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Proceedings of First DLIS Biennial International Conference

Theme: "Managing Information in the Digital Era"

Hosted at the Library Auditorium, University of Botswana, Gaborone

Edited by: Wole Olatokun

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Library and Social Networking: A new Tool in Information Management

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Abstract

The paper discusses social networking as a new tool in information management, using Facebook as case study. It explicates how social Networking can enhance library outreach and librarians' collaboration. It presents social networking as new tool in information management that is capable of creating futures -prospects, opportunities, hope for library users and information and library professionals. For the purpose of this work three groups were created on Facebook. One for library users and two for Librarians. Social networking sites could be effectively used to disseminate information and promote pleasant professional relationship among librarians and library users. It encourages academic collaboration. With Facebook group, pictures of memorable events could be shared, news could be posted, and meeting, conference and workshop could be announced.

Keywords: social network, library outreach, librarian's collaboration, information management, library 2.0

Introduction

From time immemorial information management, i.e. knowledge collection, selection, preservation and transmission, has being the exclusive responsibility of library as an institution. One of the key tasks of information and library professionals is to manage and present functional information to users. With the influx of new technologies - the personal computers, the Internet and World Wide Web (www), knowledge dissemination has drastically changed. Potential library users (students, researchers, professionals, and government officials) have many options beyond the traditional one of walking into a physical building to get useful information. There are thousands of commercial search engines that provide information, even more than what any single physical library can give. The question is, how can librarianship thrive in the face of these new technologies? How can we reach students and other library users if they don't come into our physical or cyber space domains? How can we maintain our traditional role as knowledge custodians? One obvious answer is to go to them. (Users)-Library2.0 principle.

Rationale for the study

It is a known fact that, in addition to commercial search engines, students are also making substantial use of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace (New Media Consortium 2007). In response to these developments, which seem to have happened almost overnight, there is a need for library and information professionals to reconsider their roles and the ways in which they manage and provide informa'... services. I believe our concern is to create futures for our clientele by providing services that would encourage users' patronage,

thereby promoting information-seeking heritage. Against this backdrop, this paper discusses how social Networking can enhance library outreach and librarians' collaboration. It presents social networking (using Facebook[1] as a case study) as a new tool for creating futures -prospects, opportunities, hope for library users and information and library professionals.

Social Networking

Social networking as a term is new, but the ideas behind it such as sharing content, collaborating with others and creating a community have been around as long as man exits. Literarily, social networking is described as the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighborhood subdivision. An online dictionary, wiki (2009) defined Social networking as the interaction between a group of people who share a common interest. Social networking is the enabling platform for people to build up connection of friends and associates. It builds and creates links between different people irrespective of time, location, and space. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in schools or in the workplace, it is currently most popular online. This is because unlike most high schools, colleges, workplaces or religious institutions, the Internet connects millions of individuals who are eager to meet other internet users to develop friendships and business relationships. When it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking websites are an online community of Internet users. This new technology is capable of making the contribution of content and interaction with other people faster, easier and more accessible to a wider population than it's ever been before.

Social Network Sites

Danah and Nicole (2007) define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and organization of these connections may vary from site to site. There are more than a thousand of such social sites. This is a list of major active social networking websites; the list is not exhaustive, and is limited to 10 notable, well-known sites, arranged by number of registered users.

Table 1 List of Social Networking sites

Name	Description/Focus	Registered users	Registration
MySpace	General.	**253,145,404**	Open to ages 13 and up.
Facebook	General.	**200,000,000**	Open
Windows Live Spaces	Blogging (formerly MSN Spaces)	**120,000,000**	Open
Habbo	General for teens. Over 31 communities worldwide.	**117,000,000**	Open to people 13 and older
Friendster	General. Popular in Southeast Asia	**90,000,000**	Open to people 16 and older. No children allowed.
hi5	General. Popular in India,Portugal, Mongolia, Thailand,	**80,000,000**	Open to people 13 and older. No children allowed.
Reunion.com	Locating friends and family, keeping in touch	**51,000,000**	Open
Classmates.com	School, college, work and the military	**50,000,000**	Open

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Netlog	General. Popular in Europe and Québec province.	**42,000,000**	Open to people 13 and older
LinkedIn	General but mainly business	**40,000,000**	Open to people 18 and older.

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites)

Looking at the list, **Facebook** has 200,000,000 and for the fact that it is popular in Africa especially among students, it is used for this study.

Facebook

Facebook is a free-access social networking website that is operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. Users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. People can also add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. The website's name refers to the paper Facebook depicting members of a campus community that some US colleges and preparatory schools give to incoming students, faculty, and staff as a way to get to know other people on campus. Facebook began in early 2004 as a Harvard-only SNS (Cassidy, 2006). To join, a user had to have a harvard.edu email address. As Facebook began supporting other schools, those users were also required to have university email addresses associated with those institutions, a requirement that kept the site relatively closed and contributed to users' perceptions of the site as an intimate, private community. Beginning in September 2005, Facebook expanded to include high school students, professionals inside corporate networks, and, eventually, everyone.

Facebook and Libraries: A Brief Review of the Literature

Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis's article, "Checking Out Facebook.com: The Impact of a Digital Trend on Academic Libraries," published in the March 2007 issue of *Information Technology and Libraries*" was the most inclusive article discussing Facebook in the mainstream library and information science literature as at June 2007. The expansive literature review included in the piece encompassed publications on a variety of aspects of online social networks, including privacy issues and usage statistics. It is reported in the paper that, despite the obvious interest of librarians in online social networks, "actual literature in the field of library and information science is scarce." They correctly attributed this to the newness of the phenomenon (Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis, 2007: 26). Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis's article analyzes the results of their February 2006 survey of 126 academic librarians about their attitudes toward Facebook. The authors found that only "a small group of the respondents 29, were extremely positive and excited about the possibilities of online social networking"

In little more than a year, the situation changed dramatically "**Librarians and Facebook**," a discussion group that Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis founded within Facebook itself, had 1,391 members as of June 2007 and today it has 9,713 members (May 2009). This is strong confirmation that librarians are quickly embracing this new phenomenon. Moreover, "Librarians and Facebook" is not the only such group on the site. Others include "*Digital Reference in Facebook*," with 260 members as at June 2007 now 822 members (May 2009); "*FacebookAppsForLibraries*," with 133 members (June 2007) now 4,446 (May 2009). These membership totals are all as of May 12, 2009; group membership numbers in Facebook tend to increase daily, often dramatically, especially in the first days after a group is formed.

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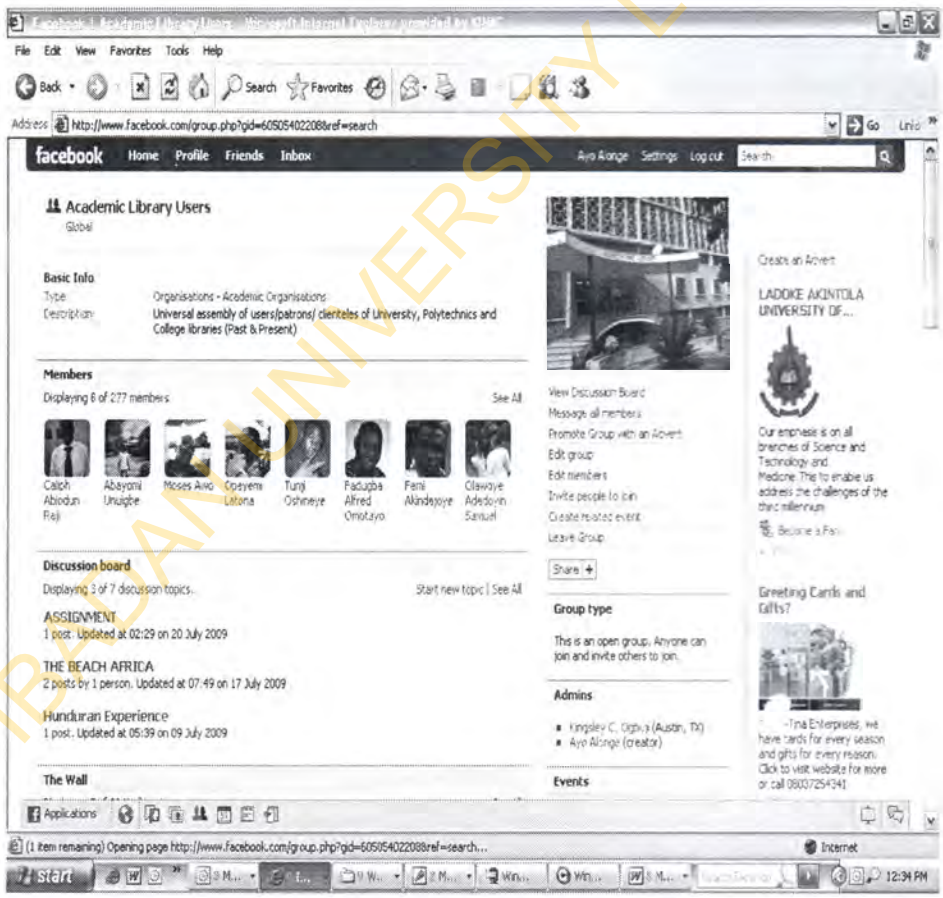
While this paper was being researched and written, I created three (3) Facebook groups, one for students/ex-students (Library users), *Academic Library Users*_and two (2) for Librarians: *African Librarian* and *Nigerian Librarian*.

Academic Library Users

Academic Library Users was created December 2008 as *University of Ibadan Readers*, is a Universal assembly of users/patrons/ clienteles of University, Polytechnics and College libraries (Past and Present) and it has 127 members May 12, 2009. On the conclusion of this report, July 21 July 2009, the group has 277 members. The following are some of the officers of the group:

- **Kingsley C. Ogbuji** (Texas): Kingsley lives in Texas, United States. A graduate of Library and Information studies, University of Ibadan. He is one of the moderators.
- **Lorie Layugan** (Philippines): LORIE is a scholar from Baguio, Philippines. She is lover of book. She is a committed user of Facebook. She is one of the moderators

Figure1: Academic Library Users page



Benefits of the Group to Library Users

- Members of the group discuss issues relating to their experiences in the library on the Group's Discussion Board;

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- The group serve as meeting point for library users (past and present) from different parts of the world to come together develop friendship as they learn from one another
- Assignments, projects and school assignments are discussed among the members of the group;
- New words with meaning and origin are mailed to members from time to time;

Members freely discuss problems, concerns, expectations, issues pertaining to Library and information centres on the *Group Walls; Figure 2: Academic User's Wall)* *http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=60505402208&ref=search#/wall.php?id=6050540220 8*

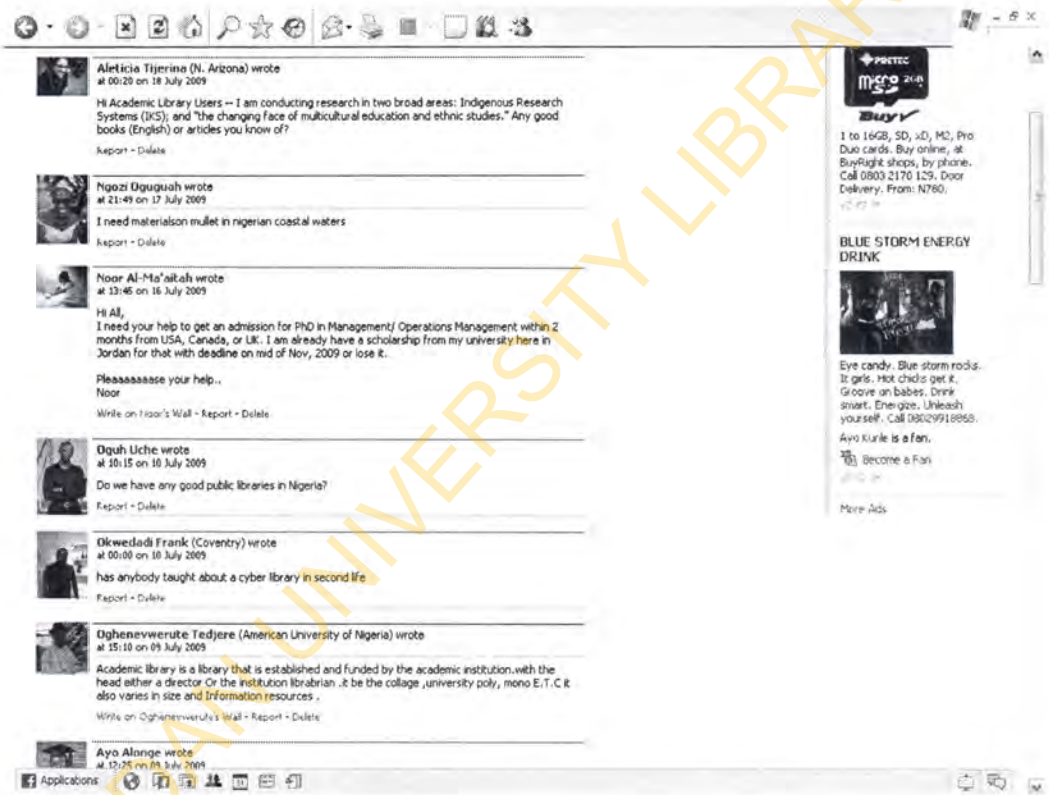

Figure2: Academic Library Users Wall

African Librarian

African Librarian is a Forum of all Librarians in Africa and all African librarians all over the world. These groups were created in April, 2009 and at as May 12, 2009 African Librarian which is tagged "Forum of all Librarians in Africa and all African librarians all over the world" has 15 members and 23 members on 21st July, 2009 the conclusion of this report. Roger Stringer is one the officers of the group:

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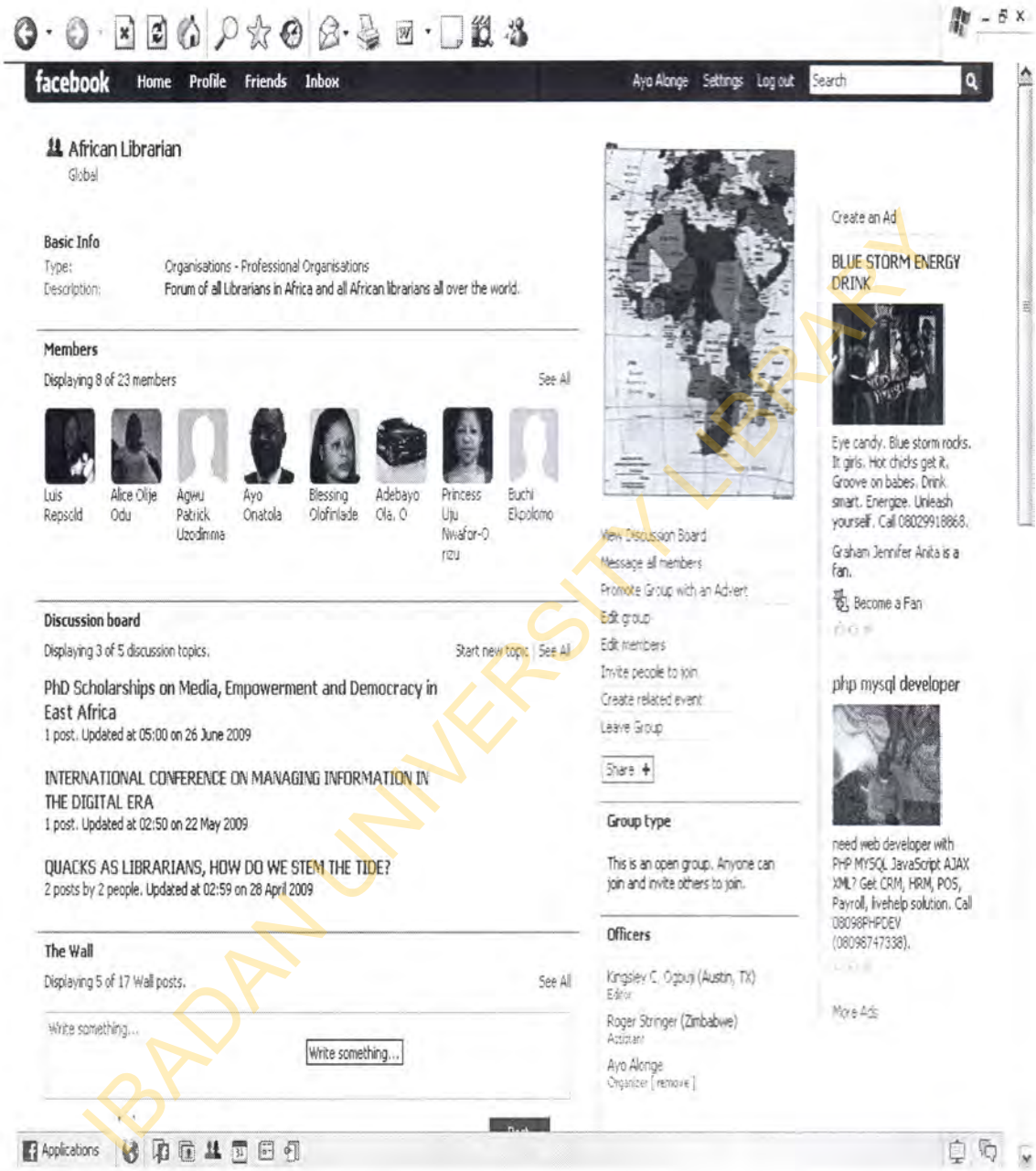

***Figure 3**: The African Librarian*

- **Roger Stringer** is a Zimbabwean and an editor of "Focus on International Library and Information Work" publication of the International Library and Information Group (ILIG) of CILIP).

Nigerian Librarian

This is forum of Nigerian Librarian on Facebook Nigerian Librarian (forum of Nigerian Librarians on Facebook) has 18 active members and on 21st July, 2009. On the conclusion of

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this report, July 21 July 2009, the group has 57 members. The following are some officers of the group:

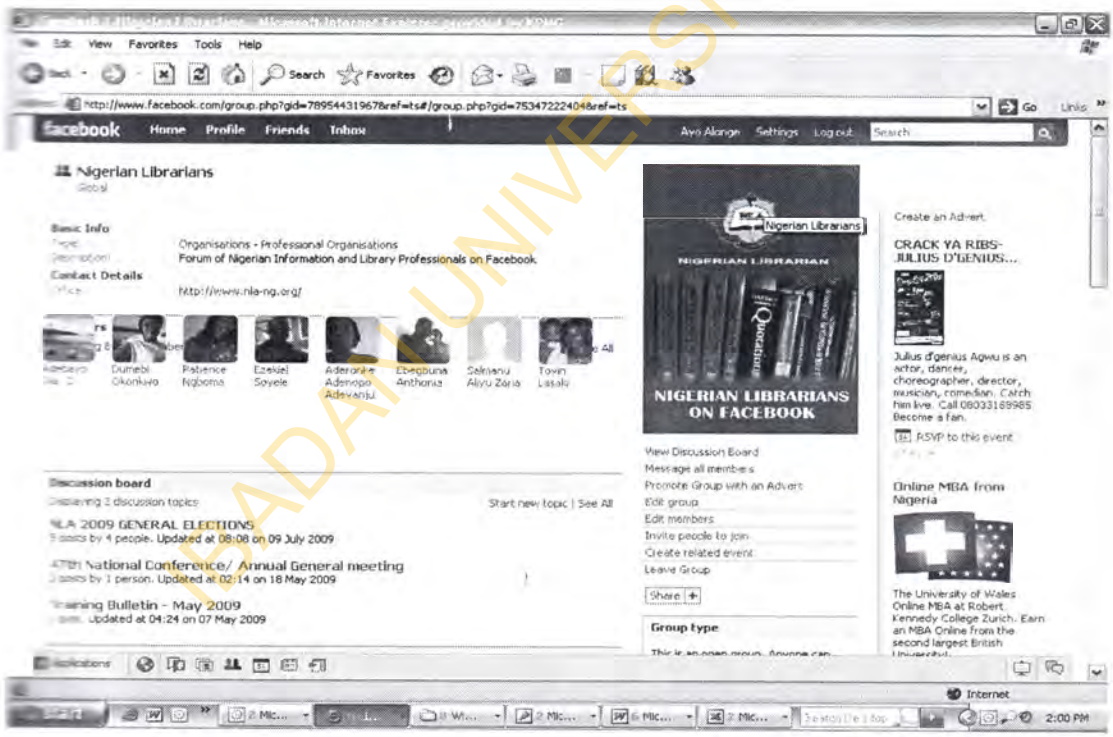
- **Inuwa Bukar** (Nigeria) the Co-coordinator of Cataloging at the American University of Nigeria, Yola and moderator of NLA's Cat- and-Class Online Forum Cat.

- **Ayo Onatola** (London) is a Librarian with St. Christopher IMD College of Medicine, Luton England and an Author, a Librarian and Community Development activist. A political animal of the progressive bloc and a patriotic Nigerian.

Figure 4: Nigerian Librarian page

How to use Facebook

Anyone over 13-years-old can join Facebook. All that is required to join is filling out a form with your name, address, and e-mail. Log-in information includes an e-mail address and a personally chosen password. Once a page is set up you can add friends by importing your e-mail contacts or simply searching for individuals directly in the Facebook site, www.facebook.com.



Libraries/Librarians Creating Future: Using Facebook For Library Outreach

Facebook plays an important part in the lives of a great proportion of library clientele especially students. The more information and library professionals use social networking environment like Facebook, the more they will discover good ways to use it to improve library services and to

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expand their outreach (Marshall, 2009). For the fact that Facebook seems to be an all-encompassing part of student life, librarians can make good use of it. Social networking sites, especially Facebook, have several options and opportunities that libraries can grab to create future for library clientele. Social networking sites – for instance, Facebook, is a low-cost technology tool that can expand library outreach beyond limited library budgets.

Facebook could be used as an avenue for library outreach to students. Libraries could create their presence on Facebook in formation of Groups or Pages. Employ the service of "Internet librarian" or social-networking librarian" who will be available all day round to repartee or chat with students, researcher and other library users, answering late night questions ranging from trivia to "last minute-assignment-due in the morning information emergencies" (Marshall, 2007). Nowadays, Facebook seems to be the one with the immediate interest to the library community. Facebook falls within the "trend of our users that we just can't ignore" (Marshall, 2007). The presence of library in social networking sites such as Facebook could help in preserving, promoting and globalizing our cultural heritage. These networking sites permit interaction among people from different age groups, ethnic backgrounds as well as social interest.

Librarians/Libraries collaboration

Social networking sites such as Facebook are an excellent environment to foster and facilitate contact and communication among members of a local community. Facebook can serve as a place and space where libraries and librarians' services can be more actively and visibly promoted. Hinchliffe and Schmidt (2008) observed that the ubiquity of online networked social space presents librarians with an opportunity to become members of user community and thereby integrate library resources and services at point of need and point-of-discovery in ways previous models of library outreach could not obtain. Participating in networked social space such as Facebook is particularly valuable for connecting with other students "for whom the library is unfortunately alien and mystifying entity" (Hinchliffe and Schmidt, 2008). Moreover a networked social space provides information and library professionals' opportunity to cordially relate among themselves thereby encouraging social association, professional partnership and scholastic collaboration. Within Facebook group and page, results of researches conducted, pictures of memorable events, news, etc. could be posted and shared. Announcement of meetings, conferences and workshops are also possible on Facebook applications.

Conclusion

This paper has exemplified the Library 2.0 Principle of Taking the Library to Users. It is anticipated that this presentation would be useful to libraries who wish to implement this new technology tool: social networking into their Library outreach activities. In the same vein, I believe that information and library professionals would see the need to embrace social networking as a latest tool that could enhance professional, scholastic and social collaboration. Social networking is an effective tool libraries could employ to create futures. Just as a physical library is more than a building full of books, Social networking librarianship means more than merely present in the users' space. As Farkas sustained: "A big difference exists between being where our patrons are and being useful to our patrons where they are" (2007). The need for libraries/librarians to be proactive- to anticipate, understand, and fulfill the users' needs effectively when on the social network domain cannot be over-emphasized lest we lose the benefits.

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Biography

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