Social Networking: an Overview

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ABSTRACT *Social Networks can be used for providing user centric service in social library environment. The attitudes of users towards library are changing day by day accordingly the revolution in information technology. User needs most practical and speed information in e-learning age, however providing quick and easy retrieval information to user is a great task to library. Therefore library should find and search some new techniques for impacting valuable information to the user in upgrading environment. Social networking helps librarian to share information with users in the easiest way for digital library environment. Librarian can use   social networking tools in three broad activities such as information communication,   distribution and organization.*

Introduction

The primary aim of any library and information center is to provide its users with timely access to the information they need, so that, it may be possible for the users to exploit the collection to the maximum benefit. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) make revolutionary change in library profession to interact, communicate share and acquire knowledge over traditionally tools in 21st century. The traditional library services (cataloguing, circulation, searching techniques, etc.) provided by libraries were not enough to cater users' demands. The information requirements of 21st century users are very different in comparison to the previous century. So to cope up with users' demands and services in 21st century, library professionals developed their technical and communication skills, time management, presentation skill etc. Management and interpersonal skill makes library professional mare effective in present IT environment. In this era of information explosion, the tremendous amount of information is being generated and transmitted over the World Wide Web and through various other popular mode of communication in digital and print format such as Research papers, books, lectures, patents and standards etc. In the early stage of 20th century, libraries were facing problems, of how to cater and fulfill the users, demand in minimum span of time. To deal with new challenges and increasing demand of users, libraries and librarian of 21st century are reconsolidating, reshaping, redesigning and repackaging their services and information products by incorporating ICT based information   product and services. The present boon of ICT based products and services have a great impact on libraries and the impact is quite perceptible right from the beginning as the libraries started adopting ICT in the form of automation, stage of digital archives and library 2.0. Technological revolution with World Web Wide has transformed the mode of communication, teaching, learning and entertainment.

Definition of Social Networking

The term "Social Networking" refers to a range of web-enabled/it-enabled software programs that allow users to interact and work collaboratively with other users. It includes ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact, share film reviews, comments, blog entries, favorites, discussions, events, videos, ratings, music, classified ads, tag and classified information and more. A social network allows individual to join and create a personal profile, then formally connect with other users of the systems as social friend. It can be expressed as social connecting sites among the social user in web 2.0 domain. The potential of social networks to be relevant to information seeking and sharing from the more specialist web 2.0 sites. Social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.[1]

Seufert et al[2] defines social networking in terms of knowledge networking as signifying number of people, resources and relationships among them who are assembled in order to accumulate and use knowledge primarily by means of knowledge creation and transfer processes for the purpose of creating value. The concept of social networking is one of the tools of Web 2.0 which also forms the basis of library 2.0. Deducing from the above definitions the term social networking can be referred to as a web platform where people from different cultural settings can connect and interact with each other. Social Networks are websites that encourage interaction among users. These contain user-generated contents focusing on community where users get a chance to make connections, post pictures and share various types of information. Libraries can create a forum through social networking sites to discuss about library related issues, services and resources.

Importance of Social Networking Sites for LIS

Social networking sites can be relevant to information seeking and sharing on information retrieval perspective by providing speed and quick information to the information community by connecting and collecting digital information required by the user**.** SNSs are used by diverse categories of users for a variety of purposes. The main goal or motive of the SNSs is to provide an interactive environment to communicate with peers and get useful information. Through the scanning of literature, the following objectives have been drawn and discussed as:

- To find useful information: SNSs are a new platform for information sharing and communication, where users can read, download and upload valuable as well

as up-to-date information and share with others. For instance, read book reviews, join publishers/journals/oraganizations /Institutional pages etc.

- To get opinions on subject: SNSs users post their comments on a subject matter for open discussion and get views of peers. The users' community give their feedback in the form of comments regarding posted topics.

- For entertainment: many people admit that these sites are merely a form of entertainment. They use these sites as a creation network of users, share and post funny videos, flirt with girls, comment on the profile of others, and establish fake relations through chatting. Some people use this media for eradicating loneliness and depression.

- For Socializing: The term "socializing" is derived from the sociology which means to create a society. In the context of SNSs, socializing means to meet people of the society organised on a single platform, share common interests and communicate with each other.

- Discussion Forum: People on these sites have joined different groups or communities like academic, solutions, political and social welfare. They discuss common matters on the related problems. They post common topics for discussion and take views and opinions of others.

- To share experience and expertise: The users' community share their experiences, achievements, solutions of problems, to give or take advice on it. They also share personal information with whom they have not as yet know.

- For academic purpose: Academic bodies such as school/college/university and other institutions have applied these tools on their websites to provide information on what is happening in their respective institutes in the form of announcement and news. They also facilitate providing reference utility at admission time. The libraries also utilize this technology to provide the need- based services to the users.

- To communicate with family and friends: A powerful mode of communication among friends, family, teachers, researchers and other business and academic community.

- Playing games: Most of the SNSs are providing the feature of games. Sometimes members of particular network do their entertainment through playing the games on it. This feature is very popular among teenagers for playing online games.

- Interactive media of communication as compared to phone/e-mail:
- SNSs are free services provided by the Internet. Anyone can connect with them without any hindrance or skill. These sites are providing easier, cheap, fast and interactive features for communication than the earlier communications such as mobile or email.

- To keep-up-date: This media keeps up-to-date with their current happenings in the society, profession, business and their work place. For instance, if an earth quake has occurred users have updated their status on the SNSs.

- Helps in study and learning: It is a virtuous network among students and teachers. This media provides an interactive classroom environment among the teachers and learners.

- Promote themselves and their work: Everyone can share their latest achievements in their respective fields. The users' community post their journey photographs and personal videos.

- .Professional network: People related to similar professions can share useful tips regarding current happenings and discuss producing the products.

- Online interaction: SNSs are merely online interaction among the people that are located at distant locations across the globe.

Social Networking Tools
Social Networking Tools[3] can be categories in three parts like Information Communication, distribution and organization.

Information Communication
In this process librarian can keep constant touch and effective interaction with staff, patrons, and faculty in online collaborative environment. Following social networking tools are basically used to communicate information or some message:

- **Face book**
Face book is a social utility that connects people with friends and other who works, studied and live around them. Face book is a social network service and website launched in February 2004 and operated privately owned by Face book, Inc. It frequented by students face book is librarian friendly. We will find a group just for librarian – centric face book apps, a JSTOR search and much more.

- **MySpace**
MySpace is are extremely popular social networking tool which primarily have a social function allowing people to make friends, talk online and share resources

- **Ning**
An online service to create, customize and share a social network launched in October 2005. Use this networking tool to get connected with students, library associations, and many more. You can also use it to share information with many people at a time.

- **Blog**
An individual with regular entries, events or materials such as graphics or video usually maintains Weblogs or Blogs. It is a kind of web portal containing chronological web publication for personal or professional purposes. There are different types of blogs defined by the method in which content is written by type of media devices like mobile phone, by type of subject etc. Blogs are created using blogging software available on the net. E.g., Blogger (free), Web logger (fee based). Its application in library setting is to organize a library's activities, news, notices, reports, etc. in a chronological order. It can be used to announce new services of library and publish web pages easily without depending on hardware and HTML skills. Librarians can get current information on different subject's e.g. forthcoming conferences through blogs and provide this current infor-

mation to users through library blogs. Using blogs library staff can directly communicate with the users.[4]

- **Meebo**

Meebo is web platform for IM on any network or site. Meebo connects you to MSN, Yahoo, AOL/AIM, MySpace, Facdebook, Google Talk and many more! Meebo is a social platform connecting users with their friends across the web. Network and assist students on Meebo, no matter what IM client they use. You can even embed a chat screen on any webpage using this tutorial.

- **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn strengthens and extends your existing network of trusted contacts. LinkedIn is a networking tool mainly used for professional networking. Whether that's you, faculty, librarian, author, historians or other sources they can find them in your LinkedIn network.

- **Twitter**

Twitter is a website, owned and operative by Twitter Inc. which offers a social networking and micro-blogging services enabling its users to send and read other user massages called tweets. Twitter is providing text based message of up to 140 characters. To keep staff and patrons update on daily activities like frequently updated collections or even just scheduling.

Information Distribution

Information sharing is the major part and crucial area where professionals should looks seriously while considering and designing library activities in digital age. Patron's satisfaction should give first and foremost priority by providing right information at the right time in a right way from anywhere. Library professionals should rethink for implementing web 2.0 technologies in library services from early period. Following social networking toos are basically used to distribute information:

- **Flickr**

Flickr is almost certainly the best online image management and sharing application in the world. Show your favorite photos and videos to the world. You can create image sets with metadata, as well as take advantage of the many plug-in like organizer, Picnic, Camera finder, World map and so on available for Flickr users. For mobile users Flickr has an official app or i-phone only not for other mobile devices. Flickr users can also help gather missing information about image.

- **YouTube**

You Tube is a video-sharing website on which user can find out, watch, upload, share and view videos. Spread the world about library events. Some smart phones are capable of accessing You Tube videos dependent on the provider and the data plan.

- **Wiki**

Wiki is innovative server software which permits any user or specified users to create and edit web contents via web browser or build knowledge management application. To enhance intranet communication a library can use Wiki as an information gateway to access, create and edit information guides, resources, services, tutorials etc. Wikipedia is an example of Wiki.

- **Footnote**

On Footnote, you'll get access to original historical documents, and can update them with your own content and

insights. You can even find personal anecdotes and experiences you won't find in reference books.

- **Community Walk**

Community walk offers a geographical way to interpret text and events. You can use it for instruction, such as showing someone where to find a book, or walk them through a historical and geographical timeline.

- **SlideShare**

Encourage faculty, staff, and students to share their slideshow presentations for the grater community to access on SlideShare. It's a great way to disseminate information.

- **Digg**

Digg is a great way to find useful content that wouldn't come across in traditional ways. Find stories here, then share them with others using Digg's blog function.

- **StumbleUpon**

Another way to find great content is with StumbleUpon. You can channel surf the Internet to find useful content, research tools, and more.

Information Organization

Following social networking tools are basically used to organize information .

- **Connotea**

Connotea is a great reference tool, allowing User to save and organize reference links and share them with others. It can be accessed from any computer and offer integration with lots of other tools.

- **aNobil**

aNobil is a site of social media. It is specially for book lovers, where book lovers share reviews and recommended the things. User can also take the advantage of due date alerts, lending, and discussions.

- **Del.icio.us**

Del.icio.us is a world's leading social bookmarking site. You can create a custom directory for library patrons and teach them to search by your tags. Through the del.icio.us it will be easy to find useful internet resource.

- **Library Thing**

Thjis social cataloging network is great for librarians. Library Thing catalog your books online, easily, quickly and free. You can catalog along with AMAZON, the Library of Congress, and more than 200 other libraries around the world.

- **Netvibes**

Netvibes is basically for agencies, brands and media companies. Netvibes pioneered the first personalized dashboard publishing platform for the Web. You can create a public page that can be viewed by anyone. You can use it to help guide patrons to helpful Internet sources, news feeds, and more. It can be integrated with many of the social networking tools.

Conclusion

The fast growths of the Information and Communication technology and SNSs have changed the traditional method of storage, retrieval and communication of scholarly information. Role of librarian in modern internet community web world, Web 2.0 emphasizes as a guide for information rather than traditional role of an information keeper. So-

cial networks can be used for providing user centric service in social library environment; however providing quick and easy retrieval information to user is a great task to library. Library should find and search some new techniques for impacting valuable information to the user. Virtual Reference Desk (VRD) can be performed by Wikipedia[5]. Library can plane, design and disseminate information to users by KM Wiki. Marketing of library services can be possible by using social networking tools like Podcast, YouTube, Blogger etc. Library can host their personal websites in blogger. Digital video library can be framed by using the most successful tool like YouTube in library. Impacting and planning online course curriculum in online learning environment by PBWiki. Support just-in-time reference, since students may find it easier and more comfortable to communicate with a librarian through this medium than in traditional ways. Take online assistance by implementing chat reference in library. Professionals can put their collections on flicker. Footnote.com may be used to learn about history of library. After all, The implementation of these social networking tools and services have huge implications for current libraries and upcoming libraries in future and it will stay relevance for their present communities as well as upcoming generation of in new information technology.

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