Community Information service in public library through social network: A conceptual model

Soumitra Datta

Department of Library & Information Science
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, W.B., India
sdatta.lisc@gmail.com

Bipasha Biswas

Department of Library & Information Science
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, W.B., India
bipasha.86@gmail.com

Abstract

With rapid development of the information and communication technology, the web based services particularly social networking services help the users to interact and work collaboratively with other users, including the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact with web world. This article has intended to describe the possible implications of social networking technologies in the field of library and information services particularly Community Information Service (CIS). Finally, the authors have tried to develop a conceptual model of CIS where social networking is an important part.

Keywords: Community Information Service, Public library, Library service, Social Networking Service, Social media, Community development

1. Introduction

Information is an essential part of every human being. Information transfer and its revolution is the main path way through which cultural change; socio-economic development of a nation is possible. Information is that basic need of life, which helps in the proper fulfillment of needs such as food, shelter etc. for its survival and growth. Globalization and the development in the field of Information and Communication Technology made the gap between information haves and have nots and created inequality of accessing information. As

a result a new class called "information poor" has evolved. It is the basic responsibility of any welfare government to provide information services to its communities. . But in India, this important task is performed by many governmental, non-governmental voluntary organizations in their own way. There is no single agency to collect, reorganize and disseminate community information in a suitable form as per the requirement of different communities. In this context, Public libraries, being the library of communities can play important role in this regard. These are the only institutions entrusted with the duties of providing right information to right users at right time, there by help people to deal with daily problem solving or in improving the quality of their lives. The use of social networking services such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp has become a popular and integral part of everyday communication in India. Young generation people are very enthusiastic users and majority are engaging on a daily basis with social networking services via a computer or smart phone. Nowadays, the importance of social networking services have become a major issue within society. In this paper the authors have tried to develop a framework of community information service (CIS) with the help of information communication technology particularly, social networking service to serve its community.

2. Literature review

The use of social media and social networking has become a significant force in political organizing, social interaction, and economic development. A growing body of literature now describes the use of social media as a tool in different areas of library and information science such as community information service, library online service, online reference service etc. A number of literature studies deals with application of ICT in CIS in public library like Mukhopadhyay (2004) discussed about how CIS can be given through web and CDROM. Satpathy (2006) discussed about the role of public libraries in CIS. Joselin & Panneerselvam (2015) said about CIS in public libraries in 2015. C. S. Mishra (2008) discussed about social networking technologies in digital environment in 2008.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

  i.   provide a definition of Social networking and Community Information Service
  ii. discuss the relationship between Community Information Service and rural development, and

iii.   present a discussion of current challenges, opportunities, and potential future directions related to the use of social media and networking in community information service.

4. Methodology

The conceptual and textual information related to the present study were collected from primary and secondary sources of information such as books, journals, magazines newspapers, conference proceedings official documents and unpublished sources. Websites were also used for collecting information.

5. Definition of cis

The most comprehensive definition of CIS has been provided by the Library Association's Working Party on CIS. It says CISs are those, which assist individuals and groups with daily problem solving and with participation in the democratic process. This service concentrates on the needs of those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to do with their homes, their jobs and their rights.

6. Why cis in public library

UNESCO public library manifesto, 1994 provides new guidelines for public libraries as community information center. While proclaiming UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force of education, culture and information, the Manifesto asserts that the public library is the local center of information, ensuring access of citizens to all sorts of community information.

Libraries in the public domain should be the first point of reference for any enquiry from users of the community. These libraries must use its expertise, its skill and its trained staff to be an information searching organization, dependent not only upon its accumulated printed formal resources, but on its ability to search outside the wall for non-print informal resources as well, to provide a single information gateway available to its community.

7. Relation between CIS and Rural development

It can be seen that there exists a strong relation between community information service and rural development. As a large number of rural people are educationally poor, so they are very much information illiterate that means they do not know from where they collect their needed information. There exists other types of factors such as social, economic, physical, mental, language etc. for which they can't collect their needed information successfully. CIS may help in

the development of rural community by reducing barriers to information access such as economic, geographic, technological, language etc. CIS helps to achieve the following goals –

- Enabling equal access to information to disadvantaged people
- Access to government information
- Minimize information poverty
- Turn layman into informed citizen by serving organized information related to democracy
- Expand social interaction and information exchange
- Employment and educational gain
- Greater skill and confidence development
- Increased knowledge of community

8. Dominant areas of CIS

As the main objective of community information service is to serve the disadvantaged people of the community by providing information about their daily problem
solving matter, it may be the information related to:

- Agriculture,	- Business,	- Education,
- Employment,	- Health,	- Government,
- Housing,	- Legal issues,	- Local events and news,
- Local history,	- Marketing,	- Weather etc.

There may be present another community information needs. These needs can be analyzed and identified by various direct and indirect methods.

9. Social network and social media

According to Wikipedia social network is an interdisciplinary academic field of study which emerged from social psychology, sociology, statistics, and graph theory. In general it focuses on the study of relationship between individuals, groups, organizations, or even entire societies.

When computer network and software combines, and produces a new medium for social interaction known as social networking service or social networking site or simply social media. A social media is an online platform that is used by the people to build social networks or social relations with other people who share similar personal or carrier interests, activities, backgrounds or real life connections.
Variety of social networking services are present and will be coming in near future and they also varies in characteristics, some common features of these are as follows:
i.   They are the result of Web 2.0 internet based application;
ii. User-generated content is the main driving force of social networking services;

iii. User create their own profile and maintained by social networking service organizations;

iv. Social networking services facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user profile with those of other individuals and/or groups.

10. How social work help in CIS

Information and Commutation Technology has unbelievable historical change in the realm of information communication in the recent time. Social networking can be relevant to information seeking and sharing on information retrieval perspective by providing speed and quick information to the information community by connecting and collecting digital information required by the user. It is also a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users, including the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact with web world.

In communities large and small, public libraries have a strong role in literacy and learning, innovation, community development, and prosperity. Social networking in the field of information landscape can be great contributor to the field of information poor society. It has several unique features that can serve the user community where availability of resource is a great challenge to library field. Library should experiment and come forward to accept this new budding technology. It has some major features like social collaboration, easy surfing, more participation, private messaging, discussion forums, events management, blogging and commenting, media uploading, multimedia enabled, interactive and collaborative learning are some of the important features that we can see in social networking can help in community information service.

11. Process of providing CIS

CIS is simply a cyclic process where five steps occur repeatedly. These steps are:

I. Collection -Collecting all aspects of community information from the reliable sources.

II. Organization–Organizing the collected information using standard formats.

III. Storage–Storing of information online or offline for future use.

IV. Dissemination–Disseminating the information to the people through public libraries.

and   V. Updation–Community information should be updated frequently.

A conceptual framework can be made to provide CIS by above mentioned functions where social networking service has an important role. The model is as follows:
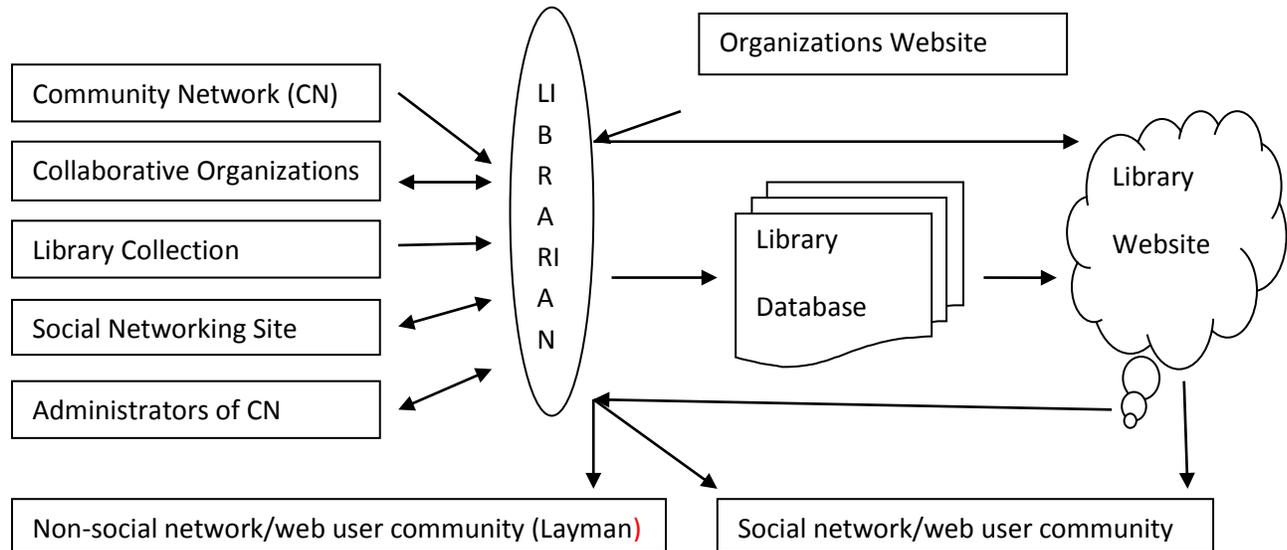
Model of Community Information Service

11.1. Collection

According to the above model librarian collect information from various sources such as community network, collaborative organizations, library collection, social networking site, administrators of community network and organizations website. These sources are described herewith briefly:

a. Community network (CN): It is actually a hierarchical structure of social network of local community having provision of personalized service or private messaging with creating group like whatsapp.

b. Collaborative organization: These are the organizations which have collaborative role with library that means both library and organizations are benefited by each other. These may be Governmental or Non-Governmental organizations.

c. Library collection: Collection of printed and non-printed materials situated into the wall of library. These may be books, journals, periodicals, magazines, news papers, pamphlets, CDs etc.

d. Social networking sites: Librarian should have at least one account in various social networking site so that they can collect up-to-date information. These information should be verified by the librarian and put authentic information into the library website through library database.

e. Administrators of CN: Administrators of community network are those who act as a node into the hierarchical structure of community network. Librarian should collect information related to addition of community into their social network structure and community needs to put into the database for updation at regular interval.

f. Organizations website: Librarian should link various organizations website with library website related to CIS.

11.2.   Organization

Librarian should organize all these collected data into the library database using standard format applicable for CIS. The collected data are three types – i) Time-dependent data (recent event), ii) Time-independent data and iii) Data related to user profile of local community.

11.3.   Storage

Librarian should be stored organized data into library database. There should be a mechanism by which time dependent data can erase from database at regular interval automatically.

11.4.   Dissemination

Librarian should disseminate information related to CIS by four way – i) by library website, ii) by personalized service to the user community having user profile in social network, iii) direct service to the user community having no user profile in social network (layman) and iv) by posting information into social network to public related to recent event(s) occurred into the locality.

11.5.   Updation

Librarian should collect updated information database updation and modification of community user profile from all the sources from where data are collected.

12. How community network can be made

Development of community network is not so easy but challenging and enjoyable job for a librarian. According to Mishra (2008) experience it involves more work in the beginning, but additional value comes quickly by tagging or exchange experiences. Idealistically, after a while, communication not only shifts but will be more efficient and creative. It takes time from few months to few years to make the full fledged structure of community network. To develop and function the structure properly various activities are needed step by step. The steps are as follows:

- View Census of locality
- Collect Names and pictures of peoples of locality
- Searching those peoples account into online social network
- Send friend request to those people having an account on social network
- Inform those about librarians motto and encourage them about its benefit
- Enter their profile data into library database as they are given into their social network account useful for CIS as user profile
- Encourage them to create an account into common social network having option to personalized service and create group for CIS
- Meet with those people and create a hierarchical structure of social network on the basis of capability to provide information of their locality on particular subject domain
- Create groups on each node of subject domain and decide interested person who became an administrator of each group
- The functions of administrator is very vital. They collect the information from just lower level of hierarchical structure and send it to the upper level
- At the top level there should be a librarian as administrator so that he/she can get every day information of the locality.
- Librarian should meet with the administrators and consult with them about problems and if necessary may be change the administrator. They should be encouraged to join other people into this network by create an account. Librarian should know about new addition of local people into the network and put those data into libraries database
- All these data with other collected data mentioned earlier should be viewed into library's website through library's database.
- Developing a web-based communication culture needs orientation. Things such as tagging, basic upload functions etc. have to be often explained.

13. Challenges

Social networking is totally a new concept before the professionals. User participation is the key for the successful implementation of social software perception in the virtual world. Therefore library should think and crack the challenges to stand as good social partner in the online collaborative environment. The following challenges should kept in mind when implementing social software in library as:

i. Culture: There is a need for an open, transparent, horizontal working culture. It is not always a prerequisite but it is conducive for effective and creative online knowledge sharing.

ii. Economic barrier: In India most of the people in rural area live in below poverty level. So for them it is too much

iii. Organization Support: To have a commitment from the management for collaborative web tools.

iv. Conviction: Having good arguments to proof why these tools are useful

v. User Orientation: Developing a web-based communication culture needs orientation. In India a large number of locality in rural area are week in IT. A policy can help to explain the advantages and also show the limits of interaction.

vi. User Participation: In the beginning usually only few users participate; that's why a critical mass of contributors is important. Web2.0 tools are ideal for revolutionary marketing, where motivated contributors serve as multiplicator and can easily train others to join.

vii. Patience: To incorporate social networking to an organization takes time. A few months can pass by before participation reaches a sufficient level, but in the mean time the process is exciting.

viii. Training: Social networking might be easy but many people from the organization are totally new to the applications. Things such as tagging, RSS or basic upload functions have to be often explained.

ix. Privacy, IPR, copyright issues of social software: Storing personal data on remote systems raises obvious privacy issues, but IPR and copyright issues also need exploring.

SSARSC

14. Conclusion

Implication of social software may be a difficult part on the part of new professionals but still expertise over it will be given an immense impact to the library. Here librarian can act himself as role model to professional community for the promotion and adopt social software in the library. Hence both challenges and opportunity should be considered while adopting these technologies. Socialization of library with more visibility can be possible by planning, designing and implementing social networks in library. Social networking website provides great opportunities for librarians to interact with their users as it places them in the digital social space of their users. Librarians can get first hand information about the user through interacting with them. They can then understand the behaviour of the user and design services to meet the needs accordingly and that is the ultimate aim of CIS.

References:

Chakraborty, B. (1993). *Library and information society*. World Press: Kolkata

Community information services. Chapter 5, 224-301. Available at: shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in

Joselin, J.J. & Panneerselvam, P. (2015). *Community information service in public libraries – a solution to information poverty*. Available at: https:// www.researchgate.net / publication

Mishra, C. S. (2008). *Social networking technologies (SITs) in digital environment: its possible implications on libraries*. Eprints. Available at: eprints.rclic.org

Mukhopadhyay, P. (2004). *Community information services through Web and CDROM : an open source framework for public libraries in India*. 1-14. Available at: citeseerx.ist.psu.edu

Satpathy, S. K. (2006). *Community information servicev(CIS) through public libraries: a realistic approach. Eprints*. Available at: eprints.rclis.org

Ohdedar, A. K. (1993). *Research methodology*. Bengal Library Association: Kolkata

Soumitra Datta
Ex- student
Department of Library & Information Science
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, W.B., India
Email: sdatta.lisc@gmail.com

Bipasha Biswas
Ex- student
Department of Library & Information Science
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, W.B., India
Email: bipasha.86@gmail.com