Social Media Awareness and Use Among LIS Professionals in India: A Study

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INTRODUCTION

In this era of global information the social media is the most dynamic internet service that persuades the contemporary world. “Many of today’s teens spend hours each day online communicating with friends. They visit their online friends in social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter; they comment on each other’s videos and photos on sites such as YouTube and Flickr; and they send each other text messages throughout the day and night via their ever present cell phones.” Social media is now not only influencing the youth but also all sorts of people and it had turned out to be a part of social life. Social media services make it possible to connect people, share interests and activities across political, economical, and geographical borders. “In the digital era Internet and mobile technology become more essential part in everyday’s life. The way people access, create and distribute the information result libraries to reconsider their traditional role as librarian to cybrarian.”

Social media is offering new confronts to Library and Information science (LIS) professionals in this web influenced world. There is noteworthy increase in the number of social media sites and users all over the world; the Wikipedia lists more than 200 social media websites and its number is increasing day by day. As global phenomenon the users of internet and social media are also mounting in a higher rate in India. India ranks 3rd position in terms of internet users according to the internet world stats survey in 2012 and its previous year ranking was 4th position. A recent report by ComScore, “globally used web audience measurement tool also ranks India as the 3rd largest in the world after China and the United States in terms of internet users. This report also point out that India has 73.9 million home and work internet users and surprisingly 94.8% of typical Indian web users are using social media sites. So social media use is rated as the top online activity in India.” Libraries and LIS professionals in western countries are overpoweringly adopting social media sites for the progress of their profession and libraries. On the other hand developing countries like India are high-flying users of social media but they are far behind in adopting social media sites for the development of their libraries and profession.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media had become a most popular subject of study in nowadays in view of its goodness and evils. The popularity of social
media made it as a fastest communication tool for dissemination of information and influenced by all sorts of people, so as like others LIS professionals are also influenced by social media. Recently there are several studies about the awareness and use of social media among LIS professionals. Zohoorian-Fooladi, Niusha and Abirazih point out that “A review of literature on the usage of social media in library and information services is confined to three phases: the early phase when researchers reported on the type of social media tools used in libraries; the intermediary phase which highlighted how libraries used the social media tools; and the late phase, when researchers began to focus on the issues and challenges of using these tools in libraries”. In India LIS professionals are now in the late phase, so studies in social media should focus on the issues and challenges of using social media tools in libraries.

Tyagi conducted a study among librarians and library professionals in Western Uttar Pradesh and showed that librarians’ skills in internet usage influence the adoption of social media. The researcher also emphasized the need for a comprehensive study to find out the factors which affect social media participation among librarians. A recent study conducted by Kumar and Reddy among the Engineering Institutional librarians in Andhra Pradesh reveals that the “use of online social network by academic libraries is also increasingly prevalent and they are being used to communicate with the potential library users, as well as extending the services provided by individual academic libraries. It is found that nearly 68.99% opine that social network is very essential and 12% as essential”. Samuel and Helen conducted “an exploratory study in 140 university libraries in Asia, North America and Europe about the use of social networking tools in academic libraries, examining the extent of their use, library staff’s perceptions of their usefulness and challenges, and factors influencing decisions to use or not to use such tools. Facebook and Twitter were the most commonly adopted tools in university libraries. Most library staff had positive perceptions on the usefulness of social networking tools, but hesitancy among library staff and limited participation of users (i.e. students) were perceived to be hindrances”. Khan and Bhatti who conducted a study on application of social media in marketing of library and information services in Pakistan finds out that “Social media provides more opportunity to Library professionals to reach their user community, target specific audiences, and give them a chance to interact with their library. Respondents recommended the use of Facebook, Wikis, LinkedIn, Blogging, YouTube and online groups for marketing different library services”. Hall who conducted a study among the academic librarians in UK and points out that “Librarians currently demonstrate more sophisticated use of social media for personal professional purposes than for services delivery; a number of challenges currently limit the extent to which librarians are able to exploit social media to full advantage; fuller exploitation of social media is possible when librarians transfer the good practice exhibited in personal professional use to applications for services delivery; service innovations are considered before tools; and end users are treated as collaborating clients rather than consuming customers”. The review of literature reveals that there were not many studies based on the use and awareness of social media among LIS professionals in India. So this study is an attempt to trace out the influence, awareness and use of social media among library professionals in India.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To examine the awareness and presence of LIS professionals in India on social media.
- To know the social media site preferences among LIS professionals in India.
- To identify social media tools preferred by LIS professionals.
- To examine the awareness and the preferences in image and video sharing social media sites.
- To examine the awareness and the use of book reviewing social media sites.
- To know the use of online news groups/forums.
- To know the awareness in creating own websites and blogs using social media.
- To compare social media and e-mail as a communication tool.
- To know the attitude of LIS professionals to the creation of official social media profiles to the libraries.
- To know the limitations and drawbacks of social media use among LIS professionals in India.

**METHODOLOGY**

The present study was conducted to trace out the awareness and use of social media in profession among library professionals in India. The survey method of research was applied in this study and both printed and online questionnaires are used. 100 printed questionnaires were distributed among the different library professionals and LIS students in India, and 86 library professionals responded. Finding that in a vast country like India data collection using manual questionnaire method is difficult, an online questionnaire was also developed in google forms and published in mailing forums and LIS communities in social media sites, as well as through email, and it ran from 30th September to 30th October 2013. One hundred and sixty one responses were received through online questionnaires. Table1 shows a clear picture about the sample used in the study.

**Table 1:** Type of Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Questionnaire</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed Questionnaires</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Questionnaires</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The demographic characteristics such as gender and LIS professionals working environment can be revealed with help of Table 2 and Fig 1. The Table 2 shows the gender wise response.

- Gender wise Response
Table 2: Gender wise Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%age</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

It is found from the table 2 that out of the 247 total population, 140 (57%) were male and 107 (43%) were female respondents.

- **LIS Professionals Studied**

The Fig. 1 depicts that majority of the respondents are academic library professionals (68%). Special library professionals account for 15% and LIS students and research scholars 10%. The number of responses is less from public library professionals (4%) and LIS faculty (3%).

- **Social Media Presence of LIS Professionals**

Social media has become a part of social life and it is influenced by almost all sorts of people who are aware of computers and internet. “Mobile technology had also made possible a much greater reach of the social networks and in effect mobile social networking services provide an “always-on” environment for information exchange among members of social networks”. So in this information explosion on social media are one of the latest communications technologies that have been widely-adopted by library users. Most of the libraries are not only providing traditional library resources and services but also a wide range of electronic and internet resources and ICT based services. The main problem faced by the libraries is that users are not aware of resources available in their libraries. Social media provides an avenue to reach library users in their own preferred environments and make awareness about library resources and also it provides possibilities to even extend library services beyond the traditional library walls. In petite social media sites are offering promising outreach options for LIS professionals and their institutions. Fig. 2 reveals the social media influence among LIS professionals in India.

Fig. 2 indicates that 92% of respondents have social media account and interestingly other 8% of respondents who does not have social media account are also using social media sites.

- **Preferences in Social Media Sites**

“Social networking sites are internet-based systems and services that allow individuals to create multiple public or semi-public profiles either within or between different social networks, build a list of other users with whom they share a connection, often referred to as “friends”, and view and communicate with their list of “friends”, and other social networking sites users. The key aspect of social networking sites is that it involves wider participation in the creation of information which is shared and collaborated in educational, social, and business contexts”. There is a tremendous increase in the number of social media sites. This trend leads to the development of social media sites related to specific function such as image sharing (flicker, picasa), video sharing (youtube, vimeo), slide sharing (slideshare), Academic research (Academia.edu, MyNetResearch, methodspace, researchgate.net) and also professional or specific subject social networks (LIS links, Libgig.com). Fig. 3 reveals the preferences in the use of social media sites by LIS professionals in India.

Fig. 3: Preferences in Social Media Sites

As a global trend library professionals are also prominent users of Facebook (214). “Face book is the most accepted among the large number of social networking sites in India with nearly 63 million registered facebook users in January 2013, is the second fastest growing country for Facebook in terms of people registering every month”. The next commonly used social media site by LIS professionals is Youtube (93). Other commonly used social media sites by LIS professionals in India are LinkedIn (88), Google plus (78), Blogs (74), Twitter (69), Slideshare (55), Wikis (48), Orkut (46), Library thing (34), Other sites (25) and Flicker (14). Only eleven respondents said that they are not using any of social media sites. The preference and use of professionally useful social media sites like Library thing, slide share etc are comparatively less among the LIS professionals in India.

- **Frequency of Social Media Use**

It is a fact that social media sites are attracted by all types of
internet users in India. Library professionals are also prominent users of social media. The frequency of social media use is shown in Fig. 4.

**Fig. 4: Frequency of Social Media Use**

It is found from the study that 61% of Library professionals are daily users of social media, 17% visited social media once in a week, 9% visited social media twice in a week, 5% use social media once in a month and 4% rarely use social media and 4% does not use social media. The development of communication, information technology and wide features of social media had made it essential part library users especially the youth. The technological developments also provide immense opportunities for LIS professionals to access social media from computers at office, home or in a commercial cyber cafe and even from their own laptops, mobiles or tablets at any time. Library professionals can use social media sites as tool to magnetize users to the library.

**Time Spent on Social Media**

It is illustrated from the Fig. 5 that 48% of daily users of internet spend less than one hour in social media, while 23% of library professionals spend one hour in social media, 18% use social media more than one hour daily. Only 7% does not use social media daily and this reveals the influence of social media among LIS professionals in India.

**Comparison of Email and Social Media**

Development of internet has changed the total scenario of communication and Email had become an important communication tool. The developments in mobile technology and internet had made social media as a supplementary or additional tool for easy communication. It can be inferred from Fig. 6 that even though most of the LIS professionals are heavy users of social media accounts, they prefer Email (61%) as an internet communication tool for communicating with their friends and other library professionals. Only 39% prefer social media as a communication tool.

**Fig. 5: Time Spent on Social Media**

**Fig. 6: Comparison of Email and Social Media**

**Purpose of Using Social Media**

Social media along with other internet resources have now become an integral part of internet users. LIS professionals who are prominent users of internet are also influenced by social media. “LIS professionals and paraprofessionals have been heavy adopters in the use of social media to engage in professional development and to communicate and connect with other LIS colleagues around the world”. The LIS professionals purposes of using social media are clearly indicated in Fig. 7.

**Fig. 7: Purpose of Using Social Media**
The Fig. 7 reveals that 77% of LIS professionals are using social media for interacting with their friends and 69% use social media for creating professional connections. 49% is using social media for sharing images, videos and comments on public interest, 46% is using for finding their classmates and old friends, 38% is using social media for sharing their personal photos, 4% don’t use social media, 2% use social media for other purposes and only 1% use social media for entertainment purpose.

- **Online News Groups / Forums**

Online news groups/forums are utilized by the library professionals to know latest developments in their profession, discussions, to know forth coming conferences, seminars, employment opportunities etc. Most of the library professionals are members of one or many of the online news groups/forums. LIS links and LIS-forum are considered as the most popular discussion forums. LIS links possess all the features that a social media site possesses.

77% of respondents are using LIS Online news groups/forums, whereas 92% respondents are using social media. The preferences of LIS professionals in using online news groups/forums are explained with help of Fig. 8. 40% of LIS professionals consider LIS-Forum as the most commonly used online discussion forum. The next preferred online news groups/forums by LIS professionals are LIS Links (38%). Other commonly used online news groups / forums are NMLIS (11%), IATLIS Forum (6%) and 5% prefer other newly developed online news groups / forums.

- **Use of Book Review Social Media Sites**

Books are considered as major resources of libraries in all times. Collection development has become easier task to libraries with development of Internet and communication technology. The Fig. 9 reveals the use of book review social media sites by library professionals in India. From the figure it is evident that only 30% of respondents use book review social media sites.

- **Blogs and Social Media**

The easy creation of personal blogs is one factor that attracts library professionals towards social media. The blogs facilitate librarians to keep current their users with the recent developments in their libraries and preferred subject area. By creating blogs librarians can periodically post messages, share information on a particular subject or issue, and allow users to contribute to content. The Fig.10 shows the clear picture creation of blogs by LIS professionals. Only 32% of LIS professionals have their own blogs.

- **Images, Video Tools in Social Media and LIS Professionals**

Image and video distribution tool of social media is a grand way to share and view image and video collections. Easy image and video sharing tools in social media is one of the main features of social media that attract public towards it. LIS professionals use image and video distribution tool of social media for both professional and personal purposes. Image and video distribution tool of social media provides colossal chances for advertising and marking library products and services by webcasting library videos, photo collections of library, library programmes, Library workshops and conferences, cover page of new arrivals of both books and journals, there by attracting more users to the library. But on comparison of image and video sharing social media tools by LIS professionals for personal and professional purposes, it is clear from the Table 3 that the majority (74.9%) of the library professionals use social media for sharing personal photos and videos, only (39.68%) of the library professionals use social media for sharing their library images and videos through social media. So LIS professionals have to utilize the immense opportunities provided by image and video distribution tools of social media for promoting their library products and services.

### Table 3: Use of Social Media Image and Video Sharing Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Image and video sharing Tools and its use</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of social media sites by LIS Professionals for uploading, viewing and sharing their personal Image and videos</td>
<td>185(74.9%)</td>
<td>62(25.1%)</td>
<td>247(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of social media sites by LIS Professionals for uploading, viewing and sharing their library and other libraries Image and videos</td>
<td>98(39.68%)</td>
<td>149(60.32%)</td>
<td>247(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Fig. 8: Online News Groups / Forums*

*Fig. 9: Use of Book Review Social Media Sites*

*Fig. 10: Creation of Blogs by LIS Professionals*
Preferences in Social Media Sites for Image and Video Sharing

The exponential growth and popularity of social media sites and their easy image and video sharing tools attract more and more people towards social media. Flicker, Shutterfly, Picasa and aviary are commonly used image distribution social media sites. Library videos, e-learning tutorials, events and other video library services can be effectively promoted and webcast through video tools. YouTube is most commonly used video tool to share videos of conferences, workshops and library events. Even though multipurpose social networking sites like Facebook, Orkut, Myspace etc., possess only limited ability of sharing of videos and images it is most preferred by LIS professionals for image and video sharing. Fig. 11 reveals preferences in social media sites for images and video distribution by LIS professionals. The Figure also enables a comparison of social media sites used by LIS professionals for image and video sharing for personal and professional purposes.

Fig. 11: Comparison of Social Media Sites for Image and Video Sharing

The popularity of Facebook dominated in the preferences of LIS professionals in sharing library images and videos, that even though there are social media sites specifically for image and video sharing. As like other people majority of the respondents (170) prefer Facebook for sharing their personal photos and videos and 87 respondents prefer Facebook for sharing their personal photos and videos and 24 respondents use youtube for sharing their library videos and 24 respondents use YouTube for sharing library videos. Google plus another fastest growing social media is used by 37 respondents for sharing personal images and videos and 11 respondents use googleplus for sharing images and videos of the library. Only one respondent use other social media sites for sharing his personal photos and videos and 3 respondents use other social media sites for their library image and video sharing.

Developed countries are utilizing image and video sharing features of social media to the maximum for the development of their libraries but developing country like ours is far behind. Harper College Library, USA took YouTube viewers on a tour of the library facility and the University of Arkansas Libraries, USA provides its web page and online catalogue in YouTube. Official Flicker pages of Boston Public Library, The Library of Congress are only some of the paradigm that how well images and video social media tools are utilized for the development of libraries and information centers. LIS professionals in India have to develop official pages in flicker, Picasa for image sharing and utilize video sharing tools of YouTube, Viddler, Vimeo, Ustream etc. Even though multipurpose social media sites like Facebook, Google plus, LinkedIn etc and blogs only pose limited image and video sharing tool application it is most preferred by LIS professionals in India for sharing their personal and library images and videos.

Social Media Presence of Libraries

Social media presence of libraries attracts more users to the library. In this ICT era official social media pages of libraries have become a requisite factor to attract users to library. Library websites can also be integrated with social media and vice versa. The respondents were asked whether social media profile for institutions/libraries is useful to communicate with library users and whether it promotes the use of library products and services. It is evident from Fig. 12 the importance of social media profiles for libraries. Majority of the respondents (95%) think social media profiles of the library are must for the development of libraries in this internet age. Only 5% of respondents think social media profiles have no role in the development of libraries and its services.

Fig. 12: Social Media Presence of Libraries

Limitations and Drawbacks

It is interesting to trace out the problems faced by LIS professionals in using social media. The main problems faced by LIS professionals in using social media can be mainly categorized into six as shown in the Fig. 13 and respondents are also permitted to specify the other problems faced regarding the use of social media. Majority of the LIS professionals (148) expressed that the lack of time as the main problem regarding the use social media. No privacy ensured in the social media is listed as another major problem by the 91 respondents. 65 respondents feel that lack of technical support as the limitation in using social media. 24 respondents listed some problems faced regarding the use of social media. Other important problems revealed by the respondents are waste of valuable time, low bandwidth and slow internet connections. One of the respondents responds that “Generally, information or post what are being shared in the social media is not authentic rather misleading and lack of judgment.” Only 9 respondents feel that it has no role in making awareness and 6 respondents think that social media is not useful to profession. All these reveals that the benefits of social media in libraries and LIS professionals outweigh the drawbacks and
hence there is a need to integrate social media to the library services.

![Fig. 13: Limitations and Drawbacks of Social Media](image)

**CONCLUSION**

Social media provides an avenue to reach library users in their own preferred environments and make awareness about library resources and also it provides possibilities to even extend library services beyond the traditional library walls. The result of this study reveals that the majority of the LIS professionals are aware of social media but it is being mainly used for personal purposes. Only a limited percentage of LIS professionals use social media for their professional development and promotion of their libraries in India. Majority of the respondents think official social media profiles of the library are a must for the development of libraries in this internet age but only limited libraries in India have official social media profiles. The LIS professionals of developed countries are profoundly adopting social media for the development of their libraries and profession. On the other hand developing countries like India are prominent users of social media but they are far behind in adopting social media for the development of their libraries and profession. The application of social media in libraries helps the LIS professionals to re-shape the traditional ideas of library services. So in this age of instant global communication and access to worldwide information, social media are offering promising new outreach options for LIS professionals and can capitalize on social media for the development of their libraries and profession.

**REFERENCES**


