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BLOGGING: AN EMERGING INITIATIVE AMONGST LIBRARIANS IN OYO STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines blogging as an emerging initiative among librarians in Nigeria. It looks at how librarians having embraced the blogging technology have used it not only to promote themselves but to also promote the activities of their affiliate organizations. The attitude of librarians to ownership and operation of weblogs was also examined. It aims at investigating Librarians' awareness of weblogs, their attitudes to weblog and the benefits accruable to the individual and the library in weblog operations. The descriptive survey research method was used with questionnaire questions drawn up in line with the objectives of the study. A hundred questionnaires were distributed to Librarians in Oyo State, Nigeria out of which ninety eight were returned. Data gathered was analyzed using the frequency count and simple percentages. Conclusions were then drawn from the analyzed data and recommendations made on how librarians can and should exploit the benefits of weblogs and blogging to advance librarianship.

Keywords: Blogging, Librarians, Weblogs, emerging initiatives, library services.

Introduction

A blog is a platform on a web page where information, views, opinions or ideas are frequently updated and arranged in a reversed chronological order. Its origin is traceable to the word weblog which was first used in 1997 by Jorn Barger (Barger, 1997). This word was shortened to blog by Peter Merholz in 1999. According to Winer (2001), “the first creator of a weblog in 1992 was Sir Tim Berners-Lee”. The advent of this medium over a decade ago has brought tremendous change in the type of services rendered to library patrons by librarians. This tool allows librarians to conveniently present ideas, services, hints, adverts and also awareness about an individual or a library setting. It is a dynamic, flexible tool used easily whether one is creating with it or simply viewing the results (Richardson, 2004).

Weblog forms an alternative to mainstream media publications. Bloggers enter a blogging application; add formatting or hyperlinks and save the post. Entries which include text, hyperlinks, images or multimedia are being added to blogs with all the content being made available online.

Some of the attributes that distinguish a blog from a standard web page is that it allows for easy circulation of new pages. Data can be entered in a simple form usually with the title, the category and the body of the articles and thereafter, submission is made. Blogs enables internet users to publish and connect to a worldwide audience.

Blogs are media of promoting library operations and services. Clyde (2004) reported all the various areas where libraries use weblogs. They include; “provision of news or information to library users, provision of links to recommended internet resources, book reviews, provision of entertainment and amusement to users and research tips for communication among librarians”.

Understanding the nature, ideology and idiosyncrasies of library patrons, it becomes expedient to elicit information on librarians’ knowledge, ownership and use of blogs.

Reichardt and Harder (2005), assert that librarians in the field of science and technology, and other areas of librarianship, can use blogs in project and team management as well as reference desk training and scheduling.

Adeleke and Habila (2012), asserted that availability of blogging software has motivated the use of blogs which makes publishing content online feasible. It is easy and convenient to publish to the web without any special knowledge of the web design or hypertext markup language (HTML) coding.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the research objectives;

1. To investigate what weblogs are.
2. To investigate the level of awareness of Librarians about blogging.
3. To investigate the role of blogging in disseminating information to library patrons.
4. To investigate Librarians' attitude towards weblog ownership.
5. To investigate the benefits accruable to librarians in owning and using weblogs.

Significance of the Study

Findings from this study will help library managers be more aware of where to focus attention on when it comes to improving library services delivery. It will help managers in having insight on where to focus training of library staff on to harness current trends in technology for the advancement of the library and in carrying out its main function of information dissemination. Librarians will also benefit from the findings of the study as it will serve as a direction guide in relation to self-development.

Literature Review

Blogs are not new to Librarians and a lot of research on blogs and librarians have been carried out by a lot of researchers in the field of Librarianship.

Aharony (2009), in a research of thirty topic oriented blogs dealing with librarianship and information science and focusing specifically on tagging and folksonomies over a period

of two months discovered that professional Library and information science blogs “reflect the most up-to-date interests of library and information science professionals as well as blogger’s personal lives and experiences”. The purpose of the research was to find the understanding in tagging patterns of library and information science bloggers.

Adeleke and Habila (2012), while carrying out a research on awareness, ownership and use of blogs by librarians in Nigeria discovered that more males were attracted to new technologies than females. On awareness of blogs, majority of the respondents indicated awareness. A high percentage of the respondents also indicated that they had knowledge of blogs. It was however observed that this high awareness did not translate to regular usage or blogging by the respondents. Though a high percentage of the respondents also claimed that their institutions had blogs, only one of these could be accessed. The research revealed that though interest in blogging was on the rise among librarians in Nigeria, ownership and use of blogs were just developing.

Bar-Ilan (2007), in her research on the use of weblogs by Librarians and libraries to disseminate information found out that blogs have an impact on the activities of information science professionals and are a novel information channel for transferring information to fellow professionals and to other users of the web. She studied various library and Librarian’s blogs for a month and discovered that postings were characterized using multi-

faceted findings of the report to that of a previous one and it was revealed that there was an increase in ownership and increase use of blogs by libraries and librarians.

Schwartz (2010) gave six reasons why librarians should own and use weblogs or contribute to a collaborative effort. These reasons includes (1) helping the librarian to be current as writing a blog encourages one to actively engage in the process of information seeking and current awareness. (2) blogs can be an advocacy tool where change can be made to happen because it allows one to expose the world to issues facing both libraries and librarians. (3) in thinking through ideas and cultivating means of expressing them effectively. (4) in building a community allowing one to meet people who share ones interests and thereby becoming part of a progressive segment of Library and Information Science professionals community. (5) it makes one unique as one is freed from the usual stereotyping that abounds in Librarianship and lastly, the ease in owning and writing blog entries is a factor that makes the entire effort worthwhile.

Dhiman and Sharma (2008) investigated blogging and uses of blogs in libraries. They noted that blogs were natural for Librarians. According to them, “blogs are an extension of what we already do: identify, organize, and make information accessible in libraries”. Their findings indicated that though blogging was still a relatively grey area amongst librarians, the web’s potential has been enjoying a gradual use by librarians and

libraries. They discovered that “librarians were using blogs to provide local information such as changes in opening hours, special lectures and new acquisitions”. It would also be commendable if Librarians in Nigeria embrace blogging to enhance library patronage through provision of timely and relevant information.

Ojala (2005) in her article blogging for knowledge sharing, management and dissemination looked at the importance of blogs in a collaborative work environment where blogs can bring significant benefits to organizations willing to adopt the technology. She posits that “blogging could add to the sum total of knowledge for research projects, share industry and product knowledge, capture and disseminate pertinent news from outside the organization and contribute viable insight on specific subjects”. Blogs she said “are particularly useful for promoting knowledge in a cross-cultural environment”.

Steele and Greenlee (2011) shared their experience while implementing a law library in ‘thinking, writing, sharing, and blogging: lessons learned from implementing a law library. The authors discussed the success and challenges experienced in running a blog and suggested strategies for law libraries and librarians to consider when starting or revamping their weblogs. The personal information provided in their article can be an insight to the Nigerian librarian interested in starting a personal or institutional weblog.

Methodology

Questionnaire-based survey method was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was developed in line with the research objectives for data collection. Random sampling was used to select the respondents. A total of a hundred questionnaires were distributed to Librarians in Oyo state covering academic, special, public and national libraries. Ninety eight of these questionnaires were retrieved and the data collected in them was analyzed using frequency count and simple percentage.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the TAM2 (Technology Acceptance Model 2) theory of Davies (1989, p320). TAM2 was chosen because it includes gender which was not included in the original TAM. The theory is appropriate for this study because it was designed to predict information technology acceptance and usage on the job. The two major constructs of TAM are 'perceived usefulness' and 'perceived ease of use'. Vankatesh, Morris, Davies and Davies (2003, p428) define perceived usefulness as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" and perceived ease of use as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort". TAM2 is most suitable because this study is aimed at finding out the awareness and use of weblogs by Librarians to carry out their professional duties. Would librarians' perceived usefulness and ease of use of weblogs predict their acceptance of this technology?

And does gender have any correlation to perceived usefulness and ease of use of them to enhance library services

Data Analysis

Table No. 01: Distribution of respondents by gender

Gender	No of Respondents	Percentage
Male	63	64.3%
Female	35	35.7%
Total	68	100%

Table No. 01, shows that majority of the respondents are male.

Table No. 02: Distribution of respondents by type of library they work in.

Type of library	No of Respondents	Percentage
Public	15	15.3
National	10	10.2
Academic	68	69.4
Special	5	5.1
Total	98	100

Table No.02 shows that majority of the respondents (69.4%) work in academic libraries while respondents from special libraries were least with 5.1% respondents.

Table No. 03: Showing respondents awareness, use, attitude and benefit of blogs and blogging to libraries and librarians

(Strongly agree=SA, agree=A, disagree=D and strongly Disagree=SD in percentage)

Sr. No.	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	I am aware of weblogs	59.2%	22.4%	13.3%	5.1%
2	I use blogs regularly	25.5%	31.6%	28.6%	14.3%
3	Blog is another way to publish on the web	50%	28.6%	18.4%	3%
4	I read blogs often	22.4%	34.7%	30.6%	12.2%
5	I think using blogs in the library is interesting	53.1%	37.7%	9.2%	-
6	I have interest in blogs	21.4%	33.7%	29.6%	15.3%
7	Blog encourages good communication atmosphere between librarians and library patrons	57.1%	37.8%	5.1%	-
8	My interest in blogs is professional	25.5%	64.3%	10.2%	-
9	I have my own personal blog	23.5%	25.5%	40.8%	10.2%
10	I have benefitted from blog usage	15.3%	51%	33.7%	-
11	My library has a blog	29.6%	20.4%	34.7%	15.3%
12	Users recommend my library's blog to other users	20.4%	20.4%	35.7%	23.5%
13	Users find my blog beneficial to their search queries	20.4%	20.4%	49%	10.2%

14	I have used my blog to promote my library services and programmes	8.2%	35.7%	40.8%	15.3%
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Table No. 03 shows the response of respondents on awareness, use and benefit of blogs by librarians.

Discussion of Findings

In line with the research objectives, a breakdown of the findings of the various aspects reveals the following;

On awareness and use of blogs: Librarians in Oyo state are very aware of blogs. They know what blogs are as can be gleaned from their responses. Majority of the respondents, 81.6%, say that they are aware of blogs compared to 18.4% of the respondents who say that they are not aware of blogs and their uses. This finding supports those of Aharony (2007) and Adeleke and Habila (2012). Considering that majority of library services and practices are done through the use of Information Communication Technology, it is not surprising to discover that awareness of blogs and blogging among librarians is very high. Majority of the respondents, 57.1% also make use of blogs regularly to get and disseminate information unlike the remaining 42.3% who say that they do not use blogs regularly.

On awareness and use of blogs by gender: Majority of the male respondents (64.5%) showed very high awareness of the use of weblogs which was higher than the percentage of female (52.8%) who showed high awareness of it. This showed a significance correlation between gender and weblog awareness and usage as it appears that the male gender is more aware of and uses weblogs.

On using blogs and blogging to disseminate information to library patrons, majority of the respondents believe that blogs play a positive role. This is seen in the responses of the respondents where a majority, 94.9% believe that blogs and blogging enable the librarian transfer information between a library and its patrons and also among librarians. This is also reflected in publishing through blogs as majority of the respondents, 78.6% posit that blogging is a way to publish and through this disseminate information to library patrons and other professionals as they ensure a wider reach.

On the attitude of Librarians towards blog ownership, it was discovered that this was an aspect that has not yet been fully embraced by Librarians. While a majority of the respondents, 90.8% believe that using blogs in the library is interesting and beneficial, and majority, 55.1%, of the respondents have interest in blogs and blogging, it is quite alarming to discover that majority, 51%, of the librarians investigated in the study do not have a personal blog. This is further reflected in the answers to the question on whether or not users

find their blogs beneficial as majority of the respondents, 59.2% say that users do not. This is to be expected as what is available will determine usefulness or not.

Ownership of blogs by libraries was evenly divided as half of the respondents say their libraries do and half said their libraries do not, that is 50% do and 50% do not. This shows that the attitude of libraries and librarians in Oyo State towards ownership of blogs need to change so that libraries and librarians can readily harness the benefits in blogging, be more relevant to their societies in this cyber age and expand their frontiers in provision of information and information services not only to their local patrons but internationally.

On benefits in owning and using blogs by librarians, majority of the respondents, 66.3%, posit that they have benefitted immensely from the use of blogs, both professionally and on an individual personal level.

On whether or not the respondents have used their personal blogs to promote their libraries' activities and programmes, 56.1% responded in the affirmative while the remaining 43.9% say that they have not done so. When the words of Dhiman and Sharma (2008) that "weblogs are ideal for disseminating all types of information chosen by the blogger, for commenting, expressing opinion and for discussing implications" are considered in respect

to blogging and the Nigerian librarian, it is plain to see from this study that libraries and librarians still have some ways to go in harnessing the benefits of this technology called blogging. What can be perceived from the findings of this study is that though Librarians in Oyo state have not fully embraced this technology, there seems to be indications that the situation is only temporary and that they will eventually embrace blogging for their personal development and for their libraries.

Conclusion

Blogging is an emerging initiative that is facilitated by advancement in technology. While the use of blog cuts across different age groups and professions in every society, it is of particular interest and benefit to librarians because our work as information professionals demands an in-depth understanding of information technologies and tools, importance of these technologies to information dissemination and adapting these technologies and tools to effective and efficient information services delivery. There is a lot Nigerian Librarians can do with blogs. Library and information professionals may enjoy the benefits of blogs for a wide variety of purposes: these include publication records, annual progress report of the library, messages to the new College and university students, and many other messages, purposes, and audiences. With blogs, the Librarian brings his/her services to the users and there is even more opportunity of attracting new users to the library. Information

dissemination has gone beyond expecting the user to come to the library for everything, so with blogs and blogging, the Librarian is saying “I am here and available to you for all your information needs”. Further studies should be considered in replicating this research on a larger number of respondents to cover the whole of Nigeria. The views of library users on libraries having and maintaining weblogs can also be investigated so that the library can know what the user wants and work towards meeting these needs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that Libraries, Librarians and information professionals in Nigeria should be more involved in blogging because through blogging activities, they can promote their online presence and disseminate information effectively irrespective of time, space and location.

It is highly recommended that library schools in Nigeria should review their curricula in the teaching of Information and Communication Technology and all its attendant variants in order for emerging Librarians to fully embrace, use and harness internet-based tools and technologies right from the outset of their professional career.

Moreover, it is also strongly recommended that more librarians should own blogs either for personal or organizational use. Hands-on training workshops should be organized by

libraries for librarians to learn how to create and use blogs for different purposes. There is need for heads of libraries to be responsive to the training needs of Librarians especially in the area of ICT in library operations.

It will be of immense benefit to Libraries and Librarians in Nigeria should they be actively involved in these emerging initiatives for better output in their services and more relevance in information dissemination.

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