

The Use of Facebook in Information Service Delivery in Academic Libraries in Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract: The deployment of social networking sites in university libraries has changed the way information is disseminated and used by members of the university community. The use of new technologies like Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, Wikis, Flickr, Microblogs, Chat and Podcast have become essential tools for information dissemination in academic Libraries. However, in order for libraries to remain relevant in this ICT driven environment, the use of social media for information service delivery becomes useful. This paper therefore examines the use of Facebook for information service delivery in academic libraries, focusing on the concept of Facebook, importance of Facebook in academic libraries, advantages of Facebook, conclusion and recommendations.

Keywords: Facebook Microblogs, Social networking.

INTRODUCTION

The current changes on the information landscape in academic libraries, as a result of the deployment of social networking sites in libraries has altered the way information is disseminated in academic libraries. In view of this foregoing, academic libraries are striving to reposition themselves in this fast growing digital environment, and trying to redefine their role to enable the library remain relevant through the use of social networking sites to advocate, promote and raise awareness about library collection and services[1]. A social networking site is an online service, platform or site that focuses on building social relationship among people who share interest and activities. Social networking site often involves grouping specific individuals or organizations together. This site provides a quick method of generating, and maintaining a web based subject guides and act as a communication tools that enable social interaction among users[2].

One of the most popular social networking sites used today by academics, and private organizations is the Facebook. According to Calvi, Cassella and Nuijten [1], Facebook has become one of the prominent tools for social networking over the last few years, and its usage in academic libraries is gaining wider acceptance globally. Facebook constitutes a rich social networking site for researchers, where information can be located in a library Facebook page. It allows user to make comments and feedback on libraries posting on the latest happenings in the libraries[3].

THE CONCEPT OF FACEBOOK

The concept of Facebook started in February 2004 at Harvard, initially its usage was restricted to students of Harvard University, as the awareness began to grow, its usage was expanded to include other colleges in Boston area, the Ivy League and Stanford University[4]. In 2006, it was finally opened to the general public of all age group above 13 years. Today, the site is one of the most visited sites among educators, college students, businessmen and the society globally. However, by 2011 Facebook had over 800 million users. According to Paxson [5] and Abubakar (2011) as cited by Adaja and Ayodele[6], Facebook has been described as "one of the important social media networks and websites, and one of the social networking sites which enable users to have interpersonal and communication capabilities, social interactions and academic discussions"

When Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook in 2004, February 4th, there was no platform for institutions and groups. But as the usage continued to increase there were modifications and expansion of the design, which gives room for business organizations, institutions of education, and other cooperative bodies to have their presence on the network. Adaja and Ayodele [6] notes that, the platform allows users to join common interest groups, organized by workplace, school or college for social networking and also allows users to create individual and group profiles. The usage statistics of Facebook globally is on geometrical progression both

for social interaction, business and education. According to Skelton [7], a monthly online news forum, facebook offers an alternative tool to help drive traffic to your blog and other outputs, by appearing in a newsfeeds of all your “liker’s” sharing opinions and making suggestions. In Nigeria, the usage of facebook for information dissemination is amazing. Guaranty Trust Bank with over 1.2m facebook leads as the brand with the highest number of facebook fans, followed by M.T.N. with 1.1m facebook fans while Airtel Nigeria and Nokia Nigeria followed with 609,054 and 529,413 respectively. For celebrities, pastor Enoch Adeboye

leads with over 1.1million facebook fans while Omotola Jolade follows with over 1million fans, popular artist Wizkid and Tope Alabi have 663, 438 and 539,381 fans respectively (Amazing social media statistics, 2014). However, for politics, president Jonathan of Nigeria reached 56 million fans for re-election, today social media has become an increasingly familiar tool employed in academic libraries to market services and resources to current and prospective patrons [8]. Generally, facebook usage progression since its inception in 2004 is shown below:

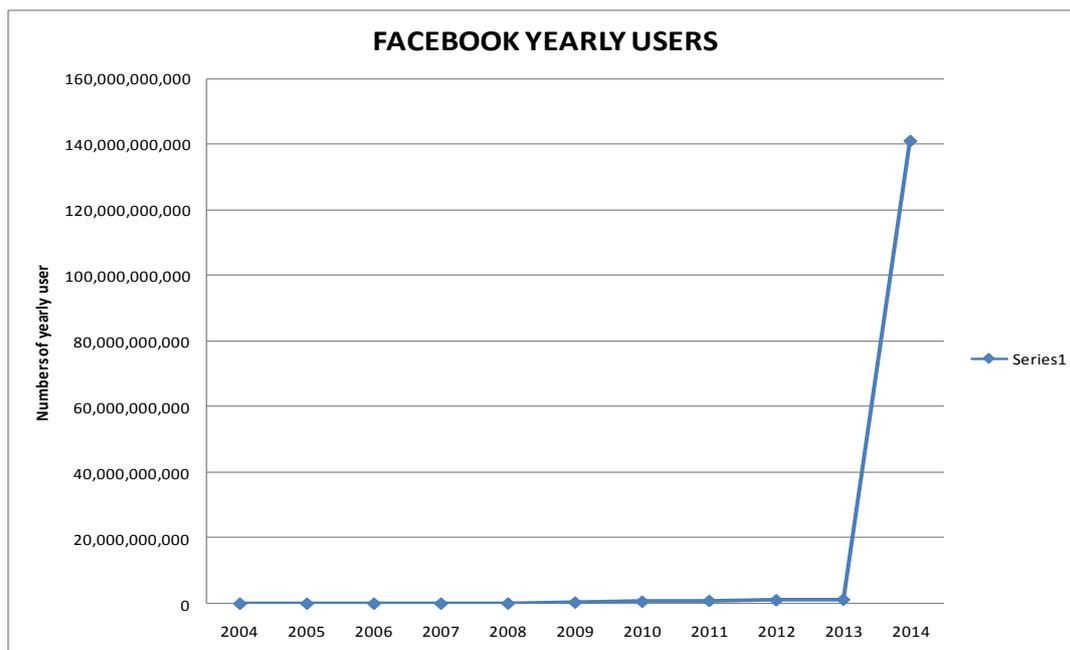


Fig. 1: Source of Data: facebook www.guadian

Figure 1 is a global yearly user’s statistics, progressing geometrically. From the diagram the usage has reached 140 billion in the second quarter of 2014. When compared with other social networking site, Adaja and Ayodele [6], posits that facebook is the most popular social networking site used with 64.69% as against 19.64% for YouTube. On a global view, English speaking countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom and the United states are rated higher. In Africa, there are about 17million facebook users at the start of 2011 and the figure is expected to rise to 28million by 2012 (Ledgard, 2011) as cited by Adaja and Ayodele,[6]. Over the years, the use of facebook has continued to be on a rising profile, According to African Facebook Users (2013), Nigeria is the 3rd largest users of facebook and 36th in the whole world. In the latest ranking of countries using social interactive site on the internet by the World Bank. The figure as at March , 2013 showed that Nigeria is having 5,357,500, South Africa came second with 5,554,160 users, Egypt led with 13010,580, Morocco 5,250,340 , Algeria

34,36,700, Kenya 1,880,560, Ghana 1,465,560, Democratic Republic of Congo has the least number of users among countries with a total of 891,140 user. Comparing the figure with other countries of the world, the report shows Egypt though the largest in Africa is the 20th country in the world rating, comparing with Australia, Taiwan, Malaysia and Japan. The latest report by CPAAFRICA[9] has it that Nigeria facebook users hints 11million leading south Africa with over 2 million users. In November 2007, facebook launched another facebook page, this feature is intended for business, non-profits organization, music group etc. This was in response to the shutting down of such profiles, libraries and other groups can now create their profile. This new facebook platform application allow anyone to develop facebook programs

Importance of Facebook in Academic Libraries

The importance of facebook in academic libraries cannot be under estimated in this ICT driven environment. According to Jacobson [10] facebook has

come to dominate the social networking site arena, more libraries have created their own library pages on facebook to create library awareness and perhaps to disseminate timely information to users or academic community. Social media such as facebook is commonly used to interact with users, sharing library news or events, sharing pictures as well as marketing library services [11]. The finding from the study by Benn and McLoughlin[12] on web analysis of web content of academic libraries on facebook of 100 top

universities across the globe established that 83% of academic libraries based on academic ranking of World University are on facebook, while 73% has Twitter account. Posting was very active with 90% posting to facebook and 81% of libraries posting a tweet to twitter on at least seven days. At the Yale University for example, university library had the most “like” on facebook while Harvard University had the most “followers” on Twitter. Table 1 show 10 most “liked” libraries on facebook:

Table 1: Ten Most “liked” libraries on facebook from the World’s top 100 University as at 29 April ,2013

S/N	Universities	No. of Liked
1	Yale University library	5503
2	University of Melbourne	5478
3	Stanford University	4251
4	South California University	2860
5	University of Washington	2798
6	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	2698
7	Stockholm University	2591
8	University of Oxford	2550
9	Princeton University	2524
10	University of Sydney	2400

In South East Asian, from the finding of the study by Mohd and Hazidah [11]), out of 73 academic library, only 36 have adopted Web 2.0 while 29 are on facebook. In Philippines, 11 academic library are on facebook, Thailand 12 while Indonesia 7 respectively. In the present circumstance, for libraries to remain relevant in 21st century and beyond the use of social networking sites is paramount for dissemination of information and library routines/ services. Studies has shown that there is a decline in the use of library physical collections and service which may impact negatively on the quality of teaching, Learning and research in academic institutions [13], notes that many library users bypass library resources and went directly to the web for information. The use of web page is overtaking the traditional library practice, as noted by Wright (2004) library webpage is one of the means of disseminating information to university communities in this internet global information age. The emergence of internet encourages students and academic library users to make use of library virtual sites, a situation which has affected physical library patronage.

Studies on the use of facebook in university libraries reveal that facebook help in promoting the library, because it’s an outreach tool to connect with student and university community[10]. In another study by Mack, Behler, Roberts and Rimland [14] on the nature of services libraries can render via facebook, they concluded that libraries can render reference services through the use of facebook, social media site, this will entails asking of reference question [10]. A study by Guidry[15], at South Dakota State University

revealed that 98% of students log into facebook daily compared with 31% that visit the library online portal. However academic libraries need to explore these social networking avenues to provide services to their university communities. For university libraries to utilize the services offered by facebook social networking site, librarians’ can join the site, like anyone else, with official university e-mail addresses, and relate with each other in this information fast grown environment. At the University of Illinois and the College of William, they have crated facebook aimed at their students’ users. Majority of these applications provide a simple search for library’s OPAC, Worldcat and JSTOR and also provide applications that search their respective data bases.

One of the ways which libraries can take advantage of the face-book is to create applications that will enable users to interact and share ideas, for example the library at the college of Williams and Marry has a facebook application that allows users to search, but also has a way for the user to display a map of his location in the library on their profile [15]. According to Farkas [16], one of the major way to enable libraries use facebook, is for them to gather demographic information about the user community. As a member of the campus network, the library is able to view the profile of everyone else in the network, except for issues of privacy settings. This will help librarians to know groups that are on the network, the home page and usage statistics of the network. One of such evidence is that of Mack, Behler, Robert and Rimland[14], who promoted their facebook library

profile for reference service. At the Post Modern Library, Kenyatta university. The use of facebook is very prominent, PML facebook was opened on 21st June 2011 and the usage has been very encouraging. The page is manned by five library staff that ensures it is regularly updated. Presently, the page has 4,642 followers, this number is increasing on daily basis. The facebook page updates on issues relating to library and it services, university activities and events of national importance. Program such as “Ask a Librarian” will afford students and university community the opportunity to ask question and receive answers online. Below are two examples of questions and response :

From Elvine to KU Library

Subject: Chemistry

Question: Can I access past papers for SCH 100 (fundamentals to inorganic chemistry)

KU library to Elvin

Response: You can access past papers online from the KU library Website or through this link <http://digital-library.ku.ac.ke/h/>

- From Teddy to KU Library

Subject: Use of Library

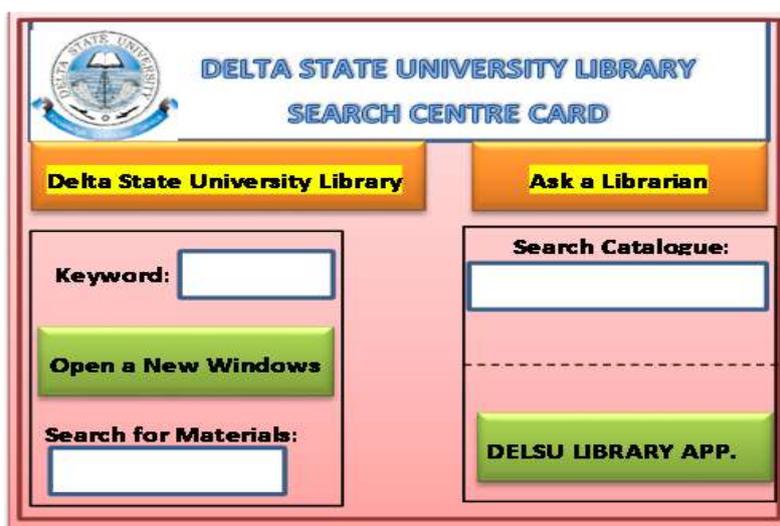
Question: I’m an MSC Finance student and so far we’ve not received the students ID. What is the process and & requirement for registering with the library in other to start using the library services? I’m in a City Campus and I do not know if this can be done from this side? Secondly, during the orientation there were passwords of various resources available in the e-library, how can I get this passwords?

From KU library to Teddy

Response: Thank you for your email. For a KU student to use the library, they need to come with their students ID. In your case you only need to come with your national ID and admission letter, until the student ID is provided to you. The only service you cannot access without your student ID is borrowing of library materials for the e-library resources, you can get the password from any library within a KU campus.

Since the most interesting discussion regarding facebook and other social networking sites occurs in the “blogosphere” meaning personal blogs of information professionals it5 is important for academic libraries to ensure that their presence are felt on the social networking site. A search for “facebook” and academic libraries will yield positive result [15]. This is because information on facebook social networking site is current and relevant compared to traditional print resources. Presently many librarians and information professionals are joining the site for personal and official use. Accordingly Guidry[15] noted that social interaction allowed by the site makes it a great place for librarians to talk with each other about professional issues and share ideas and resources that are available in the library online. Presently there are many facebook groups intended for librarians. The group “facebook and librarians” has over 4,000 members.

Powers, Schmidt and Hill [17], asserted that library facebook group allows for events to be created, and all members of the group can be invited easily. Libraries can post photo album and video gallery on facebook, this situation will enable them post library related events and services. Below is an example of a library facebook profile application.



**Figure 2: Example of a library facebook profile application
Adapted from: The MSU Libraries facebook Profile application.**

The above facebook application will enable librarians respond to frequently asked questions on library issues, users can do OPAC searching, frequently used links, library news information on new arrival and the ASK-A-Librarians' reference service[17]. However, according to Boyer and Ryan[18], as of March 2009, approximately 60 public and academic libraries offer facebook applications in the United States with the following features:

- Catalog search
- Article database search
- Meta search
- Library news
- Library information (hours, content information) and
- Live reference chat

Advantages of Facebook

The basic function of any library is to acquire, store and disseminate information. To this end, the use of facebook in university libraries cannot be underestimated. Since the expansion of the application in 2007, the usage for business, social interaction and education is overwhelming. One of the advantages of using facebook is to get feedback, as the design of the platform, will enable user to click "like". However, when university libraries put their resource like new arrivals on this social networking site, university communities will have knowledge of it without having to visit the library physically. It will enhance collective knowledge and collaboration within the user's community. Facebook helps in development of research and enhance research skills through posting of timely information on the web. This will stimulate the interest of user community to visit the site for academic benefit. Similarly to make users aware of the new arrivals, libraries have to post information about library resources.

Facebook is becoming popular among the university community because of its flexibility as a tool for both social and academic interactions among students and members of the university community, connection is on the average of 120 with other facebook users, and 850 millions photos added to Facebook each month. There are 28 million links posted each month and 25 million active user groups. Currently facebook is available in 35 languages, users spends 3billion minutes of time on facebook every day[18]. It is important that library continue to play its role in providing relevant and accurate information to patrons and employ the use

of the web by designing and deploying an effective Library Website[13], This will enhance and refine library services, because users have become an important task for all academic libraries. In view of the above, Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis(2010), Power, Schimidt and Hills (2008), Connell (2008), Mack, Behler, Robert and Rimland (2007) and Hendrix, Chiarella, Hasman, Murphy and Zafron (2009) as cited by Calvi, Cassella and Nuijten[1], notes that studies like the ones mentioned above focused on the tools and applications available in facebook for librarians and make recommendations about the way libraries could benefit from using facebook. Such applications include facebook a facebook librarian, a virtual librarian service providing links to books and other resource, Books iRead to share books with the friends on your network, tools like the Word Cat Search and several ad hoc facebook groups. The purpose of this study therefore is to examine the use of facebook in information service delivery in academic libraries in Niger Delta region, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine:

1. The use of facebook for information service delivery in academic libraries in Nigeria.
2. Ascertain libraries that are on facebook social networking sites
3. Make recommendations that will enhance the use of facebook for information dissemination in academic libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The population for this study is 15 University libraries, 9 State Universities and 6 Private Universities located within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The 15 Universities form the population size for this study. Data were collected by visiting the library web sites, through the University official web sites in September, 2014. The content analysis of the library website was based on Qutab and Mohammood website content analysis cited by Gbaje and Kotso[13] and adapted for this study.

Data Analysis

The aim of the study is to examine academic library usage of facebook for dissemination of information. The study employed web content analysis to identify Universities and academic library that have their presence in the web, a use of the website as a means of disseminating information.

Table 2: State and Private Universities websites

S/ N	Universities	Ownership	Location	Website Address
1	Ambrose Ali University	State	Ekpoma	http://www.aaukpoma.edu.ng
2	Niger Delta University	State	Amassoma	http://www.ndu.edu.ng
3	Delta State University	state	Abraka	http://www.delsu.edu.ng
4	Rivers State University of Science and Technology	State	Port Harcourt	http://www.ust.edu.ng
5	Abia State University	State	Uturu	http://www.absu.edu.ng
6	Cross River State University of Technology	River	Ekpo-Abasi	http://www.crutech.edu.ng
7	Imo State University	State	Owerri	http://www.imsu.edu.ng
8	Adekunle Ajasin University	State	AkungbaAkoko	http://www.aaua.edu.ng
9	Akwa-Ibom State University	State	,Ikot -Akpanden	www.livesschoolnews.com.ng
10	Igbenedion University	Private	Okada	http://www.iuokada.edu.ng
11	Western Delta University	Private	Oghara	http://www.wdu.edu.ng
12	Benson Idohosa University	Private	Benin City	http://www.biu.edu.ng
13	Obong University	Private	Akwa-Ibim	www.obonguniversity.net
14	Ignatus Ajuru University of Education	Private	Port- Harcourt	www.iaue.edu
15	Novena University	Private	Ogume	http://www.novenauniversity.edu.ng

Table 2 Shows the universities and their websites addresses. Form the web content analysis, it was revealed, that all the 15 Universities comprises of

State owned and Private Universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have their websites where academic routine work are done online.

Table 3: Universities websites and Library facebook

S/N	Universities	Websites	Library Presence on University Website	Library Facebook
1	Ambrose Ali University	http://www.aaukpoma.edu.ng	–	–
2	Niger Delta University	http://www.ndu.edu.ng	–	–
3	Delta State University	http://www.delsu.edu.ng	–	–
4	Rivers State University of Science and Technology	http://www.delsu.edu.ng	–	–
5	Abia State University	http://www.absu.edu.ng	–	–
6	Cross River State University of Technology	http://www.crutech.edu.ng	–	–
7	Imo State University	http://www.imsu.edu.ng	–	–
8	Adekunle Ajasin University	http://www.aaua.edu.ng	–	–
9	Novena University	http://www.novenauniversity.edu.ng	–	–
10	Igbenedion University	http://www.iuokada.edu.ng	–	–
11	Western Delta University	http://www.wdu.edu.ng	–	–
12	Benson Idohosa University	http://www.biu.edu.ng	–	–
13	Obong University	www.obonguniversity.net	–	-
14	Ignatus Ajuru University of Education	www.iaue.edu	–	-
15	Akwa-Ibom State University	www.livesschoolnews.com.ng	–	-

Table 3, reveals the web analysis of university libraries their website addresses, it was observed that the entire 15 academic library which represents 100% of the population of the study has no facebook application. The study also revealed that even though all the Universities have website addresses and porter, the library as an information house of the Universities are not connected to their respective University websites.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has revealed that facebook application a vital communication tool in the electronic information environment is not used in academic libraries in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that academic libraries should avail themselves, as the opportunities provided by facebook to promote their resources and services, enhance their value in the university communities and boast usage.

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