Using Social Media Tools and Networking Techniques in Library Activities in Digital Environment

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Abstract: The rise of social media has transformed it into the fastest means of communication for spreading information, engaging a diverse range of individuals. Like others, librarians are also impacted by social media. In today's era of Information and Communication Technology, having official social media accounts has become essential for attracting library users. In India, librarians are encouraged to create official profiles on platforms such as Flickr and Picasa for sharing images and to use video-sharing sites like YouTube, Viddler, Vimeo, and Ustream. Although multipurpose social media platforms such as Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn, as well as blogs, offer limited options for image and video hosting, they remain the preferred choice for Indian librarians to share both personal and professional visuals. Additionally, library websites can be linked with social media, and they can also enhance each other.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is an online technology that enables social interaction among large groups of individuals via various networks. The rapid growth of social media is making it an essential aspect of daily life, driven by the recent technological advancements. In today's digital age, librarians have a broad range of resources and services to manage that go well beyond the conventional eight-hour work schedule. The role of librarians in the international information landscape is unique. The responsibilities of librarians are essential for managing information resources in both physical and digital spaces. Significantly, the emergence of alternative information sources such as the internet, World Wide Web, and social media has presented a new challenge for librarians to address the swiftly evolving information requirements and anticipations of users in the 21st century. Librarians face the challenge of increasing their relevance in today's digital era. A primary concern for many librarians is drawing users to the library and keeping them engaged. To address this issue, librarians are reorganizing, redesigning, reformatting, and repurposing resources to enhance the promotion of their services and information.

II. SOCIAL MEDIA: CONCEPT

Social media encompasses various online platforms, tools, and technologies that enable people to connect, interact, share information, and form communities. It has become a crucial element of contemporary society, shaping our interactions, news consumption, business practices, and self-expression.

- *Interactive Technologies:* Social media platforms utilize interactive technologies that enable users to produce share and interact with content instantly. This level of interactivity sets social media apart from traditional media such as newspapers or television, where communication mainly occurs in one direction.
- *User-Generated Content:* A key feature of social media is the focus on content created by users. Individuals produce and disseminate a diverse array of content, such as text updates, images, videos, articles, and personal announcements. This enables people to act as their own content creators and publishers.
- *Social Networking:* Social media platforms allow for the establishment and upkeep of social networks. Individuals can link up with friends, family members, coworkers, and others who have shared interests. These networks

allow users to foster relationships, maintain communication, and work together on projects.

➢ *Virtual Communities:* Social media sites frequently encourage the development of online communities where individuals with common interests or backgrounds can unite to talk about various subjects, share thoughts, and provide mutual support. These groups can revolve around interests, careers, or collective experiences.

➢ *Communication and Information Sharing:* Social media has transformed the way we interact and convey information. It offers immediate access to news, updates, and various viewpoints from across the globe. Additionally, it enables both individuals and organizations to connect with a worldwide audience through their communications.

A. *Examples of Social Media Platforms:*
- *Social Networking Sites:* Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- *Photo and Video Sharing Platforms:* Instagram, YouTube, TikTok
- *Messaging Apps:* WhatsApp, Messenger, Telegram
- *Blogging Platforms:* WordPress, Tumblr, Medium
- *Review Sites:* Yelp, TripAdvisor, Google Reviews

B. *Social Media Impact on Society*
Social media has significantly influenced multiple areas of society, such as:
- *Communication:* It has made it easier and quicker to connect with individuals over long distances.
- *News and Information:* It has emerged as a primary source of news and information, often circumventing traditional media channels.
- *Business and Marketing:* It offers businesses robust tools for marketing, advertising, and engaging with customers.
- *Social and Political Movements:* It has had a crucial impact on the organization and mobilization of social and political movements.
- *Culture and Trends:* It shapes cultural trends, popular culture, and the dissemination of ideas.

C. *Challenges and Criticisms:*
Despite its benefits, social media also faces challenges and criticisms, including:
- The quick dissemination of misinformation and fake news through social media can lead to significant repercussions.
- Social media networks gather extensive user data, which raises worries about privacy and security.
- Cyber bullying and Harassment: Social media can be used for cyberbullying, harassment, and online abuse.
- Mental Health Concerns: Overuse of social media has been associated with mental health challenges like anxiety, depression, and diminished self-worth.
- Polarization and Echo Chambers: Social media algorithms may lead to the formation of echo chambers, wherein users encounter only information that aligns with their preexisting views, resulting in enhanced polarization.

III. LIBRARIANS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

By using platforms like social media, librarians and libraries can enhance their services and operations while keeping their relevance. A modern tool is necessary for promoting library and information resource services in the twenty-first century, as there has been a noticeable change in the way library services are communicated to users. Social media serves as a modern and relevant medium for the effective promotion of library and information services in today's technological landscape. Social media encompasses the methods of interaction between individuals where they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas within virtual communities and networks. The communications and marketing office oversees the primary accounts on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Vimeo.

Librarians aiming to maintain continuous engagement with their clients to enhance user satisfaction through promotion must establish a presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, MySpace, and micro blogging sites like Twitter, as well as blogs, etc. Presently, university libraries have established pages on Facebook, including Kenneth Dike Library and Delta State University Library, among others. Libraries ought to increase awareness of social networking sites online among their users and encourage library patrons to participate in these platforms to advocate for library resources and services. Therefore, it becomes essential for these university libraries to promote the library effectively, which, in turn, will contribute to the overall development of the university.

A. *Social media usage in Libraries and services:*
Web-based or internet-related technologies are the source of social media, and they rely on these mobile and online technologies to function. Facebook, blogs, microblogging, YouTube, Twitter, wikis, Mash Up, Digg, Delicious Second Life, Flickr, and Picasa are a few examples of the various forms of social media.

One of the primary approaches academic libraries employ on Facebook is to promote their library webpage. Libraries utilize Facebook to share information about their locations, operating hours, website details, and newly acquired materials, among other things. Facebook can serve as a platform to communicate updates on new reference services, document delivery, research assistance, and various library offerings. Moreover, some libraries can share insights about their collections, such as database trials, promotions, and updates related to both their print and electronic resources, along with other research materials. Another means that libraries advertise their activities are by sending invites to events. Databases, print and digital collections, and more study materials. Another way that libraries advertise their activities is by creating invites to events.

A blog is a website created by users that features entries displayed in reverse chronological order, typically resembling a journal format. Similar to personal webpages in the realm of social media, blogs can come in many forms, including comprehensive summaries on specific topics or personal diaries chronicling the author's experiences. Libraries can utilize blogs to promote their resources and services. Within a library setting, a blog can serve for outreach, sharing information, building a positive image, facilitating communication both internally and externally, highlighting newly acquired materials of interest, and—most importantly—promotion.

Librarians have the ability to provide information on certain topics and challenges within the government and institutions, post messages on a regular basis, and allow people to leave comments or add to the content. One can upload articles on topics that provoke thought and anticipate an immediate response. Librarians can post news about the library and events taking place there, and they can also be used to promote the activities of the parent communities of libraries, including community news about celebrations, ceremonies, sports, etc.

Librarians have adopted social media as an effective means to engage with their communities, highlight resources and services, and facilitate discussions about literacy, education, and access to information. Social media has emerged as an essential tool for libraries to operate and interact with their communities. Below are the different methods to leverage social media in libraries:

➢ *Promoting Resources and Services:*
- New Acquisitions: Libraries leverage social media to announce the latest books, journals, databases, and other materials.
- Events and Programs: They advertise library events such as author readings, workshops, book clubs, and children's activities.
- Digital Resources: Libraries showcase their online offerings, including e-books, audiobooks, and streaming options.

➢ *Engaging with the Community:*
- Interactive communication: Social media enables libraries to engage with patrons, respond to inquiries, and collect feedback;
- Fostering Relationships: Libraries create a community atmosphere by sharing engaging content, posing questions, and hosting contests;
- Reaching wider audiences: Social media allows libraries to connect with individuals who may not typically visit the physical library.

➢ *Providing Information and Support:*
- Library hours and locations: Libraries utilize social media to inform patrons about essential details like operating hours, holiday closures, and branch locations;
- Research support: Some libraries offer online research help via social media channels;

- Information literacy: Libraries can provide guidance and resources on how to assess information and combat misinformation.

➢ *Showcasing the Library's Value:*
- Behind-the-scenes insights: Libraries can offer followers a peek into their operations, showcasing the skills of librarians and the diverse range of services they provide;
- Success narratives: Sharing testimonials of how the library has positively impacted individuals and the community can illustrate its worth;
- Advocacy efforts: It serves as a platform for advocating for library funding and support;
- Promoting Library collections and Events: Librarians use platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to showcase new books, films, and other materials, as well as to announce upcoming events like author talks, book clubs, and workshops;
- Connecting with Patrons: Social media provides a platform for librarians to interact with patrons, answer questions, and provide personalized recommendations;
- Building Community: Librarians use social media to foster a sense of community among library users, creating online spaces for discussion and sharing;
- Advocating for Libraries: Social media can be used to raise awareness about the importance of libraries and the services they provide, as well as to advocate for funding and support;
- Sharing Information Literacy Resources: Librarians use social media to share tips and resources on topics like evaluating information sources, avoiding plagiarism, and protecting privacy online.

B. *Examples of Social Media Platforms Using by Libraries:*
- Facebook: For sharing news, events, and engaging with the community.
- Twitter: For quick updates, announcements, and interacting with other organizations.
- Instagram: For visually showcasing library resources, events, and behind-the-scenes glimpses.
- YouTube: For hosting virtual events, tutorials, and sharing informative videos.
- Blogs: For longer articles, book reviews, and in-depth information about library services.

C. *Social Media Benefits in Libraries:*
- *Increased visibility and reach:* Social media helps libraries connect with a wider audience.
- *Enhanced communication:* It provides a platform for two-way communication and feedback.
- *Community engagement:* Social media helps libraries build relationships with their communities.
- *Promotion of Resources and Services:* Libraries can effectively promote their offerings through social media.
- *Cost-effective Marketing:* Social media can be a cost-effective way to market library services.
- *Time commitment:* Managing social media accounts requires time and resources.
- *Content Creation:* Libraries need to create engaging and relevant content.

- *Staying up-to-date:* The social media landscape is constantly changing, so libraries need to stay informed about new trends and platforms.
- *Dealing with negative comments:* Libraries need to have a plan for handling negative comments or feedback on social media.

D. Some examples of how Libraries are using Social Media:
- The New York Public Library uses Instagram to showcase its collections and host virtual events.
- The Boston Public Library uses Twitter to share news and updates, as well as to engage in conversations with patrons.
- Many libraries have Facebook groups where patrons can discuss books, share recommendations, and connect with each other.

IV. CONCLUSION

By providing a platform for engagement and information sharing, libraries utilize social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to actively market their services, engage with users, announce new acquisitions, host online events, provide reference support, gather feedback, and foster community. This approach effectively extends their reach to a broader audience and enhances user connections. Key networking tactics include sharing relevant content, hosting contests, promptly responding to comments, collaborating with other organizations, and utilizing hashtags to boost visibility. Social media serves as a powerful and transformative influence that has altered our methods of engagement, communication, and perception of the world. While it offers numerous advantages, it also introduces challenges that warrant attention. Grasping the definitions and significance of social media, alongside its societal implications, is essential for navigating today's digital landscape. Social media has emerged as a vital resource for librarians in the 21st century, enabling them to engage with their communities in fresh and creative ways. In summary, social media acts as a potent instrument for libraries to connect with their communities, showcase their resources and services, and highlight their significance. By leveraging social media effectively, libraries can attract new audiences, engage with patrons, and cultivate stronger bonds with the communities they serve. Libraries that maintain an active presence on social media tend to attract more patrons.

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