

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MODERN REFERENCE SERVICE DELIVERY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA



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ABSTRACT

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The technology driven environment today is pressing hard on every aspect of human endeavour. This demands that academic libraries use the latest technologies and trends to make their services more popular, interesting and user friendly. Appropriate and adequate integration of the social media network will evolve in the recasting of reference services, as it provides an avenue to reach out to the users in their preferred environments as well as aid in a more dynamic, exciting and easier reference services delivery. There is dearth of literature on the use of social media for reference services in academic libraries, particularly in Nigeria which can be attributed to scarcity of research on this topical area. This work seeks to ascertain the application of social media to reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria. Questionnaire instrument was used for data collection. Survey questionnaire was designed for library personnel involved in reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria. 100 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the librarians and other library personnel at the National seminar in 2011 held at Kogi State University, Nigeria. 62 copies were filled and returned, given a response rate of 62%. The study found that the rate of use of social media platforms for reference services by academic library personnel in Nigeria is very low as a result of lack of awareness and training on the various kinds of social media and their application to reference services, infrastructural and technological problems amongst others. The study advocated attitudinal change on the part of librarians, awareness and advocacy on the use of social media within the academic community, provision of appropriate infrastructure and workshops on the use of social media in reference services as solutions to the use of social media for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature on the use of social media. This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the use of social media for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The basic purpose of academic library is to provide users with resources, services and facilities that facilitate teaching, learning and research. Reference services motivate the use of library resources as well as aid in demonstrating the need for library existence. Achebe (2012) opined that reference and information services is an aspect of library services in which contact between the reader and library materials is established through staff

assistance. This helps to match the users with the relevant information resources which could be print or electronic resources. Reference service provides a platform for interaction between the clientele and library professionals which determines the future patronage of the library. It involves a direct personal assistance to library users in search of information. Some of the services offered by academic libraries include current awareness services, selective dissemination of information (SDI), monthly accession list, user education, inter library-loan, borrowing of library materials either on reciprocal basis or on contractual basis, access to catalogue, manual or computerized, inter-library loan services, Internet services, subject literature search, and reference services.

Information communication technology (ICT) has brought versatility in the types and mode of reference services delivery. Library as a physical place where one can visit to get information is rapidly eroding to a social cyberspace where users access, communicate and contribute to the existing knowledge. The 21st century library armed with ICT has become a more dynamic, two-way communicational network environment. The modern library is therefore characterized of collective knowledge creation and enabling technologies which is a diversion from the old conventional stereotype, and one directional library services to users. The changing library environment today, demands that academic libraries use the latest technologies and trends to make their services more popular, interesting and user friendly. The rapid decline of traditional reference interactions in many academic and research libraries further necessitate a perennial attempt to reposition reference services into a variety of virtual services, outreaches and engagement initiatives, and to redesign the library spaces into learning and information commons.

While the traditional role of the reference librarian has been changing as a response to prevalence of technology, the responsibilities for outreach and extension beyond the physical library building have become increasingly important. Wang *et al.* (2010) identified the evolving role of reference librarians over time which is evident through advertised job titles, from bibliographer to database/online searching reference librarian and Web services librarian. Cardina and Donald (2004) collaborated that librarians are often asked to serve as liaisons to academic departments, collection managers, promoters of other library services, and collaborators with faculty to embed information literacy concepts into curriculum. Martin (2009) further ascertains that as the nature of information evolves, how we serve users in an academic environment also must change, arguing that "societal transformation has more immediate relevance to reference services than technological advancement." Okoroma (2014) advocated the need to repackage library information resources to suit various user groups at their door steps. Craig and Mandernach (2013) also advocated a proactive approach and envisions a new holistic model of "research services" that more appropriately encompass reference expertise in the right environment at the right time for the right constituency. Many academic librarians are advocating reaching students and faculty in their preferred environments in order to extend library services beyond the traditional library walls (Farkas, 2007b). This is necessary as the exponential rise in electronic resources provides a serious option for students and researchers in the course of their academic and research pursuit. Online social media networking is one major serious option, through which library patrons can resort to in the bid to meet their information needs. Social networking sites are constantly promoting open access to knowledge and provide academic libraries with outreach possibilities to the faculty, students and other users. Appropriate and adequate integration of the social media network will evolve in the recasting of reference services. Online social networking provides an avenue to reach out to the users in their own preferred environments which reduces the need for the users to come to the library. With the social media, reference service is made easier, more exciting and more dynamic.

Social media has been defined by authors in various ways. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) social media is "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." Social media are computer-mediated tools which allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. "Social media has also been broadly defined to refer to 'the many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or

build relationships" (Murthy, 2013). Social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals which are the focus of the emerging field of techno self studies. Internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of site. Kietzmann and Kristopher (2011) found that the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PC and mobile devices increased by 99 percent, from 66 billion minutes in July 2011 to 121 billion minutes in July 2012. Tang *et al.* (2012) ascertained that the benefits of participating in social media have gone beyond simply social sharing to building reputation and bringing in career opportunities and monetary income. Many social media sites provide specific functionality to help users re-share content, example, Twitter's retweet button, Pinterest pin or Tumblr's reblog function. Businesses may have a particular interest in viral marketing; nonprofit organisations and activists may have similar interests in virality.

Social media tools are rooted in the emergence of Web 2.0 which is the evolution of the internet from the First generation known as informational Internet or Web 1.0. (Which was pursuing various objectives: informational, promotional, relational or transactional, with little or no interactions) to a social and interactive Web that gives everyone a chance to participate. Social media web sites encourage users to share multimedia objects from photographs to videos, and to comment on items posted by fellow users. Users can also tag the content of the media, essentially creating a new classification system within the website itself. Academic libraries currently post videos of library tours as well as bibliographic instruction videos for students on these sites. Bibliographic instruction videos can also be shown during classroom library instruction. Social media technologies take on many different forms including blogs, business networks, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products/services review, social bookmarking, social gaming, social networks, video sharing and virtual worlds Popular among the social media are: Facebook, MySpace, Wikis, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr , Whatsap and Library Thing.

Facebook is the most popular now because it is librarian-friendly, with many applications like JSTOR search, World Cat, and much more. With Facebook librarians can interact with users to know their information need. The Facebook page on the library's web site acts as a portal to the library. Academic libraries use Facebook to market the library and the services available with a library fan page. Libraries advertise opening hours, location, and other information. Libraries also create event invitations for programs as an additional forum to promote library activities, even a basic Facebook page can serve as a reminder to use the resources available at an academic library In Academic institutions where the students are; libraries have also taken advantage of MySpace site to post calendars, custom catalog search tools, and blog features to improve their presence.

Blogs on the other hand provides an avenue for librarians to periodically post messages; share information on a particular subject or issue, and allow users to contribute to content. While Wikis is a free online encyclopedia that gives a background knowledge and definition of concepts. It offers a platform for users to access, edit and contribute to content. This is a collaborative web page for developing web content. Also through LinkedIn Librarians can get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest. Librarians can use this platform to render specialized services such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI). Twitter is a micro blogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update. Librarians can use this platform to give users firsthand information on the on-going national elections. Users can send Instant Messages (IM), complaints, reshare content or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using Twitter's retweet.

Furthermore, events such as important highlights of inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops are disseminated via the YouTube. YouTube also allows individuals and organizations to post original videos and to embed their videos onto other web sites. Whereas Librarians can use Flickr to share and distribute new images of

library collections. Cover page of new arrivals of both books and journals can be disseminated to users via Flickr. Flickr allows users to post photographs and to create discussion groups. While Flickr is known largely as a photo sharing web site, it also allows users to post videos. Academic librarians post photos of the library and its staff to provide a virtual tour of the library itself while simultaneously putting a human face to the building. Farkas (2007b) collaborate that “general search of Flickr reveals that most academic libraries use Flickr to post pictures of the library building and its staff”. Academic libraries can also post material from special collections on a Flickr (Andrea, 2010). Additionally Library Thing is a tool that enriches the library OPAC. Once an account is created, a list of books with ISBNs is sent to Library Thing which sends back a piece of code which is pasted into the footer of the Library OPAC. Librarians can utilize this to send a list of current publications to users.

In addition to multimedia web sites, there are also social games that can be used in student outreach. Second Life is an online reality game that allows libraries to set up virtual libraries and to provide library services, particularly reference services. These digital libraries provide a 3-D environment with the potential to include video tutorials, audio players, subject guides, database and catalog searching, as well as live assistance, instructional sessions, meeting areas, and other features.

Organisations, business entrepreneurs and institutions are taking advantage of the social media to publicize and market their products and services. Literature has shown that many academic librarians advocate using the new social Web platforms to reach out to student populations (Farkas, 2007a; Mathews, 2007a; Farkas, 2007b; Andrea, 2010). But there is still room for optimal exploitation and utilization of the social media for reference services both in the Western world and developing economy. There is dearth of literature on the application of social media reference services in academic libraries, particularly in Nigeria which can be attributed to scarcity of research in this topical area. Andrea (2010) reported the need for quantitative and qualitative research about the use of social networking tools within academic libraries. It is against this backdrop that this study is situated to determine the use of social media for modern reference service delivery in academic libraries in Nigeria.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this work is therefore to ascertain the use of social media for modern reference service delivery in academic libraries in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

- a. Identify the kinds of social media used by the Respondents for Reference Services
- b. To ascertain the level of use of the social media for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria.
- c. Determine the constraints to the use of the social media for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria.
- d. Identify solutions to enhance the use of social media for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Questionnaire instrument was used for data collection. Survey questionnaire was designed for librarians and library staff involved in reference services delivery in academic libraries in Nigeria. Section A consists of the respondents Bio data. Section B identifies the types of social media that are in use in academic libraries in Nigeria for reference services. Whereas section C highlights the frequency of use of the social media for reference services in academic libraries, Section D looks into the constraints to the use of the social media in academic libraries in Nigeria, while Section E deals with suggestions on enhancing the use of social media for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria. 100 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to librarians in Nigeria at the National seminar in 2011 held at Kogi State University, Nigeria. Simple frequencies and percentage were used in data analyses.

3. FINDINGS

Table-1. Distribution of Respondents by Institutions

Name of Institution	Frequency	Percentage
UNICAL	3	4.8%
JABU	2	3.2%
MCPHERSON	1	1.6%
UNIJOS	1	1.6%
DELSU	2	3.2%
UNILAG	7	11.3%
FUNAAB	3	4.8%
AKWAPOLY	1	1.6%
OYSCAT	1	1.6%
FUTMINNA	2	3.2%
NIGER STATE University	1	1.6%
UNIBEN	1	1.6%
ABIA STATE University	1	1.6%
Federal POLY ILARO	2	3.2%
FCE, OYO	1	1.6%
U.I, Ibadan	9	14.5%
LEAD CITY University	1	1.6%
NATIONAL ASSLIB	1	1.6%
CODE OF CONDUCT LIB	1	1.6%
THE POLY IBADAN	2	3.2%
OYO STATE LIBRARY BOARD	2	3.2%
LAUTECH	2	3.2%
EACOED	1	1.6%
NISER LIB	2	3.2%
UNN	2	3.2%
KOGI STATE UNI	3	4.8%
OSUN STATE UNI	1	1.6%
THE SUN LIB	1	1.6%
AMERICAN University	2	3.2%
BABCOCK University	1	1.6%
FUTO	1	1.6%
NIHORT	1	1.6%
TOTAL	62	100%

Source: Result from field work by the researcher

Table 1 shows the distributions of respondents by institutions, 32 universities were represented in the study. Both Federal, state and private universities were well represented. Out of 100 questionnaire copies distributed to the librarians in the universities in Nigeria, 62 copies were filled and returned, given a response rate of 62%. From the table the highest number of respondents came from University of Ibadan (UI) with 9(14.5%) respondents, seconded by University of Lagos (UNILAG) with 7(11.3) respondents, followed by University of Calaba (UniCal), Federal University of Abeokuta (FUNAAB) and Kogi State University with 3(4.8%) persons each. While Joseph Afe Babalola University (JABU), Delta State University (DELSU), Federal University of Mina (FUT MINNA), Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Polytechnic Ibadan, Oyo State library Board, LAUTECH, American University Library that have 2 persons each. While the rest of the universities have 1 representative each. In all Federal Universities had the highest representatives with 15 universities, followed by state, which has 11 universities that participated in the study and 6 universities from state.

Table-2. Social Media used by the Respondents for Reference Services

Question	Social Media	Frequency	Percentage %
Please, Identify the type of Social Media that you use in your reference services	FACEBOOK	27	42.2%
	BLOGS	08	12.5%
	LINKEDIN	09	14.1%
	MY SPACE	02	3.1%
	YOU TUBE	09	14.1%
	FLICKER	04	6.2%
	LIBRARY THING	09	14.1%
	WHATSAPP	14	21.9%
	TWITTER	06	9.4%
	NONE	20	31.2%

Source Result from field work by the researcher

The above table 4.2 highlighted the various social media platforms used by the respondents for reference purposes. It reveals that 27(42.2%) respondents were using the face book for reference purpose, 08(12.5%) respondents were using blogs for the same purpose, 09(14.1%) respondents were using LinkedIn for the same purpose, 02(3.1%) respondents were using my space for the reference services; the table further reveals that 09(14.1%) respondents were using you tube for reference services, and 04(6.2%) respondents were using flicker also for the reference services Whereas 14(21.9%) persons were using twitter for reference services purpose while 20(31.2%) respondents were not using social media for reference services at all. That means that face book was the highest in usage by academic library personnel in Nigerian for reference services while MySpace was the least in use.

Table-3. The Frequency of Social Media use for Reference Services

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage %
What is the Frequency of your use of Social Media for Reference Services in your Library?	Everyday	21	38.2%
	Twice a Week	09	16.4%
	Once a Week	03	5.5%
	Once a Month	03	5.5%
	None	19	34.5%
	Total	55	100

Source Result from field work by the researcher

The above table 3 shows the frequency of social media use in reference services. The table reveals that only 21(38.2%) respondents used the social media for reference services everyday, 09(16.4%) respondent used the media for reference services twice a week and 03(5.5%) respondents use the media for such purpose once a month while 19(34.5%) persons do not use social media at all for reference services. Table 3 therefore affirms the low use of social media platforms for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria.

Table-4. Level of Application of the Social Media for Reference Services

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage %
What is the Frequency of Social Media for Reference Services in your Library?	Low use	18	38.3%
	Moderate use	13	27.7%
	High use	10	21.3%
	None Use	06	12.8%
	Total	47	100

Source Result from field work by the researcher

The above table 4 shows the level of use of social media in reference services in their library. 18(38.3%) respondents affirmed that the rate of using social media for reference services in their library was low, 13 (27.7%) respondents affirmed that there was moderate use, only 10(21.3%) respondents affirmed that the use was high while 06(12.8%) respondents noted that it was never used at all. Therefore social media use for reference services in

academic libraries in Nigeria is very low when the number of respondents that indicated none use, low use and even the 15 persons who did not answer the questions are put together. Table 4 still affirms the low use of social media platforms for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria.

Table-5. Constraint to the use of Social Media in the Library

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total
1. Lack of awareness of the various kinds of social media and their application to reference services	18	34.6%	21	40.3%	07	13.5%	06	11.5%	52 (100%)
2. Lack of librarians training on the application of the various kinds of mass media to reference services	17	32.1%	27	50.9%	08	15.1%	01	1.9%	53 (100%)
3. Dogmatism on the part of librarians	07	32.1%	27	50.9%	08	15.1%	01	1.9%	50 (100%)
4. There is infrastructural problem	16	29.6%	31	57.4%	06	11.1%	01	1.9%	54 (100%)
5. Technical support is a challenge	18	35.3%	26	51%	06	11.8%	01	2%	51 (100%)
6. There is a security issue	08	15.4%	25	48.1%	16	30.8%	03	5.8%	52 (100%)
7. Technophobia is a limitation	10	20.4%	20	40.8%	17	34.7%	02	4.1%	49 (100%)
8. Lack of access to the internet	17	31.5%	22	40.7%	10	18.5%	05	9.3%	54 (100%)
9. There is inadequate user's education	12	23.1%	27	51.9%	11	21.2%	02	3.8%	52 (100%)
10. Inadequate funding	21	39.6%	26	49.1%	05	9.4%	01	1.9%	53 (100%)

Source Result from field work by the researcher

Table 5 reveals the constraints to the use of social media in the library. Item 1 on the table shows that 39(74.9%) respondents agreed on lack of awareness on the various kinds of social media and their application to reference services, while 13(25.1%) of the respondents disagreed. Item 2 reveals that 44(83%) respondents also agreed on lack of librarians training on the application of the various kinds of mass media to reference service while 9(17%) respondents were on the disagreement side. Item 3 on the table shows that 32 (64%) respondents agreed that dogmatism on the part of the librarians is a constraint to the use of social media in the library while 18(36%) respondents disagreed. For item 4, 47(87%) respondents opined that there are infrastructural problem in the library while 07(13%) respondents opposed the idea. Item 5 shows that 44(86.3%) respondents agreed that technical support is a challenge to the use of social media in the library while 07(13.7%) respondents disagreed. Item 6 revealed that 33(63.5%) respondents viewed security issue as a constraint to the use of social media in the library while 19(36.5%) disagreed. Item 7 shows that 30(61.2%) respondents agreed that technophobia is a limitation to the use of social media in the library while 19(38.8%) respondents were on the disagreement side. Item 8 highlighted that 39(72.2%) respondents ascertained that lack of access to the internet is a constraint to the use of social media in the library while 15(27.8%) respondent disagreed. Furthermore item 9 shows that 39(75%) respondents agreed that inadequate user's education is a constraint to the use of social media in the library while only 13(25%) respondents opposed the idea. Finally item 10 shows that 47(88.7%) respondents identified inadequate funding as one of the constraints to the use of social media in the library while 06(11.3%) respondents disagreed.

Table-6. Suggestions to enhance the use of Social Media for Reference Services

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total
1. Awareness through seminars/flyers and brochures	29	58%	21	42%	0	0%	0	0%	50 (100%)
2. Workshops/training for librarians on the use of mass media for reference services	36	66.7%	18	33.3%	0	0%	0	0%	54 (100%)
3. Attitudinal change on the part of librarians	24	43.6%	28	50.9%	03	5.5%	0	0%	55 (100%)
4. Provision of appropriate and adequate infrastructure/internet facilities	35	64.8%	19	35.2%	0	0%	0	0%	54 (100%)
5. Advocacy through interpersonal communication within the academic community	19	35.8%	32	60.4%	02	3.8%	0	0%	53 (100%)
6. Workshop/training on use of mass media in reference services and faculties	25	46.3%	28	51.9%	01	1.9%	0	0%	54 (100%)
7. User's enlightenment	26	48.1%	28	51.9%	0	0%	0	0%	54 (100%)
8. Adequate funding	34	63%	19	35.2%	01	1.8%	0	0%	54 (100%)

Source: Result from field work by the researcher

The above table 6 shows data on suggestions on the solution to the use of social media for reference services. Item 1 on the table presents that 50(100%) of those that responded to the questionnaire agreed that awareness through seminars/flyers and brochure are solution to enhance the use of social media for reference services. Item 2 on the other hand shows that 54(100%) respondents agreed that workshops/training for librarians on the use of mass media for reference service is a solution while none of the respondent disagreed. Item 3 reveals that 52(94.5%) respondents ascertained that attitudinal change on the part of librarians is a solution to enhance the use of social media for reference service, while only 03(5.5%) respondents disagreed. Item 4 shows that all 54(100%) of the respondents opined that the provision of appropriate infrastructure will enhance the use of social media for reference services. Item 5 ascertains that 51(96.2%) respondents agreed that advocacy through interpersonal communication within the academic community will enhance the use of social media for reference services while just 02(3.8%) respondents disagreed. Again, item 6 reveals that 53(98.2%) respondents noted that workshop/training on the use of mass media in reference services will enhance the use of social media for reference services while only 01(1.9%) respondent was on the contrary idea. For Item 7, 54(100%) respondents agreed that user's education enlightenment will enhance the use of social media for reference service while none of the respondents disagreed. Finally item 8 shows that 53(98.2%) respondents agreed that adequate funding will enhance the use of social media for reference services while 1(1.8%) respondent disagreed.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Most of the academic library personnel in Nigeria surveyed had integrated social media technologies into their reference services, but their use of the media for reference services is quite low. The findings identified various kinds of problems inhibiting the use of social media for reference services in academic libraries in Nigeria. Such impediments include: Lack of awareness on the various kinds of social media and their application to reference services, dogmatism on the part of librarians and other library personnel, infrastructural and technological challenge amongst others. Furthermore, there are non regular trainings to enhance and upgrade the library

personnel on the emerging technologies and how to apply them for reference services and other aspects of librarianship. Even where such trainings exist, quite a few staff is usually granted approval for sponsorship due to limited library fund allocation. Also some librarians are still static in the manner they manage their libraries including their approach to reference services, they find it difficult to accommodate the changes and innovation ICT is bringing to librarianship. All these coupled with inadequate infrastructure, internet connectivity issues and technical issues are hindering the full integration of social media in reference services in academic libraries in Nigerian.

To salvage the situation, the study advocated for the following: Attitudinal change on the part of library personnel; awareness through seminars/flyers and brochures, workshops/training for librarians on the use of social media for reference services, provision of appropriate and adequate infrastructure/internet facilities, as well as advocacy through interpersonal communication within the academic community and adequate funding.

5. CONCLUSION

Academic libraries' personnel in Nigeria have embraced the use of social media, but the application of these media to reference services is quite low. The implication of this is that the 21st century ICT driven students that constitute the majority of the academic library users are likely to be left behind in reference services; this can constitute a threat to the future of library profession. To achieve maximum impact of ICT and full integration of the social media in the area of reference services in Nigeria, there is need for regular trainings for the library personnel on the emerging technologies, their relevance to the profession and how to apply them for reference services and other aspects of librarianship, coupled with ICT enabling environment within the academic institutions.

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