Chapter 3
Social Media Application and the Library:
An Expository Discourse

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ABSTRACT

The chapter discusses the emerging social media and its impact on libraries and information professionals. The chapter reveals that because of the fluidity and convenience of these tools, users all over the world have embraced their usages, gingering libraries and information professionals to adopt them or become irrelevant. The authors highlight how libraries can use these tools, the advantages inherent in using them, and possible challenges that may crop up with their use. The chapter concludes by recommending the inclusion of these tools in library plans, policies, and work schedule of library staff.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is all about the people. It is all about building relationships and connecting people irrespective of space and time. It is all about fostering interest, fostering and engineering collaboration on common subjects. Gossieaux and Moran (2010) noted that since humans are so fundamentally social, we have consistently developed tools and technologies through the ages that allowed us to share thoughts and information with others in some form. Jain (2014) also asserted that social media provide several opportunities to reach and interact with the community.

According to a recent social media statistics, there are over 1.15 Billion Facebook users compared to 700 million in 2011; over 500 million Twitter users compared to 250 million in 2011; over 238 million LinkedIn users compared to 115 million in 2011 and there are over 500 million Google Plus users opposed to 25 million users in 2011 (Digital Insights, 2013; Rafiq, 2011). Ac-

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cording to the recent study, *Why Americans use social media* by Aaron Smith at the Pew Research Center, "Two-thirds of online adults (66%) use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, or LinkedIn." Why then should a library not adopt social media applications in its information delivery services?

Likewise, 'the people' is at the centre of librarianship. Like social media, librarianship is people-centred. The decision to establish a library, acquire, organise, store, disseminate and preserve information for posterity is people driven, centred and oriented. Every activity in the library has users' satisfaction as the ultimate goal, as Aina, (2004) stated, "user is critical to the services of the library" and according to Cozin and Turrini (2008) the focus of the renewal of libraries are the users.

Thus, the fusion of Social Media Applications (SMA) and librarianship is inevitable. Also, libraries alongside other organizations have always been at the forefront of taking advantage of technological innovation to improve services rendered in order to remain relevant in the scheme of things. Choukhande (2003) thus asserted "nowhere has the impact of computer been felt greater than in the field of library and information services… libraries are moving further and faster towards total automation and libraries that cannot adjust to these trends will not survive". Hence, social media can no longer be seen as a triviality, fad but reality (Loudon & Hall, 2010).

It is therefore not surprising that libraries once again are taking the lead in leveraging opportunities provided by SMA to better their lot. This is good for libraries as it allays the fear of obsolescence unleashed by emerging technologies and their adherents and tends to erase both real and imaginary threat of emerging technologies to render libraries and information professionals redundant and irrelevant by placing information at users' fingertips with a click of the button. The unlimited potentials and possibilities of SMA to connect people for content sharing is made possible by Web 2.0 architecture. In this new dispensation, information is interactive; user generated and can be accessed from anywhere, at any time without borders (Perera, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Internet has completely changed everything beginning from individual lifestyles to organizational set-up. However, the "transformative power of the Internet did not begin to be realized until the emergence of the Web in the early 1990s" (Miller, 2009) and this also paved way for the emergence of social media. The use of social media is not new as corroborated by O'Dell (2010), who assert that social media is now mainstream and is expected by library users and client groups. It is fast becoming a fundamental part of life. A lot of people now depend on social media for business and pleasure. In the past, people depended on libraries to meet their information needs but technology has completely revolutionized information seeking behaviours and delivery platforms. Jain (2014) stated that "today technology has endowed information seekers with varied options to satisfy their information needs". Libraries are surely not left out as many have already incorporated the use of social media applications for better service delivery. Twitter reported that they reached the 100 million user mark in 2011 (Kiss, 2011). According to Facebook (2012), there are 845 million monthly active users on Facebook and "a new world changing paradigm is emerging, that of Web 2.0, which according to some, will inevitably evolve to Web 3.0" (Miller, 2009). With these staggering statistics, why should a library not adopt social media applications in its information delivery services?

Before the emergence of the web, Internet access in libraries was uncommon. This was due to a lot of factors such as challenging connectivity, difficult and confusing protocols, inadequate bandwidth, insufficient ISP, and limited facilities.

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