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# Library and Information Science in Developing Countries

Contemporary Issues



A. Tella & A.O. Issa

# Library and Information Science in Developing Countries: Contemporary Issues

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# Chapter 21

## Social Media in Library and Information Centres

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter 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 future prospects, opportunities, and 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: Academic Library Users, African Librarian, and Nigerian 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 meetings, conferences, and workshops could be announced.*

### INTRODUCTION

The social and communication pattern of our society are being shifted by the influx of Social media products and services such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Bloggers WordPress, Delicious etc. Undeniably, this development has

direct impact on various aspects of library and information services; starting from how we find information online, to the ways libraries reach out and relate with their clientele. This chapter considers social media as an enhancement of library services, library outreach and librarians' collaboration. It presents social media as an effective tool in information management that is capable of creating futures -prospects, opportuni-

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ties, hope for library users and information and library professionals.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

It is difficult to give an explicit definition of the term, Social media Many are confused with the use of term with others like social networking, social news, web 2.0., wikis, etc. We often use them interchangeably.

To get better understanding of what Social Media connote let's simplify the term by taking the words and separating them into their different meanings. According to the Dictionary.com website, here are the definition listings for each:

**Social:** 1. pertaining to, devoted to, or characterized by friendly companionship or relations: a social club. **Media:** 1. a pl. of medium. (*ok that doesn't help, let's go to the second definition-L.S.C.*) 2. (usually used with a plural verb) the means of communication, as radio and television, newspapers, and magazines, that reach or influence people widely: The media are covering the President Jonathan speech tonight.

From the above we can now see that Media is an instrument on communication, like a newspaper or a radio, so social media would be a social instrument of communication. It can be called a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting/communication

Social media are media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. They support the democratization of knowledge and information and transform people from content consumers to content producers (Wikipedia 2010)

## Social Media Websites

Now that we have got the simplified meaning of Social Media the next is know what social me-

dia websites are. Any website that invites you to interact with the site and with other visitors falls into the definition of social media.

Social Media is expansive term therefore it covers a large range of websites. But the one common link between these websites is that you are able to interact with the website and interact with other visitors.

The number of social media is increasing everyday. Here are some examples of some social media websites:

Arts, Bookmarking, Cars and Auto, Connecting with Friends, Consumer Reviews, Cooking/Food, Cultures/Foreign Language, Dating, Education/Books, Event Planning, Family, Fashion/Clothing, Finance, Games, General Networking, Health/Medical, Internet Marketing, Link/Website Sharing, Microblogging/IM/Mobile, Movies, Music, News, Pets, Photo Sharing, Politics, Pop Culture, Professional, Real Estate, Religious, Shopping, Social Action, Sports, Technology, Teen, Travel, Video Sharing, Women, Miscellaneous

- **Social Bookmarking.** (Del.icio.us, Blinklist, Simpy) Interact by tagging websites and searching through websites bookmarked by other people.
- **Social News.** (Digg, Propeller, Reddit) Interact by voting for articles and commenting on them.
- **Social Networking (General).** (Facebook, Hi5, Last.FM) Interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions.
- **Social Photo and Video Sharing:** (YouTube, Flickr) Interact by sharing photos or videos and commenting on user submissions.
- **Wikis.** (Wikipedia, Wikia) Interact by adding articles and editing existing articles.
- **Microblogging/IM/Mobile:** blogspot, twitter



## 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 exists. 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 (Figure 1).

### 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. Figure 2 shows 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.

Figure 1. Social networking. Source: Social Networking in Plain English: English <http://www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking>.

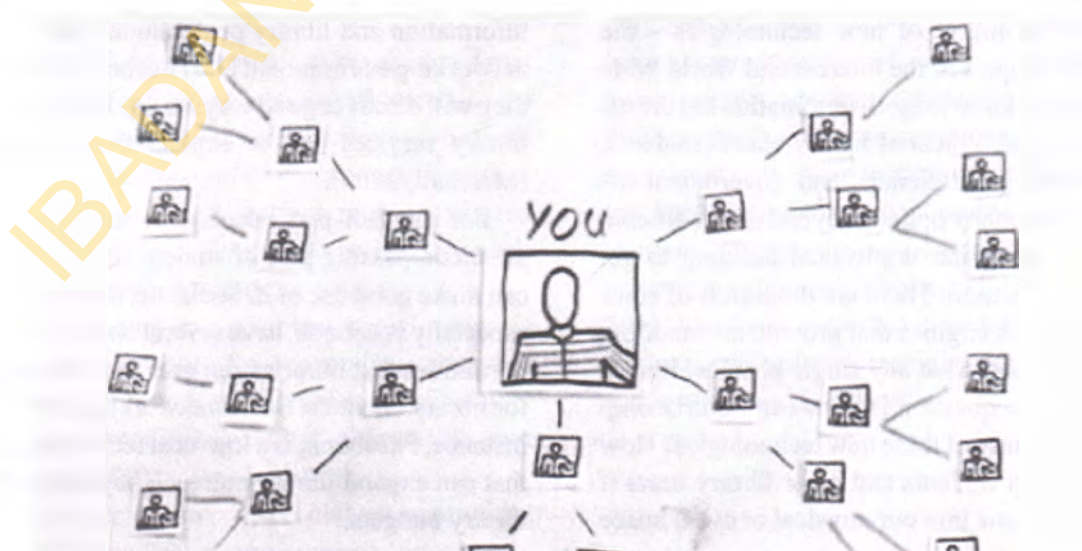


Figure 2. List of social networking sites

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 <u>Southeast Asia</u>	90,000,000	Open to people 16 and older. No children allowed.
hi5	General. Popular in <u>India, Portugal, Mongolia, Thailand.</u>	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
Netlog	General. Popular in Europe and Quebec province.	42,000,000	Open to people 13 and older
LinkedIn	General but mainly business	40,000,000	Open to people 18 and older.

## The Place of Social Media in the Library

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.

## Library Outreach

Social media/ social networking 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 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.



Social media sites such as Facebook, blogspot, twitter 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, social media 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 media sites such 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 are 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 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.

### **Facebook**

Looking at the statistic presented earlier, 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 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.

While this paper was being written, three (3) Facebook groups were created, 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 (Figure 3) 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 July 21 July 2009, the group has 277 members. On the conclusion of this paper it has **1,023 members** now (23 June, 2010). The following are some of the officers of the group:

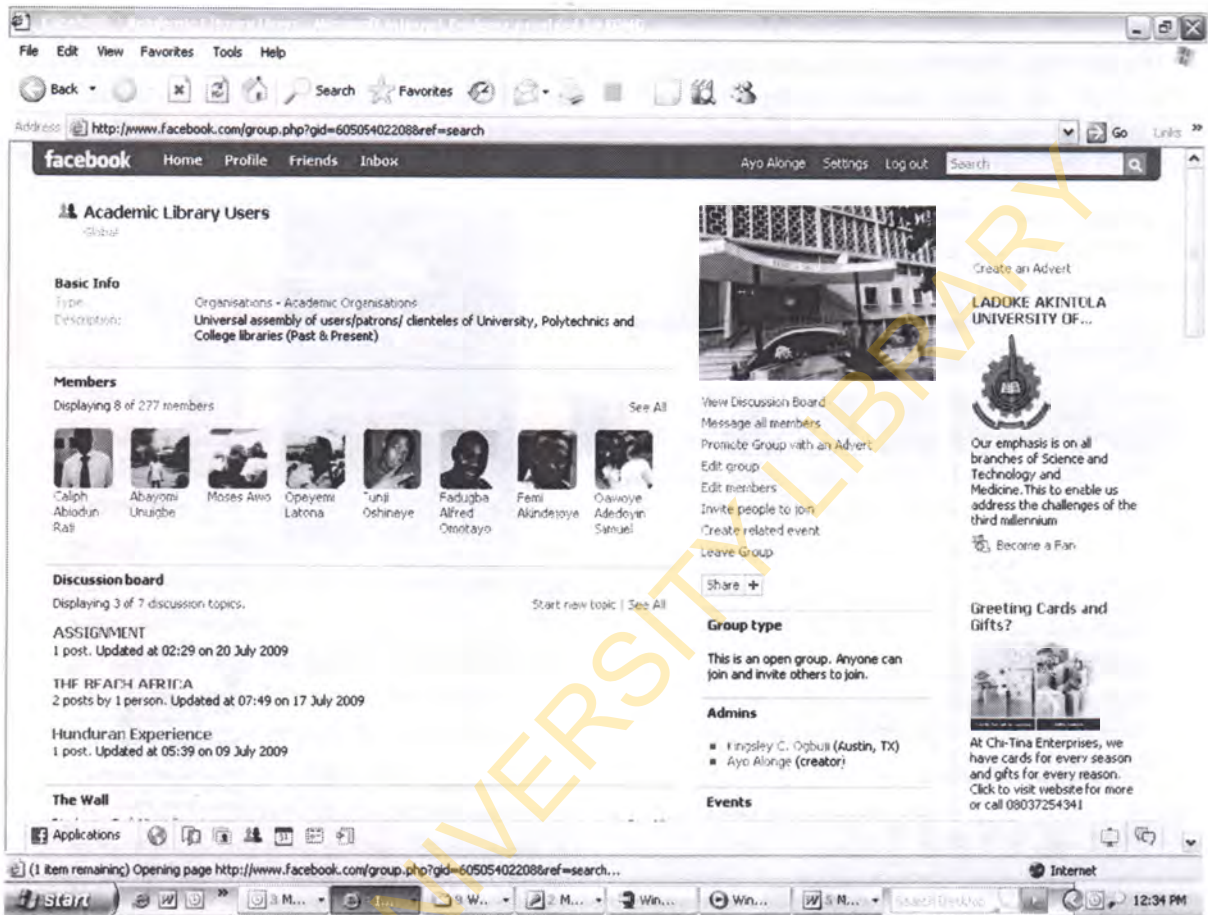
- **Kingsley C. Ogbuji** (Texas): Kingsley lives in Texas, United States. A graduate of Library and Information studies, University of Ibadan. He is one of the moderators.
- **Lorie Layugan** (Philippines): LORIE is a scholar from Baguio, Philippines. She is lover of book. She is a committed user of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

## 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;
- 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;



Figure 3. Academic library users page



Members freely discuss problems, concerns, expectations, issues pertaining to Library and information centres on the Group Walls.

### Nigerian Librarian

Figure 4 shows a forum of Nigerian Librarian on Facebook Nigerian Librarian (forum of Nigerian Librarians on Facebook) has 57 active members in July, 2009. Presently it has 106 members (23 June, 2010). 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. AND CLASS ONLINE FORUM

- **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.

### BASIC SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTE

Many are afraid involving into social media such as blogs, Facebook, and other social networks, and microblogging services like Twitter for the fear of privacy being temper.

Here are some basic decorum:



Figure 4. Nigerian librarian page

The screenshot shows a Facebook page for the 'Nigerian Librarians' group. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with 'Home', 'Profile', 'Friends', and 'Inbox'. The group's name 'Nigerian Librarians' is prominently displayed at the top left. Below this, there is a 'Basic Info' section with details such as 'Type: Organisations - Professional Organisations' and 'Description: Forum of Nigerian Information and Library Professionals on Facebook'. A 'Contact Details' section provides the website 'http://www.nla-ng.org/'. A row of member profile pictures is shown below. The 'Discussion board' section lists three topics: 'NLA 2009 GENERAL ELECTIONS' (5 posts), '47th National Conference/ Annual General meeting' (2 posts), and 'Training Bulletin - May 2009' (1 post). On the right side, there is a featured post for 'CRACK YA RIBS- JULIUS D'GENIUS...' and an advertisement for 'Online MBA from Nigeria'.

- **Don't share secrets.** Be careful not to disclose sensitive or proprietary information, including financial details or any other internal matter. Disclosing private information about specific patrons, coworkers, or any other person affiliated with the library is also a violation.
- **Be yourself.** If you're posting about matters related to your employer, be candid about who you are and who you work for. Although some bloggers post anonymously, it's recommended that you use your real name on social media sites and are up front about your professional role.
- **Respect copyright.** Understanding copyright and fair use laws with regard to publishing protected content and referencing sources is your responsibility. It's customary in the blogosphere to cite sources by linking to them within blog posts, and it's recommended that you do so.
- **Respect the Community.** This might be the most important rule of social media etiquette. Show respect to the community. It's not that hard to do. Just make sure you don't step out of line, and always treat everyone the way you want to be treated. These are simple social skills you should already be following in real life; now, you just have to follow them online too.
- **Respect your colleagues/Clientele.** Consider the privacy of your coworkers and



library users and avoid posting photos, videos, or internal conversations without their permission.

- **Listen to Others.** Your first reaction whenever someone disagrees with you online is probably to tell them how wrong they are. Instead of constantly fighting back, take the time to listen to what they're really saying. Listen to the people commenting on your blog or Tweeting at you. Understand where they're coming from. You don't know everything, and you can learn from others if you take the time to listen.
- **Avoid online fights.** If you have a difference of opinion with someone online or wish to post about a controversial matter, please take care to do so in a professional manner. Voice your opinion, but don't use social media for personal attacks or inflammatory arguments, and remember that what you post is not private and may impact the organization.
- **Post accurate information.** You are responsible for checking the accuracy of the information you post online. Be diligent in your research to ensure that your posts are factually correct and, if possible, provide supporting sources.
- **Add Value to the Site-** At the end of the day, the thing that will earn you great connections with others is if you add value to the community. This means not submitting content that nobody cares about and not constantly promoting your brand. Before you ever submit anything to a social media site, ask yourself "Does this article really add value to the community?" If not, reconsider submitting it.
- **Use a disclaimer.** Include a disclaimer on your personal blog and other social sites in which you state that your opinions are yours alone and not your employer's. An example: "The opinions expressed on this Web site are my own and do not necessarily represent those of [insert organizational name]."
- **Consult the employee manual.** Be aware that all existing policies and employee behavior guidelines extend to the online arena as well as the workplace.
- **Use good judgment.** Think about the type of image that you want to convey on behalf of the organization when you're posting to social networks and social media sites. Remember that what you post will be viewed and archived permanently online once you hit the "publish" button. On sites where you publicize your professional affiliation, make sure that your profile adheres to established criteria, especially if you're a new hire.
- **Provide value.** Think about what you have to offer the community, whether it's thoughtful, relevant blog posts, newsy tweets, or homework help, and focus on providing that consistently. Look for opportunities on these social sites to offer recommendations or services to engage patrons and provide value to your community.
- **Accept responsibility.** If you're wrong about something, admit it and move on. It's not the end of the world to have made a mistake, and in the long run it's better to be honest about it and apologize than to deny it or cover it up.

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