



## **AWARENESS AND TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED BY LIBRARIANS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING IN METROPOLITAN KANO**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Despite the benefits and popularity of social media use in libraries, its full use is yet to take full course. This study investigates the awareness and types of social media platforms used by librarians for information service delivery in higher institutions of learning in metropolitan Kano. Survey research design was adopted with the study sample comprising 132 librarians selected from 13 higher institutions, located within Kano metropolis in Kano state. Questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). The study revealed that librarians under study have a relatively high level of awareness of social media particularly facebook, twitter and youtube, which are the common types of social media used for service delivery. Findings also show that the librarians have significant low awareness of other types of social media such as blogs, ning, flickr, and Myspace and therefore do not use the tools in information service delivery. Furthermore, findings also revealed the challenges associated with the use of social media such as lack of requisite knowledge of social media, inadequate skills, technophobia, lack of infrastructure. Therefore, to encourage a more productive use of social media it is recommended that forums such as conferences, seminars workshops on social media use in libraries is necessary in order for the librarians to stay more visible, relevant and satisfy the ever changing needs of their users.*

**Keywords:** *Awareness, Social media, Librarians, Information service delivery, Metropolitan Kano*

### **Introduction**

The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the World Wide Web (WWW) have led to the emergence of social media, which has changed the way institutions; and organizations communicate and collaborate with each other. Social media is described as concept related to online communities and sharing online information and resources (Rogers, 2012). In a related definition, Tella (2014) cited in Ojo (2014) stated that social media can be referred to as all various web-based and mobile apps that give users to create a personal profile, connect with other users and create, publish and respond to content. This technology has become so popular that it has dominated the personal and professional life of millions of users. The popularity is affecting the way that libraries, museums, archives and other cultural heritage organizations operate (Eze, 2016) and has therefore, compelled librarians to adapt to changes brought upon by the technology to meet the needs of the Internet generation in order to sustain their visibility and relevance to their community.

As a result of the growing awareness of social media in libraries, university libraries such as Yale Science Libraries, Adelphi University Libraries, Carnegie Mellon University Libraries, Cambridge University Library and Norwegian University of Science and Technology Library have adopted online social media (Ayiah & Kumah, 2011). Many types of social media tools available for use, such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Flickr exist, and there are number of ways librarians can benefit from their use of these tools to offer dynamic information services such as communication and collaboration with users and colleagues, reference services, marketing of library resources and



services, building image, knowledge sharing, generation and dissemination of information, current awareness services and many more. Mathews (2006, 2008) suggested that librarians can create services that are more responsive and attuned to the changing needs of users. Therefore, social media offers boundless opportunities that are highly valued for their ability to connect libraries with users who may be unaware of their existence. Despite the popularity, awareness and importance of social media for information service delivery in libraries, its full use by librarians is yet to take full course. This study therefore, examines awareness and types of social media platforms used by librarians for information service delivery in higher institutions of learning in metropolitan Kano.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The developments in the area of ICTs have brought about the existence of social media, which has gradually become an indispensable tool for librarians in the area of information service delivery. Social media has affected the operations and information service delivery of libraries, providing librarians with innovative and effective ways of interaction and collaboration with their users (Alonge, 2009). Social media is highly valuable for its ability to connect libraries with users; which are also vital tools that help the librarians to generate, disseminate, exchange and share information as well as to gather knowledge. With the potentials embodied in the use of social media for information service delivery, Olasina (2007) stated that librarians' awareness of social media is not very popular. Furthermore, it is not certain whether librarians in the institutions of higher learning use the social media platforms available to the information professionals-facebook, myspace, blogs, wikis, linkedIn, twitter, youtube and flickr. This study therefore, investigates the awareness and types of social media used by librarians in higher institutions of learning in metropolitan Kano for information service delivery.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the extent to which librarians in the higher institutions in metropolitan are aware of social media;
2. identify the types of social media used by librarians in the institutions under study for information service delivery;
3. assess the services that the librarians used the social media to deliver; and
4. identify challenges encountered in using social media in these libraries.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Social media is becoming an integral part of life. It 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 of users. These tools are used for collaboration and sharing of ideas and information and it is becoming an integral part of library services. It also calls for libraries to encourage user participation and feedback mechanism in the development and maintenance of library services. With information and ideas flowing in both directions (from library to user and from the user to the library), library services have the ability to evolve and improve on a constant and rapid basis. However, different types of social media applications exist and are used for different purposes in the library for information service delivery. Alyson (2012) in his study of welsh libraries and social media found that librarians use the following social media tools for library services:

*Facebook:* most popular now because it is library friendly, with many applications like *JSTOR* search. Librarians 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, librarians have taken advantage of this application to post calendars, custom catalog search tools, and Blog features to improve their presence.



*Blogs:* Here librarian periodically post messages, share information on a particular subject or issues, and allow users to contribute content. They can write articles, news on topical issues and expect an instant reaction for their users.

*Wikis:* A free online encyclopedia that gives a background knowledge and definition of concepts. It offers a platform for users to access, edit and contribute to content. This is a collaborative web page for developing web content.

*LinkedIn:* Librarians get patrons connected with specialists in their particular field of interest via *LinkedIn*. Librarians 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. Librarians utilize this platform to type in short messages or status update, can send Instant Messaging (IM) on complaints, or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using Twitter.

*YouTube:* Librarians use this application to disseminate information about conferences, workshop as well as highlights of inaugural lectures.

*Flickr:* Librarians use this tool to share and distribute images of library collection. Cover pages of new arrival of both books and journal can be disseminated for use via *Flickr* (Alyson, 2012).

Similarly in a related review, Bola and Unuoha (2011) found that librarians use *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube*, but are not familiar with other social media applications and as such, do not use them. Dickson and Holley (2010) in their study of social networking in academic libraries found and categorized the different types of social media used to include *Blogs* and *Wikis*, Social Gaming and Social Bookmarking. They further stated Blogs are web pages consisting of user supplied content in chronological order. Wikis are open web pages that allow approved users to add and alter a page's content (Boxen, 2008). Blogs encourage user interaction through their comment section, which allows users to provide feedback regarding the information provided and the library itself. Librarians can post news about the library as well as events occurring in the library. *Wikis* are collaborative web pages that allow for higher user participation. Within the academic libraries, Wikis are primarily used for the creation of collaborative subject guides. Academic libraries can create subject Wikis with links to resources on a chosen topic, including information regarding relevant databases and search tips tailored to that subject (Kroski, 2007).

Social media and gaming: encourages users to share multimedia objects from photographs to videos. *YouTube*, *Flickr* and *Second Life* are a few examples. *YouTube* allows individuals and organizations to post original videos. Academic libraries currently post videos of library tour as well as bibliographic instruction videos for users (Kroski, 2007). *Flickr* allows users to post photographs and to create discussion groups; as well as allows users to post videos. Librarians can also post materials from special collections on a *Flickr* account, though a general search of *Flickr* reveals that most librarians use *Flickr* to post picture of the library building and its staff (Farkas, 2007). In addition, there are also social games that are used by librarians; second life is an online reality game that allows libraries to set up virtual libraries and provide library services. Virtual Games allow academic librarian to move traditional library services to an entirely new platform. Ultimately, social media applications enables librarian to create multimedia profiles with the goal of encouraging interaction between library staff and the user.

*Social Bookmarking* is another type of social media, which has also emerged to encourage users to store their Internet bookmarks and to interact with users bookmarking similar websites. Delicious is a popular example of social bookmarking. It is in relation to this that Gilmour and Strickland (2009) found that librarians use Social Bookmarking to create resource lists for different departments that can be viewed by users.

Librarians put the different types of social media tools to various uses. In relation to this, the study by Alonge (2012) found that Blogs (image/video sharing tools) and Wikis are used by librarians to post resources, reviews and information on new books and programs. In a similar study of librarians' use of web 2.0 in UK Medical School, Pachecho, Kuhn and Grant (n.d) found that librarians use Twitter and other social networking sites to announce information to users,

communicate with experts and colleagues, market services, create discussion groups, and information exchanging.

While literatures above highlighted the importance and uses of different types of social media in service delivery, other literatures have identified the challenges associated with the use of social media. In relation to this, Agyekum, Arthur and Trivedi (2016) found that the major factors confronting effective use of social media tools across university libraries included inadequate computers, lack of internet connectivity or network failure, unstable power supply, abuse of specific networking tool usage, and lack of requisite knowledge and community acceptance. In a related review, Quadri and Idowu (2016) found that challenges like erratic power supply, poor Internet connectivity, lack of infrastructure and other technical constraints were greatly impeding the librarians' use of social media to reach out to their user community.

The literature review have identified the different types of social media such as *YouTube*, *Flickr*, *Twitter*, *Linkedin*, *Facebook*, *Blogs*, *Wikis*, which are used for services such as information gathering, exchange, sharing and dissemination, communication as well as for collaboration in information service delivery. While there are different types of social media, there can be overlap among them for instance, *flickr* and *youtube* have comment systems similar to that of *Blogs*. From the literatures above, the discussion is in conformity to what is obtainable in developed countries where libraries and librarians have the knowledge, skills, resources and expertise to use the different types of social media for different purposes in information service delivery. In the context of developing countries like Nigeria a gap exists as librarians do not use all the social media tools in their libraries and the few one that are used, the librarians are still struggling to find out their productive uses for effective information service delivery (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012).

### Methodology

Survey research method was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprises 132 librarians in higher institutions of learning in metropolitan Kano. No sampling technique was used because the population was found to be manageable by the researcher as stated by Israel (1992) that "one approach to drawing sample is to use the entire population (census) if the population size is 200 or less; which tends to eliminate sampling error and provide data on all individuals in the study". Questionnaire containing structured questions was designed and administered to the respondents. Data was collected on librarian's awareness of social media and types of social media used for information service delivery in the institutions under study. The data for this research were analyzed using descriptive (percentages and frequencies). A total of 132 questionnaires were distributed out of which 120 were returned representing 91% return rate. Table 1 indicates the population of the study.

**Table 1: Population of the Study**

S/N	Name of Institution	No. of Librarians
1	Bayero University Kano (BUK)	87
2	Federal College of Education (FCE)	11
3	Saadatu Rimi College of Education (KUMBOTSO)	5
4	College of Arts Science and Remedial Studies (CAS)	4
5	Aminu Kano School of Islamic and Legal Studies (LEGAL)	5
6	School of Technology (SOT)	1
7	Northwest University Kano	8
8	School of Midwifery Kano	1
9	School of Health Technology Kano	1
10	School of Management Studies	4
11	School of Hygiene	1
12	Federal College of Agricultural Produce Technology	3
13	School of Nursing Kano	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>

Source: Result of preliminary study (2014)

**Findings and Discussions**

In terms of social media awareness, respondents were asked to indicate the level of their awareness. Their responses are presented as follows:

**Table 2: Social Media Awareness**

Level of Awareness	No.	Percentage
Not sure	9	7.5
High	84	70.0
Very high	27	22.5

Source: Survey (2015)

On the level of their awareness, the table shows that majority, 84(70.0%) of the respondents rate their level of awareness with the social media to be high. The findings on level of awareness cannot be detached from the popularity of social media among users. Further justification is the primary features of the social media; easy to use. Respondents were asked to indicate the type of social media platform they use for information service delivery. Their responses are presented as follows:

**Table 3: Types of Social Media used for Information Service Delivery**

Social Media	Frequency/Percentage (%)		Total
	Yes I Use	No I don't Use	
Twitter	67(55.8%)	53(44.2%)	120(100%)
LinkedIn	31(25.8)	89(74.2%)	120(100%)
YouTube	62(51.7%)	58(48.3)	120(100%)
Facebook	109(90.8%)	11(9.2%)	120(100%)
MySpace	6(5.0%)	114(95.0%)	120(100%)
Ning	6(5.0%)	114(95.0%)	120(100%)
Wikis	17(14.2%)	103(85.8%)	120(100%)
Blogs	20(16.7%)	100(83.3%)	120(100%)
Flickr	7(5.8%)	113(94.2%)	120(100%)
Virtual games	5(4.2%)	115(95.8%)	120(100%)
Second Life	2(1.7%)	118(98.3%)	120(100%)
Delicious	8(6.7%)	112(93.3%)	120(100%)
Social bookmarking	12(10.0%)	108(90.0%)	120(100%)
Social gaming	7(5.8%)	113(94.2%)	120(100%)
Pinterest	6(5.0%)	114(95.0%)	120(100%)
Others	7 (5.8%)	113(94.2%)	120(100%)

Source: Survey (2015)

It should be worthy of note that social media includes a diversity of applications, while there are different ways to categorize it; its typology is often based on the main function and purpose of use. Respondents were asked to indicate the types of social media they use. Findings from table 3 shows that majority 109(90.8%) use Facebook, Twitter, 67(55.8%), and YouTube, 62(51.7%) more than other types of social media tools. Based on this analysis, it can be said that, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have features that are similar and easier to use as stated by Mayfield (2008).

**Table 4 Information Services provided with social media**

Information Services	Frequency Percentage (%)		Total
	Yes	No	

Current awareness services to the users	100(83.3%)	20(16.7%)	120(100%)
Selective Dissemination of Information to users	105(87.5%)	15(12.5%)	120(100%)
Market library collection to users	110(91.6%)	10(8.3%)	120(100%)
Provide reference services to users	95(79.1%)	25(21.0%)	120(100%)
Provide bibliographic information services to users	92(76.6%)	28(23.3%)	120(100%)
Dissemination of library information to users	84(70.0%)	36(30.0%)	120(100%)
Resource sharing services among libraries	101(84.1%)	19(16.0%)	120(100%)

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of information services they provide with the use of social media. Table 4 shows that the percentages of 100(83.3%), 105(87.5%), 110(91.6%), 95(79.1%), 92(76.6%), 84(70.0%), and 101(84.1%) represent that majority of the respondents unanimously indicated the use of social media in different types of information services. This finding of using the social media for different information services cannot be far from the fact that the present day librarians are prepared to shift from the traditional ways of information services delivery to the use of technology rendering services in a more specialized way (Emezie & Nwaohiri, 2013).

**Table 5: Challenges of using Social Media**

Factors	Frequency Percentage (%)		Total
	Yes	No	
Lack of infrastructure	92(76.7%)	28(23.3%)	120(100%)
Lack of Policy on the use of social media in libraries	102(85.0%)	18(15.0%)	120(100%)
Technophobia	89(74.2%)	31(25.8%)	120(100%)
Erratic power supply	98(81.7%)	22(18.3%)	120(100%)
Lack of requisite knowledge of social media	93(77.5%)	27(22.5%)	120(100%)
Inadequate skills	82(68.3%)	38(31.7%)	120(100%)
Poor Internet connectivity	105(87.5%)	15(12.5%)	120(100%)

Table 5 clearly shows that majority of the respondents were unanimous on the challenges that hinder the use of social media for information service delivery in their libraries. The analysis shows that provision of the above mentioned factors to the librarians under study would go a long way to facilitate effective and efficient use of the social media in service delivery.

### Discussion of the Findings

On the awareness of social media, the study found that librarians in the higher institutions of learning were aware of social media. This could be attributed to their level of internet skills and various sources of awareness available to them. An interesting finding is that, majority of the librarians were aware that social media is used as a tool for information service delivery which contradicts the findings of Anunobi and Ogbonna (2012), Anyaoku, Ezejiofor and Orakpor (2012) who concluded that librarians do not have adequate knowledge of social media tools. It was also found that the librarians were more aware of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube than other types of social media which further confirmed the findings of Bola and Unuoha (2011) where they concluded that librarians are mostly aware of *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Twitter* but still lack knowledge of other social media tools. Among the different types of social media available, the findings revealed that majority of the librarians under study used *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* than other social media tools, which recorded low usage. This outcome has supported the findings of Bola and Unuoha (2011) where they concluded that librarians use *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* but are not familiar with other social media applications, and as such do not use them in information service delivery.

Further findings revealed that, the use of social media for different information services by the librarians under study was found to be relatively high, thus reaffirming the findings of, Ezeani and Igwesi (2012), Suraweere et al (2010), Kim and Abbas (2010), Poynter (2010), and Kroski (2007) on the uses of social media where they concluded that social media is an important tool for marketing and reference services, creating awareness about library collection, dissemination of information, knowledge gathering, bibliographic information and dissemination of information to users. Findings

of the study further revealed that librarians are faced with several challenges in their attempt to use social media in information service delivery which supports the findings of Ramzan and Singh (2009), Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) and Nazim (2015) who stated that technophobia, erratic power supply, poor internet connectivity, lack of requisite knowledge of social media are factors affecting librarians' full utilization of social media.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, this study concludes that the librarians in higher institutions of learning in metropolitan Kano have a relatively high level of awareness of social media particularly *facebook*, *youtube*, and *twitter* with low level of awareness of other types of social media. In addition, these are the types of social media (*facebook*, *twitter* and *youtube*) the librarians use more in information service delivery than the other types such as *blogs*, *ning*, *flickr*, and *myspace*. The study however, demonstrated that librarians are faced with challenges in using social media. Therefore, in order to further encourage a more productive use of social media among librarians, it is recommended that:

1. Awareness of other types of social media tools particularly those that are currently emerging such as *pinterest*, *social gaming*, *social bookmarking*, *second life* and *delicious* should be increased through forums such as seminars, conferences, and workshops on the use of social media in library service by the library authorities. This is necessary in order to stimulate new ideas and sensitize them to the great potential of social media use.
2. The libraries should be stocked with adequate ICT infrastructure and vibrant internet connectivity to ensure proper functioning and effective use of the social media networking tools.
3. The librarians need to constantly update their skills and competencies in information service provision particularly in this digital age where technology is taking over every sphere of the profession. This will enable them to market the existing library services to the user community, as well as develop new ones.
4. Libraries should employ professional Internet Service Providers to give quality Internet service to facilitate effective use of social media for improved service delivery.

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