Connecting with Library Science research scholars and alumni using the Facebook Page: An empirical study

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Abstract

Purpose – The Department of Library and Information Science, Pondicherry University, has a Facebook page created a decade back to reach out to its Alumni and Research Scholars. This research is to collect feedback on the FB page to improvise it.

Design/methodology/approach – A well-structured questionnaire comprising two sections: section A: demographic details and Section B: consist of questions with provisions to rank on a five-point Likert scale, circulated on the Departments Facebook Page (DLIS-Pondicherry-University). Sixty responses were recorded during data collection and analyzed using SPSS.

Findings – The present study results show that the Facebook page is used more for interaction with the faculty, but WhatsApp's use was more comparatively. Job-related postings attracted more preferences as most alumni and research scholars are in the early career, and the Department is just a decade old. Interactions were more, but the satisfaction seems split. More subject-related content is needed to keep the satisfaction level high.

Keywords – Facebook, WhatsApp, Pondicherry University, Department of Library and Information Science, Alumni Network.

1. Introduction

Library and Information Science is a dynamic subject that is ever-evolving in tune with the changing dynamics of Information sources, storage devices, and delivering platforms. To enhance the future librarians with the required skillsets, the Library Science Schools often revise their curriculum with ICT oriented papers and teach more Information storage and retrieval concepts through ICT laboratories. Similarly, these schools' teachers explore further avenues to use the latest web-based applications in reaching and teaching their students.

The Department of Library and Information Science, Pondicherry University (Central University) was started in 2007 and stood Twelfth among the Library Science Schools from South India in scholarly contributions (Harinarayana & Raju, 2012). The Department, which is the youngest among the schools in South India, is most sought after due to the Infrastructure, Well qualified teachers, and Better placements.

The Department teachers follow several strategies to reach out to its alumni viz., Google groups, Facebook and WhatsApp, apart from personal calls or emails when needed. Reaching through Facebook proved more effective, but the teachers who maintain the page felt the urge to collect feedback from the alumni and research scholars who follow the page to offer better service and hence, this research.

2. Review of related literature

Peruta & Helm, (2018) critically analyzed the Facebook pages of various higher education institutions. They adopted the PRUNE model to categorize the themes of the contents viz., Pride Points, Relevance, Unifying Imagery, Nostalgia, and Engagement for its effectiveness in engaging the community.

Zickar et al. (2018) surveyed the psychology departments' Facebook page's followers to find out the kinds of most engaging posts among the students and alumni

and friends. They categorized the posts into seven significant categories; Photos, Alumni updates, Faculty updates, Events promotion, Graduate students' updates, Undergraduate students' updates, and General psychology Knowledge to construct the questionnaire to collect feedback from its followers.

Moore-Russo et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between the quality of interaction (likes, shares, and comments) and the thematic categories viz., Professional Information, Entertainment, and Locally Situated Information amongst the graduate students, who are the users of the Facebook page created by their faculty administrator.

Chou & Pi, (2015) studied Facebook's effectiveness as a digital learning environment among the students' community, compared with the traditional digital learning systems, and found the Social media usage as a Digital learning environment was more effective.

Ping & Maniam, (2015) experimented with Facebook's usage as a medium to improve participating matriculate students writing skills. The study findings reported that the participants learned new vocabulary and learned how to present ideas by writing from their peers effectively through Facebook groups.

Kowalik, (2011) analyzed and reported on various studies engaging alumni and prospective students through social media. He stressed the potentials of social media usage as alternative means of communicating with alumni and students.

Gamble & Wilkins, (2014) research amongst Japanese students' found that the respondents felt that Facebook could also be used educationally apart from its usage for social purposes. A majority also felt that accessing the information on Facebook was more comfortable than that of the University website.

Alias et al. (2013) carried out a study among Islamic students. The research findings reveal that Facebook-based learning is instrumental in enhancing creativity in writing and problem-solving among the participants.

Irwin et al., (2012) research findings report that the student community is very .receptive to incorporating tools like Facebook in their academic activities.

Hamat et al. (2012) carried out research and found that the tertiary level students use Social Networking Sites for their informal learning. Still, only half of the population uses this tool to connect and communicate with the teachers for their informal learning; contrarily, they do not believe that Social media usage will not harm their academics.

Hurt et al. (2012) surveyed the students' perception of Facebook as an online discussion learning tool and reported that familiarity with Facebook positively affected getting acquaintance with classmates. They could learn more course material through online delivery.

Lawson et al. (2011) surveyed among the alumni and current students of the Psychology department on the use of the Facebook page of the Department. They found that they regularly visited the site as they felt more informed through the site and felt more connected with the Department. They wanted the Facebook page to continue.

3. Methodology

Dr.Mangkhollen Singson created the Departments Facebook page, and Dr. M.Leeladharan started Google Groups and WhatsApp groups. Departmental accounts with these three channels were activated at different periods to ensure maximum reach among the alumni and supplement each other. While the faculty and alumni still use all these communications, the Facebook page had the maximum number of interactions when carrying out this research. A well-structured questionnaire was designed for data collection and circulated to the FB Page's closed group of followers. Though more than 160 followers are there for the web page, only 60 responded to the survey. Users responded on a five-point Likert scale on the

frequency of use of Social media, frequency of interactions on FB Page, and satisfaction on content.

The collected data were tabulated using Microsoft Excel and analyzed using SPSS 19.

4. Analysis and Findings

Below is the general demographic profile of the 60 participants.

Table 1: Sample Profiler

Profiling variables	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	41	68.3
	Female	19	31.6
Present Age	20-25	12	20
	26-30	37	61.7
	31-35	9	15
	above 35	2	3.3
Qualification @ time of admission to M.Lib.I.Sc	Graduate	38	63.4
	Post Graduate	22	36.6
The medium of instruction @ degree	English	57	95
	Non-English	3	5
Pursued Masters @ Pondicherry University	Yes	55	91.7
	No	5	8.3
Occupation	Employed	48	80
	Unemployed	3	5
	Student/Scholar	9	15

Male respondents are the majority with 68.3 percentage, and Female respondents are only 31.6 percentages. The respondents' age mostly spread among 20 to 25 and 26 to 30 categories, with 61.7 shares in the latter category. Most of the respondents (63.4%) joined the Department of Library & Information Science, Pondicherry University, to pursue a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science (M.Lib.I.Sc) with a Degree, which is the essential requirement. But remaining 36.6 percent of respondents reported having a Master's degree at the time of admission to M.Lib.I.Sc. Most (95%) of the respondents had studied their essential degree through English medium of instruction while the remaining five percent have pursued their degree through other languages. On the same line, the majority (91.7%) of the respondents are Pondicherry University alumni, and the remaining are Research scholars who have done their M.Lib.I.Sc from other Schools. Eighty percent are employed, 15 percent pursue research programs and 5 percent search for a job.
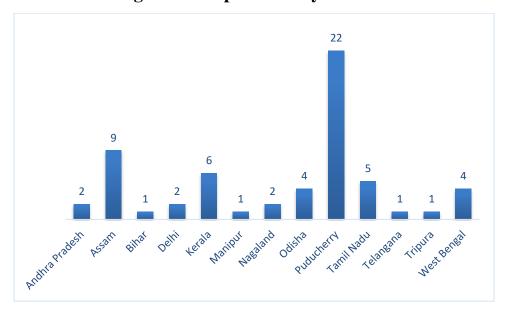
Figure 1: Respondents by their Domicile

A majority (22) of the respondents are from Pondicherry, followed by Assam (9), Kerala (6), Tamilnadu (5), Odisha, and West Bengal with four respondents each, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, and Nagaland with two respondents each. The remaining respondents (1 each) were from Bihar, Manipur, Telangana, and Tripura.

Table 2: Summary of frequency of Social Media usage

Frequency of use	Facebook	WhatsApp	Twitter	YouTube	Instagram
Never	0	0	23	3	15
Percentage	0	0	*38.30*	*5*	*25.00*
Rarely	6	2	21	3	16
Percentage	*10*	*3.40*	*35*	*5*	*26.60*
Sometimes	27	20	11	18	15
Percentage	*45*	*33.40*	*18.30*	*30*	*25.00*
Often	18	16	5	19	9
Percentage	*30*	*26.60*	*8.40*	*31.70*	*15.00*
Always	9	22	0	17	5
Percentage	*15*	*36.60*	*0*	*28.30*	*8.40*
Mean	***3.48***	***3.95***	***1.95***	***2.54***	***3.72***

Table 2 is about Social media usage by the respondents. With a mean score of 3.95, WhatsApp is the most frequently accessed Social Media, followed by Instagram (mean 3.72). Facebook is in third place, with 3.48 as a mean score. The Department did not have an Instagram account, while the respondents more used WhatsApp. It is interesting to note their interaction was more on the Facebook page with the Department.

Table 3: Respondents' Interest in Posts

Types of Postings	Mean Score
Job-related	4.45
Conference/Event	4.26
Department Events	4.00
Congratulatory	4.29
Promotions	4.00
Notification related to PhD	4.11
Congratulatory notes on NET/SLET	4.20
Notification on NET/SLET	4.08

From table 3, one can see that the most preferred posts among respondents are Job-related with a mean score of 4.45, followed by Congratulatory posts (4.29) and News on Conference and Events (4.26). Mostly due to the respondents' pattern, most of them are employed or newly joined in jobs, so they are more onto Job-Related Posts. Next is Congratulations posts; this could be due to the respondents' young age (20 to 30).

Congratulatory notes on qualifying National Eligibility Test (NET), State Level Eligibility Test (SLET) stood fourth with a mean score of 4.20. Closely followed by Notifications related to Ph.D. (4.11) and notifications about NET/SLET (4.08). The least mean score was 4 for postings related to promotional avenues, corroborating that the Department is just a decade old. The alumni are yet to get eligible for promotions to higher cadres.

Table 4: Frequency of activities done on the DLIS PU FB page

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	*Mean*
I read Messages and Posts	4	15	20	15	6	*3.07*
Percentage	7.00	25.00	33.00	25.00	10.00	
I reply to messages	10	20	21	7	2	*2.52*
Percentage	17.00	33.00	35.00	12.00	3.00	
I comment on the posts	12	20	16	7	5	*2.55*
Percentage	20%	33%	27%	12%	8%	
I post information related to the LIS domain	27	21	7	3	2	*1.87*
Percentage	45.00	35.00	12.00	5.00	3.00	
I post my queries on the page	29	23	4	3	1	*1.73*
Percentage	48.00	38.00	7.00	5.00	2.00	
Share Job Vacancies posts	20	18	14	8	0	*2.17*
Percentage	33.00	30.00	23.00	13.00	0	

The frequency of interaction on the Facebook page is mostly for reading messages and posts, followed by posting comments. Respondents replied to general questions and statements on the FB page, and they occasionally shared Job Vacancy-related information to their peers through the FB page. The least activities on the page are posting information related to the Library and Information Science subject or raising any subject-oriented questions. The results emphasize the need to encourage alumni to interact on subject matters too on the Facebook page. As understood through consultation with the Department's teachers, alumni regularly call them and consult on subject-related issues. If these consultations happen through Facebook, they will act as an archive of valuable information.

Table 5: Level of Satisfaction on DLIS PU Facebook Page

	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfied	30	*50.00*
Not Satisfied	30	*50.00*

The level of satisfaction is only 50%. From the above table, one can infer that only 50% of the respondents are satisfied with the DILS FB page, corroborating that the page needs improvement in content and postings.

Table 6: Effect of Profiling Variables on Satisfaction (t and F Test)

Variable	Category	Satisfaction Mean	Responses	df	t Stat/ F Stat	P value
Gender	Male	18.87	41	58	1.588	0.120
	Female	21.31	19			
Age	20-25	17.75	12	59	0.800	0.499
	26-30	20.51	37			
	31-35	18.55	9			
	Above 35	20.00	2			
Qualification before joining M.Lib.I.Sc	UG	19.76	38	58	0.187	0.845
	PG	19.45	22			
The medium of instruction @ UG	English	19.40	57	58	1.671	0.220
	Non-English	24.33	3			
Pursued Masters @ Pondicherry University	Yes	19.78	55	58	0.579	0.565
	No	18.20	5			

	Employed	19.79	48			
Occupation	Unemployed	15.33	3	59	0.901	0.412
	Student/Scholar	20.33	9			

Table 5 is about the influence of profiling variables on the satisfaction of the DILS FB page. It is clear from the P-value that none of the profiling variables significant at 5 %. Therefore, none of the profiling variables have any influence on satisfaction. The theoretical mean for satisfaction scale is 18, and from the mean values, one can understand that most of the satisfaction values are only around 18. From this, it is clear that satisfaction among the respondents is not high on the DILS FB page.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this research helped the researcher understand the level of satisfaction and the interest of the alumni, which led to the understanding that the page needs improvement in terms of contents, pictures, and postings related to Subject discussions apart from General congratulatory posts and information related to admissions and Vacancies. Department is doing good in academics by producing quality research (Harinarayana & Raju, 2012), better placements, and making more students qualify for NET/SLET. Its interactions with the alumni, which started informally, should be strengthened by dedicating more time to posting Job alerts and posting subject-oriented content.

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