

**LIBRARY SERVICES AND SOCIAL NETWORKING IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: AN INTRODUCTION****Dr.Raj Kumar Singh**

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**Abstract**

The social networking services can effectively be used by the libraries to share information with its clients in the easiest way possible. With social networking tool one can create bookmark collections, share notices and more.

This paper is therefore an attempt to examine the present scenario in library services delivery with these new and emerging technologies. In this paper we highlighted conceptual meaning of social networking, changing environment of libraries, some important different type of social networking sites, role of librarians in social networking era, and challenges and recommendations for 21<sup>st</sup> century library and librarians.

**Key word** WWW, Social Network, YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, ICT

**Introduction**

Up to some years back, there was no problem in identifying the information sources in libraries as the majority of them were in only printed form such as books, periodicals, govt. publications, dissertations and thesis, patents, standards, specification etc.

The emergence of the internet particularly the WWW as a new medium represents a revolution in information storage and retrieval. It has shown a paradigm shift in information rendering and information seeking behaviour of the regular users.

In the present era of information explosion, more and more information is available on web. All the sources of information are now available in electronic media like on-line and other stored electronic formats. The old traditional methods and models of information seeking needs to be redefined in new context i.e. in digital age.<sup>1</sup>

Social networking is a concept that has been around much longer than the internet or even mass communication. People have been always social creatures; our ability to work together in group, creating value that is greater than the sum of its parts, is one of our greatest assets. In traditionally networking terms, what

are being linked are device or object; phones, fax machines, computer, documents etc. The rapid rise of social networking sites has already provided this a reality, even though they are "wall garden". By mid-2004 there were over 200 social networking sites, including Friendstar, LinkedIn, Ryse, Orkute, ZeroDegrees, Meetup, Tickle, and many more are coming. In these communities, an initial set of founders send out messages inviting members of their own personal network to join the site. New members repeat the process, growing the total number of members and links in the network site then offer features such as automatic address book updates, viewable profile, the ability to form new links through 'introducing services' and other forms of online social connections.<sup>2</sup>

**Conceptual meaning of Social Network/Media**

Social network is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users, in an environment where the facility to browse, search, and invite friends and to connect and interact with WWW.<sup>3</sup>

In other words Social networking is an evolutionary development of online participation where people of common interest communicate,

share and contribute content on the social cyberspace. It is a viable tool for cooperation and sharing of knowledge in an open access platform. In the Social Network Space (SNS), people with common interests are able to share information with each other via a huge variety of social networkingsites (sites created specifically to make sharing, communicating, and creating information as simple and efficient as possible). Social networking is a new way of providing library service through new internettechnologies, with emphasis on “user-centered”, two-way interaction and communication of information. With new networking tools, information can now flow in a multi-faceted dimension (library to user, user to library, library to library, and user to user), rather than the one way stereotype form of library to user. It is constantly expanding the world of participatory and collaborative scholarly communication and learning. It is a new model of online service that encourages an increased flow of information from library to users and from the user back to the library. Online participation and contentcontribution are core issues in the present social networking practices. Social networking tool is a platform where users are both consumers and producers of online content. With these tools, librarians can constantly evaluate and update content to meet the changing needs ofusers. These tools are used for collaboration and sharing of ideas and it is becoming an integral part of library services. It also calls for libraries to encourage users’ participation and feedback mechanism in the development and maintenance of library services. The active participation of users enables them to contribute content, establish communication links, and stay informed of new developments in the social network space. With information and ideas flowing in both directions – from the library to the user and from the user to the library – library services have the ability to evolve and improve on a constant and rapid basis.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Useful Social NetworkingTools for Librarians**

Social networking site iscommonly known as social networking website and promote a number of social network services. It allows to user to share ideas, activities events and interest within the individuals networks. Some social network have additional feature, such as ability to create groups that share common interest or affiliation, upload or stream live videos and hold discussion in forums.

As a librarian, you want to be able to share information with patrons and students in the easiest way possible, and social networking offers a great way to do just that. With social networking tools, you can create bookmark collections, share notices, and more. We have profiled some of the best here. With these social networking tools, it should be easier than ever to stay in touch, organized and well connected. You may even find that you have got more access to information than you ever did before. Of course as an added bonus, you will now be known as the “cool“ librarian because you are on Facebook.

Some of the popularly used social networking communication, distribution and organization sites are briefly discusses as follows:<sup>5</sup>

#### **Communication**

**Facebook:** most popular now because it is librarian- friendly, with many applications like JSTORsearch, World Cat, and much more. Librarians can interact with users to know their information need.Libraries try to link some of these specialized library applications to Facebook.

**MySpace:** In Academic institutions where the students are; libraries have taken advantage of this siteto post, calendar, custom catalog search tools, and blog features to improve their presence.

**Ning:** Librarians can get connected with users, library associations, and more. You can also use it to share information with many people at a time.

**Blogs:** Here, librarians can periodically post messages; share information on a particular subject orissue, and allow users to contribute to

content. They can write articles, news on topical issues and expect an instant reaction from their users.

**LinkedIn:** Librarians can get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest via LinkedIn. Librarians can use this platform to render specialized services such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI).

**Twitter:** a micro blogging application, to keep staff and patrons updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update.

**Distribution**

**YouTube:** Institutions can highlight the inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops disseminated via the YouTube. We can see how other libraries are using YouTube by checking out the [youtubeandlibrarieswiki](#).

**Flickr:** Librarians can use this tool to share and distribute new images of library collections. Coverpage of new arrivals of both books and journals can be disseminated to users via Flickr.

**Wikipedia:** Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia updated by users. You can use this

tool to share your knowledge by editing or simply point library patrons in the right direction.

**Organization**

**Library Thing:** A tool that enriches the library OPAC. Once an account is created, a list of books with ISBNs is sent to Library Thing which sends back a piece of code which is pasted into the footer of the Library OPAC. Librarians can utilize this to send a list of current publications to users.

**anobii:** This site for book lovers is a place to share reviews and recommendations. You can also take advantage of due date alerts, lending and discussions.

**Lib.rario.us:** Another social cataloguing site, you can put media such as books, CDs, and journals on display for easy access and tracking.

**The Changing Library Environment**

This paper discusses about the changing library environment from early period to 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries, reading material, retrieval techniques and also discusses about the five fundamental laws of library science.<sup>6</sup>

**Five Fundamental Laws of Library and Information Science.**

1 <sup>st</sup> stage	2 <sup>nd</sup> stage	3 <sup>rd</sup> stage
1. Books are for use.	1. Information is for use.	1. Library serves humanity.
2. Every reader his/ her book.	2. Every reader his/ her information.	2. Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated
3. Every book its reader.	4. Every information its reader.	3. Use technology intelligently to enhance service.
5. Save the time of reader.	3. Save the time of information user.	4. Protect free access to knowledge.
Library is a growing organism.	Information is a growing organism.	5. Honour the past and create the future.

**Reading Materials and Retrieval Techniques of Early Period library to 21<sup>st</sup> Century library**

Period	Reading Material	Retrieval Techniques
Early Period	Early reading material such as Pinakes, Clay tablets, Parchment, Vellum Bark of trees, Palm leaves, Papyrus, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scholar librarian usually depended in memory.</li> <li>Limited collections confined to religious institutions, royals and rich.</li> </ul>

<p>Mediaeval Period</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper, printing and books: Paper was invented in 11<sup>th</sup> century in China, but rest of the world came to know only in 13<sup>th</sup> century.</li> </ul>	<p>Still books were limited called incunabula, often kept in chain and locked.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholars were the moving catalogues.</li> </ul>
<p>16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printing press was invented in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century.</li> <li>• Movable letter presses and changes in social structure such as democracy and sovren states, resulting in the movement for education for the masses.</li> <li>• Birth of many educational institutions including Universities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of books became easy</li> <li>• Demand for books has increased</li> <li>• Need arose for libraries storing books in rooms made of bricks with large collections. This resulted for the birth of Librarianship as a profession. Librarians were still scholars and were mostly depending on their memory for retrieval. Often prepared list of books (what we now call catalogues)</li> </ul>
<p>18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century</p>	<p>Saw the production of large number of books Libraries were created for the benefit of citizens</p>	<p>Classification and cataloguing dominated as two techniques of Information retrieval, assisted by personal assistance leading to Reference Service.</p>
<p>20<sup>th</sup> Century</p>	<p>Periodical/Publications and serials became handy as quicker and faster means of Information communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation work and service by producing Documentation lists.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-conventional documents: Microforms, microfilms, micro-fiche, micro card</li> <li>• Video-audio tapes</li> <li>• Computer readable material Floppy, CDs and other e-documents, net worked libraries etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Indexing, Abstracting, CAS, SDI, Repackaging were invented for Information retrieval. Creation of large data bases, on-line retrieval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public access system, etc.</li> </ul>
<p>21<sup>st</sup> Century</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Euphoria of Internet Revolution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-line services (with the help of clicks)</li> </ul>

**The important characteristics of social networking for libraries are:**

- **Participatory**- Users have the opportunity to actively engage in the construction of knowledge rather than being passive consumers of content;
- **Educative**- Users are kept abreast of the latest developments and can have open access to knowledge;
- **Collaborative**-Social Network ensures knowledge sharing, establishes communication link with experts and allows users to develop a teamworking skill and
- **Fascinating**- It is inspiring, interesting and users can be engrossed in the use of social network sites; some users garner information with these sites in an easy and unencumbered manner; and **Flexibility** - Easy content creation and sharing, easy to update files and personal contact.

**Role of Librarians in Social Network Era**

Libraries play important roles in providing information for research and access to knowledge. In order to stay relevant in the socially networked environment and meet the growing needs of their users, librarians therefore need to pro-actively embrace the new technologies and face the challenges for better services delivery. Librarians are responding to the popularity of social networking sites and their expanding role in the creation, use, and sharing of information by engaging them as a central medium for interacting with library patrons and providing services to meet their information needs. The ways in which people communicate, acquire and share knowledge, will inevitably have an impact on the library, its services, and its staff. Librarians should follow the public conversations, posts, updates, and events of these key individuals, and pro-actively offer advice, resources, and help. He should act as an active participant of the social space and be able to identify the needs of the members of the library communities and to proffer solutions by offering information, links to the websites that are relevant to their information needs; and even direct offers of help. There is an urgent need for libraries to adopt the new social

networking tools in their services as a strategy to embrace change while promoting a participatory role for library users in knowledge creation. The growing use of social networking tools calls for librarians to develop 21st century skills on digital technologies. Libraries can connect their social networking sites with their library Websites to links to their catalog, chat reference pages, research guides, calendar of events, news etc. Some of the roles of the social networking librarian include: understanding and articulating the nature of social networking sites, creating webpage and content, establishing friendly user interface over the network, creating online database management, evaluating and applying information, and assisting users with skill acquisition. Other skills for a social networking literate librarian include: searching and navigating the web, creating social network space, teaching, and providing quality online library services. The Model below is an adaptation of Richter and Koch (2008) model on process of IT supported social networking. This model encapsulates the future roles of the 21st century librarians in the dynamic technological environment. Librarians must possess these skills:

**Identity management** - Librarians should be able to examine profiles of users to mirror their information needs and match them with the library collections.

**Network awareness** - Should be able to share views and create awareness of the different social network sites and their uses

**Expert search** - The 21st century librarian should be an expert in web navigation; able to find friends of friends, and potential library users with common interest.

**Contact management** - Librarians can cross-link people and ideas among the conglomerate of different groups.

**Context awareness** - should be diversified in knowledge and able to link information to people's profiles.

**Challenges of Social Networking**

- Lack of awareness
- Bandwidth problem
- Technophobia
- Poor connectivity
- Afraid of handling computers
- Unreliable power supply
- Lack of maintenance
- Lack of training staff
- Government intervention
- Copyright Issue

**The above identified challenges could be solved by librarian through the following strategies:**

- Organizing a public awareness forum such as library orientation, conferences, symposia, workshops to create awareness and educate librarians and users on the social networking services and applications.
- Embracing current change in order to remain relevant and adapt to the new ICT driven environment.
- Imbibing a maintenance culture so as to manage the few available ICT facilities effectively.

- Provision of stable power supply will encourage and facilitate the effective use of these tools.
- Pro-active training of librarians to acquire 21st century skills to adapt to the changing ICT environment.
- Government should take an active role in providing ICT facilities to institutions.
- Educating the public on the issue of copyright law and violation.

#### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, this paper has tried to examine the concept of social networking and its application to library services. It has been observed that librarians not fully embraced these social networking tools in library services. As such, there is a need for a pro-active awareness and training to educate both the librarians and the users on the invaluable importance of utilizing social networking in library services. 21<sup>st</sup> century librarians adapt to the new ICT driven environment and will be able to implement a successful social media programs, and utility to prove the value of their collection.

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