Social Networking Sites As A Viable Tools
For An Effective Delivery Of Library Services

Anand Y. Kenchakkanavar¹ & Dr. Gururaj S. Hadagali²

¹Junior Research Fellow, Department of Studies in Library and Information Science, Karnataka University, Dharwad – 580 003, India.
²Assistant Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Karnataka University, Dharwad – 580 003, India.

Abstract : The main purpose of the present study is to shed light on the importance of social media, particularly Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in Library and Information centers (LICs). Libraries are slowly adopting SNSs to provide effective services to its user’s community without wasting much of their time. Further, the paper highlights on the Internet and SNSs users, importance and general features of SNSs. A number of services which can be provided using SNSs are enlisted in this paper.

Keywords: Internet, Library services, Social Media and Social Networking Sites.

Introduction

The present society has witnessed a tremendous change in all matters, be it educational institutes, R&D organizations, business enterprises and library & information centers which are not exception to these developments. The use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ YouTube etc. have become a popular and integral part of everyday communication. The technology savvy users have considered these communication tools as the sixth basic need of human being. However, in addition to communication, social networking sites facilitate the creation and sharing of various forms of content including blogs, photos, videos, audios, files, status and many more. These Social Networking Sites (hereafter SNSs) are helping people evolve with a current trends in technology and changing face of the world of communication (Madhusudhan, 2012). The SNSs are profile based websites that allow the users to maintain social relationships by viewing, visiting and sharing the lists of social connections with the members (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Boyd & Ellison (2008) define SNSs as “Web-based services that allow individuals to (a) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (b) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”.

Internet and Social Media users

Since its inception in the early 1960s, the internet was used by computer experts, engineers, scientists and librarians. Over a period of time, there was a gradual increase in the number of internet users. At present, around 40% of the people have internet connection worldwide. The figure 1 shows the internet users of the world from 1993 to 2014. There is an exponential increase in the number of internet users from 1993 to 2014. During 2005, there were one billion internet users worldwide. Within a span of five years it has reached the two billion mark.

The table 1 shows the statistics of top ten countries’ internet users. It indicates that China leads the table with 64,16,01,070 internet users. On an average, there is a growth of 2.5 crore internet users every year (with 4% growth every year). Among the total internet users of the world, there is more than 20% share from China alone. The US and India ranked second and third respectively as per the internet users are concerned. It is interesting to note that Nigeria has 16% growth of internet users in one year whereas that of India and Russia are 14% and 10% respectively. The penetration of internet users compared to the population is highest among US, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, France etc (more than 80%).
Figure 1: Internet users in the world from 1993 to 2014 (As on 1st July 2014)

Table 1: Internet users of the different countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Internet Users</th>
<th>1 Year Growth %</th>
<th>1 Year User Growth</th>
<th>Total Country Population</th>
<th>1 Yr Population Change (%)</th>
<th>Penetration (% of Pop. with Internet)</th>
<th>Country’s share of World Population</th>
<th>Country’s share of World Internet Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>641,601,070</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24,021,070</td>
<td>1,393,783,836</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>46.03%</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>21.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>279,834,232</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17,754,869</td>
<td>322,583,006</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
<td>86.75%</td>
<td>4.45%</td>
<td>9.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>243,198,922</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29,859,598</td>
<td>1,267,401,849</td>
<td>1.22%</td>
<td>19.19%</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>109,252,912</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7,688,535</td>
<td>126,999,808</td>
<td>-0.11%</td>
<td>86.03%</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
<td>3.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>107,822,831</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6,884,333</td>
<td>202,033,670</td>
<td>0.83%</td>
<td>53.37%</td>
<td>2.79%</td>
<td>3.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>84,437,793</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7,494,536</td>
<td>142,467,651</td>
<td>-0.26%</td>
<td>59.27%</td>
<td>1.97%</td>
<td>2.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>71,727,551</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1,525,829</td>
<td>82,652,256</td>
<td>-0.09%</td>
<td>86.78%</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
<td>2.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>67,101,452</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9,365,590</td>
<td>178,516,904</td>
<td>2.82%</td>
<td>37.59%</td>
<td>2.46%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>57,075,826</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1,574,653</td>
<td>63,489,234</td>
<td>0.56%</td>
<td>89.90%</td>
<td>0.88%</td>
<td>1.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>55,429,382</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1,521,369</td>
<td>64,641,279</td>
<td>0.54%</td>
<td>85.75%</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Figure 2 indicates the latest numbers on mobile connections, internet users and social media users in India. India has near about 946 million active mobile connections against the total population of 1,265 million. The data shows that more than 75% of the population has the mobile subscription. Out of 946 million mobile connections, more than 25% population is having internet connections. Out of 243 million active internet users, 118 million active social media users are there.
Importance of Social Networking Sites

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly changed the way in which people, especially young chaps interact with their peers and the world around them. The usage of landlines, pagers, and other devices for communication are becoming obsolete over a period of time. Due to continuous research, now a day, android based cell phones as well as Smart phones are available with cheaper cost with all features. Because of these devices, one can communicate, share videos, and interact very easily without any barriers. Recent survey conducted by Tata Consultancy Service on use habit of mobile and Smartphone among the students of high schools in 14 cities across the country ("GenY" & “Post-Millennials", 2012). The survey included 17,478 students in 1660 schools among the cities during August 2012 to December 2012. As per the survey, students are more interested by using social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Orkut etc. Social Networking Sites allow users to create personalized websites where they can post personal profile photos, music, blogs etc (Miller et al., 2010). The first recognized SNS was launched in the year 1997 and named as ‘Sixdegree.com’ (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). This site allowed users to create profiles, list their friends etc. During 1997-2001 a number of community tools began supporting various combinations of profiles and publicly articulated friends. The Korean virtual world’s site ‘Cyworld’ was started in 1999 and added SNS features in 2001 (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The next waves of SNS began when Ryze.com was launched in 2001 to help people leverage their business network (Sampath Kumar et al., 2013). Friendster launched in 2002 as a complement to Ryze. It was designed to compete with match.com, a profitable online dating site (LIU and YING, 2010). MySpsee attracted the majority of social media attention in the U.S and abroad. Orkut became the premier SNS in Brazil before growing rapidly in India (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Mixi attained widespread adoption in Japan, LunarStorm took off in Sweden, Dutch users embraced Hyves, Grono captured Poland, Hi5 was adopted in smaller countries in Latin America, South America, and Europe, and Bebo became very popular in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia (Donelan et al, 2012). Facebook was originally launched in 2004 for Harvard students and Twitter created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey (Lusted, 2011). LinkedIn is a business oriented social networking site founded in December 2002 and launched in May 2003, which is mainly used for professional networking (Cunha and Manuela, 2011). YouTube is a (Google-Owned) video sharing, on which users can upload, share and view videos (Elza, 2011). A wide variety of user generated video content is displayed, including film and TV clips. Thus, the social networking is a practice of expanding of one’s business and / or social contacts by making connections through individuals. Hence, SNSs attract a wide audience to communicate each other.

Features of Social Networking Sites

The following are some of the features of SNSs in general. The list is exhaustive but not limited to these only;
i. SNSs help to share and discuss information among others.
ii. It helps people to share their stories and experience.
iii. It helps to create social groups.
iv. It helps to create Forums, Groups, Events and listings etc.
v. It allows users to have online profiles and invite others to be their friends.
vi. It encourages people to join virtual groups based on the common interest.
vii. SNSs allow individuals to be visible to others and established or maintained connection with others.
viii. It helps form community groups.
ix. Some of the SNSs allow chatting.
x. Some of the SNSs allow videoconferencing.
xi. Few of the SNSs offer free phone calls.

Social Networking Sites and Library Services

Today’s buzzwords are social media, social networking sites, Facebook, WhatsApp, Google plus, Twitter, Blog etc. Over the past few years, these SNSs have been more popular among the young population especially college students. Nowadays, SNSs have become increasing requirements in almost all organizations and hence, libraries are not an exception to this. SNSs can be a great tool to save money and promote library services and collection (Tella et al., 2013). As a result, most of the professionals are using these SNSs to connect other libraries and professionals. The professionals are communicating with potential library users by extending services using SNSs (Suraweere et al, 2011).

The following are some of the services enlisted which can be rendered by the libraries using SNSs especially Facebook, Google+, MySpace, Twitter, Blogs, LinkedIn, YouTube, and others.

i. SNSs can be useful in the activities like, Book Acquisition request, recommendation of books, Borrowers card request, overdue charges etc.
ii. SNSs allow to provide Current Awareness Services to the library services viz., forthcoming events like, seminars/conferences/workshops/tutorials, Book exhibitions, special lectures etc.
iii. Through SNSs information can be disseminated such as calendar of events, list of holidays, working hours during holidays.
iv. SNSs allow to provide the arrivals of new books, journal issues, news papers to the library.
v. The online services like ‘Ask-a-librarian’ or ‘Help Desk’ through SNSs to answer specific queries of the different users is possible through online.
vi. To discuss with the users, online chat service can be extended to the users particularly with regard to library collections, staff, services, facilities and users respective subjects.
vii. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) through SNSs will allow users’ to find answers and solutions for the common problems encountered in using the library services.
viii. Using SNSs library can provide information about the general library policy/guidelines for the various types of users.
ix. Libraries can render Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services by providing information sources and useful links on their specialization.
x. A library can provide services like online document reservation and cancellation.
xi. Libraries can conduct online quiz’s, as an outreach activity there by creating public awareness programmes.
xii. Reference service can be provided using SNSs.
xiii. Users will come to know that their materials have arrived at the library via SNSs tools rather than phone or mail.
xiv. SNSs help the users to introduce subject specific information available on collaborative weblogs.
xv. SNSs allow the library staff to get feedback, suggestion or for the acquisition of title, which helps the library staff to improve the services.
xvi. SNSs allow users to get links to online resources, subject gateways, knowledge portals and digital repositories etc.
xvii. SNSs allow users to browse collections of bookmarks of other users and require a certain participation to become successful.
xviii. Libraries can use some SNSs for disseminating library related video contents and as library virtual tour guides. Library can also upload videos like those of guest lectures, Seminars, Conferences, Library tour, User orientation etc. for the benefit of users.

Above mentioned services are broad views of social network based library services, which focus on different types of library services. Social networking sites emphasise on the need to
provide the quality library services in social network environment, which creates a positive environment among the tech-savvy users.

**Conclusion**

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made a tremendous impact on the service sectors, be it banking, health, transportation, education and library and information centres (LICs) (Subramanian, 2015). The latest trends in LICs are Interoperability, Ontology, Web 3.0 especially social networking and social networking tools. In the present knowledge based society LICs are not merely places to visit and collect information but also disseminate the information using latest electronic/communication gadgets/ tools.

In the present era, social media has become the buzzword. It is a new way of providing library services through Internet technology. It has become a viable tool for cooperation and sharing of knowledge. Social networking is an evolutionary development of online participation where people of common interest, communicate, share and contribute on the social cyberspace (Subramanian, 2015).

Social media and use of social networking sites in Indian libraries are slow compared to the libraries of developed countries and some of the developing countries. The adoption and usage of social networking has to be geared up in the Indian context. Since the social networking technologies are very useful for user catered reference services, it is essential for the LICs to implement the social media tools. Once the LICs set up the social networking, it becomes very easy to provide services to the users’ community. Thus, social media can be a complementary technology tool to the traditional library system for library professionals.

**References**


