

## Social Network-Driven Services for Academic Libraries

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### Abstract

*Many academic libraries rely on their traditional services and have a hesitation to start new services. Whether they have new services, they do not need to promote these. However, the modern society is changing very fast due to the adoption of new tools and techniques of information and communication technologies. The paradigm shift in the society due to the advent of web 2.0 technologies, especially, social networking and mobile technologies laid emphasis on the academic libraries to change its services and to adopt new services according to changes in the society. Thus, academic libraries need to employ the new service based on social media tools in order to target large audiences. This paper is an effort not only to study different types of social media tools and its usefulness but also to elaborate different types of services which can be employed by academic libraries to optimize and popularize its services.*

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**Keywords:** Academic Library, Library Services, Social Media, Social Networking Tools.

### 1. Introduction

The dictionary.com (2017) defines library as a place set apart to contain books for reading, study, or reference; (the library as a place, the physical location, the building); the books contained in a 'library' a great mass of learning or knowledge (the library as the collection); a scribe (the library staff, i.e., the agglomeration of librarians, staff and the tools of the trade arrayed to curate the resources entrusted upon them by the academy). Clearly, a tradition library is recognized as a space, as a collection, and as a scribe. But, the modern libraries have changed according to the needs of users. Now-a-days, the libraries have turned its phase to:

1. Library as a Space (Physical, as well as Virtual)
2. Library as a Collection (Physical as well as Online)
3. Library as a Scribe (Librarian, Skilled Staff, Advanced Tools and Techniques)

Table 1 represents more clearly the paradigm shift in past and present libraries. The past libraries have only physical space while modern libraries have both physical and virtual space. The past libraries have physical documents while modern libraries have both physical as well as digital documents. The tradition libraries have the agglomeration of librarians, staff

and services while the present libraries have web librarians, skilled staff and advanced tools and techniques.

**Table 1: Paradigm Shift in Past and Present Libraries**

	<b>Library as a Space</b>	<b>Library as a Collection</b>	<b>Library as a Scribe</b>
<b>Traditional Library</b>	the physical location, the building	Physical mass of learning or knowledge	the agglomeration of librarians, staff and services
<b>Modern Library</b>	Physical, as well as Virtual	Physical as well as Online	Librarian, Skilled Staff, advanced tools and techniques

Many academic libraries rely on their traditional services and have a hesitation to start new services. Whether they have new services, they do not need to promote these. However, the modern society is changing very fast due to the adoption of new tools and techniques of information and communication technologies. The paradigm shift in the society due to the advent of web 2.0 technologies, especially, social networking and mobile technologies laid emphasis on the academic libraries to change its services and to adopt new services according to changes in the society. The changes are due to capability of World Wide Web in creation, repackaging and dissemination of information effectively; fast and error-free library services due to web technologies; shift of libraries towards library 2.0; library services based on web 2.0; relevance of web technologies in providing a platform for conservation, collaboration and sharing in both physical and virtual spaces. Libraries around the world are forced to catching up facilities and services due to the paradigm shift. Colleges going youths are keen to adopt new technologies and are mostly familiar with the social media. Thus, academic libraries need to employ the new service based on social media tools in order to target large audiences. The present paper is an effort not only to study different types of social media tools and its usefulness but also to elaborate different types of services which can be employed by academic libraries to optimize and popularize its services.

## **2. Social Media Tools**

Wasik (2013) stated that social media is used to facilitate governance, provide access to vital information and services, communicate with the public, and promote civic participation. The potential approach to the regulation of library use of social media is a universal issue. Further, Social media involves social relations amongst people who have some type of relationship or affiliation (Wellman, 2001). It encompasses Whatsapp, Viber, Blogs, Wikis, MySpace, Facebook, Social marks, Tagging, Podcasting, Vodcasting, Mash-up, YouTube, RSS, Flickr, Tag Cloud, Folksonomy, Twitter, among others. It may be conceptualized as socio-technical arrangements incorporating technologies that support such activities. Thus, social media is a channel of communication dedicated to group based input, interconnection, sharing, collaboration, dissemination and integration of information in the faster way and on large scale. It compasses both web-based applications like Blogs, Wikis, Myspace, etc. and mobile-based applications like Whatsapp, Facebook, Viber, Hike etc. to make the interaction between different communities, institutions, organizations, and individuals which are familiar to these services. It can be used to publish, share, discuss, inter-connect, microblog, live stream, livecast, social gaming etc.

### 3. Types of Social Media Tools

The different types of social media tools can be classified as in table 2:

**Table 2: Different Types of Social Media Tools**

S. N.	Types	Social Media Tools
1.	General Type Social Networking	MySpace, Facebook, Google+, Orkut, Bebo, QQ Friendster
2.	Professional, Academic, Research Purpose Social Networking	Linkedin, Ning, ResearchGate, Academia.edu
3.	Subject Specific Social Networking	LisLinks, Library2.0, ALA Connect
4.	Internal (Community/ Class Specific) Social Networking	ALA Connect (for ALA members)
5.	Mobile Social Media Applications:	WhatsApp, Hike, Viber, etc

(Source:<http://slideplayer.com/slide/4910845/>)

### 4. Characteristics of Social Media Tools

According to Chitumbo (2015), the social media tools have following characteristics:

**4.1 User-Centered:** Online social networks are developed and directed by the users. Without the users, the network would be an empty space filled with empty forums, applications, and chat rooms. Through conversations and content, users keep populating these sites. This makes social networks exciting and dynamic to users.

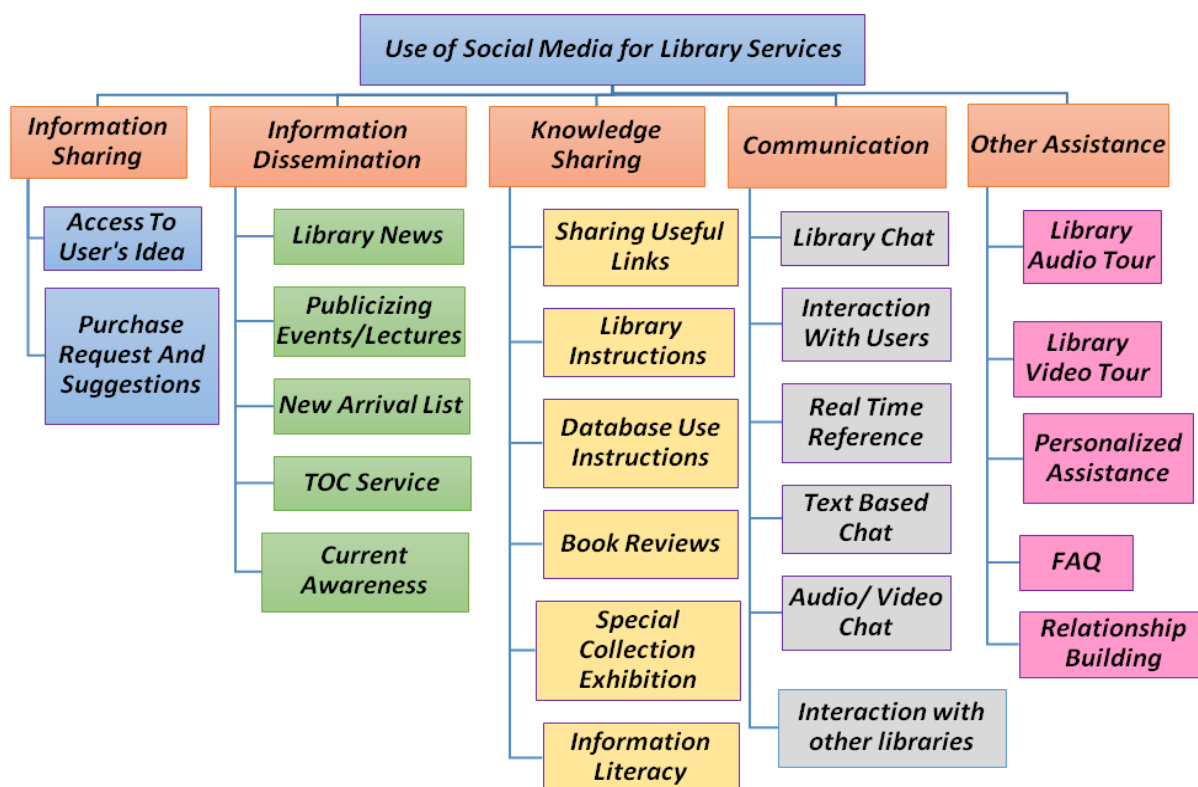
**4.2 Interactive:** Social media facilitates interaction and engagement between/among users. This improves communication and relationships. Social networks are no longer used for charting and forums only. For example, Facebook offers applications that allow participants to play games or challenge a friend to a chess tournament. SMTs now offer more remarkable platforms that allow for discussing and sharing of valuable issues like academics and business strategies. Social networks have become more than just entertainment but ways of connecting and sharing services while enjoying fun with friends.

**4.3 Community-driven:** Social networks are built and thrive from community concepts. Just like communities or social groups worldwide are founded on common beliefs or hobbies, social networks are based on the same principle. Within most modern online social networks today, you'll find sub-communities of people who share similar commonalities/interests or have the common background. These may include alumni of a particular high school, backers' association, professions, etc. This exercise does not only help participants discover new friends with similar interest in that community but can also help them to reconnect with old friends they had lost contact with many years ago.

**4.4 Flexible:** Social media features can easily be manipulated or tailored to meet specific needs of any user group.

**4.5 Relationships:** The more relationships one has or makes within the network, the more established one becomes towards the center of that network. Any update one makes on their page reaches out to a network of contacts and sub-contacts much larger than one may realize.

## 5. Use of Social Media for Library Services



**Figure 1: Use of Social Media for Library Services**

### 5.1 Information Sharing

Social media tools are useful in sharing of different types of information with the library users in order to know what types of services and resources library can procure time to time. User's idea and feedback about the library holding and their requirements are quite helpful for libraries to build a collection which is used by all. Social media like Whatsapp etc. can be used to ask about the purchase requests and the suggestions.

### 5.2 Information Dissemination

Academic libraries use many ways to disseminate information to its users like current awareness service, SDI services, TOC service etc. All these are traditional methods which are cumbersome and time taking process. While with the help of social media, the dissemination of the information like library news, future events organized specially for the library users, list of newly arrived documents, Table of Content of periodicals for specific subject group, and other current awareness services etc. become easy and fast and can be serve in both in group and in personalized.

### 5.3 Knowledge Sharing

The main aim of adoption of social media tools in the libraries is to share knowledge to the users. It includes the hyperlinks and URLs of the useful educational websites, library

instructions, database use instructions, book reviews or its links, exhibition of the special collections and information literacy. Some of these are:

**Information Literacy:** Library orientation and information literacy program to the students are become the necessity for the optimum use of the available resource at higher education level (P. K. Singh, 2015). It needs strong place in academic programs. The presentations, e-pamphlet, videos regarding these can be distributed to the users with the help of social media tools. Librarian has great opportunity to provide information literacy in regular basis at the beginning of academic session and remotely through social media.

**Book Reviews:** Book reviews help users to understand the creditability of the books. Many times users need to know that the particular book is useful for him or not. Librarians can help users by providing the URLs of the online reviews of the specific book. Book reviews of the recently procured books are quite useful to the users (P. K. Singh & Singh, 2017). The newly arrived books with its review may be disseminated to the users which is useful to attract the users.

## 5.4 Communication

Social media can facilitate to sharing of knowledge and ideas by communication between the library and its users, among students, among faculties and students etc. Library chat, interaction with users, real time reference, text-based chat, audio chat, audio-visual communications etc. are the forms of communication which can be initialized with the help of social media tools.

**Library Chat/ Interaction with Users:** Social media tools are capable to provide platforms to create groups of the library users of a specific subject or interrelated subjects. It may be helpful to do interaction with each other and sharing ideas and knowledge for academic and research purpose.

**Real Time/ Virtual Reference:** Ask-a-Librarian is mainly an online reference service in which users can ask questions anytime anywhere which can be handled by the reference librarian or other staffs promptly by using social media tools. The librarians can easily provide reference services through smart-phones in the form of SMS, MMS, e-mails, etc. Real time virtual reference service can be provided easily through the use of the social media tools. It is easier, more communicative, more interactive and more cost effective than the SMS, MMS and e-mails (Singh & Singh, 2015).

## 5.5 Other Online Assistances

It's a good way to incorporate electronic media for detail information with physical items and to make the display more engaging e.g. workshops, seminars, conferences etc.

**Library Audio Tours:** URLs of library audio tours are of immense value of the new comers to library orientations. It may help to know the rule and regulations of the library.

**Library Video Tutorials:** Library can provide users the videos of lectures, seminar tutorials, and university anthem, folk and cultural events organized time to time, which can be saved for easy access, as needed. The small video files can be uploaded directly while URLs of YouTube playlists of large videos can be provided.

**Personalized Information:** Web 2.0 and social media applications are also highly valued for their ability to connect libraries with users who may be unaware of their existence (Collins and Quan-Haase, 2012) while library users have many queries that they hesitate to ask in face to face conversation with reference librarian/ staffs while they remotely ask about these. Social media can help to solve these types of queries.

## 6. Issues and Challenges

Libraries can use social media tools for different kinds of activities and interactions, however, rate of adoption of these technologies in academic libraries is low because of several factors like requirement of skilled staff, requirement of regular updates, requirement of time and resources, require regular updates so hard to maintain, fragility of tools, users unlikeliness, lack of eagerness to communicate with library staff, negativity about library services etc. It is difficult to publish same information in different types of social media tools. Integration of different social media is required so that one post can be scattered in all connected media in a single effort.

## 7. Conclusion

The uses of social media tools are ubiquitous and pervasive among the university and college library users. Students have access to library resources without reaching to library building while librarians have facility of target large audiences to provide information notifications and other assistance to users with the help of social media platforms. It has facilitated several new services and fastens the existing services of libraries. The popularity of Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Wechat and others among the students, researchers and faculties can be used as an important library tool for providing the real time virtual reference service, personalized information, current awareness service, chat with librarian, dissemination of the information to the mass, group chat, sharing of the new arrival list etc. Librarian's contributions need not be limited to information organization, preservation, and access. The domain remains an open world of possibility (Jim, 2008). The current trend mobile internet use among Indian academic research scholars impacts on the libraries to provide their services through mobile library site too (Singh, 2014).

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