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Adetola Akanbiemu  
adetola22@gmail.com

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# Promoting A Policy For Social Media Use In Nigeria

Adetola A. Akanbiemu

National Open University of Nigeria

## Abstract

*The paper discusses the development and promotion of social media policy in academic libraries in Nigeria. Academic libraries are charged with the responsibility of supporting their parent organisation in achieving the institutional objectives which involve providing support for research and educational activities. Having such crucial roles to carry out, the use of social media has become a helpful tool in the delivery of services to users. Social Media has provided new opportunities for libraries and librarians in the world. In academic libraries, they are used as a powerful tool for communication by providing an excellent platform for an active and knowledge network community that individuals can exchange and share their valuable information. Nowadays, many libraries are aware of the importance and application of these social media tools in their libraries and as it is being used in many libraries in the world. Despite this use, there are still some concerns in terms of its misuse, for example, issues of privacy, loss of an authoritative perspective, information overload and work/life balance in academic libraries. Lack of privacy and identity theft, Confidentiality of information, Lack of knowledge on how to use it and Low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media can also be other forms of negative issues. This paper, therefore, proposes a policy for social media use in academic libraries that will respond to the criticism and negative issues that will reflect the institution's goals, missions, and objectives.*

**Keywords:** social media, policy, social media policy, academic libraries

## Introduction

Academic libraries are charged with the responsibility of supporting their parent organisation in achieving the institutional objectives, which involve providing support for research and educational activities. Their involvement further involves content development, acquisition, technical services, providing institutional repositories, inter-library loans, and document delivery services etc. Some academic libraries establish writing centres and centres for information literacy too (Kumar, 2014). Yusuf and Iwu (2010) further added that a well-stocked academic library is a storehouse of information or a record of human experience to which users may turn data into information. This, therefore, implies that academic libraries have important roles and responsibilities in every institution in providing services to users and information in all formats. Having such crucial roles to carry out, the use of social media has become a helpful tool in the delivery of services to users.

Social Media has provided new opportunities for libraries and librarians in the world. In academic libraries, they are used as a powerful tool for communication by providing an excellent platform for an active and knowledge network community that individuals can

exchange and share their valuable information. Nowadays, many libraries are aware of the importance and application of these tools in their libraries and as it can be seen in many libraries in the world by exchanging information between students, faculty members, and the librarians themselves. (Anari, Asemi, Asemi & Bakar, 2013). Recently, Social media has recorded many successes in its integration. Its abilities to market library services remain relevant and have achieved a new level of interaction between libraries and users (Collins and Quan-HaAse, 2012).

Amidst all successes, Andrew Keen (2007) and Nicholas Carr (2010) critiqued the ubiquitous use of social media and stated some of its concerns as the growth of technology, privacy, loss of an authoritative perspective, information overload and work/life balance in academic libraries. Lack of privacy and identity theft, Confidentiality of information, lack of knowledge of how to use it and Low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media can also be other forms of negative issues (Kumar, 2015). This criticism and negative issues may be valid in some cases but not necessarily in all, it is important to respond to these criticisms by promoting a policy for social media use that will reflect the institution's goals, missions, and objectives.

The objective of this paper is to promote a policy for social media use for academic libraries in Nigeria. For this reason, this paper would look at the concept of social media; social media use among academic libraries in Nigeria, social media policy in academic libraries in Nigeria, policy implication for academic libraries, conclusion and recommendations will be made.

## **Concept of social media**

Obar and Wildman (2015) define social media as computer-mediated technologies that allow the creating and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. In this same light, Cohen (2017) also defined Social Media as the platforms that enable the interactive web by engaging users to participate in commenting and creating content as means of communicating with their social graph, other users and the public. He further explains the characteristics of Social media as encompassing a wide variety of content formats including text, video, photographs, audio, PDF and PowerPoint, allowing interactions to cross one or more platforms through social sharing, email and feeds, facilitating enhanced speed and breadth of information dissemination. Social media also provides for one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many

communications and extends engagement by creating real-time online events, extending online interactions offline, or augmenting live events online. More broadly, **Grahl (2017) categorises social media into six (6);**

**1. Social Networks**

Services that allow you to connect with other people of similar interests and backgrounds. Usually, they consist of a profile, various ways to interact with other users, the ability to set up groups, etc. The most popular are Facebook and LinkedIn.

**2. Bookmarking Sites**

Services that allow you to save organise and manage links to various websites and resources around the internet. Most allow you to "tag" your links to make them easy to search and share. The most popular are Delicious and StumbleUpon.

**3. Social News**

Services that allow people to post various news items or links to outside articles and then allows their users to "vote" on the items. Voting is the core social aspect as the items that get the most votes are displayed the most prominently. The community decides which news items get seen by more people. The most popular are Digg and Reddit.

**4. Media Sharing**

Services that allow you to upload and share various media such as pictures and videos. Most services have additional social features such as profiles, commenting, etc. The most popular are YouTube and Flickr.

**5. Microblogging**

Services that focus on short updates are pushed out to anyone subscribed to receive the updates. The most popular is Twitter.

**6. Blog Comments and Forums**

Online forums allow members to hold conversations by posting messages. Blog comments are similar except they are attached to blogs and usually the discussion centres around the topic of the blog post. There are many popular blogs and forums.

These are the 6 different types of social media broadly categorised, there can be overlapping among the various services. For instance, Facebook has microblogging features with its "status update". Also, Flickr and YouTube have comment systems similar to that of blogs. The most well-known social media sites are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, These sites allow you to share photos, videos and

information, organise events, chat, and play online games. However, Christensson (2013) describes social media as popular social networking websites, which include the following:

1. Facebook - an online community that allows individual users to create personal profiles, share photos and videos, and post on each other's profile pages, or "Timelines."
2. Twitter - an Internet service that allows people to publish quick updates and see posts or "tweets" of other users they are following in real-time.
3. LinkedIn - A professional networking website that allows users to create profiles, post resumes, and communicate with other professionals and job-seekers.
4. Pinterest - an online community that allows users to share ideas and photos with others by "pinning" items and describing them on their profile pages.

### **Policy for Social Media Use for Academic Libraries in Nigeria**

The use of social media involves the use of the internet to connect users with their friends, family, work colleagues and acquaintances. Its use may not necessarily be about meeting new people online, although this happens, instead, are not necessarily about meeting new people online, although this does happen. Instead, they are primarily about connecting with friends, family and acquaintances you already have in real life.

“A policy is very much like a decision or a set of decisions, and we "make", "implement" or "carry out" a policy just as we do with decisions”. (Sandford, 1987 p.15). A policy is not itself a statement, nor is it only a set of actions, though it comes with a decision, we can infer what an institution or libraries policy is either from the statement made about it or, we don't believe his statement from the way he acts. The term policy is used in many different ways, varying from institution to institution, and libraries to libraries and sometimes within institutions and libraries as well. In all, there are some central features common to all good policy:

- it states matters of principle
- it is focused on action, stating what is to be done and by whom
- It is an authoritative statement, made by a person or body with the power to do so.

Above all, good policy is a tool that makes administration easier and allows people to get on with the organisation's core business more efficiently and effectively (university of Sydney, 2016)

Techtarget (2017) on the other hand defined a social media policy (also called a social networking policy) “as a corporate code of conduct that provides guidelines for employees who post content on the Internet either as part of their job or as a private person”. Storey (2011) expresses her opinion about the purpose of a policy which is to provide detailed information about how a company is approaching the use of social media. She further mentioned that a social media policy should outline in detail confidential information for academic libraries arguing that social media guidelines may just state “don’t post confidential information online”.

The purpose of a social media policy in academic libraries is two-fold. Firstly it is a source document for educating libraries and librarians on using social media in the particular work environment in which they are employed. Secondly, it is to protect the library from uninformed (and often unintended) misuse of social media to the detriment of the library. Beese (2015) and Rouse (2017) agreed to this by stating that the goal of a social media policy should set expectations for appropriate behaviour and ensure that libraries’ posts will not expose the institution to legal problems or public embarrassment. Such policies include directives for when an employee should identify himself as a representative of the company on a social networking website, as well as rules for what types of information can be shared. Almost all social media policies include restrictions on disclosing confidential or proprietary business secrets or anything that could influence stock prices.

Mashable (2017) explained that in developing a social media policy, some tips will be useful to avoid pitfalls and allow librarians to focus on what’s important in engaging their users. They include the need to introduce the purpose of social media, be responsible for what they write, be authentic, consider their audience, exercise good judgement in responding to comments, understand the concept of community, respect copyright and fair use, remember to protect the confidentiality and proprietary information, bring value and know that productivity matters. Navarro (2016) emphasized that a robust social media policy should answer some basic questions. Questions like who has the right to post? Who can create a library social media account? What can we write about? How will we protect patron privacy? Who has oversight in an emergency? What permission do you need for photographs? Most importantly, how do you write a policy that doesn’t choke experimentation and innovation?

Wakeling(2017) added that in developing social media policy in academic libraries, some key points should be considered, they include;

- **Work out a policy:** An employer should set out in writing what it regards as acceptable behaviour in the use of social media at libraries and what is unacceptable. It should also give clear guidelines for libraries on what they can and cannot say about the organisation.
- **Draw a line between private and work lives:** An employer should be clear throughout its policy in making a distinction between business and private use of social media. If it allows limited private use in the workplace, or in any way connected with the organisation, it should be clear what this means in practice.
- **Be ready to adapt:** A policy can have many benefits, but an employer should make sure it is written in a way that can accommodate alterations so it keeps pace with the continuing evolution of social media.

He further explained that the policies should include advantages and benefits of such policies include helping the employer to protect themselves against liability for the action of its workers and also helps line managers to manage performance effectively. University libraries in the diaspora like Washington state university, Mary Baldwin College(2015) in their social media policy indicates when librarians' posts on behalf of the university, the following should be considered;

- **Privacy:** Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. If you wouldn't say it at a conference or to a member of the media, do not post it online.
- **Be Accurate:** Verify content before posting on a social media site. Check for spelling and grammatical errors.
- **Be Respectful:** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Encourage open dialogue and diverse viewpoints. Respond to each comment with respect and understanding. Discussion of opposing viewpoints is encouraged, but do not engage in online confrontation.
- **Know your Audience:** Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes prospective students, current students, current employers and colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups.

- **Personal Sites:** Identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a WSU faculty or staff member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution.
- **Allow Comments:** Even the negative ones. A good philosophy for comments is to encourage thoughtful discussion, debate and differing viewpoints, with the understanding that all comments made must be civil, respectful, and appropriate for your audience. If comments are lewd, libellous, incite violence or are otherwise hurtful or hateful speech directed at either individuals or groups, WSU library employees who serve as account administrators reserve the right to delete such comments.
- **Be Aware of Liability:** You are responsible for what you post on your site and the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be a copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libellous, or obscene (as defined by the courts). Increasingly, employers are conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

However, in Nigeria, The Bureau of Public Enterprises says it plans to roll out policies and the legal framework for the regulation of the use of social media in Nigeria. Director-General of the privatisation agency, Mr Benjamin Dikki frowned on the unregulated posting of what he called offensive materials on the various social networking sites(Anu, 2015). At the 2017 social media week, Nnachi(2017) reported that Federal Government has concluded plans to come up with Digital Engagement Policy that would hold citizens accountable and then guide the government on the best approach to relating with the population digitally. He added that the Special Adviser to the President on Digital Media, Tolu Ogunlesi, disclosed this at the 2017 Social Media Week (SMW) that took place at the Landmark Centre, Victoria Island, and Lagos. At the event, Nigerians were warned of the contents they dish out on the internet because such are capable of further ruining the image of the country at home and abroad. As It was said on the panel, a social media policy will be brought about that will make it mandatory and give guidance on how to go about the way we approach the citizens digitally,” The steps to create a social media policy would only affect the citizen of Nigeria at large but not particularly academic libraries. Unfortunately, there is no academic library in Nigeria that has a social media policy stated in its institutional policy,

unlike her foreign counterparts. This paper will, therefore, propose possible policies that would regulate the use of social media in academic libraries in Nigeria.

In proposing a social media use policy in academic libraries in Nigeria, the social media policy should cover the following :

- **Network security:** To avoid viruses, most organisations will have controls on the downloading of software. Technical security features, such as firewalls, will usually be managed by the IT department.
- **Acceptable behaviour** and use of:
  - **Internet and emails:** If personal use is allowed, state the boundaries.
  - **Smartphones and hand-held computers:** Employers need to regularly review and update their policies to cover the new and evolving ways for accessing social media, and to reflect changing employee behaviour and attitudes about their use.
  - **Social networking sites:** Remind employees to regularly check the privacy settings on their social networking profiles, as they can change. Also, research has shown that the majority of employees would alter what they have written on their social networking profiles if they thought their employer could read them. Further, an employer should cross-reference its social media policy to its bullying and harassment policy.
  - **Blogging and tweeting:** If an employee is representing the company online, set appropriate rules for what information they may disclose and the range of opinions they may express. Bring to their attention relevant legislation on copyright and public interest disclosure.
- **Data protection and monitoring:** An employer should try to find alternatives to checking staff use of social media if it can. It needs to justify the use of monitoring, showing that the benefits outweigh any possible adverse impact. An employer should consult with employee representatives or a recognised trade union.
- **Business objectives:** As well as setting clear rules on behaviour, many employers are integrating the use of social media tools into their business strategy. Social networking can be used internally to encourage employee engagement with the organisation, and externally to help promote the organisation's brand and reputation.

- **Disciplinary procedures:** An employer should try to apply the same standards of conduct in online matters as it would in offline issues. To help an organisation respond reasonably, the employer should consider the nature of the comments made and their likely impact on the organisation. It would help if the employer gives examples of what might be classed as defamation and the penalties it would impose. Further, the employer should be clear in outlining what is regarded as confidential in the organisation.
- **The organisation's intellectual property:** This is a material that is the result of creativity in the organisation - for example, the company logo and brands, a song, copyrights, an invention, patents, designs etc. The employer should clearly outline what constitutes its intellectual property.

Kroski(2009) believes some specific points might be considered in libraries social media policy, they include:

- **Use a disclaimer.** Include a disclaimer on your 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]."
- **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 whom you work for. Although some bloggers post anonymously, it's recommended that you use your real name on social media sites and are upfront about your professional role.
- **Respect copyright.** Understanding copyright and fair use laws concerning republishing protected content and referencing sources are 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 your colleagues.** Consider the privacy of your coworkers and avoid posting photos, videos, or internal conversations without their permission.

- **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.
- **Consult the employee manual.** Be aware that all existing policies and employee behaviour 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.

Mary Baldwin College, Alvernia University and a lot of universities in America share and use the same social media policy and in their social media policy, they consider the following as best practices in a social media policy especially to those posting on behalf of a university department, for example, a library, though the guidelines may be helpful for anyone posting on social media in any capacity. Consistent with the University's mission statement, the user should think about the ethics and responsibility associated with posting content online or within a social network.

- **Think twice before posting:** Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. Be aware that a presence in social media is or easily can be made available to the public

at large. This includes prospective students, current students, current employers, colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups. If you are unsure about posting something or responding to a comment, ask your supervisor for input.

- **Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. If you are unsure about institutional facts do not post them until you have confirmed them by contacting the Marketing and Communications Department.
- **Be respectful:** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the poster and/or the university and its institutional mission. Social media should never be used in a way that defames or disparages Alvernia or its stakeholders.
  - **Photography:** Visitors can easily appropriate photographs posted on social media sites. Consider adding a watermark and/or posting images at 72 dpi and approximately 800x600 resolution to protect your intellectual property. Images at that size are sufficient for viewing on the Web, but not suitable for printing. Remember that copying and pasting images is against copyright laws and apply online as well as in print. If you have questions regarding the usage or purchase of the university's images. Libraries also create policies to guide users in the proper use of the institutions' Web pages. These guidelines include informing users that their comments and other posts will be reviewed before they are made public and that by posting to the site, the user agrees to indemnify the library against all liabilities that may arise from user-created content. Some libraries reserve the right to edit or modify comments as well as reproduce those comments and messages in other public venues. The Whitman Public Library's Social Networking Policy is an excellent example of this type of document.

## **Conclusion and recommendation**

In addition to establishing and integrating a social media policy, librarian training or orientation sessions regarding the use of social media should be organised. This training would educate librarians about privacy issues and the type of things they should post and shouldn't post online. Part of the policies may also include placing one person in charge of each social media app. This will make the designated librarian responsible for the use of

social media for the library. This part of the policy is being practised in some libraries in Nigeria, unfortunately, it is not in a written document but it is being practised. Finally, a social media policy doesn't have to belong or read like a tyrannical list of rules. But a few guidelines can go a long way toward helping people use social media wisely.

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