Adoption and Utilization of Social Media in Selected Academic Libraries in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the benefits and challenges in the adoption and utilization of Social Media in selected academic libraries in Botswana. The study used a mixed method approach and the research instruments were questionnaire and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The major challenges were identified as: lack of Social Media policy, insufficient funds, shortage of time, technophobia, inadequate skills, lack of awareness about Social Media and copyright issues.

Keywords Social Media Adoption, Benefits, Challenges, Academic libraries, Botswana,

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Owing to rapid developments in Information and Technology Communication (ICT), there have been profound changes in the education system and the information seeking behavior of the information consumers. These changes propelled the academic libraries to change accordingly. The advancement of ICT has also paved way for the emergence of Social Media. The advent of Social Media has affected the way people and organizations communicate, interact, and build relationships, share ideas and experiences. This is affirmed by Chitumbo and Chewe (2015) who maintain that Social Media is a catalyst in changing the manner in which individuals and organizations do their businesses, collaborate or communicate and build relationships with colleagues, peers, and prospective audiences. Examples of Social Media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Wikis, and YouTube among others. Just like Web 2.0, Social Media holds both exciting and challenging opportunities for academic libraries.

Problem Statement

Academic libraries have harnessed the power of Social Media to enrich communication, facilitate collaborations and foster innovation(Chu& Goh, 2010). It was assumed that some Botswana academic libraries have embraced Social Mediato enrich their library services. However, literature has revealed that there are issues that hinder successful and efficacious implementation of Social

Media in developing countries. Nonetheless, no study has been carried out to explore the Social Media adoption and utilization in academic libraries in Botswana.This paper sought to address this knowledge gap in three selected academic libraries in Botswana.

Purpose and Objectives

The dawning of Social Media has not only brought about new opportunities for academic libraries but it has also posed challenges that libraries need to address. Hence, the purpose of this study was to explore the benefits and challenges in the adoption and utilization of Social Media in selected academic libraries in Botswana. In pursuit of this purpose, the following objectives were pursued to:

1. identify the perceived benefits of Social Media in selected academic libraries in Botswana.
2. find out the challenges that hinder the adoption of Social Media.
3. recommend ways to mitigate challenges of Social Media adoption.

Scope of the Study

This study was undertaken in three selected academic libraries in Botswana, which are the University of Botswana (UB), Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN), and Botho University.

University of Botswana

The University of Botswana (UB) was established on 1st July 1982 by an act of Parliament. The functions of the University are to engage in improving the quality and expanding the quality of human resources needed for development and to act as the repository of the knowledge and experience of the nation and the world (University of Botswana, 2018). The University of Botswana library was established in 1982 and it exists to assist UB to achieve its mandate. The mission of the University of Botswana library is to develop and provide access to quality information and foster a supportive environment, which promotes learning, teaching and research capabilities of the university and the nation, and contribute to international scholarly communication (University of Botswana, 2018).

Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources Library

The Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) is an agricultural university, (formerly known as Botswana College of Agriculture). BUAN was established in 1967. The University aspires to be an agricultural university of international repute (Botswana College of Agriculture, 2018). It is the only agricultural university in Botswana. The Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources Library (BUANL) plays a critical role in assisting the university to attain its vision. Its vision is to be a world-class information service provider contributing towards the growth of the university and the agricultural sector (Botswana College of Agriculture, 2018).

Botho University Library

Botho University was established in 1997. It has evolved rapidly over the years to become a leading multidisciplinary high quality tertiary education institution(Botho University, 2018). It is one of the first local tertiary institutions to be accredited by Human Resources Development Council (HRDC). Botho University's strategic focus is to increase student diversity by attracting international students (Botho University, 2018). The Botho University Library was established in 1997 and its vision is to be a center of excellence, innovation, and leadership in higher learning. Its mission is to support the teaching, learning and research needs of the university by providing access to a wide range of information resources (Botho University, 2018).

LITERTURE REVIEW

The Concept of Social Media

Social Media is a fast growing phenomenon that has permeated all aspects of life including the library and information science. Individuals and organizations have embraced it to enhance their communication, interaction and collaboration. There is no "one-size-fits-all" definition of Social Media and as such, authors define Social Media differently. According to Merriam-Webster (2015, p. 1), Social Media refers to "forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content (as videos)". The Oxford Dictionary (2015, p. 1) defines Social Media as "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking." Tufts University (2015, p. 1) describes Social Media as "the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks." Adigun, Adegbore and Amuda (2015, p. 143) believe Social Media is a "term that encompasses all Web 2.0 and Social Networking Tools that enable content creation, sharing, discovering and exchange of user-generated content, with the main focus on their participatory nature." Deducing from these delineations, this study used the term Social Media to refer to Web 2.0 technologies and mobile applications that allow people to collaborate, create, and share information in virtual communities.

Social Media and Academic Libraries: Various authors indicate that in library context Social Media could be utilized in the following areas: information acquisition, information dissemination, information and knowledge organization, user engagement, and outreach (Chu & Goh, 2010; King, 2015; Kumar, 2015).

According to King (2015), one of the purposes of an academic library is to acquire information from external sources of information and avail it to its patrons. Furthermore, Social Media enables libraries to distribute information to their patrons (Quadri & Idowu, 2016). Libraries can use Social Media to alert their users about their new developments, newly acquired library materials and services offered by the libraries. Regarding information and knowledge organization in libraries Social Media enables libraries to present information and knowledge in a manner that will enable easy search and retrieval (Kumar, 2015).

Social Media can also serve as an avenue to develop a closer relationship between libraries and

their clientele as it facilitates a two-way communication between two or more parties (Taylor & Francis, 2014). In a way, it will allow libraries to listen and get feedback from their communities and customers (King, 2015). Hence, this will enable libraries to offer services, which are specifically tailored for their users and will be able to retain their relevance to their customers. Social Media can also increase the audiences of the library as it enables it to reach out to both its current and prospective customers (Taylor & Francis, 2014). It enables the library to extend its service beyond the library building, and serve open and distance learning students and scholars (Quadri & Idowu, 2016; Makori, 2012).

Benefits of Using Social Media: Proper integration of Social Media in the provision of library and information services proffers benefits to academic libraries, librarians and patrons. Harnesk (2010) revealed that the use of Social Media in European academic libraries has enhanced their visibility, rationalized their images and e-reputations; enables them to reach out to both their existing and prospective users. Chinese academic librarians opine that the values that Social Media has added to their services include increased library's relevance to community of users, improved library's brand; facilitated rich, collaborative, quick and convenient services; facilitated prompt feedback to patrons' queries; enabled them to draw collective knowledge to serve users better and enhanced knowledge sharing (Cao, 2009).

In Africa academic libraries use Social Media to lessen the impact of inadequate professional librarians and limited library spaces; offer quick feedback to patrons' queries and proffer effective and efficient library and information services with limited resources (Ayiah &Kumah, 2011). Moreover, Kebede (2014) acknowledges that the utilization of Social Media in Sub-Saharan Africa enables academic librarians to disseminate library news and announcements; create awareness about newly acquired library resources; offer direct access to online databases and free e-resources; promote and market library services and resources; interact with patrons and provide information literacy programs.

Furthermore, librarianship is regarded as an ever-changing profession. According to Choi (2013), Social Media facilitates professional development; increases current awareness on the latest trends and emerging technologies; and expands professional networks and collaborations with other library and information professionals. In a nutshell, the use of Social Media will help librarians to keep abreast of the latest developments in their profession and build a stronger relationship with other information professionals.

Additionally, modern library users need to have quick access to information at any time wherever they are. It is therefore commendable that the effective application of Social Media can enable libraries to offer online services 24/7. It can also enable patrons to participate in the development and upgrading of library services and resources.

Challenges in Social Media Adoption: Despite the great opportunities that Social Media holds for academic libraries, librarians and patrons, research indicates that there are many challenges that hinder its efficacious implementation in academic libraries. Chu and Du (2013) state that most university librarians in Asia, North America, and Europe have positive perceptions on the

usefulness of Social Networking Tools. However, reluctance amongst some librarians and limited participation from patrons were the professed hindrances to the usage of Social Networking tools in those university libraries. Taylor and Francis (2014) believe that technological infrastructure is one of the barriers that hinder the implementation of Social Media in academic libraries. Most academic libraries in Africa do not have adequate ICT infrastructure required for successful implementation of Social Media platforms. Some of the ICT resources are not compatible with some Social Media platforms. Akeriwe& Thomson (2014) stated that limited and unstable bandwidth are some of the problems that hinder successful implementation of Web 2.0 tools in the academic libraries.

Another challenge is that most academic librarians lack the technical expertise required in adopting Social Media for effective and efficient delivery and promotion of library services. This was affirmed by Mpoeleng, Totolo and Jibril (2015) pointing out that lack of relevant skills towards the implementation of Web 2.0 tools is another common challenge that is experienced by academic librarians. Furthermore, Ezeani and Igwesi (2012), indicate that some of the older academic librarians are afraid of using ICT. They do not want to leave their comfort zone of providing traditional library services (Kebede, 2014).

According to Makori (2012), inadequate budget is one of the main hurdles that hamper the use of Social Media in African university libraries. This is emphasized by Jain (2015) who states that budgets allocated to libraries are far much less than the costs required to implement the use of Social Media. Similarly, Akeriwe and Thomson (2014) point out that lack of funds to acquire equipment and train staff is one of the problems that hinder the implementation of Web 2.0 tools. Another challenge faced by libraries is copying and pasting or use of other people's research work without acknowledging (Sonawane&Patil, 2012). Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) assert that most academic libraries in Africa lack maintenance culture. Some of them fail to maintain their presence and visibility in the Social Media world. As a result, some of the library Social Media platforms are hardly used while some are dormant (Mpoeleng et al., 2015; Wasike 2013).

Most librarians in developing countries are not aware of Social Media and even the few that are aware are still struggling to explore its productive use in library services (Ezeani&Igwesi (2012). This might be ascribed to Social Media anxiety especially among the older librarians. According to Taylor & Francis (2014), failure to have any Social Media policy in place hinders the successful implementation of Social Media in academic libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The population of this study comprised the library staff from the main libraries from the three universities, which are Botho, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) and the University of Botswana (UB). Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire and structured face-to-face interviews. Questionnaires were administered to 97 library staff while interviews were conducted among the 11 subject librarians and 17 library staff who work in the clientele services divisions. Descriptive statistics was employed when analyzing quantitative data

using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) V23.0 while the qualitative datasets were analyzed using thematic analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the target population of 117, only 97 questionnaires were administered. The reasons for not administering questionnaires to all 117 library staff was that others did not participate. Table1 presents the responses from the participating libraries.

TABLEI. RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPATING LIBRARIES

Name of the University	No. of Survey Handed Out	No. of Responses
Botho	8	8
BUAN	13	12
UB	76	51
Total	**97**	**71**

Overall, a total of 97 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 71 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 73.2%. BUAN librarians were excluded from the interviews because the quantitative results did not require any further explanation from them. Hence, the interviews were conducted at Botho and UB libraries.

Demographic Data of Respondents

Of 71 respondents, 29 (40.8%) of them were from the Library Officer cadre, 19 (26.8%) Librarians, 9 (12.7%) Senior Librarians, 3 (4.2%) Assistant Librarians, 2 (2.8%) Junior Librarians, 1 (1.4%) Archivist, 1 (1.4%) Senior Assistant Librarian and 1 (1.4%) Senior Library Officer. Most of the participants were females at 52 (73.2%) and 17 (23.9%) were males while 2 (2.8%) did not specify their gender. With regard to age 25 (35.2%) respondents were aged between 41 and 50, 23 (32.4%) aged between 31-40, 12 (16.9%) aged between 51-60, 8 (11.3%) aged between 21-30 and 3 (4.2%) aged 61+. With regard to educational qualification about 19 (26.8%) of the respondents had Masters, 27 (38.0%) were Bachelor degree holders, 19 (26.8%) had Diploma and only 6 (8.5%) had a certificate qualification.

Benefits of Using Social Media: In order to find out how academic libraries in Botswana had benefitted or could benefit from using Social Media, the respondents were asked if their libraries had or could benefit from using Social Media. Fifty-seven (80.3%) respondents indicated that their libraries could benefit from using Social Media, only 4 (5.6%) felt that there were no benefits accrued from using Social Media, while 10 (14.1%) did not respond. The results show that participants had different opinions as to whether their libraries had or could benefit from using Social Media. However, it is encouraging to note that an overwhelming number of participants reckoned that the use of Social Media had or could benefit their libraries. The respondents were further asked how the use of Social Media had or could benefit their libraries. Table 2shows data regarding the benefits that libraries have or could accrue from using Social Media.

TableII. Benefit of Using Social Media(N=57, Source: Field data, 2017)

Benefits	Responses					
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Non-Responses	NA	Total
Enables us to extend our library services to the patrons	3	8	51	9	2	71
Increases the visibility of our library in the Social Media world	5	9	47	10	2	71
Increases current awareness on the latest librarianship profession	2	14	44	11	2	71
Increases the relevance of our library to its community of users	5	15	40	11	2	71
Enhances our library's image and e-reputation	1	8	51	11	2	71
Minimizes the impact of limited space in our library	2	7	50	12	2	71

The findings revealed that a majority of 51 (89.5%) respondents agreed with the notion that using Social Media had or could enable them to extend their library services to patrons. Forty-seven (82.5%) respondents noted that the use of Social Media will increase the visibility of their library in the Social Media world and 44 (77.2%) indicated that Social Media increases current awareness on the latest in librarianship. Other benefits were: Social Media increases the relevance of our library to its community of users at 40 (70.2%), enhances our library's image and e-reputation at 51 (89.5%), and minimizes the impact of limited space in our library at 50 (87.7%). The findings revealed that majority of the respondents were aware of the benefits of Social Media. The results noticeably showed that the use of Social Media mainly enable the libraries to extend their services to the patrons, and improves the libraries' images and e-reputations. This is in agreement with the finding from Harnesk's (2010) study that the libraries in Europe used Social Media to modernize their images and e-reputations.

Another potential benefit identified with the use of Social Media in academic libraries is to minimize the impact of limited spaces in libraries. Relevant to this Ayiah and Kumah (2011) sustain that academic libraries in Africa use Social Media to decrease the impact of limited spaces in libraries. One of the participants noted that

> *"Social Media may enhance service delivery as they will ensure that library staff provide services that are relevant and accurate".*

Other benefits identified include increased visibility of libraries in the Social Media world, increased current awareness, and increased relevance of the library to its community by offering

user-oriented services. These findings suggest that library staff were very much aware of the immerse opportunities that Social Media holds for their libraries.

Challenges Faced in Implementing Social Media: This objective sought to find out the challenges that academic librarians encounter in using Social Media. Respondents were asked if they faced any challenge in using Social Media.

According to the findings of the study, a majority of 49 (69.0 %) respondents reported that there were hurdles that impeded the implementation of Social Media in their libraries, while 14 (19.7%) found no challenges and 8 (11.3%) did not answer the question.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to highlight those challenges. Their responses are presented in Figure I. below.

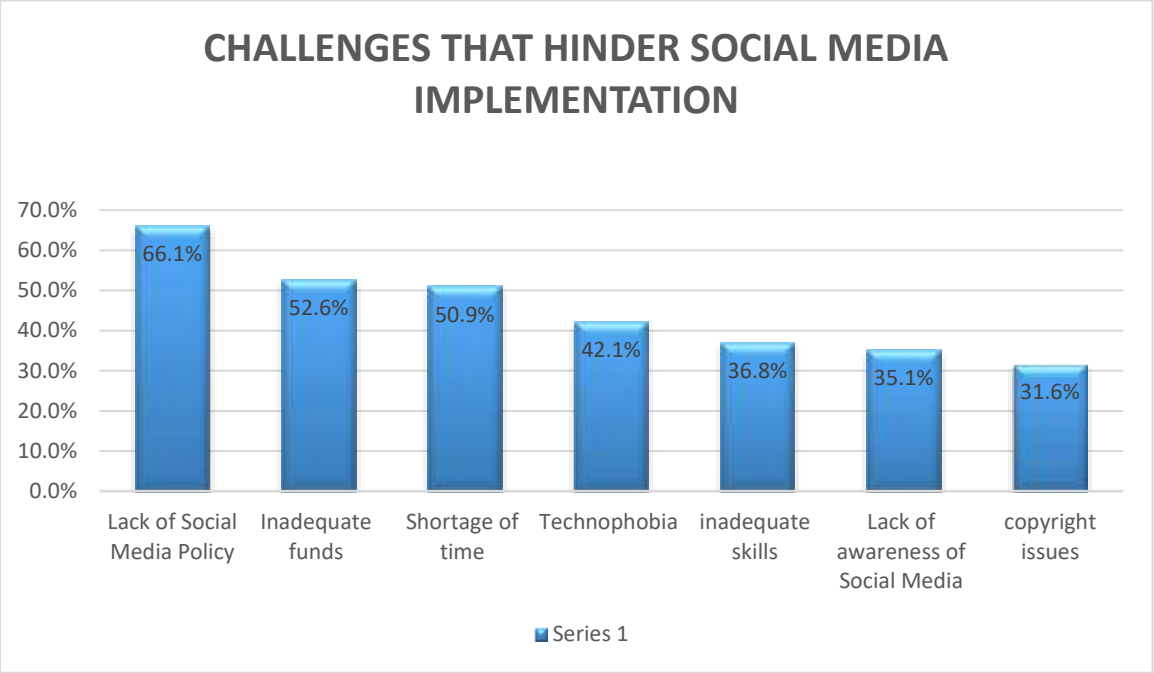


Figure I. Challenges impeding the implementation of Social Media (N=57, Source: Field data, 2017)

As indicated in Figure I, lack of Social Media policy was identified as the major inhibiting barrier in using Social Media in academic libraries as it was highlighted by 37 (66.1%) respondents. Following Social Media policy it was inadequate funds to support more advanced Social Media features and training at 30 (52.6%). Insufficient time followed with 29 (50.9%) responses and technophobia at 24 (42.1%). Other noted challenges are inadequate skills required at 21 (36.8%), lack of awareness of Social Media at 20 (35.1%), and copyright issues at 18 (31.6%).

Form the interviews, this study revealed lack of Social Media policy as the major challenge that hinder the successful adoption and use of Social Media in the participating libraries. This is consistent with the finding by Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah (2016) which revealed that

university libraries in Ghana did not have any Social Media policy. Similarly, Mabweazara and Zinn (2016) identified lack of Social Media policy as a significant factor that discouraged the non-use of Social Media platforms at UWC library. This calls for formulation of Social Media policy.

The second major challenge inhibiting successful implementation of Social Media was inadequate funds. The funds to support the use of advanced Social Media features and train staff on Social Media were limited. This conforms to Makori's (2012) finding to the effect the that the major problem faced by libraries in Africa in developing and implementing Web 2.0 tools is lack of resources such as human personnel and capital. Similarly, the result is in agreement Mabweazara and Zinn (2016) who revealed that lack of financial support was the major barrier that hindered the adoption of Social Media at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) library. Thus, this calls for the parent institutions to provide adequate finance to support and improve the use of Social Media in academic libraries.

Lack of time was also one of the major challenge hindering the adoption of Social Media. The participants did not have time update, monitor and respond to users' queries in library Social Media platform(s). This was also noted as a major challenge in university libraries in South Africa (Baro, Ebiagbe, & Godfrey, 2013). This means that academic libraries have to create a Social Media librarian position or modify the responsibilities of some cadres to cater for efficient and effective espousal of Social Media.

The other challenge was technophobia. This was revealed by the interviews that the library staff was reluctant to use Social Media. Supporting this, during the interviews, some library staff indicated that they were using their emails and mobile phones to communicate with their customers. They further indicated that they were just fine with these communication conduits and were not willing to use Social Media platforms. This finding is in line with Kedebe's (2014) findings that most libraries of elite universities in Africa relied more on traditional conduits of communicating with library users (i.e. using telephone, emails and online forms).

According to Chitumbo and Chewe (2015), most of the students at the University of Zambia and National Institute of Public Administration did use Social Media for academic work. Yet, there seemed to be a different story in the case of Botswana. Some of the participants bemoaned the non-academic use of Social Media by patrons. One of them reported that

> *"Most students are into Social Media; however the sad part is that they use it more for social interactions instead of using it for educational and academic purposes"*

This statement confirms the opinions of Nkeiru and Emezie (2016) that the majority of library users did not visit Social Networking Sites for academic purpose because they believe that these sites were mainly used for fun and entertainment. Another participant indicated that the few patrons who were using their library's Social Media platforms did not use them for academic purposes. This therefore signals a need for academic libraries to increase the level of awareness on using Social Media for academic purposes.

Some of the participants reported internet filtering as one of the obstacles that inhibited the use of Social Media in their libraries. In agreement with this finding, Pirshahid, Naghshineh and

Fahimnia's (2016) study identified internet filtering as one of the barriers that hindered the adoption of Web 2.0 in universities of East Azerbaijan in Iran. In most developing countries, internet filtering is usually done in order to curb the consequences of limited internet bandwidth, which is always lamented as one of the major challenges. Hence, this calls for the parent institutions to increase their internet bandwidth.

Another challenge that emerged during the interview was low user engagement on libraries' Social Media accounts. Similarly, Kedebe (2014) revealed that patron participation in the use of Social Networking Services in top African university libraries was not extensive. This implies that academic libraries that are using Social Media have to develop Social Media marketing strategies as means to increase the level of patron engagement.

CONCLUSION &RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper explored the benefits and challenges in the adoption of Social Media in selected academic libraries in Botswana. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the study revealed both benefits and challenges in the adoption and utilization of Social Media in the academic libraries in Botswana. The benefits accrued from using Social Media were identified as follows: the selected libraries were able to bring services close to users, enhanced image of the library and minimized impact of limited space in the libraries. The most of the challenges that hinder the adoption of Social Media were related to staffing including: lack of time, lack of skills, the reluctance of library staff to use Social Media, lack of management support, and inadequate staff. Other challenges were lack of funds, lack of Social Media policy, internet filtering, and underutilization of Social Media.

Based on the findings of the study and to overcome some of the challenges, the authors recommend the following:



- **Training-** to address the issue of shortage of skilled manpower, library staff need to be adequately trained on using Social Media in their professional life.

- **Rigorous Marketing and Induction on Library Social Media Platforms-** to alleviate low participation from patrons of the libraries' Social Media platforms, the library has to induct library community on the use of Social Media at the beginning of each academic year or whenever there is a need. The library has to sensitize patrons on the benefits they can attain from using Social Media for educational purposes.

- **Social Media Policy -** only one of the participating libraries had a Social Media policy. It is therefore recommended that libraries should put in place a Social Media policy, which will safeguard both the institution and the users from any risk associated with the use of Social Media. This will also help resolve the fear of risks (such as, privacy issues, phishing attacks and scams, malware attacks and hacks) that some of the participants mentioned as one of the barriers that hinder the use of Social Media.
- **Adequate Funding**– Lack of funds emerged as one of the main challenges that hinder the adoption of Social Media in the selected libraries. It is suggested therefore, that the parent institutions should endeavor to allocate enough funds tailored towards the use of Social Media.
- **Management Support –** This study revealed that the library staff lamented lack of support from management on the adoption of Social Media. It is recommended that management at all levels (i.e. library and institutional level) should provide all the support that facilitates efficacious adoption and usage of Social Media in library.

- **Increased Bandwidth –** Internet filtering was raised as one of the hurdles that impede successful implementation of Social Media in academic libraries. Hence, it is proposed that parent institutions should increase their internet bandwidth.

- **Introduce a Social Media Librarian –** In order to solve the lack of time barrier that the participants mentioned, libraries have to create a position for Social Media library staff or customize the roles and responsibilities of reference library staff to include Social Media.

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Brief biography

Mrs. Tshepo Maniki: Tshepo Manikiis an Information Professional in the Department of Library Services at Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. She has just completed her Master's in Library and Information Studies. Tshepo is a passionate information scientist, who aspires to make significant contribution to the body of knowledge in Library and Information Science. Her research interests are: digital libraries, discovery systems, user-centered library systems and library advocacy.

Priti Jain: Priti Jain is a Professor of Information and Knowledge Management in the Department of Library and Information Studies at the University of Botswana. In her 16 years' work experience in Library and information world, Priti has written extensively in referred journals and has presented several papers in international conferences. She serves on five editorial boards in international journals. She is engaged in various community initiatives. She teaches and researches in knowledge management and information Science courses. Her current areas of research interest are: Knowledge management, Open access, Institutional Repositories, and Digital Scholarship.