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## An Evaluation of Level of Awareness and Extent of Utilization of Social Media Platforms in Service Delivery by Librarians in a Federal University

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### Abstract

*Social media which is seen as a channel made available for people to communicate and share ideas, information and content in online communities and networks is a collection of software and web tools that allow users to create and share content participate in conversations and develop individualized network of friends, colleagues, or organizations. This study therefore is an evaluation of the level of awareness and extent of utilization of social media platforms in service delivery by Librarians of Federal university libraries using Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ikwo, Nigeria as a case in point. The design for this study is a descriptive survey research design with a sampled population of 12 librarians selected through census sampling techniques which entails that all librarians working in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Library, Ikwo, Nigeria formed part of the study. Working with the objectives of the study, a four-point scale modified Likert type structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher which forms the principle instrument used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and mean while results were displayed in tables and a chart. The outcome of the study shows that librarians of Alex Ekwueme Federal University are highly aware of the existence of most social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Webinar, Telegram and TikTok and that regardless of the fact that the librarians are highly aware of most social media platforms in use in libraries today, these social media platforms or tools are not in use in their library for service delivery with the exemption of Facebook, Whatsapp and Messenger. It was also discovered that there are many factors inhibiting the utilization of the various social media platforms in service delivery in Alex Ekwueme Federal University library. These constraints as identified include inadequate funding, poor internet connectivity, epileptic power supply and lack of commitments on the part of university management to use the technology among others. Based on the findings the study suggested among other things that the federal government of Nigeria as the financier of federal universities and their libraries should make available adequate funds to get these*

*libraries well equipped with the state-of-the-art facilities as obtained in university libraries of developed nations so as to be better placed to meet up with the information needs of their teeming users being the information and research hub of the parent institutions and that university librarians should be appointed on merit and target set for such librarians in that it will be mandatory for all university library management to ensure full implementation of all needed information service delivery technologies such as the social media for effective service delivery.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Information, Service Delivery, Communication, Information Dissemination University Library

## 1. Introduction

As a reliable social phenomenon, social media networks have as a transformation channels find their way like a wild wind though not rampaging for destruction into our daily lives that many can brag that they cannot do without them. The social media which has been variously defined as interactive technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and aggregation of content such as ideas, interests, and other forms of expression amongst virtual communities and networks (Kietzmann & Hermkens, 2011) with common features to include, online platforms that enable users to create and share content and participate in social networking and User-generated content such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through online interactions (Obar & Wildman, 2015) as well as an internet-based form of communication that allows users to have conversations, share information and create web content (University of South Florida, 2024) is not only transforming the way we interact and discover the world around us from ephemeral selfies to heated debates and latest viral trends, it has also become an ever-evolving digital canvas where every day brings all kinds of surprise and novelties (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the contemporary digital ecosystem, social media is perceived as a phenomenal tool for information dissemination and interaction as it allows and makes possible for one to stay connected with friends, family, even professional and work colleagues by sharing information materials such as photos, videos, status as well as ideas and dissemination of desirable information and news (Fuchs, 2017). The crown glory of social media is that users see themselves as being involved in face-to-face interaction. Besides, the potency of social media apps has forced many business organizations, establishments and even libraries especially those from developed nations to embrace this technology.

Come to think of it, considering the place of library as a social institution, where information is created and stored and knowledge is shared and as service centre aimed at providing focused, current and apt services to its users, with emergence of technology should be seen as a key component in attaining the goals of libraries. Abinitio, libraries have always been on the forefront of incorporating the emerging technologies in their set up and in the case of social media, they should also be at the forefront of utilizing this media. It therefore a matter of necessity for libraries and librarians to move in line with the emerging trends in order to be better positioned to satisfying the desires of contemporary clientele and social media is an irk to this. Just as noted by Chore (2023), in an educational setting, social media may be a potent medium for delivering desired information to the doors or information-accessing workstations of researchers, instructors, and students. Social media has the potential to significantly improve the interactions between libraries and information centres and their patrons, regardless of where users are located or how they choose to learn about and utilize library services and resources. The

current state of libraries and information institutions is one of extraordinary change and difficulty. The implication is that academic libraries may become obsolete in this digital era if they fail to harness new technology with a view to improving information and service delivery to their teeming users.

Going by what happened in 2020, the era of the COVID-19 pandemic during which maintaining social distance became the only way out, it was only those libraries that did employ the services of communication technologies were able to deliver their services efficiently and effectively and serve their user optimally as those with had it difficulties in providing access to their services and collections. This underscores the fact that the use of technology like the social media by libraries cannot be overemphasized. On this ground asserts Onwubiko (2024) that technology as the application of scientific knowledge in production has transformed the ways we do most things and in the area of information accessibility and dissemination, the arrow head is information and communication technology (ICT) which spearheaded the emergence of what we today know as new media technologies where access to and distribution of information have become very easy. The underlying fact is that social media is not just a platform but also a way for people to communicate and share ideas, information, and content in online communities and networks. As a collection of software and web tools it allows users to create and share contents, have conversations and develop a personalized network of friends, colleagues, or organizations. It therefore, goes beyond being just a broadcast channel or a sales and marketing tool. It is about connecting with an audience, building relationships, and community (Google Cloud, 2024).

The four basically social media platform types that could be used for effective and efficient library services delivery as enumerated and explained by Tech Target (2024) include, Social networks that are used by people to connect with one another and share information, thoughts and ideas focusing principally on the user. As with user profiles, participants could identify other users with same interests or concerns. In this case, Facebook and LinkedIn serve as good examples, Media-sharing networks with focus on content while interaction is around videos created by users. In this instance, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube standout while Streaming platforms such as Twitch are considered a subset of this category, Community-based networks that focuses on in-depth discussion, much like a blog forum. Users leave prompts for discussion that spiral into detailed comment threads. Communities often form around select topics. Reddit is an example of a community-based network and Review board networks that mainly focused on a review of a product or service and here falls Yelp where users can write reviews on restaurants and endorse each other's reviews to boost visibility.

While King (2015) lists the top social media sites that libraries presently use as Facebook, X formerly known as Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Vine, and Pinterest. Also enumerated and explained as social media platforms are Facebook, a free social networking website where registered users create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues, LinkedIn, a social networking site designed for the business community. Registered members can create networks of people they know and trust professionally. Pinterest, a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. The main focus of Pinterest is visual, though it does call for brief descriptions of images. Others are Reddit, a social news website and forum where site members curate and promote stories. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities called *sub-reddits* with each sub-reddit having a specific topic, such as technology, politics or music while the site members known as "Redditors," submit content that members vote on.

X on its own is a free micro\_blogging service for registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. with members free to broadcast tweets and follow other active users' tweets using several platforms and devices and Wikipedia a free, open content encyclopedia created through a collaborative community which allows anyone registered member to create an article for publication whereas both registered and non-registered user can edit articles (The Target, 2024) as well as Google Meet which was introduced in March 2017 after February 2017 as enterprise-friendly version of Hangouts after a debut Video conferencing software for up to 30 people to offers everyone access to professional video conferencing. Presently, anybody with a Google Account is at liberty to arrange an online meeting for up to 100 people to attend for a maximum of 60 minutes. It is one of two apps, the other being Google Chat that make up the Google Hangouts replacement. On mobile devices, it is also planned to take the place of Google Duo. WebEx Meet a multi-functional desktop Video/Audio Conference call application that allows one to meet with anyone, anywhere, in real time from your office or home, as long as the person has Internet access on his or her computer or has the WebEx mobile app installed for his iPhone, iPad, Android, or Blackberry. WebEx Meeting Center for Windows and Mac features HD video and online chat, as well as all of the tools you need to share presentations and desktop applications, write on online whiteboards, and make annotations, Zoom has applications that provide one direct access to a preferred applications in ones Zoom desktop client and meetings, combining them with the power of video communications. The imperative is that it is a cloud-based video communications app that allows one to set up virtual video and audio conferencing, webinars, live chats, screen-sharing, and other collaborative capabilities. In all, one does not need an account to attend a Zoom meeting and the platform is compatible with Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, and Android, which implies that anyone can access it.

Other notable social media platforms highlighted are, Whatsapp an internationally available American freeware, cross-platform centralized instant messaging (IM) and voice-over-IP (VoIP) service owned by Meta Platforms that allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other content. One advantage it has is that the client application runs on mobile devices and is also accessible from desktop computers. Above all, it was one of the first mobile apps to offer free, internet-based

messaging. Instead of sending texts using cellular-data networks, where fees may apply, send and receive messages and calls for free, YouTube which was launched on February 14, 2005, by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim is owned by Google, it is the second most visited website, right after Google itself. YouTube has more than one billion monthly users who collectively watch more than one billion hours of videos each day as well as Telegram which can be used on all your devices at the same time with messages sync seamlessly across any number of one's phones, tablets or computers. Telegram's signature feature is its end-to-end encryption, but it's important to be aware that not all communication within Telegram has this level of privacy. Most messages use client-to-server encryption, which is less secure than end-to-end, but allows one to access personal Telegram chats from other devices, including the web. For true end-to-end encryption, one needs to use Telegram's Secret Chat feature. These secret chats offer substantially more robust security, but are only accessible from the device you originated the message on and the Electronic mail popularly known and called E-mail is a global e-mail network that allows people to exchange electronic mail messages very quickly. E-mail so-to-speak, is the electronic equivalent of a letter, but with advantages in timeliness and flexibility among many others (Wiz Shop, 2024).

Regardless of the associated gains of using social media by libraries in service delivery, there are also reports that some libraries are either under utilizing it or even avoiding its utilization. As reported by Chore (2023) of all the university libraries studied, none uses LinkedIn or Vine, two platforms for posting short videos and expressed the need for academic libraries to have a Facebook page with many fans since it will help with their marketing efforts. Although, evidence has shown that there many factors acting as constraints towards the optimal utilization of this technology especially in developing countries like Nigeria. According to Harrison (2017) in his study, most of the libraries lack sufficient hardware, software facilities and do not have adequate internet nodes and bandwidth. Even in some universities their LANs were not fully extended to exploit the benefits of digital information environment including the use of social media not minding that Smartphones have made easily accessible and affordable.

Emphatically, several researches have been conducted on the importance of social media and its use as a preferred means of delivery information to students and academics in a contemporary world ruled by information and librarians by all standards are better placed to champion the promotion of any trending information delivery tools. Be that as it may, the assertion is that librarians no matter where, know it all therefore use them where applicable and where needed. If this assertion and assumptions hold in university libraries of developed nations, can same be said of university libraries in developing nations like Nigeria? In a situation one jumps into conclusions that by the nature of librarians training today, a Nigerian certified librarian is supposed to be conversant with all contemporary social media platforms, the puzzle would be, are these social media platforms being extensively used in Nigerian federal university libraries for information service delivery to their users or are they also facing the nightmare of constraints as highlighted above?

It is to find answers to the above questions and to unravel the puzzle that this study is conceived with a view to ascertaining Librarians level of awareness of the being of social media platforms, determine the extent of utilization of these platforms by



a federal university library and librarians as well as identify if any, constraints militating against the optimal usage of these social media platforms using Alex Ekwueme Federal University library, Ikwo, Nigeria which is a microcosm of the macrocosm of federal university libraries in Nigeria as a case in point.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

Basically, the main objectives of this study are to:

- Ascertain librarians level of Awareness of social media platforms in use by the library and librarians in Alex Ekwueme Federal University library, Ikwo, Nigeria
- Ascertain to what extent social media platforms are used in service delivery in the library and
- Identify factors that act as constraints to optimal utilization of the social media in service delivery in the university library.

## 2. Methodology

The design for this study is descriptive survey research design with a sampled population of 12 librarians selected through census sampling techniques which entails that all librarians working in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Library, Ikwo, Nigeria formed part of the study. Working with the objectives of the study, a four-point scale modified Likert type structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher which forms the principle instrument for data collection. Prior to using the instrument, it was validated by 5 experts in measurement and evaluation after which, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents and they were returned 100%. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and mean while results were displayed in tables and charts as they case may be.

## 3. Presentation of Data and Results

**Table 1:** Ascertain librarians level of Awareness of social media platforms in use by the library and librarians Alex Ekwueme Federal University

Items	HA		A		NA		HNA		Mean (X)	Decision
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Facebook,	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	HA
Messenger	8	66.67	4	33.33	***	***	***	***	3.66	HA
X (Formerly Twitter)	8	66.67	4	33.33	***	***	***	***	3.66	HA
Whatsapp	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	HA
Instagram	9	75	3	25	***	***	***	***	3.75	HA
LinkedIn	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	HA
YouTube	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	HA
Yahoo	10	83.33	2	16.67	***	***	***	***	3.83	HA
Google Meet	6	50	4	33.33	2	16.67	***	***	3.00	A
Webinar	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	HA
Zoom	10	83.33	2	16.67	***	***	***	***	3.83	HA
Telegram	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	HA
WebEx Meet	7	58.33	1	8.33	3	25	1	8.33	3.17	A
Go To	3	25	***	***	6	50	3	25	2.25	NA
Snapchat	4	33.33	2	16.67	1	8.33	5	41.67	2.41	NA
TikTok	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	HA
Skype	8	66.66	2	16.67	2	16.67	***	***	3.50	HA
Pinterest	2	16.67	2	16.67	1	8.33	7	58.33	1.97	NA

\*Key: HA=Highly Aware, A=aware, NA=Not aware, HNA=Highly Not Aware

Benchmark=2.50

The data as collected, analyzed and shown in table 1 reveal that the 12 respondents representing 100% indicate that they are highly aware of the existence and workability of the following social media platforms, Facebook, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Webinar, Telegram and TikTok with a statistical Mean (X) of 4.00 respectively. The same, 12 respondents (100%) also indicated that they are either highly aware or aware of the existence and

workability of Messenger, X (Formerly Twitter), Instagram, Zoom as well as Yahoo with Mean (X) ranging from 3.66 – 3.83. While over 70% of the respondents indicated their awareness of, Google Meet, WebEx Meet and Skype as they had Mean (X) of 3.00, 3.17 and 3.50 respectively. Whereas, Go To, Snapchat and Pinterest fall below the statistical benchmark of 2.50, an indication that some of the librarians are not aware of their utilization and workability.

**Table 2:** Extent utilization of social media in service delivery in Alex Ekwueme Federal University

Items	VHE		HE		LE		VLE		Mean (X)	Decision
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Facebook,	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	VHE

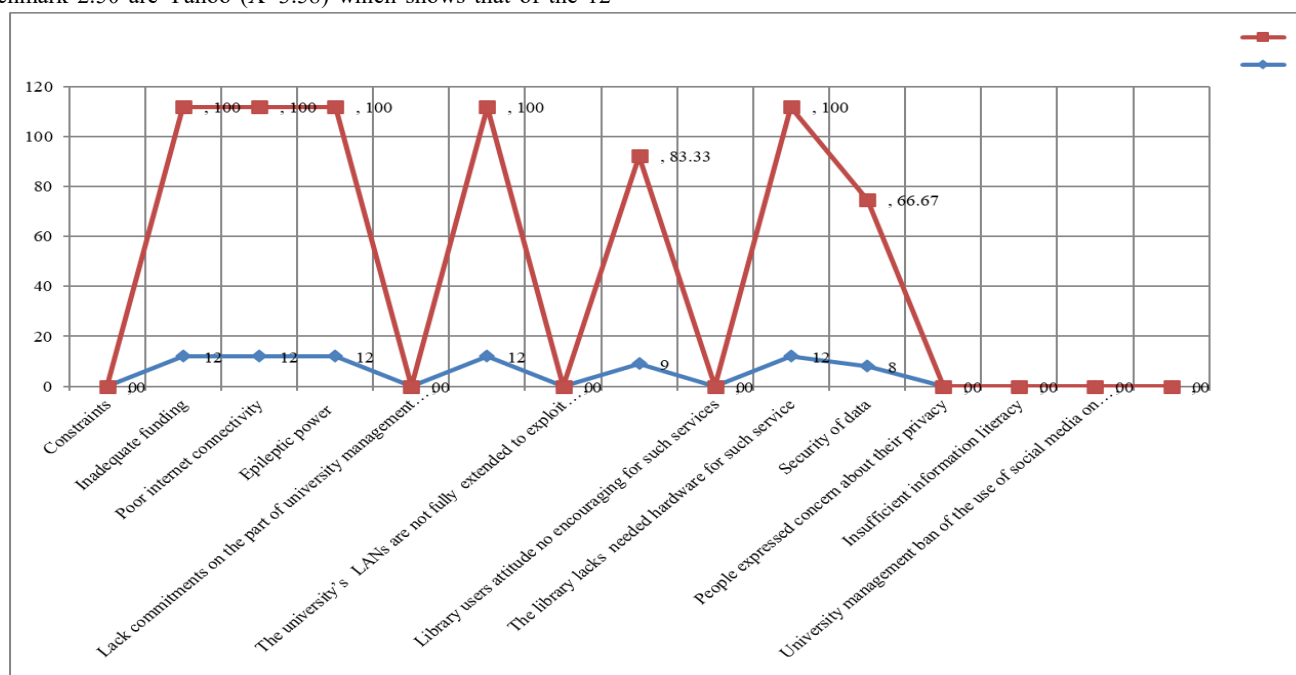
Messenger	10	83.33	2	16.67	***	***	***	***	3.83	VHE
X (Formerly Twitter)	***	***	***	***	6	50	6	50	1.5	VLE
Whatsapp	12	100	***	***	***	***	***	***	4.00	VHE
Instagram	***	***	***	***	4	33.33	8	66.67	1.33	VLE
LinkedIn	***	***	***	***	8	66.67	4	33.33	1.67	LE
YouTube	***	***	***	***	7	58.33	5	41.67	1.58	LE
Yahoo	7	58.33	5	41.67	***	***	***	***	3.58	VHE
Google Meet	***	***	***	***	***	***	12	100	1.00	VLE
Webinar	***	***	***	***	9	75	3	25	1.75	LE
Zoom	***	***	***	***	5	41.67	7	58.33	1.42	VLE
Telegram	***	***	9	75	***	***	3	25	2.50	HE
WebEx Meet	***	***	***	***	***	***	12	100	1.00	VLE
Go To	***	***	***	***	***	***	12	100	1.00	VLE
Snapchat	***	***	***	***	12	100	***	***	2.00	LE
TikTok	***	***	***	***	12	100	***	***	2.00	LE
Skype	***	***	***	***	***	***	12	100	1.00	VLE
Pinterest	***	***	***	***	***	***	12	100	1.00	VLE

\*Key: VHE=Very High Extent, HE=High Extent, LE=Low Extent, VLE=Very Low Extent

Benchmark=2.50

Table 2 contains data on the extent of utilization of social media by Ale Ekwueme Federal University library/librarians. As indicated by the data, 100% or the 12 librarian-respondents indicated that the only social media platforms that are utilized to a very high extent are Facebook and WhatsApp with a statistic Mean (X) =4.00 respectively, while Messengers with a response of 83.33% or 10 respondents followed those that are extensively used. Other platforms that are being utilized that are above the Mean (X) benchmark 2.50 are Yahoo (X=3.58) which shows that of the 12

respondents, 7 or 58.33% indicates that it is being used to a very high extent while 5 respondents or 41.67% indicates that it is to a high extent utilized in service delivery in the university library and 75% representing 9 respondents (X=2.50) indicated that telegram is to high extent utilized in the library for service delivery. On the other hand, every other social media platform displayed in the table fell below the benchmark of 2.50 an indication that they are not being utilized in the library for service delivery.



**Figure 1:** Constraints to optimal utilization of the social media in service delivery by the library

Data, as collected and shown in Figure 1 above, revealed that the 12 respondents representing 100% strongly agree that Inadequate funding, Poor internet connectivity, Epileptic power supply, Lack of commitments on the part of university management to use the technology as well as The library lacks needed hardware for such service are major factors inhibiting the utilization of all desirable social network platforms by the library and librarians in service delivery to users while 83.33% or 9 of the 12 respondents attributed it to the fact that the university's Local Area Networks (LANs) are not fully extended to exploit such services whereas 66.67% of the respondents identified security of data as the reason why some social media platforms are not being used by the library for information service delivery to users.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

The outcome of this study as shown in Table one shows that librarians of Alex Ekwueme Federal University are highly aware of the existence of most social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Webinar, Telegram and TikTok as well as Messenger, X (Formerly Twitter), Instagram, Zoom and yahoo among others that are used in libraries for effective service delivery to their users. This level of awareness of the existence and workability of these social media platforms by the librarians as discovered is an affirmation of King (2015) list of top social media sites that libraries presently use which include Facebook, X formerly known as Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Vine, and Pinterest.

The study also found that though the librarians are highly aware of most social media platforms in use in libraries today, these social media platforms or tools are not in use in their library for service delivery with the exemption of Facebook and Whatsapp, as well as messenger and telegram to an extent. This discovering is not far from the finding of Chore (2023) in his study in which, he reports that of all the university libraries studied, none uses LinkedIn or Vine, two platforms for posting short videos and therefore expressed the need for academic libraries to have a Facebook page with many fans since it will help with their marketing efforts. The study further affirms the outcome of Chore (2023) study that the largest social networking site is still Facebook, despite its growth slowing down as asserted by Butt, Qutab and Mohamad (2011). Arguably, this development no doubt negates the great importance attached to social media as noted by Chore (2023) that in an educational setting, social media may be a potent medium for delivering desired information to the doors or information-accessing workstations of researchers, instructors, and students. This implies that social media has the potential to significantly improve the interactions between libraries and information centres and their patrons, regardless of where users are located or how they choose to learn about and utilize library services and resources.

The study further found that there are many factors inhibiting the utilization of the various social media platforms in service delivery in Alex Ekwueme Federal University library despite the fact that the librarians are highly aware of their importance and essence in information service delivery in the present dispensation. These constraints as identified include, inadequate funding, poor internet connectivity, epileptic power supply, lack of commitments on the part of university management to use the technology as well as lack of needed hardware for such service. This finding collaborates that of Harrison (2017) who in his study discovered that, most of the libraries he studied, lacked sufficient hardware,

software facilities and do not have adequate internet nodes and bandwidth. In that in some universities their LANs were not fully extended to exploit the benefits of digital information environment including the use of social media not minding that Smart phones have made easily accessible and affordable.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The outcome of this study is indeed an eye-opener to the fact that much need to be done in federal university libraries in Nigeria as it relates to application and utilization of contemporary technologies where social media falls in. The deduction is that the current state of federal university libraries which Alex Ekwueme Federal University Library is a microcosm is one that needs total transformation in line with technological trends. There is no gain stating the fact that university libraries in Nigeria may become obsolete in this digital era if they fail to harness new technologies with a view to improving information and service delivery to their teeming users. As discovered, the drawback is not coming from the academic librarians rather those that are suppose to make things work which are the government and the university management as well as university library management as the librarians can only work base on the available resources and tools. The assertion based on the findings is that no battle can be won by bare hand as every army needs the desirable sophisticated weapons to fight a war and achieve victory. In the context of the librarian, no librarian can effectively and efficiently serve his or her clientele no matter how well trained, if he or she is denied the necessary working tools more so, in this digital ecosystem where information growth may be said to be in astronomical proportion and the demand for it exploding every second. It is against this backdrop therefore that this study puts forward the following suggestions as a way out of this morass.

- The federal government of Nigeria as the financier of federal universities and their libraries should make available adequate funds to get these libraries well equipped with the state-of-the-art facilities as obtained in university libraries of developed nations so as to be better placed to meet up with the information needs of their teeming users being the information and research hub of the parent institutions.
- Lack of commitments on the part of university management to use the technology was identified as one major constraint militating against the optimal use of the social media in service delivery in the university library. To this end, University librarians should be appointed on merit and target set for such librarians in that it will be mandatory for all university library management to ensure full implementation of all needed information service delivery technologies such as the social media for effective service delivery.
- Since the technology does not work in a vacuum, but needs regular power supply for optimal functioning, both government and university management should partner to ensuring regular and uninterrupted power supply.
- The university library management, should as a matter of necessity, supply librarians with all necessary hardware linked to the desired software for optimal service delivery to users.
- Library management should ensure effective internet connectivity as well as regular subscriptions to data by the library.

- The university and library management should not work on assumption and abandon the librarians to their fate rather they should as a matter of need ensure that the librarians are equipped with up to date skills in line with the technological trends through training and re-training which may come in form of seminars, conferences and conventional trainings in specific institutions.

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