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Nancy Chinenyenwa Akagha Mrs

Federal University of Technology, Owerri, nana4chienen1@gmail.com

Samuel Kelechukwu Ibenne Dr

Abia State University, Uturu, samuelibenne@gmail.com

Ifeyinwa Blessing Okoye Dr

Federal University of Technology, Owerri, ifeyinwa.okoye@futo.edu.ng

Ogechi Iheanacho-Kelechi Mrs

Federal University of Technology, Owerri, nancyureal@yahoo.com

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SOCIAL MEDIA: ACCESS TO REFERENCE SERVICES BY STUDENTS IN A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

Nancy C. Akagha
University Library, Federal University of Technology, Owerri
nana4chienyen1@gmail.com

Samuel Kelechukwu Ibenne
Department of Library and Information Science
Abia State University, Uturu

Ifeyinwa Blessing Okoye
University Library, Federal University of Technology, Owerri
Ifeyinwa.okoye@futo.edu.ng

Ogechi Iheanacho-Kelechi
University Library, Federal University of Technology, Owerri

ABSTRACT

The general purpose of the study was to ascertain the use of social media by students to access reference services at the Federal University of Technology Library, Owerri. The survey research design was used for the study using questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The research adopted both the proportionate/stratified and simple random sampling techniques to investigate a sample of 288 students in Federal University of Technology Library, Owerri. Self-constructed and validated questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was used to collect data for the study. Four research questions and one hypothesis were framed for the study. The hypothesis was tested using chi-square (χ^2) statistical analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings show that there are core different types of social media platform in reference services available to the students in Federal University of Technology Library, Owerri; students use social media to retrieve information and conduct research. The hypothesis tested shows that there is no significant difference between the challenges experienced by students in accessing reference services to that encountered by other students in Nigeria university libraries. The study recommends that more contents should be made available on these social media platforms, in order to meet the information needs of the library users. The study also recommend that both the library staff and library users should be made aware of the social media platforms.

Keywords: social media, reference services, library, new technologies, students.

Introduction

“Todays” world technology has revolutionized the way people work, think, acquire, share, retrieve and store information, which invariably has influenced human contacts and interactions

while expressing views and ideas. In the quest to satisfy one's curiosity on various aspects of life, be it education, economy, religion, health, inventions, research, learning and teaching, life has possibly gone beyond what has already been existing, to be able to add value in the Information world in this 21st century.

The deployment of social media as a form of technology in the areas of need especially in information professional enclave was because of challenges recorded over time, in the bid to share, transfer, transmit and even store information. Most importantly the continues distortion of facts, figures, pictures and videos in the manual dissemination of information was becoming the order of the day before the 21st century, most times it can get lost on transit, mutilated and damaged on the way. Hence, all these necessitated the emergence of social media, in spite of editing and cropping of some vital information from unscrupulous individuals in the name of negative hacking, its importance cannot be over emphasized as it helps in alleviating some of the problems being encountered in information sharing, storage and dissemination. Sharing of information materials in form of pictures, audio and videos has done a great deal to the benefit of Library profession as it has been able to add value and respect to library in general. Some of the tools of social media are blog, facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, whatsapp, telegram, carriercloud, carrierbuilde, monster and scholarly social media platforms which include ResearchGate and Academia.edu, to network, voice opinions, and journal articles. Notably, social media cannot thrive on its own, it requires some enablers such as computers of any kind, phone but selective because some cannot properly share information to all phones, efficient internet and of course human beings the librarians. Social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content; and it also makes face-to-face interaction easy and simple, more so, it is basically computer based service and not manual, (Akagha, 2021). Apart from that, it has the ability to widely access electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access and collaborate information on a common effort to build relationships (Murthy 2013). The use of social media gives one opportunity to express ideas, ask questions, criticizes and make decisions on any area of interest. Given the position of Librarian in any Library, it then means that he/she should be knowledgeable enough to be abreast of any new trend on how to share, disseminate and store information at any time. More so, the reference librarian is one that takes and gives any question that comes to the Library, given the services and operations of the Library. The reference service of the Library is

poised to provide and share accurate information as at when do, and often times expected to make sacrifices to ensure that quality services are properly rendered to the right users and in a right format. The use of social media equally offer user friendly opportunity in some university libraries. In some Library parlance, the use of social media gives up-to-date information of the resources, services and operations of the Library for example conferences, seminars and even all the resources emanated within the University.

According to Tiryakioglu and Erzurum (2011) social media allows people to express themselves through discussions, asking of questions and criticize decisions of group, with a common goal that binds them together. This is the beauty and the strength of social media because its opportunity to contribute and give information on the areas of interest.

The adoption of social media into the operation of the reference services of the Library is of very important, given the time of information super high-way we found ourselves, there is then need to inject it, into the operations and services of the Library to assist students and other faculty members in support of their learning, teaching and research. No wonder Witte (2014) sees it as the voice of a librarian within the institution which must be applied and deployed in the routine activities of the Library.

The role of academic libraries play, is beyond what one sees with a physical eye, hence carrying prints materials from one location to another, as it sets to work within 24hours a day in the bid to share and disseminate needed information to its patrons, even in their comfort zone electronically through social media. The fulcrum of the Library that is situated in the higher institution is to support teaching, learning and research and to offer research and knowledge exchange activities that underpin the mission of their parent institutions. Moran & Leonard (2009), confirms that libraries are crucial to the operation of tertiary institutions and in the quest for excellence.

University libraries today are creating a sense of outreach and advocacy to provide an inviting environment and establish connections with communities in a bid to share desired content and to achieve this, they are increasingly engaging in social media (Harrison, Burrell, Velasquez and Schreiner, 2017).

In spite all the foregoing, the use of social media in the deployment of effective and excellent services, the librarians on whose shoulder lies the full operation using social media must be competent enough on the various skills used in the management and operation for quality

service delivery. Equally the students and other faculty member of the University have to be informed and have the required skill equally for the free flow of information resources. Training and orientation programmes to access information on social media platform of the library should be organized from time to time for proper application. Through occasional training the duo will have the privilege to advance in skill and knowledge in the use social media. For advancement in technological skill, reference services and digital environment there dare need to change and acquire training (Rodwell 2001).

Due to the overwhelming success of internet services, some University libraries have been able to introduce virtual services that make use of new technologies like social media in reference services. This recognition and usage of social media in reference services in the university libraries has immensely increased, despite enormous challenges. Hence, the need for libraries to adequately adopt and deploy social media platforms in their services as a way of ensuring excellent service delivery is no longer in doubt.

In the view of the foregoing, this research is aimed at investigating the use of social media by students to access reference services at the Library of Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), Imo State - a way to contribute towards implementation responsive user focused library services.

Research questions

- i. What are the types of social media tools used by FUTO library for the delivery of reference services?
- ii. What are the types of reference services rendered in FUTO Library?
- iii. What are the problems encountered in the use of social media tools in the reference services at the library?
- iv. What are the possible solutions to the identified problems?

Literature review

Since its birth as a Web 2.0 innovation in the early 2000s, social media have opened new challenges and opportunities for both the private lives of individuals and the business activities of organizations, drawing interest on their benefits and applications from researchers and industrialists alike (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). The power of social media cannot be underestimated

and is expected to continue to revolutionize personal and organizational communications and interactions worldwide.

Henderson & Bowley (2010), social media is collaborative online applications and technologies that enable participation, connectivity user-generated content, sharing of information, and collaboration amongst a community of users. Asad, Mamun and Clement (2012) state that social media tools facilitates the exchange of assignments, resources and discussions on academic work and other issues on social networks among students. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre (2011) contend that 'social media introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between individuals communities, and organizations.

In addition, social media play a key role in promoting democratic participation and generating well informed pluralist society. Much of the hope pinned on social media stems from their potential use for political change purposes. Via social media platforms it has become possible for citizens to address and discuss a diverse range of public affairs and to self-propel 'public will mobilization' (Salmon, Fernandez & Post, 2010) against their governments at relatively low transaction costs. Today's audiences are aware that they have the power in their own hands to organize on behalf of political candidates and causes (Kaplan & Blakley, 2009). This has been instrumental in shaping and catalyzing social changes driven by democratic participation in public sphere. It is about what Jakubowicz (2007) describes as, the 'appearance of alternative and opposition public spheres.' This unprecedented decentralization of information and communication brought by social media has empowered citizens and enabled marginalized people to express themselves by utilizing independent channels to voice their opinions and take part directly or indirectly in social changes.

Reference services fulfill a unique function. A reference services is where patrons receive direct assistance from a librarian in the library. Since the world/environment is changing, libraries equally try to provide a reference service that suits the environment through social media services like telephone, email, text, chat etc. According to Egbukole, (2017), reference services refer to the provision of information to people entering a library and requesting assistance from the library staff or in short personal assistance provided to library users seeking for information, and is a platform for interaction between the clientele and library personnel which determines the future patronage of the library. Quality library services including reference services, are important

because today's library users live in a highly interactive and networked world which already largely provides for their information needs (Kibugi, 2013).

University libraries are using social media to deliver library resources and services and if libraries take care to respect privacy and provide equal coverage for all subject areas, social networking can be an effective method of student outreach (Dickson & Holley, 2010; Collins & Quan-Haase, 2013). University libraries today are creating a sense of outreach and advocacy to provide an inviting environment and establish connections with communities in a bid to share desired content and to achieve this, they are increasingly engaging in social media (Harrison, Burrell, Velasquez & Schreiner, 2017).

There are different types of social media available today and many of them are used in university libraries to provide resources and services and also achieve closer librarian/user partnership. Some of the social media available are Facebook, Blog, Twitter, WhatsApp, Flickr, LinkedIn, YouTube, TeacherTube, Footnote, Community Walk, SlideShare, MySpace, Microblogging, Wikipedia, Ning, Meebo, Second Life, PBwiki, Wikis, Mash Up, Digg, Delicious, Picasa amongst others (Akporhonor & Olise, 2015; Kumar, 2015).

Methodology

The data analysis method used is the descriptive statistical analysis such as percentages, mean values and frequency distribution tables. Chi-square was used in the analysis of the hypothesis.

Research Question 1: What are the types of social media tools used by FUTO library for the delivery of reference services?

Table 1: Social Media tools used by FUTO Library to Render Reference Services.

Item	Responses	
	N	Percent
Facebook	170	23.0%
Blog	124	16.8%
Twitter	78	10.6%
WhatsApp	63	8.5%
Flickr	7	0.9%
Pinterest	8	1.1%
Library Thing	51	6.9%
Researchgate	98	13.3%

Academia.edu	81	11.0%
Linkdin	58	7.9%
Total	738	100.0%

Table 1 shows the multiple responses analyses of the respondents awareness of the social media tools used by FUTO library, the table revealed that 170(23.0%) of the total respondents which formed 82.9% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Facebook as a means of rendering reference services. 124(16.8%) of the total respondents which formed 60.5% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Blog as a means of rendering reference services.

78(10.6%) of the total respondents which formed 38.0% of the total responses were aware that, FUTO library makes use of Twitter as a means of rendering reference services. 63(8.5%) of the total respondents which formed 30.7% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of WhatsApp as a means of rendering reference services. 7(0.9%) of the total respondents which formed 3.4% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Flickr as a means of rendering reference services. 8(1.1%) of the total respondents which formed 3.9% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Pinterest as a means of rendering reference services. 51(6.9%) of the total respondents which formed 24.9 % of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Library Thing as a means of rendering reference services. 98(13.3%) of the total respondents which formed 47.8% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Researchgate as a means of rendering reference services. 81(11.0%) of the total respondents which formed 39.5% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Academia.edu as a means of rendering reference services while 58(7.9%) of the total respondents which formed 28.3% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library makes use of Linkdin as a means of rendering reference services.

Table 2:What are the types of Reference Services in FUTO Library

Item	Responses	
	N	Percent
Search Services	142	19.1%
Online public Access catalogue	167	22.5%
Subject guide	72	9.7%
library news	79	10.6%
E-resource dissemination	141	19.0%
Circulation Services	65	8.8%
Translation Services	28	3.8%

Reformatting of materials	48	6.5%
Total	742	100.0%

Table 2 shows the multiple responses analyses of the type of reference services respondents are aware of that FUTO utilizes. The table revealed that 142(19.1%) of the total respondents which formed 66.7% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library utilizes search services as one of their types of reference services. 167(22.5%) of the total respondents which formed 78.4% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library utilizes Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) as one of their types of reference services. 72(9.7%) of the total respondents which formed 33.8% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library utilizes subject guide as one of their types of reference services. 79(10.6%) of the total respondents which formed 37.1% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library utilizes library news as one of their types of reference services. 141(19.0%) of the total respondents which formed 66.2% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library utilizes E-resource dissemination as one of their types of reference services. 65(8.8%) of the total respondents which formed 30.5% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library utilizes Translation services as one of their types of reference services while 48(6.5%) of the total respondents which formed 22.5% of the total responses were aware that FUTO library utilizes Reformatting of materials as one of their types of reference services. The table therefore revealed that more than 60% of the respondents were aware of the OPAC, search services and e-resource dissemination reference services.

Research Question 3: What are the problems encountered in the use of social media tools in the reference services at the library?

Table 3: Challenges of Social Media Use in Reference Services

Item	SA	%	A	%	% Agreed	D	%	SD	%	% Disagreed	Mean	SD+	Total
Insufficient content in the resources	72	32.3	109	48.9	81.2	33	14.8	9	4.0	18.8	3.09	43.98	Accepted
Lack of competent staff	72	32.3	92	41.3	73.5	51	22.9	8	3.6	26.5	3.02	35.97	Accepted
Low bandwidth	60	26.9	110	49.3	76.2	49	22.0	4	1.8	23.8	3.01	43.53	Accepted
Issues related to trust and security in resources use	72	32.3	96	43.0	75.3	52	23.3	3	1.3	24.7	3.06	39.50	Accepted
Epileptic power supply	71	31.8	113	50.7	82.5	34	15.2	5	2.2	17.5	3.12	46.76	Accepted
Staff reluctance to adopt new technology in service delivery	58	26.0	94	42.2	68.2	65	29.1	6	2.7	31.8	2.91	36.65	Accepted
Digital right management	58	26.0	111	49.8	75.8	51	22.9	3	1.3	24.2	3.00	44.21	Accepted
Some digital content can only be accessed on certain devices	68	30.5	101	45.3	75.8	51	22.9	3	1.3	24.2	3.05	40.84	Accepted
Lack of staff awareness and use	67	30.0	118	52.9	83.0	30	13.5	8	3.6	17.0	3.09	48.11	Accepted
Policy structure	64	28.7	74	33.2	61.9	82	36.8	3	1.3	38.1	2.89	35.93	Accepted
Pooled Mean											3.03		

mean<2.5 = reject ; mean>2.5 = accept

Table 3 shows the various challenges encountered by the respondents in the use of social media for reference services. The table reveals that 181(81.2%) of the respondents are affirmative that Insufficient content in the resources is one of the challenges they encounter while using the social media while 42(18.8%) were of the negative opinion this gave a mean score value of 3.09±43.98. When asked if the staff manning the social media platforms are competent enough 164(73.5%) of the respondents indicated that most of the staff are incompetent while 59(26.5%) indicated that they are competent, this gave a mean score value of 3.02±35.97. When it comes to bandwidth, majority 170(76.2%) of the respondents pointed out low bandwidth as one of the challenges of utilizing the social media for reference services while 53(23.8%) were of the negative opinion, this gave a mean score value of 3.01±43.53. 168(75.3%) of the respondents pointed out that issues related to trust and security in resources use was a form challenge for them in utilizing the social media whereas 55(24.7%) did not see it as an issue, this resulted to a mean score value of 3.06±39.50.

Epileptic power supply was pointed out by majority 184(82.5%) of the users as a major challenge while 39(17.5%) didn't see it as a major challenge this resulted to a mean score value of

3.12±46.76. When asked if they see staff reluctance to adopt new technology in service delivery as a major challenge, 152(68.2%) of the respondents agreed while 71(31.8%) disagreed this gave a mean score value of 2.91±36.65. On the issue of Digital right management 169(75.8%) agreed that is one of the major challenges they face while 54(24.2%) of the respondents disagreed this gave a mean score value of 3.00±44.21. Majority 169(75.8%) also indicated that another major challenge they face is that some digital content can only be accessed on certain devices while 54(24.2%) disagreed this resulted to a mean score value of 3.05±48.84. Majority 185(83.0%) indicated that lack of staff awareness and use as one of the challenges they face while 38(17.0%) disagreed this gave a mean score value of 3.09±48.11

Policy structure was also seen as a challenge by a significant number 138(61.9%) of the respondents with 85(38.1%) of them in disagreement this gave a mean score value of 2.89±35.93. The table therefore revealed a pooled mean value of 3.03, which is more than 2.5 average value for a 4-point Likert scale, this thus shows that the challenges identified are major hiccups the respondents face in trying to utilize social media to access reference services provided by FUTO library.

Research Question 4: What are the possible solutions to the identified problems?

Some of the problems identified in this research is lack of awareness, librarians reluctance to adopt new technology in service delivery, insufficient content, low bandwidth, epileptic power supply etc.

Based on the above findings FUTO library should enhanced more on the greater awareness of social media services in the university community through dean students affairs, HOD's, lectures timetables, lecture halls and orientation programmes etc, for more visibility of library resources. They should endeavour to increase the bandwidth to ensure efficient usage of social media and to encourage the students to embrace social media reference services for their own betterment of academics. Training/retraining of librarians on the need to embrace new technologies in service delivery continuously and providing 24/7 ready electricity, since librarians are information consultants and knowledge managers they should be more proactive/friendly in their day to day services/information delivery to attract more patronage/usage of the library products.

The essence of library is to satisfy the information needs of its user, the library managers should put more hands on the desk to bring innovative programmes/services in the library to attract and encourage users to marry their library materials. Library empower users to achieve their

academic goals based on this library managers need to draw a plan of action based on capturing the staff and student interest in social media based reference services, considering its benefits in the 21st century services. There should be a lay down rules to mandate people/students to accept or register certain media services before having access to registration to library resources. Good content resources should be posted i.e. relevant to the school curriculum.

Testing of Hypothesis

The hypothesis formulated in chapter one was tested using chi-square analysis.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the use of social media and reference services at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Library.

To ascertain this, the data was subjected to Chi-square (X^2) Analysis of the Relationship between the use of social media and references services at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Library.

Variables	No of items	Cal - X^2	Crt- X^2	df	P-value	Decision
Utilization of social media and Reference services	9	74.001	40.11	64	0.05	5

Table 5

On the application of Chi-Square statistical formula to find out the significant relationship between the use of social media and references services at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Library. The chi-square calculated value at 0.05 level of significance and 18 degree of freedom. Chi-square calculated value of 74.001 was found to be greater than the critical value of 28.87 ($x^2 \text{ cal} = 74.001 \geq x^2 \text{ tab} = 28.87$). This shows that there is a significant relationship between the use of social media and references services at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Library.

Discussion

There is a high level of awareness of social media use among the library users and the majority of the library users were of the affirmative view that social media usage has a significant impact in reference service delivery in FUTO library evidence from Table 2. Some of the positive impacts stated by the respondents is that, it enhances communication among librarians, this is in

agreement with Ritholz, (2010) who opined that librarians can thus send and receive information or carry out policy interaction with persons within the library or with educational organizations outside the library using social media.

Social media improves the library resources and services they receive; social media promotes better information sharing between users and librarians. The result of data analysis showed that social media promotes cooperation and resource sharing networks and helps to keep users of the library up-to-date. Dankowski (2013) in his work reported that the blog is invaluable in New York Public Libraries, where it is used for social content marketing with librarians acting as internal advocates. Social media promotes better information sharing between users and librarians. The librarian will now provide the advanced knowledge and technology to serve even the most demanding information seekers when he is well equipped both in training and services. Chitumbo & Chewe (2015) in their study concluded that social media creates the opportunity for the library to reach a larger audience in order to process, share knowledge and experience. Social media it gives opportunity to provide value added information services, it gives access to a wide variety of digital based information resources and services and cooperation and resources sharing. Librarians should improve more on the awareness/user education services of social media as it promotes patronage of the library resource/services in academic environ students/users.

The essence of library is to satisfy the information needs of its user, the library managers should put more hands on the desk to bring innovative programmes/services in the library to attract and encourage users to “marry” their library materials. Library empower users to achieve their academic goals based on this library managers need to draw a plan of action based on capturing the staff and student interest in social media based reference services, considering its benefits in the 21st century services. There should be laid down rules to mandate students to accept or register certain media services before having access to registration to library resources. Good content resources should be posted i.e. relevant to the school curriculum.

Chai-lee, 2013 & Al-rahimi, Othman & Musa, (2014). Opine that these tools are highly beneficial for students of higher education and modernizes the process of student learning, interaction, collaboration and sharing

Evidence from table 5 shows that there is no significant difference between the challenges experienced by students in accessing reference services to that encountered by librarians in delivering reference services.

Conclusively, based on the result, the researchers drew some conclusions the library managers/management should make rule to mandate students/staffs to accept or register certain media services before having access to registration of library resources this will handle the issue of unawareness and thereby creates more visibility of the library resources. Up-to-date resources should be posted i.e. relevant to the school curriculum. The library managers/management should see to stable and strong network is the bedrock of all social media services and promotional services of the library

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were proposed.

- i. More contents should be made available on social media platforms, in order to meet the information needs of the library users. It will also help to increase users' preference for e-resources.
- ii. Effort should be made to enlighten the students on the references service where they can deploy the use of the social; media.
- iii. The library management should subscribe to wider internet bandwidth to improve the quality of reference services delivered through the social media platforms.
- iv. The university/library management should look into the epileptic power supply in the library and make away foreword by introducing solar system and standby generator in order to give users adequate value to the service delivery.

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