network of real posts and all the posts are limited to 140 characters and less. Twitter can be used to keep library staff and patrons updated on library's daily activities, for example, frequently updated library collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status updates. Twitter can create library service alerts. Often library users prefer Twitter to interact with librarians because Twitter is more influential than other Social Media platforms and what happens on Twitter does not stay on Twitter. For making it more distinguished, it is important to give it a

personal touch. For instance, add pictures to your Twitter account page's wall paper. Set-up searches for your Twitter account to save and retrieve them quickly, e.g. set up a search on the name of your library, or set up a geo-locational search. If ever a human error occurs in posting a message, respond quickly and apologize seriously. There are over a million Twitter tools, stick to ones that give actionable results.

Twitter vocabulary is as follows:

- Tweet: a message of up to 140 characters posted on Twitter.
- Twitter stream: series of tweets from a Twitter account.
- Retweet (RT): a tweet forwarded by someone to his/her followers.
- Followers: these are individuals or organizations who choose to follow your Twitter.
- Following: these are individuals or organizations that you have chosen to follow on your Twitter account; you will receive their tweets.
- Mention: using @username to talk to or mention a specific Twitter account in a Tweet.
- Hashtags: words or phrases preceded by # used as tags. Clicking on a hashtag will search for all public instances of its use; hashtags can also be included in saved searches.

3.3 Blogs: Blogs are one of the oldest social media channels. A blog (also called a weblog or web log) is a website consisting of entries (also called posts) appearing in reverse chronological order with the most recent entry appearing first (similar in format to a daily journal). They are popularly used in libraries to broadcast library news and market other library resources.

Potter (2013) suggests some quick ways to increase Blog engagement as:

1. Put a number on it
2. Ask a question either in the title of the post or at the end and give them a voice via the comments session.
3. Use the hashtag in the title. Every time someone tweets a link to it, a wider audience will be able to read it.
4. It is important to register the Blog.
5. Make it infinitely sharable via Twitter, Facebook, email etc.

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. Increasingly, libraries are using blogs for publishing library news and events, providing information about new acquisition and encouraging use of library services.

3.4 Flickr: Flickr is a website for photo and video management/sharing, where you can easily and quickly post and share photos and videos up to 20

MB a month for free. It is an excellent marketing tool. Librarians can use it to market general library services to their users. Most students/users are not aware of the different services offered in the library such as reservation of books, reference services and Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI). Flickr is good to sensitize users with library services. It can also be used to create current awareness services. Flickr provides great opportunity to users to own library contents by allowing them to upload pictures to a particular collection and curate a collection of user pictures on a particular subject. Flickr may allow archives and libraries “to generate new means of access to an interaction with their patrons, as well as broaden the knowledge of such heritage to a larger and more diverse audience”. Flickr websites can be used for sharing photos of library events, historical moments etc.

3.5 Pinterest: Pinterest is a free, graphical and an emerging Social Media tool. It is “an online pinboard that allows you to organize and share things”. Pinterest provides great venues to market library resources. A library can make its own profile and create boards, pinning photos and video showcasing the library.

4. General guidelines & tips for successful Social Media marketing

The major guidelines and tips for effective Social Media use are:

1. Decide the purpose of Social Media marketing: First of all, it is important to decide the purpose and goals of Social Media marketing based on the specific needs of a particular library.
2. Preparation work: This includes personalizing the Social Media, linking it to the library website, creating a welcoming and informal description of the library, customization by changing colors and backgrounds in Twitter and custom tabs and boxes in Facebook to make the library profile unique.
3. Think big, start small: Pick one of the major outlets such as Facebook or Twitter create an outstanding presence of it, and, using that experience move on to other Social Media outlet. Doing one thing properly is better rather than having lots of neglected profiles all over the web.
4. Decide on what to post: It is critical to decide on what to post on your Social Media platform, whether to post library news and events, new additions to library collection, links to articles, videos, community information, pictures or anything else.
5. Promote events: A great way to market the library is to let everyone know about all the events of your library by creating descriptive hash tags that can be used on sites such as Twitter and Facebook and encourage people to attend and live Blog or tweet.

6. Get the tone right: Use informal but not overly familiar, friendly but not overly personal, colloquial but grammatically, syntactically and orthographically correct language for your Social Media platform.
7. Combine content creation & content curation: There is no need to create all original content for your Blog, Tweets, or Facebook, it is better not to do so. By curating and linking to other people's content, readers are not only referred to recommended resources on your Social Media, but also get opportunity to network with the content's original creators.
8. Maintain constant communication: Having a Social Media is like real life commitment that requires constant communication to maintain the relationship between the librarians and user community. Ensure you spend as much time following and listening to other people as posting information about yourself to show your genuine interest in them. Be diligent about keeping up with all the posts on your library's Facebook page and respond to them in a timely manner.
9. Create connected and consistent brand Channels: Create a consistent presence on all of the Social Media platforms of your library. Use the same logo and the same color scheme to show the users your brand and connect all your profiles on each Social Media channel and link all the

Social Media accounts on the library's website.

10. Claim your location: Think about Social networks such as Foursquare and Facebook places where you would want to claim your library's location.
11. Engage patrons with contests: To reward the people many Social Media sites offer great opportunities for contests and challenges for creative libraries, e.g. Foursquare allows locations to offer awards to the person, who checks into a particular location the most.
12. Feature patrons: Whether it is a Facebook page, pins on Pinterest, or videos on YouTube, spotlight your library patrons, who are enjoying your library events or using your library services, to show them your appreciation.

5. Conclusion

This paper explored how libraries and information centers can use Social Media applications in marketing libraries and information services. It is apparent that Social Media is well-recognized and well-accepted forum for marketing library and information services. The growing population of patrons and librarians using Social networking is an indication that it is an ideal vehicle for marketing the services of libraries to patrons. Thus, Social Media is not a fad, it is here to stay. However, The phenomenon of social networking tools is likely to continue evolving rapidly. Hence,

it is vital that all types of libraries create and use Social Media tools successfully.

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