

Original Article

## **Social Media Use of University Libraries in Sri Lanka: a Content Analysis**

*De Silva, A.P.U.*

*Main Library, University of Kelaniya,*

*udayangani@kln.ac.lk*

### **ABSTRACT**

Every academic or university library tries its best to cater to the users to get information relevant to the users' subject areas. To fulfill that target, academic libraries use various media to cater to their users best. The use of social media sites is one of the best ways to share knowledge with users. The present study was based on the State Universities of Sri Lanka, and it was conducted to find out first the available social media sites in academic libraries in Sri Lanka and then the most popular social media sites that used to share knowledge and information among user community in the respective university communities. There are eighteen state university in Sri Lanka. It was the population of the study. The websites of all the state universities and their faculties were selected as the sample of the study. This is a survey study and summative content analysis was used to collect data for the study. After analyzing data, it was clearly identified that Facebook was the most popular social media platform that is being used to share information about the library, programs of the library as well as the mother institute.

***Index Terms- Social Media, Academic Library, Information Sharing, Facebook***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge and information have become key resources and most individuals try to capture information in a fraction of a second for their needs (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). When considering

knowledge and information, a library is the most important organization that supports any individual to collect his or her information needs. Before the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution, the conventional function of libraries was to collect, process, disseminate, store and utilize information to provide services to their users within a reasonable time and in the right way (Maponya, 2004). However, the situation has changed rapidly and knowledge and information are available in many forms through many other ways. Information providers are not always aware of the intellectual capacity of knowledge seekers. At the same time, the knowledge seeker's understanding of the knowledge sources is also not up to the required extent most of the time (Karunanayake & Nagata, 2007). To overcome this situation, modern librarians must be equipped with the necessary advanced Information Technology skills to run information systems, disseminate knowledge through digital media, online handling of book referencing and lending, and much more (Collins & Quan-Haase, 2012).

There are various types of libraries created based on the user categories such as academic, public, school, and other special libraries. Among them, academic libraries play a big role to cater better services to the expert community. It is said that, the library is the heart of the university and without the heart, universities are not able to survive well. At the same time, it is a big challenge for such libraries to disseminate and share knowledge with the university community

and expert society in the present era. An academic library as a center of excellence in the present university system should rethink and explore ways to improve its services. It must become a more effective and efficient learning organization to capture and disseminate knowledge within the library suite creating an impressive impact on the university community (Howard et al., 2018; Maponya, 2004). Owing to the rapid growth of ICT, academic library collections are no longer mere collections comprising just printed material. They are now equipped with large collections of multiple formats and media information such as e-books, e-journals, and e-databases (Maponya, 2004).

In the past era, people used to step into libraries to get information to fulfill their information needs. However, the situation has changed drastically as most individuals wish to gather information fast and have them at their fingertips; new technological concepts and tools are being used to effortlessly gather information. Consequently, acquiring and using information from libraries have a low demand among the general public and there is a high demand for online resources and services in the present society (Amarasekara & Marasinghe, 2020; Chandrasekar & Murugathas 2013). At the same time, digital natives, who grew up in the era of ubiquitous technology including the internet and computers, most require the digital library and digital concepts for their educational purposes (Dobrevá & others, 2010). Simultaneously, as discussed in the fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) deep and multi-level collaboration between humans and machines is very important. So, it is necessary to develop deep connections with machines and humans in every field in this era (Noble, Mende, Grewal & Parasuraman, 2022).

As a solution for this situation, librarians would recognize the importance of clear, accessible online domains to attract and serve users

(Helmick, 2015). Social media are important tools for capturing external and competitive information to serve people's needs and it is a better place to engage in conversations with the user community (Bharati, Zhang & Chaudhury, 2013). Today social media has become a very popular concept among all present generations and it is clearly identified that social media of Web 2.0 are very convenient for academic libraries to promote and deliver their resources and services (Sriram, 2016). The main purpose of academic libraries is to provide resources and services to support the learning, teaching, and research of the users. Librarians of such libraries can make use of those social media to disseminate knowledge and library services to engage with their communities outside the precincts of the library. This study mainly focused on how far academic libraries use social media to promote their services and resources among the user community to achieve the purpose of the library.

This study mainly focused on the role of social media in university libraries in Sri Lanka. This study was conducted based on three objectives. They are,

- To identify the types of social media available and used in the university libraries in Sri Lanka
- To determine the purpose for which social media is applied in university libraries to promote functions and programs of the libraries, in Sri Lanka
- To identify the popular (commonly use among the majority) social media among the academic user community in the university libraries.

It is very easy to find the studies which are conducted related to social media usages in academic libraries in the present. The reason for that, social media has become the common topic for research trends in the present society.

Saleem, Aly and Genoni (2015) investigated that social media channels suchlike Facebook and Twitter are used perforate and digital communication, and blogging, YouTube and video sharing are popular media in Australia, South Africa and Iraq. How ever, Facebook and Twitter are not used to request information from the library by users and the social media platforms are used to market library services, announce library news and improve service delivery (Fainder, 2012; Rabatseta, Maluleka and Onyancha, 2021). There are more than billion users of Facebook in these countries. Due to the high usage of social media, the information gap has been reduced among academic librarians in the Iraq and Australia. At the same time, Twitter and Facebook was the most popular social media among academic libraries in Australia and UK (Palmer, 2014; Chatten & Roughley, 2016). Some studies reveled that Facebook offers a dynamic environment for academic libraries to cultivate relationships with user community in a proper way (Phillips, 2011).

In some studies, it is clear that social media have become not only a major common channel of communication among peers and relatives, but also an innovative, yet cost-effective avenue for academic libraries to enhance the quality of their services to patrons in the academic library system (Mensah, 2021).

In some cases in Kuwait, it was identified that academic librarians have a positive perception towards social media tools in marketing library information resources and services among their user community, but the support from the library management to use of social media tools in marketing purposes was very poor (Al-Awadhi and Al-Daihani, 2019).

It is interesting to note that early studies in Ghana indicated that that most of the university libraries lacked policy on the use of social media and lacked

the competence and motivation to use social media to make a remarkable difference in service delivery, but they have identified that social media are very useful for the academic societies (Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah, 2016).

Doney, Wikle, and Martinez (2020) indicated that most frequently posts of the Instagram accounts was showcasing posts specially highlighting library or campus resources of the academic libraries at land-grant institutions in the United States. Although, showcasing posts were the most common among the Instagram accounts analyzed, they also received the lowest number of likes, on average, and generated comments less compered with other post categories like crowd sourcing, humanizing, interacting, orienting, place making.

It was identified that social media postings included ten different codes such as archives; collections; events; exhibits; facility; library community; sentiments; services; site management; and university community in the academic library system. At the same time above mentioned codes were tied to three different themes. They are libraries create a sense of outreach and advocacy with the goal of establishing community connection, providing an inviting environment, and access to content as needed or desired (Harrison, Burrell, Velasquez and Schreiner, 2017).

Considering with the Sri Lankan context, there are few studies related to the social media studies in academic libraries. Weerasinghe & Hindagolla (2018), Amrakoon & Senevirathna (2014) and Amarakoon & Amarakoon (2012) examined that majority of the librarians (78.4%) in Sri Lanka used social network sites at their working place and among all social media sites, Facebook is the most famous site among them. The presentage was 64.7%. Further Amarakoon & Senevirathna stated that by using a Facebook sites, librarians promote their services and resources among their user

community. Athukorala (2020) investigated that, although the Facebook, Twitter, Instant messaging, blogs, and YouTube are very popular social media platforms in the Sri Lankan society, there was a less usage of these social media sites as a marketing tools in the academic libraries. At the same time more than 80% of academic libraries do not have their own Facebook account to share their information with the user community (Amarakoon & Senevirathna, 2014). Due to the inadequate training opportunities, lack of knowledge, privacy and identity theft, slow speed of internet and electricity failure, usage of social media in libraries for promoting library resources and services are very limited in Sri Lanka context (Amarakoon & Amarakoon, 2012 ).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a mixed qualitative and quantitative study utilizing a survey designed to investigate the availability and use of social media by university libraries in Sri Lanka. There are eighteen university libraries in Sri Lanka and it is the population used for the present study. All 18 state universities were selected as the sample for the study. All universities have two or more faculties separately and the libraries attached to those faculties have developed a collection related to the subjects of the relevant faculty. All the websites related to these faculty libraries were studied.

Figure 1 shows the number of faculties that are attached to the sample of the studied universities. Simultaneously, summative content analysis was used to observe and collect data from the websites of university libraries. At the same time, the study covered all the social media sites to cross-check the data accuracy of the available information on the university websites. After gathering information, MS Excel was used to analyze the data, and graphs, tables, and charts were used for the data interpretation modes of this study.

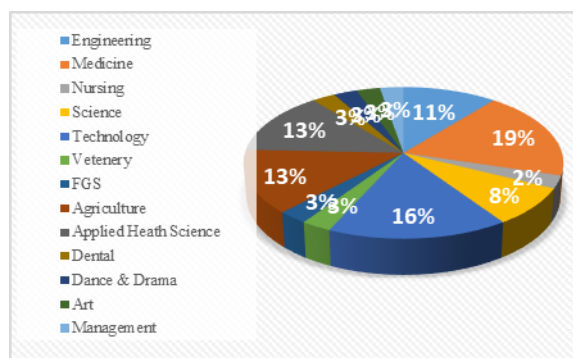


Figure 1: Number of Faculties of the Universities in Sri Lanka

(Survey data, 2022)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the summative content analysis on the websites of the university libraries during the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2022, results revealed that 65% of the samples were the libraries that used social media connection with the home page of the library. 30% of the sample size did not display even social media icons on their websites. At the same time, one of the university library websites was not opened due to a technological error. So, these results are based on 11 websites of university libraries in Sri Lanka.

The main objective of this preliminary study was to identify the types of social media available and used in university libraries in Sri Lanka. Figure 2 clearly shows that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google + were the most commonly used social media sites of the university libraries. Simultaneously, Linked-In, Instagram, Flickr, RSS, Behance, and Messengers have very less demand from libraries. Anyhow, there is a new trend in using social media in the academic library system in the Sri Lankan context.

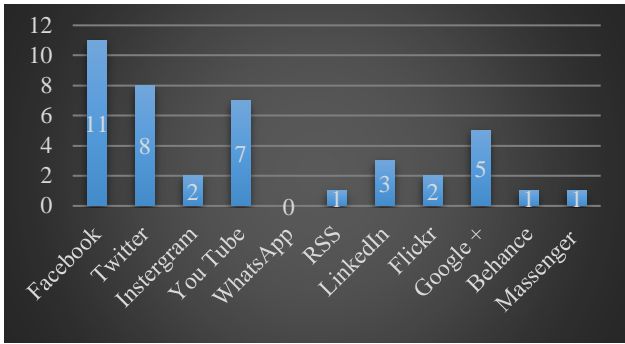


Figure 2: Usage of social media in university libraries (Survey data, 2022)

The second objective of the study was to determine the purpose for which social media is applied in university libraries in Sri Lanka. Based on the collected significant statements from social media postings, it was realized that most academic libraries use their social media sites to display background information related to the libraries and to make awareness the users regarding the programs conducted by the library or their mother institute. It was 22% of all others sharing information on the media. All the university libraries have shared their information on programs and other functions by using photo publishing. It was the most popular item on all social media sites. Although libraries were stores of information sources relevant to their mother institutes, they paid low attention to sharing information about information sources and their services to the user community.

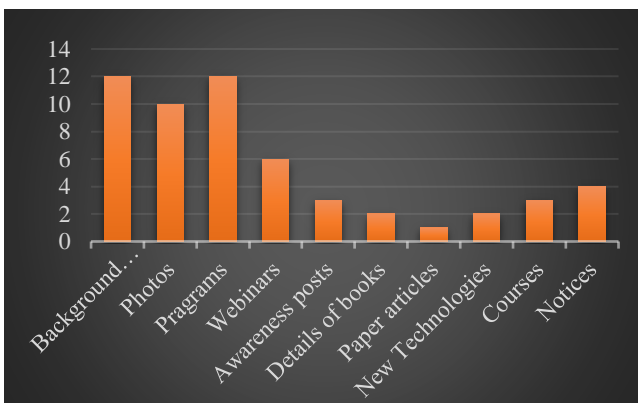


Figure 3: Purpose of using social media sites (Survey data, 2022)

After reviewing the collected data as a whole, it was realized that the most popular social media among the academic community was Facebook. Then Twitter, YouTube, and Google + took second, third, and fourth places, respectively.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study mainly reported preliminary findings of the content analysis of the social media sites attached to the university libraries of Sri Lanka. It was clearly identified that there is a sharp trend towards social media sites in sharing information with the user community. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google+ are the most popular and attractive social media sites among the user community and staff of the university libraries. However, academic libraries used these social media sites to share basic information with their user community. Results showed that some libraries have already started sharing their resources and services by using social media sites with their user community. Besides, inadequate knowledge of information technology and technical errors that they have faced frequently are the common barriers that university libraries are faced.

## REFERENCES

1. Ahenkorah-Marfo, Micheal and Akussah, Harry (2016), Being where the users are: Readiness of academic librarians to satisfy information needs of users through social media, *Library Review*, 65 (8/9), DOI 10.1108/LR-02-2016-0020
2. Al-Awadhi, Suha and Al-Daihani, Sultan M. (2019), Marketing academic library information services using social media, *Library Management*, 40 (3/4), DOI 10.1108/LM-12-2017-0132.
3. Amarakoon, L.R. and Senevirathne, T.M. (2014), Social media and library marketing: is

- Facebook being used effectively in promoting library resources and services of main libraries in Sri Lanka?, NILIS Symposium, DOI: 10.13140/2.1.2082.0483
4. Amarasekara, K.M.R.K. and Marasinghe, M.M.I.K. (2020). User Satisfaction on library resources and services: survey conducted in the main library of the Open University of Sri Lanka. *Journal of the University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka*, 23(2), pp.27–46. DOI:<http://doi.org/10.4038/jula.v23i2.8007>
  5. Athukorala, A.W.V. (2020), The possibilities for information marketing in libraries with social media: a study based on Sri Lankan university libraries, *Journal of Institute of Human Resource Advancement*, 7(2), <https://www.ihra.cmb.ac.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/V7-I2-04.pdf>
  6. Bharati, P., Zhang, C., and Chaudhury, A. (2013). Social Media Assimilation in Firms: Investigating the Roles of Absorptive Capacity and Institutional Pressures, *Information Systems Frontiers*, 16(2), Springer. DOI: 10.1007/s10796-013-9433-x.
  7. Cascio, W.F. & Montealegre, R (2016). How technology is changing work and organizations. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 3(1), pp. 349-375. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-041015-062352
  8. Chandrasekar, K. and Murugathas, K., (2013). An assessment of user satisfaction on library services: a case study of undergraduate Biology students at the University of Jaffna. *Journal of the University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka*, 16(1), pp.34–45. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.4038/jula.v16i1.5196>
  9. Collins, G., & Quan-Haase, A. (2012). Social media and academic libraries: current trends and future challenges. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 49, p.p.48–68.
  10. Dobрева M., McCulloch E., Birrell D., Ünal Y., Feliciati P. (2010). Digital Natives and Specialised Digital Libraries: A Study of Europeana Users. In: Kurbanoglu S., Al U., Lepon Erdoğan P., Tonta Y., Uçak N. (eds). *Technological Convergence and Social Networks in Information Management. IMCW 2010. Communications in Computer and Information Science*, vol 96. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-16032-5\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-16032-5_5)
  11. Doney, Jylisa, Wikle, Olivia and Martinez, Jessica (2020), Likes, comments, views: a content analysis of academic library Instagram posts, *Information Technology and Libraries*, Sep. 2020, <https://doi.org/10.6017/ital.v39i3.12211>.
  12. Fainder, David J. (2012), Social media for academic libraries, *Social Media for Academics: a practical guide*, <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/fimspub/27/>
  13. Harrison, Amanda, Burrell, Rene, Velasquez, Sarah, & Schreiner, Lynnette (2017), Social Media Use in Academic Libraries: A Phenomenological Study, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 43 (2017), 248–256p, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.02.014>
  14. Helmick, S.C. (2015). *Mobile social marketing in libraries*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
  15. Howard, H., Huber, S., Carter, L. & Moore, E. (2018). Academic libraries on social media: finding the students and the information they want. *Information Technology & Libraries*, pp. 8-18. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ital.v37i1.10160>

16. Karunanayake, K., & Nagata, H. (2007). Some affected variables of information needs occurrence of an information seeker: a comprehensive hypothetical model. *Journal of the University Librarians*, 11, p.p. 50-78.
17. Maponya, P.M. (2004). Knowledge management practices in academic libraries: a case study of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg Libraries. <http://mapule276883.pbworks.com/f/Knowledge%20management%20practices%20in%20academic%20libraries.pdf>. (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2021)
18. Mensah, Monica (2021), Towards a framework to optimise social media usage in academic libraries in Ghana: an empirical study, *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science*, 31 (2),
19. Palmer, Stuart (2014), Characterizing university library use of social media: a case study of Twitter and Facebook from Australia, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, vol. 40 (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2014.08.007>.
20. Saleem, Maysoon, Aly, Anne & Genoni, Paul (2015), Use of social media by academic librarians in Iraq, *New Library World*, vol. 116 (11/12), DOI 10.1108/NLW-03-2015-0018.
21. Sriram, V. (2016). Social media and library marketing: experiences of KN Raj library. *Journal of Library & Information Technology*, 36(3), p.p 153-157 & 5. doi: 10.14429/djlit.36.3.9810
22. Noble, S.M., Mende, M., Grewal, D. & Parasuraman, A. (2022). The fifth industrial revolution: how harmonious human-machine collaboration is triggering a retail and service [R]evolution. *Journal of Retailing*, 98 (2), 199-208p. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2022.04.003>
23. Weerasinghe, Sureni & Hindagolla, B.M.M.C.B. (2018). Use of Social Network Sites (SNS) by academics in the workplace: perspective of University Librarians in Sri Lanka. *Journal of the University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka*, Vol.21, Issue 2, July 2018, 21-43. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4038/jula.v21i2.7916>.
24. Chatten, Zelda & Roughley, Sarah (2016) Developing social media to engage and connect at the university of Liverpool library, *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 22:2-3, 249-256, DOI: 10.1080/13614533.2016.1152985.
25. Rabatseta, Benford, Maluleka, Jan R. and Onyancha, Omwoyo Boshire (2021), Adoption and use of social media in academic libraries in South Africa, *South Africa Journal of Library & Information Science*, 87 (1), <http://sajlis.journals.ac.za> doi:10.7553/87-1-1926.
26. Phillips, N.K. (2011), Academic library use of Facebook: building relationships with students, *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 37 (6).
27. Amarakoon, L.R. & Amarakoon, R.S.K. (2012), Web 2.0 social media and libraries: role of social media in promoting library and information services in an academic setting: with special reference to university of Bolton (UoB), academic centre Sri Lanka library, *Proceedings of the NILIS/University of Colombo Symposium: Changing library strategies for the new generation of users*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264045208\\_Web\\_20\\_Social\\_Media\\_and\\_Libraries\\_Role\\_of\\_social\\_media\\_in\\_promoting\\_library\\_and\\_information\\_services\\_in\\_an\\_academic\\_setting\\_with\\_special\\_reference\\_to\\_University\\_of\\_Bolton\\_UoB\\_Academic\\_Centre\\_Sri\\_Lanka](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264045208_Web_20_Social_Media_and_Libraries_Role_of_social_media_in_promoting_library_and_information_services_in_an_academic_setting_with_special_reference_to_University_of_Bolton_UoB_Academic_Centre_Sri_Lanka)