

# Social Networking as a Tool for Libraries: A Case Study of University of Kashmir

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## Abstract:

The Development of information and communication technology across the globe is providing the users different web-based services -- dominant being social media. Social media is an interactive forum and let the users work and communicate collaboratively. Social media is being used in almost all fields of life. If we talk about libraries -- one can find its huge presence on social media. To meet the digital advancements libraries use new resources provided by information and communication technology, which they term as social networking. Social networking refers to a process of relationship building among a group of people who have a common interest. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace like Universities and high schools, it is most popular online. Social Networks are being used by teachers, lectures and students as a communication tool. A wide range of social networking sites have begun to familiarize themselves with this trend and are now using it to their advantage with the help of available social networking sites. The use of social networks by libraries and information organizations is increasing prevalently and is a growing tool that is used to communicate with more potential library users, as well as extending the services provided to individual libraries. The current usage of social media by the libraries remains ad hoc and somewhat experimental but is accelerating at a faster rate. The shift of provision of library resources online has also brought about a huge shift in the role of the librarian-which becomes more integrated into the user communities within the institution. The paper will look into the role played by social networking sites on the academic librarians. The paper will also be focusing on the use of social networking by libraries in different ways. The social network proposed would be the focal point for the development of library network across different parts of the world.

**Keywords:** Social networking, Information, Communication Technology, Libraries

## Introduction

Social media has become an increasingly familiar tool employed in academic libraries to market services and resources to current and prospective patrons. Until recently research in this area has primarily focused on earlier web 2.0 tools, such as blogs and tagging. One important perception conveyed is the divergent manner by which technologies are adopted and applied in the dissimilar geographic environments (Linh, 2008; Chua and Goh, 2010). By acknowledging this phenomenon, the penetration rates of particular technologies in a specific region have not been able to understand properly within the libraries, but have acquired an insight into the potential environmental and contextual factors shaping the use of non-use of these applications.

With the development of World Wide Web, the "information search" has grown to be a significant business sector of a global, competitive and commercial market and courses. Powerful players have

entered this market, such as commercial internet search engines, information portals, multinational publishers and online content integrators.

Social media has the potential to facilitate much closer relationships between libraries and their patrons – wherever users are based, and however they choose to learn about and access library services and resources. Current usage of social media by the library community generally remains ad hoc and somewhat experimental, but the uptake of these tools is accelerating, and they will likely play an increasingly important role in library service provision and outreach in the future.

Social networking applications have been used by the libraries in different ways. Most of the libraries nowadays use social networking by the ways that enhance their growth.

### **Social Networking**

Mashable India has put social networking as an online service, platform, or site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. A social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. Online community services are sometimes considered as a social network service, though in a broader sense, social network service usually means an individual-centered service whereas online community services are group-centered. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks.

### **Social Networking Sites**

Social networking site functions like an online community of internet users. People use social networking sites for communication personally as well as professionally to maintain contact with others. Social networking sites like Facebook, twitter etc provides a space to people to express themselves and creates, publish, exchange, share and cooperate any type of information.

Facebook is one of the most predominant social networking sites today and is the fifth most trafficked site on the internet worldwide and second most trafficked social media site on the world. It was first founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. Some of the other social networking sites include Twitter, Pinterest, Snap chat, Instagram etc.

### **Social Networking and Libraries**

Social connections have become very important today. With the advent of social media -- groups began to be formed online with a purpose to share ideas and gathering first hand information regarding the profession. Libraries use social media to fulfill a range of objectives, with most focused on promotion (visibility for and usage of the library service and resources).

However, broadcast/ informational communications are increasingly being supplemented with two-way communications designed to solicit feedback (e.g. for collection development), offer real-time customer service and build engagement with users. Social media is also increasingly being seen as a collection management tool, offering flexible ways to present resources (e.g. YouTube for video delivery) and categorize them (e.g. folksonomies). Outreach is also seen as important – for example, helping librarians increase their visibility and connections within the broader library community; also, for assisting in the

promotion of the work of their faculty. Use of social media for enhancing teaching and learning is currently a lower priority, but this will likely become an important activity in the near future, and librarians with their growing experience of using social media tools are well-placed to help develop institutional capabilities.

### **Why are Libraries Using Social Media?**

According to American Library Association libraries are using Social networking to publicize library events such as gaming nights; to alert users to additions to collections; to provide links to articles, videos, or Web content that might prove relevant or helpful to patrons; and to provide a conduit for community information. Social media also play an important role in fostering relationships with the community by allowing patrons to ask questions or provide feedback about library services.

Some other reasons why librarians have a social media presence:

- To provide better access to information.
- To promote library services, workshops, and events.
- To be where the users are.
- To enhance instruction.
- To collect feedback from patrons.
- These are all fine actions—but they are what we are doing, not why we are doing it.

### **Services Libraries Provide Today**

#### **• Enhanced Catalogs & Mobile Apps**

Other than their presence on facebook etc, libraries can create other social experience for their patrons. There is a service called as LibraryThing for Libraries offered by the company LibraryThing. It features catalog enhancements (such as user-generated book reviews and recommendations) and a customizable mobile app called Library Anywhere.

According to statistics Library Thing for Libraries had 800,000 “professionally vetted reviews.” While library users could just go and get reviews and recommendations from Amazon or Goodreads, it does seem useful to have them integrated into a library’s catalog. The diversified content provided by the different apps has made it easy for the libraries and librarians to be available for the users.

#### **• Social Networking Opportunities for Libraries**

Social networking presents some important opportunities to libraries which include marketing of library services and reference services.

#### **• Marketing of library services**

The growing population of patrons and librarians that make use of social networking is an indication that it is an ideal vehicle for marketing the services of libraries to patrons. Flickr is an excellent marketing tool which could be used by librarians to sensitize the users on general library services. Most students are not aware of the different services offered in the library such as Reservation of books, reference services and Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).

#### **• Awareness**

Librarians can spread awareness of library services to those who may not be aware of these services via Social Media. 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.

### • Reference Services

The use of social networking tools enable librarians to identify library patrons on the social cyberspace and pro-actively provide the type of information that would normally result from reference service. Social networking tools are not only being used as a vehicle for promoting services, programs and new resources but they are also used for reference service. Students are using tools like Ask a Librarian, and twitter to ask questions in “real time and this is assisting in promoting the library as a relevant, efficient and helpful place.

### Advantage of using Social Media

- Social media is integral to market library.
- Social media capture potential users of the library.
- Social media offers more than just traditional ways of marketing library services.
- Social media helps students to use library.
- Social media allows user to create, connect, converse, to contribute, vote and share information.
- It helps libraries to get closer to the users.
- It helps libraries in building collaborative network with the users.
- It is great way to grab the attention of new users.
- Social media helps students in locating library resources.

### Purposes of Social Media Usage in Libraries

It was inquired from the respondents that what should be the purpose of social media usage in libraries and information centres. Participants of the study strongly agreed that social media should be used for marketing of library product and services and to build discussion groups and collaborative work. They were agreed that it should be used for fund raising, to spread news and service alerts, to provide quick updates to online users and to push library news among online users.

### Social Media Tools for Library

#### Facebook:

Most popular now because it is librarian- friendly, with many applications like JSTOR search, World Cat, and much more. Librarians can interact with users to know their information need. Libraries try to link some of these specialized library applications to Facebook.

#### MySpace:

In Academic institutions where the students are; libraries have taken advantage of this site to post, calendar, custom catalogue search tools, and blog features to improve their presence.

#### Blogs:

Here, librarians can periodically post messages; share information on a particular subject or issue, and allow users to contribute to content. They can write articles, news on topical issues and expect an instant reaction from their users.

#### Wikis:

Is a free online encyclopaedia 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.

**LinkedIn:**

Librarians can get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest via LinkedIn. Librarians can use this platform to render specialized services such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).

**Twitter:**

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) on complaints or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using twitter.

**Methodology**

To achieve the desired responses for the study, a survey questionnaire was designed for respondents from libraries who have been using social networking tools. The questionnaire was adapted from a similar instrument that examined the use of wikis among academic libraries (Chu, 2009). Relevant considerations in decisions on using social networking tools, and challenges/difficulties experiences with the use of social networking tools were also explored.

Close-ended questions were used with response choices that were based on the operational definition of social networking tools adopted in this study (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Burkhardt 2010; Hoffman 2009). Tools such as YouTube and Flickr were not included, but instant messaging was considered as a social networking tool since it allows two or more users to chat simultaneously and share contents. Open-ended questions were also included to obtain information on purposes and other insights associated with using social networking tools, and to allow participants to indicate other resources, which they might have considered as social networking tools.

Purposive sampling was done to achieve the desired objective for the study.

**Sample Size:**

For the purpose of this research, a sample size of 100 was taken in the University of Kashmir.

**Problem Statement:**

The present work is conducted, among the Library and Information Science Professionals of Kashmir University Libraries, to learn how social media helps in generating awareness.

**Objectives**

- To find out the role of social networking site like Face book in creating awareness in the professionals of Kashmir University Libraries.
- To know the views and uses of social media.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation****Table 1: Use of Social Networking Sites**

Gender	No. of respondents	Percentage
Male	58	58%
Female	42	42%

According to the results out of 100 respondents 58% were female and 42% male—which implies that more no of females use social media.

**Table 2: Most used Social networking site**

Social networking site	No of respondents	Percentage
Facebook	42	42%
Twitter	28	28%
Linked In	12	12%
Instagram	10	10%
Snapchat	08	08%

It came forth that Facebook is the most sought after Social networking site in the University of Kashmir. However, a good percentage, which is 42%, also uses Twitter. Other forms of media like linked In, etc also gets good attention.

**Table 3: Satisfaction level in using social media**

No of respondents	Satisfaction	Percentage
53	Highly satisfied	53%
32	Satisfied	32%
15	Neutral	15%

The result shows that majority of the respondents are highly satisfied with their usage of Facebook, while rest are either satisfies or neutral which puts the percentage at 53 and 32.

**Table 4: Frequency of use Face book**

No of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
55	Everyday	55%
26	Sometimes	26%
19	Rarely	19%

During the course of study it came forth that 55% use Facebook every day. 26% use it sometimes and 19% rarely.

**Table 5: Purpose of using Facebook**

No of respondents	Reason	Percentage
19	To express themselves	19%
16	To be a part of discussions	16%
30	To grab news	30%
12	Networking	12%
23	Interaction	23%

30% of the sample size use Facebook for the purpose of consuming news, 23% use it for interaction, 19% use it to express themselves, 16% use to participate in discussions and 12% involve in networking.

**Findings**

The analysis put forth the following results

- Females of this university are more tech savvy.
- Facebook is the most popular of all social media websites as majority of respondent chose Facebook as an option.

- 55% of the professionals use Facebook every day.
- Facebook is the source of news for 30% of the respondents.
- The level of contentment of usage is high among facebook users.

### **Conclusion**

Social media is becoming popular among the librarians to create awareness. These media are used to share information among users ranging from highly personal to academic interests of the participants. People connect with each other to share experiences, to spread the message about their products. Social media allows users to interact and 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 are limited to the passive viewing of content that was created for them. By creating groups or lists of social media, the content reaches to a huge population in less time. Through social media libraries send out messages to their users about the services they offer.

It came forth that Facebook is the most sought after Social networking site in the University of Kashmir and majority of the respondents are highly satisfied its usage.

A good percentage of Facebook users use this social networking site for the purpose of consuming news while others use it for interaction, to express themselves or to participate in discussions.

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