

Extent of use of blogs in rendering library and information services by librarians and library officers in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study focuses on the utilization of blogs in rendering library and information services by librarians and library officers in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted. From a population of 526 librarians, purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 323 librarians and library officers from three states in South-South, Nigeria - Edo, Delta and Rivers States. Copies of questionnaire were administered to three hundred and twenty three (323) but three hundred and three (303) were retrieved and analysed for the study. The findings revealed that blogs are used to a high extent in the university libraries to render services but some services such as news and announcement among others are not yet rendered with blogs. This study recommended the need to train and re-train librarians on the application of blogs in rendering library and information services so as to serve the library community better.

Keywords: Blogs, social media, library and information services, online services, university libraries, library officers.

Introduction

The term blog is a short term for “weblog”. It was coined by Jorn Barger in December 1997 and was developed from simple online journals to sophisticated content management systems that can be used as a platform for learning. Boxen (2008) and Trivedi and Patel (2010) describe blog as a user-generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order which allows users to have access to recent updates before older ones. Blogs provide commentary and information on a particular subject or act as a more personal online diary. Rehman & Shafique (2011) regard blogging as an easy process of publishing ones ideas on the Web and to elicit comments from other users. Blogs are a two-way communication platform that combines texts, images, and links to other related subjects or interesting sites. Readers make comments on posted information so as to leave blogs interactive. Blog site measures its success by the

number of comments each posting gets. This makes it a very viable force of communication and as reliable as ‘word of mouth’. Most blogs are text, although there are also photoblogs, sketchblogs, video blogs (vblog), or audio blogs (podcasting). These blogs differ in the way their content are written or delivered but they are all user-friendly, hence the increase in use by individuals and organizations.

Librarians in university libraries are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that library activities are running effectively. They supervise other staff of the library including library officers to achieve the library’s objectives. Library officers have the duty of assisting librarians to carry out library activities such as charging and discharging of books, answering users question and ensuring that library’s patrons information needs are met (ALA, 2022). Librarians needs all the assistance they can get especially with their determination in reaching out to their patrons in this digital

era where the place of the library is challenged due to the internet, social media among others. Therefore, librarians are often striving to be more effective working with various means to reach their potential patrons and this includes social media (blogs in particular). Librarians in university libraries use blogs to disseminate information, internal and external communication, highlight new and valuable recently added materials to their stock, answer users questions, build their library's image and general outreach programme (Adeleke and Habila, 2012). According to Han and Liu (2010) blogs are used to communicate library events (such as book reviews, book exhibitions, orientation of new students among others), publicize information resources, train staff and offer subject related service. To this end, this study sets out to explore the extent of use of blogs in rendering of library services by librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to investigate the extent of use of blogs in rendering of library and information services by librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Literature review

Blogs are considered a viable tool for providing various library services and exposing electronic resources to library users. Blogs are also used to create subject guides as they can be easily updated to reflect the most current sources of information, for a particular scholarly communication and comments on research findings in a particular department or field (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012). Bansode and Pujar (2008) opined that blogs are very useful for book reviews as it encourages scholarly communication and comments on research

findings and enumerated the following seven ways of applying blogs in library services:

- i. *Outreach services* – libraries build a community of users by linking the library patrons to other people, libraries or online book stores that they can benefit from academically or otherwise.
- ii. *Dissemination of information* – information like new websites, service notices, announcements, updates, event information, current awareness service among others are posted on blogs. Dickson and Holley (2010) stated that libraries can post news on events occurring in the library on blogs. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) added that librarians can periodically post messages, share information on a particular subject or issues both in the institutions and government and allow users to comment or contribute to the content, articles on thought provoking issues can be posted and instant reactions are expected.
- iii. *Library administrator* – blogs provide an enabling platform for library staff to express/share/contribute more on various professional issues. Information about training, conferences, tacit knowledge on tools are captured or measured on blogs. It encourages openness, transparency and adds a voice to the library. Trivedi and Patel (2010) stated that blogs are used by librarians for publication records, annual progress report of the library, messages to the new college and university students about library operations.

- iv. *Community building* – blogs creates an avenue for readers around the globe to share their own experiences and get timely response or advice through the commentary on current library issues, thereby, making learning easy and also building a strong community of user base. They can also be used for supporting the activities of the parent communities of the libraries such as community news about festivities, ceremonies, sports among others (Ekoja, 2011)
- v. *Library resources* – blogs can be used to highlight new and valuable resources added into the library. They can serve as web page and provide access to various free/subscribed electronic resources which results in better utilization of library resources.
- vi. *Fast communication* – it facilitates flow of communication as any information published will be automatically collated on individual blogs or pages for quick responses.
- vii. *Marketing of library* – many libraries keep providing valuable services but reaching these services is limited to a few users. If library base is increased, visibility of library services also need a step up. Therefore, library services such as lending, current awareness, reference; library resources like books, reports, e-journals are marketed also, as well as librarian's expertise like information searching and repackaging skills are made available to users on blogs.

In spite of the opinion by the various scholars, Adomi (2011) observed that although blogs are cheap and easy web resources that can enable libraries to advertise resources and services, to stay in

touch with patrons and communicate with members of the community, most librarians and libraries in Nigeria are yet to adopt/use blogs for service provision. This was supported by Baro, Biagbe, and Godfrey (2013) who pointed out that librarians in South Africa used blogs more than the librarians in university libraries in Nigeria. They cited lack of knowledge, interest and not ready to adopt modern technology on the part of librarians at university libraries in Nigeria as some of the drawbacks to its usage. Also, Jackson-Brown (2013) opined that librarians and library officers used blogs more for social genres than rendering library and information services. Bansode and Pujar (2008) asserted that this tool can be most beneficial when library professionals try and apply it in their library services.

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three hundred and twenty three (323) librarians and library officers were served copies of questionnaire as a means of data collection from three selected states among the six states in the South-South zone, however, only three hundred and three (303) copies were returned. The purposive sampling technique was used to select three states to be studied base on specific qualities they possess among which is that they are actively using social media. These states are Delta, Edo and Akwa-Ibom. Table 1 shows the university libraries and staff used for this study (only federal and state universities) as well as questionnaire response rate.

Results

The results are presented according to the research question.

Research question: What is the extent of utilization of blogs by librarians and library officers in the universities in rendering

library and information services in South-South Nigeria?

The data in Table 2 are used to answer this research question.

Table 1: Questionnaire response rate

University library	Distributed	Retrieved
University of Uyo Library	79	75
Akwa-Ibom State University Library	35	31
Federal University of Petroleum Effurun	27	26
Delta State University, Abr	59	57
John Harris (UNIBEN) Library	88	82
Ambrose Alli Ekpoma	35	32
Total	323	303

Table 2: Mean ratings on the extent of blogs utilization in rendering library and information services by librarians and library officers n=303

	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Outreach programmes	2.57	1.02	High extent
2. Highlight new materials added to the library	2.59	1.06	High extent
3. Interacting and getting users' opinion on issues	2.52	.94'	High extent
4. Disseminate information	2.45	.98	Low extent
5. News and announcements on library events	2.49	.89	Low extent
6. Create subject guide to reflect sources of information for a particular field or department	2.72	.96	High extent
7. Share community news about festivities, ceremonies and sports	2.75	.99	High extent
8. Information searching and repackaging	2.79	.98	High extent
9. Marketing of library resources	2.79	1.09	High extent
Grand Mean	2.63	.99	High extent

Table 2 shows the grand mean and standard deviation scores of 2.63 and .99 respectively indicating that the extent of utilization of blogs by librarians and library officers in rendering library and information services in South-South Nigeria is to a high extent. The item by item analysis shows that librarians and library officers rated the extent of utilization of blog in rendering seven of the nine listed library and information services to be high. The seven services include: outreach programmes (mean=2.57), highlighting new materials added to the library (mean=2.59), interacting and getting users' opinion on issues (mean=2.52), creating subject guide to reflect sources of information for a particular field or department (mean=2.72), sharing community news about festivities, ceremonies and sports (mean=2.75) information searching and repackaging (mean=2.79), marketing of library resources (mean=2.79).

On the other hand, the librarians and library officers rated the extent of utilization of blog in rendering the remaining two services to be to a low extent. They include: disseminating information (mean=2.45), and news and announcements on library events (mean=2.49).

Discussion

The result of research question revealed that the extent of utilization of blogs by librarians and library officers in rendering library and information services is high. However, Baro, Biagbe, and Godfrey (2013) study found that librarians in South Africa used blogs more frequently than the librarians in university libraries in Nigeria. It may be as a consequence of lack of knowledge, lack of interest, lack of skills, and not ready to adopt modern technology on the side of librarians at university libraries in Nigeria. Their findings also indicated that librarians in university libraries in Nigeria are challenged with problems such as power failure, lack of facilities, lack of internet access and lack of

expertise as compared to their South African counterparts in the usage of social media applications. Fasola, Oso and Alonge (2015), Rehman and Shafique (2011) and Adomi (2011) corroborated the findings of the present study. Fasola, Oso and Alonge (2015) opined that librarians use blogs to disseminate information and carry out library services. It also believed that blogs and blogging is a viable means of transferring information between library and its patrons and among librarians. Furthermore, they also posited that blogs is utilized as a way to publish articles to have a wider reach to library patrons and library professionals. They concluded that blogging is highly beneficial to the library as it has the potential of bringing library services to the users (outreach programmes) thereby attracting new users to the library. Rehman and Shafique (2011) opined that blogging is an easy process of publishing ideas on the web and also getting comments from other web users. Rehman and Shafique (2011) further stated that blogs combine text and images which serves as a links to other related or interesting sites where readers can leave comments, making blogs interactive. Adomi (2011) also observed that blogs are cheap and easy web resources that enable libraries to advertise resources and services, to stay in touch with patrons and communicate with members of the community. Adomi (2011) further pointed out that most libraries have not adopted the use of blogs in rendering services; this could be the reason why some services like information dissemination and news and announcement services are not currently been rendered on blogs as they were rated low in utilization in the findings of this study.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that blogs are highly used by librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. This step in the right direction should be encouraged because the world is fast leaving the arm

chair librarianship into a digital world where library users are more involved in deciding how and where they want to be served. As for the library management, keeping up with this trend is equal to embracing relevance, more visibility and a more effective service to humanity.

Based on the finding, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be training and re-training of librarians on how to use the various applications in blogs to encourage a holistic use of all the services.
2. Library management should appoint a librarian as a desk officer to manage online services so that online library users will be able to get the satisfaction of having their information needs met and on time.

Implications of the Study

This study established that blogs are used to a high extent except for some services like information dissemination, news and announcement which are not yet rendered by university librarians on blogs. The implication of this finding is that some services are still not rendered on blogs in university libraries in South-South Nigeria despite the high rate of usage in rendering other services. Therefore, librarians and library officers in university libraries should make effort to use blogs holistically in order to ensure that library users will not be stranded when they opt for any information service on blogs.

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