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Using Facebook for marketing and reference service: The University of the Philippines Diliman Library experience

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Abstract

Facebook, one of the many Web 2.0 tools, has been used by libraries as a channel to reach their respective communities. Its numerous features allow library managers to publicize and market services, share content, and interact with library users. The University Library of the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD Library), through the General Reference Section of the Main Library, provides marketing and reference service through its Facebook page by uploading photos and promotional materials on the site to disseminate information on library resources and services. The social networking site facilitates reference queries via messages sent to the page and via wall posts and comments, with the majority of queries related to library schedules and access policies. Facebook has also been useful in establishing connection and association with library users by soliciting and accepting feedback. Likes, comments and shares are the indicators of how users react to the activities of UPD Library at Facebook. Challenges encountered are non-engagement, negative feedback, problematic promotion practices, environment changes and the difficulty of achieving market saturation. Libraries are recommended to offer specific reference services such as answering queries, providing current awareness and conducting readers' advisory through Facebook. It is recommended to promote information literacy activities and market library collections, services and events through advertisements, albums, status updates and event photos. Interaction, collaboration and feedback may also be done in the social networking site.

Keywords

Academic libraries, Facebook, Marketing library resources and services, Reference service, Social media, Social networking sites, Web 2.0

INTRODUCTION

Online Social Networks and the Concept of Social Networking

In the past two decades, numerous Web-based applications have changed the way Internet users communicate, interact and share information with each other. The popularity of social networking, blogging and content sharing is unquestionable. As presented in the Web ranking statistics from Alexa Internet, Inc. (2014), three of the top ten Websites are Web 2.0 in nature: Facebook on #2, YouTube on #3 and Twitter on #10.

The term "Web 2.0", popularized by Tim O'Reilly in a brainstorming session, denotes an emerging new "version" of the Web (Graham, 2005), which is synonymous to software release jargon. Described as the second generation of the World Wide Web (WWW), Web 2.0 focuses on the

participation and communication of users (Hoechsmann, 2008). Online collaboration, content sharing and messaging have been a few of the primary components of Web 2.0 tools. Users can freely generate their content, publish it on the Web and elicit reactions or feedback from the readers.

Web 2.0 tools, such as social networking Web sites, have been an essential tool in reaching the community the library serves. This concept of applying Web 2.0 in delivering library service has been loosely defined as Library 2.0 in a variety of literature. More specifically, the integration of Web 2.0-based services in the delivery of reference service has been coined as Reference 2.0. These applications bear 2.0 characteristics of partnership and association, instantaneous communication and modification (Cassell and Hiremath, 2011).

One characteristic of Web 2.0 tools is its capability of connecting and facilitating interaction within users. Primarily, social media or online social networks are created to serve this purpose. Social networking sites are online Websites that facilitate online user interaction and open sharing of data (Cassell and Hiremath, 2011).

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