

Chapter 4

Using Social Network Sites for Library Services in Public Libraries: Possibilities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Social Network sites are one of the innovative technologies contributing libraries the opportunity to reach out to its patrons. Keeping library users up to date is the primary aim of every library, online library services taken the role successfully, and among them Social Network Sites plays the unique role to keep the patrons informative. In this chapter, we provide a study of an attempt to use social media to engage with public libraries. Also this chapter has come out with a testimony on library services and the challenges through FaceBook, Twitter and Weblogs.

1. INTRODUCTION

The unique role of Public Libraries in the society is an informal pathway to educate all. Public libraries provide learning opportunity to the common people in different ranges in the society. There is no restriction to the people to access the public libraries, as any citizen can avail the facility in the country. Dr.S.R.Ranganathan said that “*the public library system means an integrated nation-wide network of public libraries giving free library*

and information service to one and all of the citizens – literate or illiterate, rich or poor, rural or urban”. The extension services to reach the library patrons will support to the public library and justifies its presence. Now-a-days, the patrons whose are physically unable to access the library premises are in the need to access by intranet or internet with the help of electronic equipments like computers and smart phones. The internet has successfully broken down universal communication barrier and at the same time liberalized the

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access to information resources from anywhere. These affirmations also applies to social networking sites, which creates new societies online based on niche interest, such as hobbies, literature, fanaticism, and advocacy. The literary community, mostly younger generation are hardly using the social websites to share, express their ideas and interests among the same thought groups. Hence, using social network sites by the library centers is one of the online extension services, to reach the readers where they are.

Social Websites are either one of the most important Internet developments of recent years, even if they have a lot of advocates; they also have a lot of detractors. It is claimed that Social Websites are empowering because ‘anyone’ or ‘any group of people’ can create a profile in Social Websites to share their thoughts and ideas with the world. On the other talk, it is also claimed that Social Websites including weblogs ‘are pointless, self-indulgent or interesting only to a small circle of people’ and that they add considerably to the already large amount of dubious contents on the web, making it harder to find reliable or useful material. There is a sense in which both perspectives are valid that there are some well maintained, high quality Social Web profiles that provide a valuable service, but there are also many weblogs that serve no apparent purpose apart from providing the owner with an online public space. Most of opinions suggest that Social Websites cannot be ignored. If the patrons of the libraries are having Twitter or Facebook account, there should be no hesitation to reach them in the Social Websites. Andrea Dickson and Robert P Holley (2010) analysed about the role of social networking sites in academic library setup and concluded as academic librarians must thoughtfully address the issues associated with social networking as they seek new avenues to reach their students outside the library walls.

Not only at academic library milieu, the Public Libraries also able to meet the patrons in their “social neighborhood”. If the library patrons are

all using Facebook, creating a MySpace page for the library isn’t going to be a very effective means of communicating and connecting with them. The best way to meet the needs of our community is to find out what social media tools they prefer to use, and establish the library’s social media presence based on that.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the importance of Social Network sites to reach the library patrons.
- To identify the possibilities to use Social Network sites for library services.
- To analyse the challenges and barriers to use Social Networks.
- To discuss the way of library services through Facebook, Twitter and Weblogs.
- To analyse the implementation of social network library services in Indian scenario.

3. THE LIBRARY CONTEXT

The libraries and its roles in the society have been changed periodically. Instead of being a store house of books and journals, the libraries are act as a bridge between knowledge and people. In this technically advanced era, the information flow is incomparable. Especially in the Internet, one can find needed information on any topic he/she pursuing. Now-a-days, the literary appearance of a library is very inevitable than the physical appearance. The services and facilities of libraries should be reachable wherever it is, even though it is impossible by physically, but by network. A library must allows, an user from the other end of the world can access and avail the services of the library with the support of latest network technology. At the same time, library outreach to its patrons is become electronic and online paths hence it is in the need to find their users where they are. There will be no doubt that in future the

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