
The Evolving Role of Libraries in the Age of Social Media and Digital Environments

Umadevi Vanum¹, Dr. Dhana Raju Veeramallu²

¹Research Scholar (JRF), Department of Library and Information Science, Andhra University
Umadeviv.rs@andhrauniversity.edu.in

²Department of Library and Information Science, Andhra University
dr.vdhanaraju@andhrauniversity.edu.in.

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ABSTRACT

The rapid improvement of information and communication technologies has significantly modernised the traditional roles of libraries. In the present digital age, libraries are no longer regulated to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of printed resources; somewhat, they have evolved into vibrant information and learning centres that actively fascinate users through digital platforms and social media technologies. Social media applications, digital repositories, cloud-based services, AI, and virtual learning environs have modernised the association between libraries and their users. This paper identifies the evolving role of libraries in the part of social media and digital conditions by evaluating emergent trends, technical revolutions, user expectations, facing challenges and opportunities. The study highlights the role of libraries in digital information broadcasting, communal assignation, digital literacy, scholarly communication, and knowledge organisation. The paper auxiliary deliberates the challenges accompanying with digital transformation, as well as information overload, misinformation, copyright concerns, technological barriers, and data privacy concerns. The study accomplishes that libraries must uninterruptedly transform and acclimatise to remain relevant in the digital knowledge society.

Keywords: Libraries, Social Media, Digital Environment, Digital Literacy, Library Transformation, ICT.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have engaged in recreating role in safeguarding knowledge, heartening education, and supporting research and learning activities. By tradition, libraries accomplished mainly as depositories of printed materials, such as books, journals, and manuscripts, as well as archival collections. However, the growth of digital technologies and social media platforms has strongly renovated the information landscape.

The ignition of the internet, mobile technologies, electronic resources and social alliance platforms has transformed the ways users find, access, assess, and share information. In this emergent environment, libraries are increasingly embracing digital technologies and social media tools to propose innovative services, improve user engagement, and provide seamless access to information resources. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, YouTube, WhatsApp and LinkedIn have become significant communication channels for libraries to associate with users and recommend services.

The digital transformation of libraries has comprehensive their functions beyond traditional information management towards roles containing digital content creation, virtual reference services, information literacy training, research support, and community engagement. Libraries are now acknowledged as collective learning spaces, digital innovation hubs, and facilitators of lifelong learning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Chore (2023) states that social media is the best way to connect with library users because it makes it simple for them to share and accept information. Social media also has a big influence on libraries. Libraries are also significantly impacted by social media. Hence, LIS professionals are primarily tasked with recognising social media as an adaptable way to reach potential library patrons.

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Academic libraries are using social media to intermingle with different community groups and extend their influence beyond their conventional functions. Harrison et al. (2017) analyse social media content from six university libraries in two Midwestern states using a phenomenological method and institutional theory. Ten coding themes: archives, collections, events, exhibits, facilities, library community, feelings, services, site administration, and university community are involved in positions. Three basic concepts are replicated in these codes: easy access to content, promoting community associations through outreach and encouragement, and creating an attractive atmosphere. While some libraries focused less on community contributions, those with AR or MLS programs showed a balanced distribution of topics

Pawar (2026) investigates the effect of social media advertising on Indian consumers' online purchase behaviour, concentrating on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Key factors observed include content quality, influencer marketing, user engagement, and online reviews. Trust and brand perception are also discovered. Utilising a structured questionnaire via Google Forms, 100 responses were gathered and analysed descriptively. Findings expose that social media upgrades significantly affect purchasing decisions, with work in partnership content and positive reviews enhancing consumer trust.

Adewojo and Momoh (2025) discovered how social media uses Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to provide real-time support and varying reference services in Nigerian public libraries. Three major themes were established from qualitative research, including semi-structured discussions with librarians and patrons at six public libraries: an exchange from traditional services to dynamic digital models; improved service proficiency and extended hours, organised with issues with digital literacy and access; and effective strategies like active outreach and ongoing professional development. Librarians stated that higher interest and quicker reaction times, while users had challenges with complex edges. The conclusions emphasise the digital transformation of library services and the consequences of resources and training to deliver fair access to upgraded reference services.

Libraries have been, at all times, central hubs for information, education, and community immersion. However, their responsibilities and functions have been extremely altered by the rapid development of digital technology. In their study of the varying functions of libraries in the digital age, **Hassans (2025)** concentrate on historical changes, current issues, technical advancements, and community outreach programs. Libraries must deal with financial restraints, gaps in digital skills, and fluctuating user expectations as they transform from being simply a book repository to vibrant learning and innovation hubs. Libraries may continue vibrant centres of information, connection, and digital fairness by consuming innovative technologies, reconsidering services, and reassuring comprehensive community participation.

The combination of social media with knowledge management systems in open and distance learning improves collective environments. **Akanbiemu (2024)** assessed the effect of social media tools on information dissemination, collaborative learning, and community engagement in libraries supportive of such education. Using a review of literature, it distinguished the exact social media platforms, content types, and their proficiency in improving knowledge management. Key ideas involved real-time information sharing and challenges in integrating social media with traditional frameworks. Methods to moderate risks while maximising benefits were also detected. The assessed results offer endorsements for libraries to adapt their practices, improving knowledge management in a digitally evolving educational landscape.

Renovating libraries into energetic centres for education, emphasising their vital role in educating library relevance and accessibility. Improvement in modern-day libraries is significantly driven by social media, which differentiates their functions and extends their influence. **Prasanna and Bhavani (2025)** analyse how social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok boost community participation, encourage digital literacy, and provide improved and modernised services to improve library procedures. Libraries work with a diversity of partners, experiment with creative programming, get feedback, and launch a special association with their users. The authors talk about trends, case examples show how libraries can become active hubs for community engagement, and their findings determine how central social media is helps to filtering library services' relevance and availability in the digital era.

Jadhav and Ghodke (2025) discussed that in the digital age, libraries have established from repositories of printed books to hybrid spaces that chain physical and virtual resources. Libraries serve as civic hubs and digital learning centres, nurturing lifelong learning and digital literacy by giving access to e-resources and unhindered use of the internet. This renovation is fuelled by the request for open-access information and impartial technology access, allowing libraries to bridge the digital divide and also encourage research and innovation through digital archives and co-operative areas, with librarians deliberated as digital curators and educators. As society develops increasingly information-centric, libraries continue to be vital for knowledge dissemination and community engagement.

2. Evolution of Libraries in the Digital Era

The evolution of libraries can be broadly categorised into different phases:

2.1 Traditional Libraries

Traditional libraries mostly focused on:

Development of the Collection.

Cataloguing and classification in traditional methods.

Performing Manual Circulation functions.

Provide Reference services to users in a traditional way.

Preservation of print materials, i.e. books, journals, etc.

Users physically go to libraries to access information resources and utilise library services.

Automated Libraries

The introduction of computers and Integrated Library Management Systems (ILMS) empowered automation of housekeeping operations, such as Acquisition of documents, cataloguing following AACR rules and RDA, Serials control, circulation, and Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC). Automation enhanced the functioning efficiency and resource management in libraries. Which promote the use and access of information easily and quickly.

Digital Libraries

Digital libraries developed with the expansion and high use of electronic resources (E-resources), Institutional repositories, Online databases, E-books, e-journals and Digital archives. These libraries empowered remote access to information from anywhere and at any time, irrespective of geographical boundaries and time.

Social Media-Driven Libraries

Modern libraries progressively utilise social media and web technologies to promote and explore library services, conduct virtual outreach activities and use them for user interaction, offer real-time communication to the users through AI chatbots, share information and its resources quickly and easily and engage users interactively. Libraries now function as participatory digital communities rather than passive information centres.

3. Role of Social Media in Modern Libraries

Social media has become an integral component of Library Communication and Service delivery.

Promotion of Library Services

Libraries use Social Media platforms for announcing new arrivals, promoting events and workshops, sharing digital resources, Marketing library services and conducting awareness campaigns. These were increasingly using Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube for user outreach and engagement.

User Engagement and Interaction

Social media facilitates direct interaction between Librarians and users through Live chats, Comments and feedback, Online discussions, Virtual reference services, and user-generated content. This interactive communication strengthens the relationship between libraries and users.

Information Dissemination

Libraries disseminate information quickly through social networking platforms by sharing research updates, academic announcements, open-access resources, educational content, and multimedia materials. Social media enables rapid information sharing during emergencies and remote learning situations.

3.4 Community Building

Libraries increasingly serve as social and collaborative spaces where users interact, share knowledge, and participate in educational and cultural activities. Studies indicate that libraries are becoming community-oriented digital engagement centres.

4. Emerging Roles of Libraries in Digital Environments

4.1 Digital Information Provider

Libraries provide access to E-books, E-journals, Online databases, Institutional repositories and Multimedia resources. Digital collections support remote learning and online education.

4.2 Information Literacy and Digital Literacy Training

Libraries play a crucial role in developing Information literacy skills, Media literacy, Digital literacy, Research competencies and Ethical information usage. These educate users on evaluating information credibility, combating misinformation, and using digital resources responsibly.

Research Support Services

Academic libraries support research activities through Citation management, Research data management, Plagiarism detection tools and techniques, Scholarly communication support and Open-access publishing assistance to the researchers. These also assist researchers in refining research visibility through social media and digital platforms.

Virtual Reference and Online Services

Libraries provide Virtual reference services, Online consultations, Digital reference desks, Remote user assistance and AI-based chat support. These services ensure continuous access to library assistance regardless of location.

Knowledge Management and Institutional Repositories

Libraries manage institutional knowledge through Digital archives, Research repositories, metadata management, and preservation of scholarly outputs. Institutional repositories enhance the visibility and accessibility of academic research.

5. Technologies Transforming Libraries

Several emerging technologies are reshaping library functions and services.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI applications in libraries include Chatbots, recommendation systems, automated indexing, predictive analytics and Intelligent search systems. AI improves user experience and service personalisation within a short time with quick response, and is available 24/7 to the users.

Cloud Computing

Cloud-based library systems support Remote access, Digital storage, Collaborative learning and Scalable information services, which improve the functioning and usage of libraries from anywhere and at any time by the users whenever they require information.

Big Data Analytics

Libraries use analytics to understand user behaviour, improve collection development, personalize services, and evaluate usage patterns.

Mobile Technologies

Mobile applications enable Mobile OPAC, Remote resource access, Notification alerts and Digital reading services

5.5 Virtual and Augmented Reality

Some modern libraries are integrating VR and AR technologies to create immersive learning experiences.

6. Challenges Faced by Libraries in the Digital Age

In spite of technical advancements, libraries face several obstacles.

Information Overload

The abundance of digital information complicates information filtering, source evaluation, and content verification.

6.2 Misinformation and Fake News

Social media atmosphere contributes to the spread of misinformation. Libraries play a civic role in encouraging information verification and critical thinking.

Copyright and Licensing Issues

Digital resources often encompass Licensing restrictions, Copyright limitations, and Subscription costs.

6.4 Digital Divide

Inadequate access to technology and internet connectivity limits access to digital library services.

6.5 Privacy and Data Security

Libraries must keep user data and certify ethical handling of digital information.

Staff Training and Technological Competence

Library professionals need continuous training in ICT skills, social media management, Digital Content curation and Data management. Studies indicate that inadequate training and strategic planning impede effective social media implementation in libraries.

7. The Future of Libraries

The future of libraries depends on innovation, adaptability, and user-centered services. Libraries are expected to become:

Smart libraries

Digital learning hubs

Makerspaces

Collaborative knowledge centres

AI-enabled information systems

Future libraries will progressively focus on:

Personalised services

Open Science initiatives

Digital scholarship

Community engagement

Comprehensive access to information

The amalgamation of AI, Data analytics, and social media tactics will continue to renovate library operations and services.

8. Conclusion

Libraries have undertaken a momentous transformation in response to the fast growth of social media and digital technologies. The modern library is no longer merely a physical repository of books but a dynamic digital knowledge centre that supports learning, research, communication, and community engagement. Social media platforms have empowered libraries to strengthen user interaction, improve visibility, and enlarge access to information resources.

In the digital era, libraries play an important roles in encouraging information literacy, reassuring scholarly communication, opposing misinformation and helping lifelong learning. Even though challenges such as information surplus, digital inequality, copyright concerns, and technical barriers persist, libraries undergo to evolve through innovation and adaptation.

To continue important in the fast ever-changing information environment, libraries must embrace developing technologies, reinforce digital competencies, and develop user-centric facilities. The upcoming success of libraries will depend on their proficiency to assimilate traditional morals with recent digital practices to meet the developing needs of society.

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