Participatory Librarianship and Social Networks: A Case Study

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Abstract

Now a day everyone is connected with each other by means of various social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, etc. These networks are the means of social interaction where professional interaction lacks behind due to various barriers in their access and this leads to the origin of social network for profession. LIS Links has got a tremendous attention in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS). Here we have presented State wise and Designation wise contributions of people related to LIS profession. Analysis will help the LIS professionals to derive benefits from LIS Links.

Keywords: Social Networks, Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Social Interaction, Professional Interaction, LIS Link

1.   Introduction

Today's society is the society where the creation, distribution, diffusion and manipulation of information have become essential for political, economical and cultural aspects. And the effective presence of ICT has made it possible for the transmission of information from one to the other in the society via different electronic media. The process of connecting different media is networking. Social networking sites are the popular networking sites in today's society. Social networking is the grouping of individuals into different specific groups, like; small communities or neighborhood subdivision. The different social networking sites help to build up social relations among people's of the world. The main types of social networking services are those that contain category places (such as former school year or classmates), means to connect with friends (usually with self-description pages), and a recommendation

system linked to trust. Popular methods now combine many of these, with Facebook and Twitter widely used worldwide, Nexopia (mostly in Canada); Bebo, VKontakte, Hi5, Hyves (mostly in The Netherlands), Draugiem.lv (mostly in Latvia), StudiVZ (mostly in Germany), iWiW (mostly in Hungary), Tuenti (mostly in Spain),Nasza-Klasa (mostly in Poland), Decayenne, Tagged, XING, Badoo and Skyrock in parts of Europe, Orkut and Hi5 in South America and Central America and Mixi, Multiply, Orkut, Wretch, renren and Cyworld in Asia and the Pacific Islands and Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ are very popular in India and Pakistan.

2.   Profession and Importance of Network

As Library and information Science is interdisciplinary in nature the professionals also felt the need for networking in regard of exchange of cognitive ideas, views of their profession as well as, a means of quick problem solving. Apart from knowledge sharing, networking not only extended job offers but also broadened opportunities to face

professional organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA). Professional involvement has broadened different issues of profession. It helps one's career in many ways. It can help one's career by offering assistance, giving early warning of situations or trends, and providing influence in certain circles. Contacts can alert one to job openings, can serve as references, and can put in a good word for one at their organization. Some network contacts offer support by offering moral support or practical help. Mentors and experts in one's network can help further for his/her professional development and training. It enhances one's influence and visibility, and can open doors for one's career. One's contacts can support his/her current position by offering one feedback, training, problem solving, and benchmarking. They can also help one to widen his/her personal circle of friends.

As library is a social institution, library fellows cannot deny their very responsibility towards society and profession itself. Networking helps the professionals to keep abreast of the latest development that is going in and around and how to reap the fruitful result from for the betterment of the society. This kind of social interaction helps to enrich about the ongoing efforts for the advancement of this profession and in turn helps professionals to contribute their intellect to build up participatory librarianship.

The aforementioned social networking sites are obviously helping professionals to expand their networks but these sites are mainly accessed by the common people, preferably the adolescents and the youths. These sites are the media of sharing our common interests especially in our leisure times. There can be limited scope of interchange of ideas

and views in respect of profession. Even if a professional regularly posts his ideas, the events related to profession, recent activities then there will be hardly any chance of getting feedback. So there lies the need for designing social networking sites for profession.

3. Hindrances of using Social Networking Sites

Though these sites have got tremendous attention these days but they are not free from barriers. The identified barriers that may create obstacles in their access are as follows:

3.1. Lack of Technological Know-How

Most of the aged fellows are reluctant to sign up in the site as one has to undergo several formalities like e-mail ID creation, log in procedures etc. Even the recent generations do not have clear idea regarding how to register, once registered then how to post the queries and to get the answers. Many of LIS fellows cannot afford to have a PC and internet connectivity which create the so called 'digital-divide'.

3.2. Psychological Barrier

Weariness and reluctance to co-operate with the information providers, shyness, mistrust, unhappiness over the procedure, question of prestige, ignorance are the few reasons for making psychological obstacles.

3.3. Language Barrier

It is a heterogeneous site so the language has to be standardized this standardization can create barriers to the exchange of ideas. As most of the conversations are in English so the one who is not well accustomed with English will not be able to communicate properly.

3.4. Knowledge Barrier

Still many of us do not have any information about such site. Due to this lack of knowledge many persons related to LIS are unable to be a part of this site.

3.5. Social Barriers

The social psychological phenomenon of individual of each class strata, values and behaviors of each individual of each class strata in the society can put to social barriers.

4. LIS Links-A Virtual Community for LIS Professionals: A Case Study

In the field of Library and Information Science LIS Links is the first and largest social network, designed by Badan Barman an academic consultant, Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University, Assam on May 21, 2010. It is the virtual community for LIS professionals. It provides customize services in various sub-areas of LIS to the professionals through voluntary collaboration of its members. It is known in India as well as in abroad (more than 100 countries of the world) for its quality and coverage. The members belonging with this site are from diverse languages and states of India sharing common interest that is, Library and Information Science. This site not only meant for the library professionals, teaching faculties but also for students of LIS. To get the scholarly outputs of the professional, one has to register himself first.

4.1. Methodology

Though this is only the beginning, apart from usual statistical techniques, we had the opportunity to live interaction with the founder of the site Mr. Baan Barman. He perfectly served as a great human source of information and for that we remain thankful to him. We have also undergone the real time analysis of the site using the advanced search module of LIS Links. When we studied this professional network on LIS, we found some rather interesting findings:-

4.2. State Wise Members Associated with LIS Links

Name of the States or Territories of India	Number of members
Andhra Pradesh	120
Arunachal Pradesh	4
Assam	44
Bihar	24
Chandigarh	27
Chattisgarh	10
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	X
Daman & Deu	X
Goa	4
Gujarat	106
Haryana	79
Himachal Pradesh	23
Jammu & Kashmir	18
Jharkhand	9
Karnataka	173
Kerala	93
Lakshadweep	X
Madhya Pradesh	114
Maharashtra	177
Manipur	4
Meghalaya	13
Mizoram	5
Nagaland	1
National capital territory (Delhi)	174
Odisha	54
Pondicherry	22
Punjab	40
Rajasthan	22
Sikkim	5
Tamil Nadu	122
Tripura	1
Uttar Pradesh	300
Uttarakhand	35
West Bengal	151
Others	105

Table 1: State Wise No. of Members

4.2.1. Findings

Top five members holding States are Uttar Pradesh (300), Maharastra (177), National Capital Territory-Delhi (174), Karnataka (173), West Bengal (151). Featured members-6, Pankaj Kr. Sahu from West Bengal, Ritesh Kumar Tiwari from Madhya Pradesh, Niranjan Mahapatra from National Capital Territory, Rapal Singh Rajpurohit from Rajasthan, Badan Barman from Assam and Kamaljeet Kaur from Punjab. (As accessed on 28/12/2011; 3:45 pm).
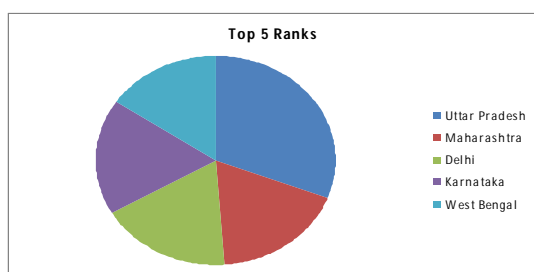

Figure: 1

4.3. Members According to their Designation

Designation	Number of members
Academic Consultant	1
Assistant Librarian	511
Assistant Professor	47
Associate Professor	17
Cataloguer	12
Chairman (Library)	3
Computer Scientist	2
Consultant	24
Documentalist	3
Documentation Officer	22
Head Librarian	10
Indexer	1
Information Manager	9
Information Officer	43
Information Professional	3
Information Scientist	14
Information Specialist	10

Lecturer	70
Librarian	3641
Library and Computer Specialist	1
Library Attendant	14
Library Consultant	7
Library Manager	17
Library Professional	3
Professor	95
Reader	5
Reference Librarian	8
Research Scholar	85
Retired Librarian	3
Student	516

Table 2: Members Designation Details

4.3.1. Findings

It is found that most of the members are Librarians and Assistant Librarians. Retired LIS professionals are also contributing for sharing knowledge. The thing that can be depicted here that job opportunities are prevailing in this field under different designations. The only thing is one has to keep his eye open and to be in touch. It is to be noted that not only highly placed professionals are involved but all who are related with LIS are the members of LIS Links. It is also found that 516 students throughout India are the part of this family. Top five members according to their designation are Librarian (3641), Student (516), Assistant Librarian (511), Professor (95) and Research Scholar (85). (As accessed on 29/12/2011; 4:10 pm).
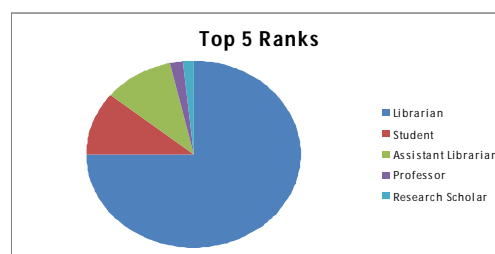

Figure: 2

5.   Services by LIS Links

5.1. There is a real exchange of ideas and views of the members. The members can post their queries and in turn he will get his required answers.

5.2. It gives details regarding the upcoming events like seminars, conferences, workshops and the like in LIS domain.

5.3. One can find his required journal via OAJSE (Open Access Journals Search Engine). This search engine is not only devoted to LIS but also for other subjects. The members can visit this search engine via LIS Links and others who know the site www.oajse.com can access any journal of his interest.

5.4. It provides reference, for example the video of KOHA installation serves as a good reference service. It also provides referral services by mentioning the related links to the queries.

5.5. One can have the awareness of the various job opportunities in LIS field.

5.6. The Link Formats site of LIS Links is targeted to host different formats of documents so that it can be downloaded by professionals and customize it to meet their own needs. But it is to be kept in mind that only .txt, .doc, .docx, .ppt, file formats will be accepted that can be modified with ease.

5.7. The service LIS Links Newsletter collect different refresher courses, orientation programs, workshops, seminars, conferences and organized into one place so that the members can easily get to know what is going around the nation.

5.8. Apart from the mentioned services there is the facilities of Free SMS (Automated and Forced), Email, RSS feed, Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, etc.

5.9.1. A member can create his own webpage, can upload videos and photos.

5.9.2 There is a provision for live chatting.

6.   Conclusion

To sum up, we have to admit that this type of effort has put together most of the professionals under the same sky named LIS Links. Within a year it has gained extreme popularity that in future it helps the professionals to share the common platforms with other professions. It has given a new dimension to this profession by encouraging the professionals to share their knowledge, practical experience. And this in turn motivates the budding professionals to explore the different facets of profession. So, such type of initiative is a boon to the success of the profession and is always praiseworthy.

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