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# ADOPTION OF SOCIAL NETWORKS MEDIA FOR REFERENCE SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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## ADOPTION OF SOCIAL NETWORKS MEDIA FOR REFERENCE SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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*This study was carried out to investigate the adoption of social networks media for reference services in academic libraries. Thus, the study discovered among others, the meaning of social networking media and the types of social networking media tools that can be applied in the reference section by the reference librarian for the provision of reference services in academic libraries. To achieve the objectives of this study, four (4) research questions were formulated. The study pointed out among others, that there are two major types of reference services which are: direct and indirect reference services and they are in use in academic libraries. The study also pointed out some vital Social networks media tools that can be used in the provision of reference services in meeting the needs of library users. It also discovered among others, the facilities such as computer, internet, webcam and cellphones that will enable the application of social networking media for the provision of reference services in academic libraries. The study outlined some problems that hinders the application of social networking media and they are: network bandwidth problem, lack of access to internet, unavailable power supply, lack of staff training and the problem of maintenance culture. The study concluded that the academic libraries especially the reference section should adopt the social media tools in the provision of reference services to library clientele in this era of technological explosion.*

**Key Words: Social Media, Reference Services, Academic Library, Reference Librarian, Social Media Tools.**

There has been invention of new technologies to better the lives of mankind as well as organizations. At first, it was the invention of the printing technology which made it possible to reach several persons in the world. As time goes on, man quest for something new and different led to the invention of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). ICTs are technologies made by man for the purpose of executing activities in organizations for effectiveness and efficiency.

Information and Communication Technologies has been defined by various scholars from different perspectives. In the work of Ogbomo and Ogbomo (2008) citing Anyakoha (1991), information technology is seen as man-made tools used for the collection, generation, communication, recording, re-management and exploitation of information. It includes those applications and commodities, by which information is transferred, recorded, edited, stored, manipulated or disseminated. Afolabi and Abidoye (nd) defined ICT as the use of electronic devices such as computers, telephones, Internet, satellite system to store, retrieve and disseminate information in the form of data, text, image and others.

Kpangban (2010) also defined ICT as electronic technologies that are used for information storage and retrieval. Alberta (2003) stated that ICT is about the new ways in which we can communicate, inquire, make decisions and solve problems. It is a processing tool and techniques for gathering and identifying information; classifying and organizing; summarizing, synthesizing; analyzing and evaluating; speculating and predicting. Ogochukwu and Charles (n.d) pointed out that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the processing, maintenance and integration of information, and the use of all forms of computer, communication, network and mobile technologies to mediate information.

For the purpose of this study, ICT shall be seen as a device that helps in the processing, storing, packaging, retrieving and communicating information to those who have need of them. The Information and Communication Technologies is an immense leap in the field of communication and it has made a tremendous impact all over the world. In line with this therefore, the birth of the Internet which has been an outstanding innovation in the coming of technologies in the history of mankind was brought into existence.

Technological changes have always been seen as a strong evolutionary force but the coming of the Internet is something that has shook almost all spheres of personal, social and professional human life. Right from the mere ways of interaction to the running of huge systems, there has been conveniences provided by the existence of the Internet. A lot of developments have been made in the Internet applications which are beyond our imagination. No one would have imagined that the networking tool that was developed solely for military purpose in U.S in 1969 would become a rich source of knowledge, entertainment, communication and many more. The Internet has been of great importance right from its inception due to the fact that it serves as a medium of connection and communication tool. Internet users all over the world have received tremendous help especially researchers to achieve many things in their various fields of study. Due to this, the World Wide Web was created which made the Internet to see a tremendous growth in the technological sector leading to the development of other tools that are used with the Internet such as the *social networking media* that finally boost the communication process.

### **Social Networking Media**

In recent years there has been a tremendous growth in the utilization of social networking media amongst people mainly for the purpose of communication, recreation, entertainment and acquiring information. This single act was made possible after the creation of the World Wide Web by Timothy Barners Lee in 1989, which made it easy for the Internet facilities to be accessed far and wide in different countries all over the world.

Social networking media is a channel that gives room for interaction or relationship between individuals, two or more people using computer systems such as phones, laptops or desktops with the aid of Internet connection services. In the same vein, Mislove (2009) defined social networking media as a system where (a) users are first class entities with semi-public profile (b)

users can create explicitly links to other users or items and (c) users can navigate the social network by browsing the links and profile of other users. In addition to this, Boyd and Ellison (2007) also asserted that “social networking media is a web based service that allow individual to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and (3) view and traverse their list of connection and those made by others within the system.” The growth in this social networking media such as Myspace, Facebook, Youtube, Fickretc became so popular as a result of the increase in their usage. A social networking media is a huge leap in technological evolution in the world of Internet. The social networking media began to grow and also expanded. That was why Ahmed and Tehmina (2011) opined that the evolution of the social networking media started with Classmates.com which was founded in 1995.

The purpose of its creation was to provide students a means of connection during or after the completion of their degree programme. Recently, social networking media is no longer seen as the only platform for students to connect themselves after the completion of their degree rather it is seen as a source and a means of communication that can be employed into the academic library to perform operations or services. Currently, the activities of the library is no longer limited to its four walls which means, the library is set to reach out to its users wherever they might be. Social networking media is useful because it is a collaborating tool that can help both the librarians and patrons in an active interaction and communication processes.

### **Academic Libraries**

Libraries have always been repositories of learning resources. From earliest time, they have been source of information for scholars and researchers. The primary role of the library is to provide information service to support the educational, recreation, cultural, economic and technological

endeavours of members in their respective communities. Okolo (2018) stated that “the library is the heart of any parent organization it is established to serve, it is a collection of information resources which cut across both book and non-book materials. The concept library is likened to the heart because, as the heart of every living animal circulates blood to every part of that animal so also the library as a store house of information is responsible for the circulation of information and its resources to all the departments that exist in that organization for which it is established”. The National Policy on Education (2004) identified the library as one of the most important aspect of educational support services. They are used as media for disseminating information and enhancing literature search and as a tool for the development of intellectual compatibilities and promotion of cultural and social integration. There are six types of libraries and the various types of libraries play their roles based on the nature they possess but for this study, the researcher will be considering the academic library. According to Uwaifo (2010) academic library is a library established and maintained by tertiary institutions of learning such as universities, polytechnics, college of education, schools of nursing, petroleum training institutes etc.

In the same vein, Okiy (2012) stated that:

*Academic libraries are libraries established in tertiary institutions. They include libraries in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The roles of these libraries are similar and that is to effectively support institutions to attain the key functions of teaching, research and community service. These institutions are responsible for the production of middle and higher level manpower for national development. The extent to which they are able to effectively accomplish that task depends largely on how well their libraries are equipped with the relevant information resources.*

Okiy(n.d) citing Akintunde (2004), stated that: “the libraries in many tertiary institutions have either earned the institutions accreditation or failed them because libraries are regarded as a tool for academic excellence.” The libraries in the tertiary institutions assist them in the discharge of their functions by acquiring all the varied and relevant in-depth information resources necessary for pursuing the teaching, learning, research and public services functions of these institutions which enable them to produce high caliber graduates into the labour market to further national development. Thus, the academic institutions play a major role in the manpower development of any nation providing the high as well as middle level manpower for the acceleration of social, economic and political advancement of a nation. According to Edoka (2000), the academic libraries is set to provide the following functions: to provide information materials required for the academic programmes of the parent institution; to provide research information resources in consonance with the needs of faculty and research students; to provide information resources for recreation and for personal self- development of users; to provide study accommodation in a useful variety of locations; to provide protection and security for these materials; to co-operate with other libraries at appropriate levels for improved information services; and to provide specialized information service to appropriate segments of the wider community.

Academic libraries are relevant entities that any higher or tertiary institution of learning needs not to take for granted because of the kind of roles they play to the parent body as such, the library should be given a priority and a sense of belonging because academic institutions play a vital role in man power development of any nation since they provide the high as well as the middle manpower needed for the social, economic and political advancement of a nation. This can be actualized through the programme of teaching, learning, research and community service which is aided by the role of the academic library. In an academic library, there are several resources and services rendered to its users. One of these services is reference services. This is a

very important service rendered in the academic library and it is seen as the root of librarianship or library and information science. Reference services are personal assistance librarians in academic libraries provide to users that come to make use of information resources in the library. The librarian working in the reference section is called a reference librarian and the reference librarian serves as a good communicator who links the library users to the resources of their choice.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The reference section is the image maker of the library because of the essential role it plays. It is an aspect of the academic library that seeks to assist the library clientele either directly or indirectly .However, academic library users today are less dependent upon the traditional library due to the rise of electronic and Internet resources, library patrons no longer feel the need to step inside the physical library or use a librarian in their research. It is discovered with evidence both anecdotal and recorded that increasing number of people have turned to the Internet as their preferred source of information and it is reflecting in the reference desk (McMillan 2003). In addition to the above Wurman (1989) in Gbaje (2007) noted that “several studies have shown that somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of people searching the web for information failed to find what they were looking for”

Thus, many reference librarians advocate reaching library patrons in their preferred environments in order to extend library services beyond the traditional library walls. Academic library is a strong advocate of reaching patrons where they are, in doing so; they may help the library patron that may be stranded in trying to make use of the electronic and internet resources.

### **Research Questions**

The study is structured to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What reference services are offered by reference librarians in academic libraries?
2. What facilities are available for the provision of reference services in academic libraries?
3. What type of social networking media do reference librarians in academic libraries apply to reference services?
4. What are the constraints to the application of social networking media by reference librarians in academic libraries?

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Reference and Information Services in Academic Libraries**

Reference service as a concept has been defined severally by different scholars in the field of librarianship. However, a reference service is seen as the personal assistance provided to the users and potential users of information (Bunge in Bhatia and Vohra 2007). This is seen as the degree of interaction between the reference librarian and individual users or specifically identified group of users. Gbaje (2007) noted that reference service is a platform where human intermediation occurs in a face-to-face modes and users express their information problems (or what they know about them) to intermediaries. Giving out this personalized information service has been the main aim of library and information profession.

In another definition Madu (2010) defined it as the personal assistance eagerly given to library users in pursuit of information by a librarian working in the reference section. Sing (2004) also sees reference service as “the personalized guidance to library users in accessing appropriate information resources to meet their information needs.” Chowdhury (2001) quoting Bunge (1999) pointed out that reference service which is sometimes referred to as “reference and information services”, can be regarded as the personal assistance provided to users in the pursuit of information. Libraries are not only willing to render help to the different readers that comes to

the library; instead they consider the help as an important aspect of their duties to the users and justification for their training. The assistance provided by the reference section does not stop at the reference section alone it cut across all the activities done in the library to satisfy the needs of library users this was why Reih (nd) stated that “reference service is a variety of activities associated with personal assistance to library users, including selection, liaison activities, bibliographic instruction and the implementation of electronic product”.

The provision of reference services in a library or information centre therefore, should be regarded and also be recognized as a serious aspect of library services which seek to satisfy the hunger of the user for information. In view of this therefore, reference services thrive to utilize the available resources in the library to meet this critical responsibility of providing personal assistance to users. This was why Gama (2008) cited Jackman (1989) who declared that reference services was not just about answering questions posed by users, it’s about the maintenance of the reference sources, and making available materials needed by patrons. He further stated that reference work encompassed series of processes, which include:

1. The collection and acquisition of appropriate materials, books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, maps, atlases, charts, microform, standards, reports, illustrations, records, videos etc., in response to the needs of clientele
2. The compilation of union list of holdings and specialized indexes related to those topics in which the service has a specialized interest.
3. The organization arrangement and maintenance of those materials so that they can be used easily and effectively by both staff and users
4. General information files giving details of searches and strategies employed in the answering of queries which are likely to be raised again.

5. In-service training of staff to ensure that optimum use is made of all facilities and that a sense of team work is fully engendered.
6. Production of printed and other guides to the library and the services it can offer, that is, publicity and education
7. Adequate signposting and guidance to layout of the library
8. Instructional guidance to users in the exploitation of the library and the use of reference materials.
9. The search for, location and presentation of sought information on behalf of users.

In the words of Anyira (2011) the following were said:

*Libraries are no longer what they used to be. This implies that librarians are also no longer who they used to be. This evolution or revolution has led to the evolution or revolution of librarians' roles all over the world, and Nigeria is no exception. Nevertheless, librarians in the developing countries (Nigeria Included) are lagging behind the changes brought by advances in ICT. Many librarians assume that a 21st century-library means a collection of MARC records, CD-ROMs, and other physical collections. However, that has already been displaced by virtual libraries. Meanwhile, only a few libraries in Nigeria are 21st century libraries and only a few librarians are 21st century librarians. There are a number of reasons for this trend. One important one is the librarian him- or herself.*

From the above statement it implies change is the only constant thing on earth, since every other things are experiencing changes of which the library should not be excluded therefore, the reference section which is a part of the library is expected to join the trend if truly it wants to meet up to the demand of patrons. The reference section of the library is an important part of the library that should not be taken for granted due to the kind of role it plays in achieving the goals and mission of the institution for which the academic library is established. In view of this

therefore, the reference librarian is expected to be acquainted with the rudiment of providing the necessary help that the library users need.

### **Types of Reference Services**

A reference service is one of the services provided in any of the libraries all over the world. The academic libraries are not an exception, Ruteyan and Akporhonor (2007) and Pegah (2009) stated that a reference service is divided into two types and they are direct and indirect reference services.

1. Direct reference services
2. Indirect reference services

### **Direct Reference Service**

Pegah stated that this form of reference services is performed on a face-to-face process between the librarian and the library clientele in the traditional way in meeting the needs of users. Under this form of reference services, the reference librarian helps in providing answers to user's question directly. These services consist of information services and library instruction. In providing these services, the reference librarian ensure that he or she helps the users to retrieve the information. Library instruction which is vital to the library profession is seen as an inseparable part of the direct reference services (Pegah, 2009). Ruteyan and Akporhonor stated in their work that reference service is acclaimed to be direct when the reference librarian is rendering a personal assistance to meet the need of information seekers.

## **Indirect Reference Services**

Ruteyan and Akporhonor (2007) opined that indirect reference services consist of all the activities that are done behind the scene to ensure that the needs of library users are met and they include selection, acquisition, processing, and maintenance of library catalogue, bibliographies, other reference aids and the administration of the reference section. In similar vein, Pegah in his work also stated that indirect reference services include reference sources selection, provision and publishing of bibliographies, union catalogues, guidelines, newsletters and reference sources evaluation. Madu (2010) enumerated some forms of reference services obtainable in an academic library which can also be a means of helping users that visit a library and they include: information and referral services, bibliographic verification, inter library loan and document delivery, selective and dissemination of information.

## **Online Reference Services**

This is the type of services that is rendered to library users under the platform of the Internet facility. Chandwani (n.d) noted that online reference services can be regarded as “the provision of reference services involving collaboration between the library users and reference librarian, in a computer based medium. These services uses various media which include e-mail, web forms, chat, video, voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) all of these are performed in an online environment. Online reference service is a site that offers reference information online. Users can ask questions and get answers anytime, anywhere online without having to go to a library or a reference desk.

Online reference services can provide many benefits for libraries. These services can be operated 24 hours a day and 7 days a week as supported in the work of (singh 2004). Berube (2003) pointed out that online reference services can add to the overall library service in that it supports

social inclusion by extending reference services to the physically challenge users who cannot come to the library. Francuoeur (2002) noted that online reference services can take many forms and they are divided into two broad categories:

1. Asynchronous
2. Synchronous

### **Asynchronous**

This form of online reference services take place where there is a conversation between the reference librarian and the clientele and the response between the two parties is not always immediately. In this, there is a delay between the question being posed and the answer being given. Asynchronous online reference services generally take the form of;

- **E-mail:** this is an online reference services whereby a user sends a question or a request to the librarian or the reference section and the librarian sends answers back to the library user who is in need of help from the reference librarian.
- **Web forms:** this is a platform whereby users click on a button on a library's website, which pops up a form where questions can be typed in and other specific information.

### **Synchronously**

This is the other form of online reference service where conversation or transaction takes place in a real-time with almost immediate response to a query or request. Under this form of online reference service, the information seeker receives the answer to the question that is posed instantly. Carolyn (2012) noted that Synchronous transaction takes the form of chat reference using simple technologies, chat reference using web contact software, video conference.

## **Reference Librarian**

This is a librarian that is employed in a reference section who is responsible for providing helpful information in meeting the need and questions posed by users of the library. Okeke et al (2012) noted that the reference librarian is professional library staff who is in charge of the reference section of the library where user's queries are answered. The reference librarian is very vast in knowledge. Therefore, he/she can perform operation information services that are central to the realization of the library objectives. Odede (2012) posited that the reference librarian is part of the overall professionals working to bring the required desire to fulfillment and therefore has a lot to contribute to make the services of the library a success. To this effect Lawal (2001) stated that the functions of reference librarians are assistance and instruction in library use, location of materials, use of the catalogue, and use of basic reference tools and sources. They also provide brief, factual information of the ready reference type, conducting literature searches, interlibrary loans for users, selective dissemination of information to clients and public relations. A Reference Librarian must be responsive to the needs of users, think critically and be organized as well as organize or coordinate projects and services for the user. A reference librarian must be aware of current trends and have a wide base of knowledge. They must also keep tabs on the new types of reference and user services. They must effectively evaluate the sources that they come into contact with so as to provide the user with the best information possible. They must also be able to collaborate with others to improve services and implement new services, in the profession and also with the user

## **Facilities Available for the Application of Social Networking Media**

Social networking media as a concept is regarded as a platform through which individuals from different locations connects each other for the purpose of communication, entertainment, sharing of ideas and also reaching out for information. Social networking media are information communication technology that cannot function on its own without the availability of information technology facilities that will aid their functionality.

The below listed items are facilities that must be available for the proper utilization of social networking media in any given organization

1. Computers
2. Internets
3. Cellphone

### **Computers**

Computers are no longer just mathematical tools; different operations can be handled with a computer that is why it's being regarded as a system. Therefore, a computer is seen as an electronic device which accepts and processes data by following a set of instructions (PROGRAM) to produce a result (INFORMATION). The ultimate aim of a computer is to produce information while the art of computing is referred to as information processing (Ayo, 1994).

Social networking media is seen as a platform for connectivity, interactivity, communication and to collaborate. This functionality cannot be possible without the availability of computers. The computers will be the medium through which the reference librarian will reach patrons both within and outside the library walls and the traditional activities that were done by the reference

librarian will be aided by the usage of computers as such the activities or the duties of the reference librarians will be made faster and quicker.

With the computer, such activities as information generation, processing, analyzing, storage and communication for sustainable development could be executed easily. It has been known to all that computers have brought about speed, cost effectiveness and optimal utilization of available resources.

### **Internet**

Social networking media cannot function in any system without the presence of internet, which is why it has been proven to be the most valuable vehicle for accelerated information flow. According to Ogbomo (2004), Internet is a network of computers that communicate with each other, often over a telephone lines. The Internet is a globally interconnected set of computers through which information could be quickly accessed. Internet has become an invaluable tool for learning, teaching and research. Internet could be regarded as technology that evolved in furtherance of the concept of paperless society. It is a super high wave invention, which is already advancing the cause of humanity of the greatest height especially in this millennium (Onatola, 2004). The potentials of social networking media lies in the availability of Internet connectivity which enable it to function. Any library that wants to keep up with the development that is taking place needs Internet connectivity. Libraries has gone beyond the level of meeting the needs of client just within the library walls, that is, the activities of librarians to patrons is not limited to the library alone and for this to be properly done , there is need for the provision of internet for the utilization of social networking media. Chigbu (2012) opined that Internet is a connection of computers around the world to share data and information, which means when the Internet is made available, the reference librarian can now utilize the social networking media in

sharing information between libraries or patrons that has a request concerning any given information resources.

## **Cellphones**

Besides the computer as a facility that should be made available in order to utilize social networking media in rendering reference services, the cellphone is also a system that needs to be provided for the utilization of social networking media in rendering of reference services. Communication is the process of exchanging information using a common protocol (Iwhiwhu, 2010). Cellphones has revolutionized the daily lives of the ordinary people. It is seen as systems that do not make use of wires or cables but work with radio waves and can be carried about and use anywhere (Homby, 2001 cited by Iwhiwhu 2010).

The library is a place where librarians work for nine hours and there could be instances a patron may want to make enquiry and the reference librarian may not be there to render the assistance the patron may need. The provision of cellphone to the reference librarian, their assistance can be extended to twenty-four hours assistance and this can be possible when social networking media are utilize alongside the cellphone.

## **Types of Social Networks Media**

Due to the significance of social networks media, different forms or types of social networks were developed by different persons. Some of the types of social networking mediaare:

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Facebook  | 5. Youtube   |
| 2. MySpace   | 6. Skype     |
| 3. Delicious | 7. RSS Feeds |
| 4. Twitter   | 8. Flickr    |

## **Facebook**

In the work of Omatayo (2011) Facebook was developed and founded by Mark Zuckerberg. At first, it was known as Facemash which happens to be the predecessor of Facebook on October 28, 2003 and it was rejected by all. Zuckerberg came back with a new name known as Facebook in 2004 and it was accepted. Page et al (2008) submitted that ...it is an environment that encourages people to connect with others through a social networking platform. Users create profiles to share information about themselves, including their education, interests, and their social goals. Facebook users are also encouraged to find all of the people they are connected to, whether through contacts made offline or through common interests. Facebook makes it particularly easy to publicly share interests or loyalties with others and to promote connections based on interests. The founder of this social networking tool was an undergraduate student of Harvard, his purpose for creating this application was for students of Harvard to be able to contact either within or outside the school. Initially, the utilization of Facebook was restricted only to students of Harvard University. The relevance of this networking media made Zuckerberg to declare it open not only to those within the school community but also for those outside the school.

Facebook is a great way to meet friends and also keep up to date with what they are doing. Once a friend has been added to your Facebook list, you will be able to know when they are adding things to their blog or updating their profile. In Facebook, users can create a profile with photos, list of personal interest, contact information and other personal information. There is room for user to be able to communicate with friends either through private or public messages and a chat feature. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) submitted that "Facebook can help librarians to interact with users to know their information need." Ogedebe and Musa (2012) stated that Facebook has two

features: “News Feed”, which appears on the homepage of each user, and “Mini- Feed”, which appears in each individual’s profile. “News Feed” updates a personalized list of news stories throughout the day generated by the activity of “friends”. Thus, each time users log in, they get the latest headlines in their social networks. “Mini- Feed” is similar, except that it centers around one individual. Each person’s “Mini-Feed” shows what has changed recently in their profile.

Ekoja (2011) posited that the important requirement for libraries and librarians that are using or intend to use Facebook in service offerings is that they must update their contents at least weekly. Therefore, it is recommended only for “active” libraries where a lot of events like exhibitions, workshops, seminars, meetings, etc take place regularly at short intervals.

## **MySpace**

This is a social networking media that was founded by Chris Dewolfe and Tom Anderson in the year 2003. The internet tool was originally created by current CEO Tom Anderson’s company eUniverse. As the largest shareholder of eUniverse, Anderson recognized that online communities were the future of the internet and made decision to use the technology, resources, and capital of eUniverse to launch MySpace.com in august 2003. The first users of MySpace were eUniverse employees who participated in contests to see who could recruit the most friends to the site. The growth of MySpace was generated mostly by word of mouth as members began inviting more friends and acquaintance to join the site. Indie-rock bands from Los Angeles region were some of the earliest users of MySpace. These bands began creating profiles and local promoters used MySpace to advertise. By 2004, teenagers started joining MySpace, as these teens signed up; they encouraged their friends to join. This word of mouth made MySpace what it is today, the third most popular website.

## **Delicious**

This social networking media performs the role of social bookmarking services that allows users to tag (describe), save, manage and share Web pages. This site was founded by Joshua Schacter in 2003 and it was been acquired by yahoo in 2005. Corrado (2008) stated that “delicious provide a one-click method to bookmark a Web site, allowing librarians to describe and categorize Web sites.” Delicious help users to group links with similar topics together to form a stack and include title and description for the stack page. Bryant (2006) posited that delicious is a social bookmarking tool that helps users save web addresses under their accounts online and tag these sites with keywords to organize them and make them searchable. With emphasis on the power of the community, delicious greatly improves how people discover, remember and share on the internet. User’s bookmarks are accessible from any computer with an internet connection.

All bookmark posted to Delicious are publicly viewable by default, although users can mark specific bookmarks as private, and imported bookmarks are private by default. To facilitate newcomers, Delicious provides an option to import bookmarks from the web browsers to its site so that new users can quickly get started with the site.

## **Twitter**

This is a social networking media that is based on micro blogging. This implies that each text post must be text based and allows only 140 or less character. Lomas Et al (2008) stated that “twitteris designed to support micro-interactions the incessant flow of the thoughts of a friend or colleague that stream across the screen. Lomas stated that tweets are short limited character within the range of 140. These posts are called tweet. Twitter allows the user to send messages to friends and family quickly and easily, and it gives room for thousands of people to see the answer immediately.

Twitter can be linked to other social networks, blogs, and websites. A user can follow other users, and it is easy to have conversations with other people, for this to be possible, one must create an account which will take a minutes and it is free to join, a complete profile includes uploading of pictures to a cell phone, web page, or instant messenger program, which allows the user to receive and send message to and from others. There is usually an update that is sent to friends and it is called “tweet”

## **YouTube**

YouTube is another social networking media that was founded by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim. They were employees of PayPal. Hurley studied in Indian University of Pennsylvania, while Chen and Karim studied computer science together at the University of Illinois. The idea behind this tool was developed by them February 2005, when they had difficulties in sharing videos that has been shot during a dinner party in one of their apartment San Francisco.

This networking tool is a video sharing website on which users can upload, view videos. This site uses Adobe Flash Video and HTML5 technology to display a wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging, short original videos and educational videos. In this site, unregistered users can watch videos, while registered users can upload and download an unlimited numbers of videos.

## **Skype**

Skype was founded in 2003 by Janus Friis, NiklasZenstrom. It was written by Estonian developers, the service allows users to communicate with peers by voice using a webcam, and

instant messages over the internet. Lomas et al (2008) described Skype as “VoIP application that allows users to collaborate over voice channels by calling one another. Skype users download and install a client application, allowing them to use their computers as phones. Educause (2007) submitted that: “skype is an application that turns a personal computer into a telephone. Skype uses voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) technology, which converts voice signals into data streams that are sent over the Internet and converted back to audio by the recipient’s computer. They can make free voice calls to other Skype users on the network Phone calls can also be placed to recipients on the traditional telephone networks. Calls to other users within the skype service are free of charge while calls to land line telephones and mobile phones are charged through via a debit-based user account system. It became popular for its additional features, including file transfer and video conferencing. Unlike other Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services. Skype is a hybrid peer-to-peer and client-server system. It makes use of background processing on computers running Skype software.

### **RSS Feed**

Gibbons (n.d) described RSS as an acronym for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary, denotes a class of web feeds, specified in XML(Extensible Markup Language) .This is a family of web of feed formats used to publish frequently updated works such as blog entries, news headlines, audio and video in a standardized format. The document of RSS is known as “feed”, “web feed” or “channel”.

Ekoja (2011) stated that Really Simple Syndication (RSS) Feeds are special computer programs (aggregators) or readers that are installed on systems using web 2.0 to enable libraries and information services using them distribute up-to-date web content from their sites to thousands and even millions of users. This social networking media is of great benefit to publishers because

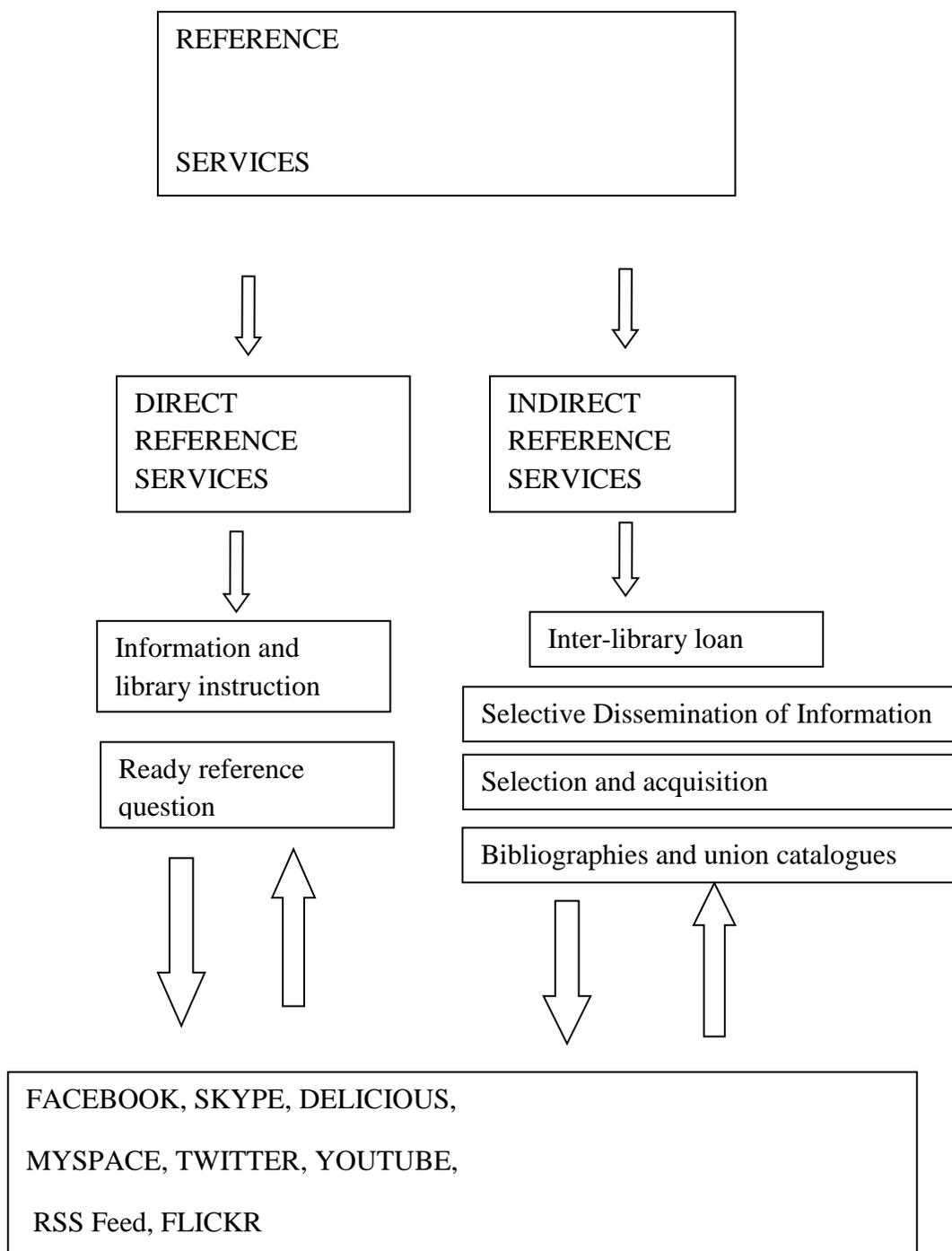
it allows them to syndicate content automatically. A standardized format allows the files to be published once and thereafter it can be viewed by many different programs. It is of great benefit to readers who want to subscribe to timely updates from favorite websites or to aggregate feeds from many sites into one place. The RSS document can be read using software called RSS reader or feed reader. These readers can be desktop based or mobile device based. Users subscribe to a feed by entering into the feeds URL or by clicking a feed icon in a web browser that initiates the subscription process.

RSS is a family of web feed format used for syndicating content from blogs or web pages, RSS uses an XML that to blogs or websites, which are interested by the users. Many web browsers have built-in-feed readers or aggregators, and can easily add feeds to web page, summarize information items and links to the information sources. It informs users of updates.

### **Flickr**

This is also a social networking media that is responsible for hosting images and video on a website, web service suite online community. It was created by Ludicorp in 2004 and it was acquired by yahoo in 2005. Lomas et al (2008) posited that “flickr is a communication tool and a site where people meet and discuss images. Besides it being a popular website for users to share personal photographs, the service is widely used by bloggers to host images that are embedded in blogs and social media. Educause (2008), defined flickr as a photo-sharing website where anyone can upload and tag photos, browse others’ photos, and add comments and annotations. Users can create photo sets and collections to manage content, and participate in topical groups to cultivate a sense of community. This is a popular tool that is used for sharing photos, especially among photo lovers. It can also be used by librarians to promote events, to advocate with images to let their stakeholders know what they are doing, as well as offer

outreaches where others can find images of their libraries (Ekoja 2011). In 2011 it was discovered by yahoo, about six million images were hosted by this networking site and the network continue to grow. Flickr is such a networking media where photos and videos can be accessed without you registering an account but for a user to be able to upload any into the website an account must be created. Registering an account in Flickr enables the user to create a profile containing photos and videos which gives the user the ability to invite or add another Flickr contact.



Source: PagehTager (2009) A proposal model for reference services in Library 2.0

What and how to utilize social networking media for reference services

1. The library should create an account with the above listed types of social networking media
2. The library users should also have an account with any of the above listed social networking media
3. Every academic library users should register their account with the library social networking media account
4. A group should be created whereby the librarian can meet the need of users either asynchronously or synchronously.
5. Library clientele can be updated of every development taking place in the library.
6. The library should have an application alerting librarians of every references service needed by the library users.

### **Adoption of Social Networking Media for Reference Services in Academic Library**

Shafique (2011) opined that the application of social networking media in libraries has affected their libraries in a positive way on the ground that it helps librarians in providing services to their clients. It is imperative at this junction that librarians especially reference librarians in Nigeria to be acquainted with these social networking media and also utilize them in rendering services in academic libraries

For the role of reference service to be felt in the present dispensation that we are currently, it is necessary that social networking media be applied in the operation of the reference section in the bid to meet the information needs of the library users. Ekoja (2011) submitted that we cannot share in the vast information offered by technologies or contribute to it unless we migrate into

the electronic environment. This will help us to contribute our quota satisfactorily to universal availability of information if we possess the knowledge of the technology that can launch our local content into the information superhighway. The application of social networking media in the library will help librarians to be able to attract the attention of library users to materials that libraries are having which users are not aware of. Jain (2013) stated that Facebook as one of the social networking media, when it is applied in the academic library, librarians can draw users' attention to useful hidden treasures of the library through the library Facebook page or account. Chu and Meulemans (2008) showed that Facebook or MySpace could help librarians enhance their libraries' social visibility, by creating profiles that show a uniform identity to users.

Barsky and Purdon (2006) opined that the application of social bookmarking tool such as delicious in the library will help users to collect their favourite resources in an online, open environment that other users are free to read. Wawta (n.d) noted that the presence of social networking media will enable libraries to use social bookmarking services such as "del.icio.us" to help users to share web resources. In the work of Ekoja (2011) and that of Wawta (n.d) they pointed out that the application of Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication in the library can help to keep the library users updated or informed of all the activities that are taking place in the library such as new issues of journals, the arrival of new books and special occasions. It will show the links in the RSS feeds to users so that they can access the full information whenever they feel like. The application of skype into the library will help the reference librarians and the library users to have video calls whereby the reference librarian will be communicating with library users via the internet with the help of skype. Social networking media serves libraries as an innovative and effective way to meet the needs of users who are seeking for information from the library. The application of twitter in the library operations such as reference services will help to keep the reference librarian and the library users updated on

library's daily activities, for example, frequently updated library collections. The patron of the library can use this platform to type short messages or status update. To this effect therefore, Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) noted in their work that "Twitter helps to create library service alert". Flickr as one of the tools of social networking media is so relevant in the provision of reference service by the reference librarian on the ground that it will help them to generate a new means of access to an interaction with their patron as well as broaden the knowledge of such heritage to a larger and more diverse audience (Thanuskodi, 2011).

Millions of people are using social media tools as part of their everyday lives for work, studies and play because of its ubiquity. Academic libraries abroad have found the use of social media as an effective communication tools to interact with faculty staff and students in new ways (Daluba and Maxwell, 2013). The following can be used by academic libraries to spread the word about different events, services that they offer and the marketing of new library products, initiatives, new addition to library collections, links to articles, videos, community information, solicit feedbacks, respond to people, talk to people, give instructions, link wherever possible. In addition to marketing, the simple act of having conversations and creating relationships with patrons is immediately useful. Through conversations on social media, reference librarians can gain insight into what their users want and can ultimately satisfy their users need better.

### **Constraints to the Adoption of Social Networks Media by Reference Librarian in Academic Library**

Social networks media have become a thing almost everybody uses in the society of Nigeria but it has not really been made visible in libraries so that reference librarians can make use of them in rendering their services to patrons both within that is those that will be coming to their reference desk for help and outside the library that is, those that will be seeking for assistance

from a remote area. Social networking media has not really been fully embraced by libraries due to some challenges or factors that hampers its effective utilization in meeting the needs of patrons. According to Ezeani (2012) the following factors were enumerated as some of the challenges that seem to affect the application of social networking media in library service delivery as follows:

Lack of Awareness; bandwidth problem; technophobia; lack of maintenance culture; unreliable power supply; lack of training of staff; government intervention; copyright issue. These challenges hinder most of the libraries from adopting and applying social networking media tools in the running of the activities of the library. In similar vein Oloruntoyin and Adeyanju (2013) noted that there are myriad of problems that confronts the usage of technologies such as social networking media in developing countries such as Nigeria and they include: low tele-density; insufficient telecommunication infrastructures leading to congestion; unreliable network design; poor interconnectivity; insufficient human resources development; poor maintenance culture; vandalization of facilities; exorbitant/unjustifiable billings and poor recovery strategy. If a library is set to adopt SNM in the running of the library's activities, the above factors could deprive them from applying them. Besides the above mentioned challenges, Qutab(2014) also noted some other challenges that poses problem to the effective utilization of technologies in the running of the various services found in the academic libraries. The challenges put forward by Qutab are: lack of funding; lack of trained staff; staff attitude towards ICT adoptability; administration/management attitude towards ICT adoption; lack interest by library users; unavailability/slow Internet connection; unavailability of back up services i.e electricity/generator.

## **Conclusion**

For an effective and efficient reference services to be provided by information professionals in this era of technological and information explosion, there is every need for the adoption of Social Networking tools in the running of the day to day activities of the library and at the same time it will enable the reference librarians to extend their services beyond the four walls of the library.

Social Networking Media is platform for collaboration and in this our contemporary time where virtually every human being is using it to interact either synchronously or asynchronously. It is expedient at this junction that the library should not be left out so as to be able to provide the needed assistance to users since it has rightly been stated that the field of librarianship is all about helping library patrons on how to access information resources either in soft or hard copies. With the help of Social Networks, the barrier that usually takes place between librarian and library users on the area of not been able to express oneself, unapproachability of librarians is eradicated thereby bringing about smooth transaction between the two parties.

To successfully incorporate Social Networking tools in the library, it is necessary that the above mentioned constraints that would deter a library from adopting technologies into their systems should be attended to in this era of technological and information explosion.

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