

## ACCESS TO SAMMANTHURAI PUBLIC LIBRARY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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### Abstract

*Social media is a pathway to anyone to create share and collaborate subject matters and information through information technology. According to Amarakoon (2012), the library should adopt social media for maximum exploitation of library services. Therefore it is high time to study the adoption of the social media to enhance library services. Amir Ali public Library (Grade II) is located at Sammanthurai, in the Ampara district. Sammanthurai is vast area which has a population of 37,000, so the library serves for a large user community. This library has developed Social Media as a supporting service. The objective of this study is to examine how far library users and staff are adopt Social Media to access library services. This research was conducted using survey method. Though there is a big population, researchers were unable to get a big sample. Due to time limit the researcher used a handful of small sample by using purposive sampling technique. Questionnaires and interviews were used as research tools. The study revealed 10 to 30 years age groups of this library are using the social media frequently and others use rarely. However, Most of the users perceived that they prefer to use Facebook to access the library. This study recommends that Facebook page of this public library should be enhanced and the other social media also should be introduced. Librarian has to start training program for library staff to provide excellent services through this media. In addition users also should be trained on how to use this type of services.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Public Library, Access to information

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Amir Ali public Library (Grade II) is located at Sammanthurai, in the Ampara district. It was opened 1952 by the Sammanthurai Village Council as a reading room. Now there are twenty thousand reading materials available in this library. E –library and e -newspaper section are also introduced in this library recently. The library installed Wi-Fi for the users to access information online. This library has computerized the catalogue system to trace the reading materials. As it is a difficult process to access the library directly by all the members, library introduced social media to fulfill the needs of the users, especially through Facebook and twitter etc. The library users need to come to the library to select their reading materials, which is a time consuming process. This time gap will be reduced with the introduction of different

types of social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs and email etc. Hence the users could access the library services through the social media with any devices. This research also would help to identify the needs of knowledge, skills of the library staff, training and follow up to implement social media system. This study result would emphasize the benefits of social media in promoting library usage and reading habits of the citizens.

### **1.1 Research Problem**

This research is concerned with developing the social media and its use in this public library. Sammanthurai is a vast area in Ampara region and the library users find it difficult to access this library. Therefore, social media was (Facebook) introduced to enhance the services. As this service seems not to that much of expectation of the developers, the user survey is highly important to analyze the current situation. In addition, preparation of staff toward the services is important to develop more in this innovative service.

The research is based on the following research questions.

01. What are the perceptions of library users and staff in using social media?
02. Do the users use social media (Facebook page of library) to get information about library services?
03. What are the challenges and difficulties faced by the users to access the library directly and through social media?
04. What remedies the library can take to uplift the usage of social media to access the library?

This study attempts to explore both stakeholders (Library staff and users) on this area and to find out how the introduction of Social Media service through smart phone devices to the library would be beneficial to both the users and the library staff.

### **1.2 Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to find out the interconnection between the users and the library through social media. The objective is to examine how this library could enhance providing services to the users through the social media and the perception of the users towards the services.

### **1.3 Significant of the study**

The significant of the study is mainly to enhance the adoption of the social media to access library services. Once this system is completely implemented and accepted by the users and the library staff this would immensely support for the betterment of the library services and the user community. Then the entire library system will exercise new modes of access services that will assist the users to enjoy innovative services. Library staff also will be motivated and provide passionate services to their best satisfaction. The library can alert the users regarding new arrivals, new

services, programs and fresh news, borrowing facilities, renewal of lending books and reservation through this system.

#### **1.4 Literature review**

Amarakoon (2012) recommends that the library and information resource centers should develop their marketing plan with incorporating social media for news, service alerts and quick updates to online users and fund raising. The use of social media is important to capture the attention of online users and which will help in distance learning and knowledge sharing.

There is a thought that the Information Communication Technology will overtake the library system in the future and it is criticized that public library memberships will be diminished in due course and which lead to obsolete the use of library by the public. To overcome these issues there is a need arisen to public libraries to shift to digital and online services. Reema Kharis (2013), in her book "A new chapter: a launch of the bookless library" states that "I think it'll be a good 100 to 150 years from now until all libraries are completely digital". Hence it could be presumed that the social media will go along with the present library system for considerable time and the traditional library system to stay for considerable time.

The government has introduced Information Communication Technology (ICT) in all stream of education in schools, and degree programs of the universities. Hence the introduction of the social media in public library will assist those students and other users. In future, the introduction of the computers in the children section will be the initial step to access the online services, when the children grow up, they will find it easy to make use of the social media. The library should find and search some new techniques for impacting valuable information to the user. Marketing of library services can be possible by using social software tools like Podcast, YouTube, Blogger, etc., Mishra (2008).

Libraries should be at the heart of digital innovation. Librarians should develop their role in actively connecting communities and helping people to experience, experiment with and master new technologies. Digital technology will be the key to future library service delivery but our research points out that its true potential will not be achieved unless the principle of an open, enabling ICT infrastructure is agreed by local authorities and library services. We can conclude that social media is highly important to practice innovative services by the public libraries in the twenty first century.

Most of the present library staff was recruited during the post period of the introduction of information technology. Hence library staff might be from the generation called 'baby boomers' (people who born in 1946-1964) except a few from 'generation X' (people who born in 1965-1982). Hence they are not familiar with the use of computer technology and online system etc. They are not ready for social media and adopting new techniques for impacting valuable digital information to the present day library users who are the 'net generation' (Oblinger, (2005), Mashroofa (2012)).

It is highly significant to identify the perception of the Sammanthurai public library staff individually towards social media usage. The librarian should act as the change agent and initiate on the job and off the job training to improve the skills and efficiencies of the staff to handle the social media mechanism in the library. And also obtain the services of the external change agents in this connection depending on the needs for this situation.

Even if the librarian and the staff are willing to establish ICT based services there might be some obstacles related to infrastructure, equipment, facilities, connectivity and so on.

Providing quick retrieval information to user is great challenge in this e-learning age. It denotes that the users must make use of the social media services to access the library. It also highlights that the library staff must be equipped to provide this service. They should be properly trained and their mindset change is also highly important. Reviewed literature indicated that library services are enhanced by introducing social media.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology is quantitative and qualitative in nature and the research was conducted by face to face interviews and questionnaires. The sample of this study is 10 numbers of library staff and 50 numbers of the library users. Data collected will be analyzed by using frequency, description and tables and figures through MS Excel. There is separate questionnaire for the library staff to express their opinion on the implementation of social media in library services. Sample was selected purposively so purposive sampling technique was used to select sample from each group. A handful of small sample was selected due to time constraints. However 45 questionnaires were received. The response rate was 90%. There are limitations with regard to sampling size and the administering of questionnaires as there are no proper records regarding the background and details of the users. The questionnaires were phrased in simple language (Tamil only) to enable to understand by the respondents easily.

## **3. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS**

Age group of Facebook users were studied firstly and identified 10-30 years age group use Social media frequently whilst other age groups such as 31-50 and 51 and above use rarely. Preference of users regarding the usage of devices to access social media was analyzed; 40% of the users prefer Laptop, 25% Computers, 20% prefer Mobile/ smartphone while 05% prefer Tab. Another 10% prefer Tablet, Mobile and Computer to use Social Media.

Considering skills and knowledge of the users 65% of the respondents has a good knowledge about Social media while 35% has excellent knowledge about Social media. It is good to note that all the respondents have known and knowledgeable regarding social media. In addition to this they were asked which social media they preferred. Among the respondents, 45% of the users preferred Facebook, 40%

preferred twitter and 10% preferred twitter and blogs. 75% of the users are willing to use Facebook page of the library. 20% are not willing to use the Facebook.

Further, respondents' satisfaction level regarding the services was explored. 50% of users moderately satisfy with the usefulness of Facebook page of this library, while 40% are highly satisfied while other 10% were not satisfied. However, it was important to identify their expectation. Therefore, a list of activities was given in the questionnaire to get the respondents' expectations. Among the respondents 70% of the users expect activities in the Social media in "information about new resources". 5% of them expect activities in the Social media in "post about Library". Another 05% for the activities in "photos and events" and another 05% wish activities in "library as the fan" another 05% are for the "like, comment, share and tag".

In addition to this, it was asked the purpose of using Social Media. Among the respondents 45% of the users use the Social Media "to read the newspaper". 40% use it to "supplement education" and 10% use "to supplement education" and "to assist research". 05% make use for "other purposes". Also the frequency of using Social Media was asked. 60% of the users use the Social Media in "seldom". 25% use it "sometimes" and 20% use "very often".

Perception of users in connection with library services and social media was also analyzed. 70% of users agreed as social media uplift the services provided by this library. 15% of them strongly agreed while 20% did not agree at all. 50% of the users agree as the use of social media will assist to gain knowledge from this library, 30% not agree at all while 20% strongly agree it. 90% of the users point out as they have no difficulties while 10% say as they have difficulties in using the social media. However, library staff and users have the following problems and challenges in using social media.

- All library users are not using internet and they are not a member of social network.
- Library staff requested to train them for effective and efficient use in Social Media.
- Users are also in need of training.
- Even the people who use social media do not update daily.
- One library assistant said that he is not familiar with using twitter and Facebook, requested to provide training on this area to deliver good services.
- Malfunction of internet connectivity.
- Users rarely respond to the library's promotion activities through Facebook.
- Majority adult users are not using social media and they are not familiar with this type of information.
- School children are prohibited in using internet during school hours. Sometimes after school hours also they are denied to use internet by the parents. This is mainly preventing them from bad sites and cultural reasons. One user mentioned that he is not allowed to use internet at his home.
- Majority users are farmers and they are unable to buy mobile devices to utilize this type of services.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the users prefer to use the Facebook to access the library. The study revealed 10 to 30 years age groups of this library are using the social media frequently and others use rarely. The use of other tools such as twitter, LinkedIn and blog also must be encouraged by all the age groups.

The social media services have to be upgraded in order to provide easy access to the users to fulfill their requirements. Students may find it easier and more comfortable to communicate with a librarian and obtain access through this medium than in traditional ways. This library must adopt the social media into their strategic plans.

This study recommends that Facebook page of this public library should be enhanced and the other social media also should be introduced. Librarian has to start training program for library staff to provide excellent services through this media. In addition users also should be trained on how to use this type of services. The result of this study cannot be generalized as the sample size is very small and recommends future researchers to explore more.

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