Effective Use of Social Media in Libraries

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Abstract

The article entitled effective use of social media (SM) in libraries deal with different aspect of SM, starting from the pre internet age to Web 4.0. It discusses how the modern libraries can take note of the changing canvas of SM to provide effective library services. Main features of the types of social media such as blogs, Facebook, wikis, etc. is described. The application of theses SM tools for promoting libraries in different libraries is provided. The paper also suggests hoe user interaction and library collaboration can be established in the web based library services era. Also discusses the impact and benefits of Web 2.0 tools to libraries. Library thing, tagging and social book marking tools and their uses are examined. Tagging podcast, RSS feeds are also discussed.

Keywords: *Web 2.0, social media, social networking, libraries, effective use*

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries are forever facing the Big Challenge of coping with the rapidly changing Information Technology and its use in libraries. Libraries are all the time trying to adapt to the new changes and provide contemporary library services. The present age is noticed with the facility of accessing information from anywhere any time, cutting across the barriers of space and time. Scientists and authors can share and publish material and research papers on their own portals or on the digital space provided by others. The web has provided unique opportunity for not only general but also scholarly communication.

Communication has been the key for human existence from the days of the early civilizations. People have used different types of reading materials to record the events and historical facts. Communication of research on the web has avoided duplication of research and also has provided solutions to serious problems facing mankind. All this depends on the speed and the network with which people work. In this context, the newly found social media or social networks are playing an important role in the digital age.

WHAT IS SOCIAL NETWORKING VERSUS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social Networking is "the use of dedicated websites and applications to interact with other users or to find people with similar interests to one's own" [1]. Social networking also the use of internet-based social media programs to make connections with friends, family, classmates, customers and clients [2]. According to Merriam-Webster social media means electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content [3].

WEB 1.0 TO WEB 4.0

First stage of internet growth is Web 1.0. It is all about connecting information on the internet. Web 2.0 is about connecting people into webs of social participation. Website readers and users are now able to comment on and participate in the creation of sites. Web 3.0 is about representing meaning, connecting knowledge, and putting them to work in the ways that make our experience of internet more relevant, useful, and enjoyable (Semantic web). Web 4.0 will be about connecting intelligences on web where, both people and things can reason and communicate together.

WEB 2.0: TERMINOLOGY

The term "Web 2.0" was coined in 1999 by Darcy DiNucci, a consultant on electronic information design. The term Web 2.0 was first coined and conceptualized by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty in 2004 to describe the terms and business models that survived the technology sector market in the 1990s. In 2004, the term Web 2.0 began its rise in popularity when O'Reilly Media and Media Live hosted the first Web 2.0 conference, which refers to a supposed second generation of internet-based services, such as social networking sites, wikis, communication tools, and folksonomies that emphasize online collaboration and sharing among users. The term Web 2.0 is commonly associated with web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration on the World Wide Web. World Wide Web inventor Tim Bernes-Lee, who called the term a "Piece of jargon" because he intended the web in this vision as "a collaborative medium, a place where we all meet and read and write". He called it as 'Read/Write Web' [4].

User Interaction and Collaboration

A Web 2.0 site gives its users the free choice to interact or collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to websites where users (consumer) are limited to the passive viewing of content that was created for them. Some of the characteristics are: Web 2.0 is individual production and user-generated content (UGC). UGC refers to self-publishing, personal publishing and self-expression. Second characteristics are its capacity for "harnessing the power of the crowd". Further characteristic is that of its architecture of participation and means that a service designation can improve and facilitate user participation another characteristic is "network effect", an economic term used to describe in value to describe the increase in value to existing users of a service, as more people to start to use it. Final characteristic is openness. It suggests working with open standards, using open source software, making use of free data, reusing data and working in a spirit of openness. Web 2.0 websites allow users to do more than just retrieve information. They provide the user with more user-interface, software and storage facilities, all through their browser. This has been called "Network as platform" computing. Users can provide the data that is on a Web 2.0 site and exercise some control over the data. These sites may have an "Architecture for Participation" that encourages users to add value to the application as they use it.

Web 2.0: Impacts and Benefits

The use of Web 2.0 applications by archives and libraries is having several effects on the way their services and products are made available to the public, as well as on the way they operate. Such impacts vary and depend on the type of applications, their characteristics and functionalities, and the way they are used and kept. One of the immediate effects of the use of these applications is the growing number of public they reach. The growing number of visitors to the page (Face book), photo stream (Flickr) or channel (YouTube) represents an extremely significant quantitative element to cultural organizations seeking to enlarge and diversify their users and to raise their public recognition far beyond their current number of users.

LIBRARY 2.0

Library 2.0 means the incorporation of blogs, Wikis, Instant messaging, RSS, and social networking in library services. 'Library 2.0' is the term that emerged from Web 2.0 and is used to denote a shift in the way the libraries serve their users [5]. Library 2.0 seeks to push information out to users and enables user participation in the organization of information. For example, social tagging, that is allowing users to add keywords, or 'tags' to items in the library catalogue, is one way in which library 2.0 is employed. Library 2.0 is involving users through interactive and collaborative activities such as adding tags, contributing comments and rating different library items. Library 2.o is user-centered virtual community and it improves the services to the users.

Librarian 2.0

These librarians understand the power of Web 2.0 opportunities, and investigate and ultimately adopt their tools. Librarian 2.0 connects users to experts' discussions and to communities of practice; they develop social

networks and encourage users to develop content and metadata. Librarian 2.0 acts as a facilitator.

Benefits to Libraries

Chinese library and information professional Dongmei Cao listed eight benefits: Increased importance of the library to the user; improvement in the library's image; potential of new interactive services to raise the level and quality of the service provided; increased involvement of users and improved communication of the library with such users; improvement in communication among librarians; greater ability to find quick solutions to meet the needs of users; improvement in shared knowledge and collaboration. Uses of recent Web 2.0 tools like YouTube Flicker and Instant messaging is narrated [6].

WEB 2.0 APPLICATIONS IN LIBRARIES

Some libraries use blogs, which serve as excellent sources of information; a place where the librarians can express their opinions on issues at hand. Libraries' blogs can market the libraries to a variety of potential users. Librarians can use wikis or YouTube for the purpose of library instruction. They can also use wikis as a platform for book recommendation, cataloguing and tagging, all created by library users.

Benefits

In 2008, Kiara King [7] listed benefits that Web 2.0 tools can confer on archives: increased awareness of its collections; varied access of its collections; diversification of users; improved relationships & links in the sector; additional information about collections; new dynamic ways to engage.

Impact of Web 2.0

Use of these applications by high-profile organizations seems to be a factor in encouraging other institutions to join and use such tools. For example, the presence of the Library of Congress on Flickr and its role in the launching of the Commons Project have definitely influenced other archives, libraries and museums to gain access to the project, independently of its reputation and pioneering characteristics. The institutional standing of the Library of Congress seemed to encourage and thus multiply the use of this application by other organizations.

Blogs

The word 'blog' derived from 'web log', is the term for an online journal that contains entries in reverse chronological order. The blogosphere can be viewed as a kind of global brain and a vital part of online culture. Blogs are primary sources and can contain some of the most current opinion on the web and are becoming a valid source to get the latest ideas about the subject. However, the task of selecting from the over 72 million blogs will require some assistance from librarians. Tools like Technorati and BlogPulse can be useful aids. Uses of blogs in libraries are: Blogs being used by academic libraries for various purposes: It enhances the library's web presence; Provide opportunity for conversation and communication; By establishing a blog about the conferences users attended, they were able to maintain contact with colleagues at home and keep them engaged with and involved in what was happening at the conference; Use of blog as record for reference queries; blog as a medium as a library marketing tool; Use of a blog to enhance performance in the cataloguing department of an academic library.

Other uses are: Blogs help to develop writing skills; Encourage community and reflection and thereby assist deep learning; With the support of academic staff, they could be used in our teaching, with student content being collected into the teacher's aggregator. Students doing major pieces of research could be encouraged to keep a blog as a way of recording progress, managing their time and reflection. They could be used to build up evidence of their progress and to gather opinions form peers or instructors.

Facebook

Facebook, founded in February 2004, is owned by Facebook, Inc. It is a social network that allows people to communicate and share information within a context of social interaction. 'Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world

more open and connected.' Some archives opted to emphasize the Face book utilities to communicate with the public.

These organizations have groups of friends that include individual and group users; among these groups we find other archives and libraries, as well as projects, associations and bodies from all walks of life and from around the world. They have differing aims in their adoption of Facebook: they attach differing degrees of importance to the various facets office book application. To archives and libraries, the adoption of Facebook may generate a new type of relationship with real users and increase awareness of the archive among potential users or visitors. Engagement is closer, with more of an interaction with many users rather than a simple contact. The communication established may not necessarily be based on the rendering of a service, but on the contact itself.

Flickr
Flickr, founded in 2004, is now the property of Yahoo Inc. It is a photograph (and other image formats) and video-hosting site, as well as a Web service suite. It is also an online community of professional and amateur photographers for users who wish to publish and share their images and videos on the Web. Its use is free of charge, but there is also the option of subscription offering an account with additional functionality. Flickr allows users to store, edit, organize, share, geo-reference, generate products with images, define forms of access to images, take part in discussion forums, and maintain contact within an online photography community. Flickr is now the most popular storage repository on the web for photos [8].

The use of Flicker may allow archives and libraries to generate new means of access to and interaction with their patrons, as well as broaden the knowledge of such heritage to a larger and more diverse audience (namely the photographic community). The Commons Project is an opportunity for these institutions to extend their presence on the Web and expose their archives and photography collections (and other image formats) to the world. Such 'broadcasting' is done within a

platform that brings together several cultural organizations and a diverse public, with the opportunity of extending the knowledge of their users, their own standing, rationale and institutional profile. Photos of our library, staff and students, its presentations, classes and events can be stored quickly and efficiently. Easy access will be enabled and possibilities of sharing with others. Library groups are being formed and this photo sharing, along with general images under Creative Commons license gives use a huge bank of material for use in our presentations.

YouTube
YouTube, founded in February 2005, is now owned by Google Inc. It is a free video-sharing community that offers access to and the sharing of videos, films, video clips and amateur material that, in turn, can be disseminated through blogs and other Web locations. At present YouTube receives 20 hours of video every minute, uploaded by individuals and bodies from all over the world. Videos can be uploaded in any format or through the YouTube site; this contributes to making more material more easily available. The absence of any control or filter on the material submitted also contributes to the speed at which it becomes available [9].

Use of YouTube
The use of YouTube by archives and libraries can represent a new type of exposure with a worldwide impact, at little cost and with wide access; it is also a powerful tool for raising the institutional profile worldwide and a promising channel when exploited in the marketing operations of such institutions. YouTube service, although limited to a ten-minute format and of variable technical quality, can be used to create our own YouTube videos for promotional programmes. Some of the best examples have used students as presenters, and their involvement in planning is crucial. Librarians now also have an interesting teaching resource in material for use in our teaching to trigger discussion.

Instant Messaging
The OCLC Perception of libraries and Information Resources report of 2005 highlighted the use of Instant messaging as a

popular method of communication of students. This medium may appeal to reticent students who shy away from using desks and other help mechanisms. Experimentation with this form of communication may be attractive to some libraries.

LibraryThing

Librarians who want to trial social networking tools should first consider Library Thing. This enables the storage of details about books, which have been read, i.e., cataloguing. Brief descriptions, reviews and tags can be constructed. The information is then shared with others who have read the book. This may foster alternative and additional reading, based on their opinions and favourites. Rather like a book club, this could be used with groups of students to encourage reading, sharing of favourites and critically review.

Tagging

Tagging can become part of critical thinking, making links, which involve evaluation, categorizing, and formulating keywords. They can assist understanding of subject headings and summarizing a topic. Tag clouds can be useful for browsing similar concepts, narrowing and widening terms.

Some librarians are being critical of tagging and compare it unfavourably with tradition taxonomies as used in classification schemes. However, the possibilities opened up by tagging may prove popular with our users and useful to develop and encourage student research.

Social Bookmarking

These services make bookmarking much easier and portable between PCs. Connotea, CiteULike and del.icio.us are the most well-known. Del.icio.us can be used as a research tool to help students to organize what they find and bookmark easily, accessible anywhere.

It can assist referencing and encourages them to tag, which is central to the linking of ideas, and aids sharing of resources. Individuals will use different tags according to their own interests, but when these are shared with others, this tagging can expose new links,

which in turn lead to discovery of further resources.

Podcasts

We need to teach ways of searching for podcasts, e.g. http://podcasts.yahoo.com. Librarians are already using them for library instruction, especially for distance learners. Access can be via iTunes, allowing users to jump around chapters. Podcasts can be effective for academic performers with wonderful voices. They allow students to time-shift and can be used in a car, while jogging, anywhere.

Wikis

Wiki is a page or collection of web pages designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content [10].Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites and to power community websites. An encyclopaedia that can be edited by users.

RSS Feeds

Really, Simple Syndication helps various social media interact with each other. The authors use RSS professionally to track student blogs, as well as library and technology blogs. Some libraries use RSS to pull their Twitter feed onto their library website. The beauty of RSS is that one need not understand the technology of the tool to use it well. RSS means that we do not need to visit each website to track changes, but, rather, an RSS reader will alert us when one of our tracked blogs or sites has been updated [11].

RSS feeds provide the glue with link to the content which link us to the content which we want to read. The feeds can allow students and researchers to subscribe to regular content from news services, blogs and relevant content from databases. They can create their own information world, choosing their content, which then comes automatically to them, keeping up to date. They may choose to use an aggregating service like blog lines, which collects the feeds from all their sources into a common format for swift browsing. Promotion of these to advanced researchers facilitates access and regular update of contents concerning their chosen subject.

CONCLUSION

We should use Web 2.0 technologies in order to connect with the library users of the present era. The possible effects arising from the use of these applications are significant and have implications in areas crucial to the libraries. The adoption of Web 2.0 applications by archives and libraries are a landmark recognition of their potential: the 'immediacy' factor; the support of exchange of views and the creation of new means of communication with the public; the opportunity afforded users to add extra information to content (text, images, audio and video); access to primary sources over the Web; the broadening of their audience; the potential of new ways of providing access, and; raising the institutional profile within the user community.

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