SOCIAL MEDIA REGULATIONS AND THE LIBRARY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Social media platforms enable people to access and share information. People also get answers to questions, learn, discover and connect with people, services, clientele and brands on social media. Libraries use social media to provide information services to their users. Social media also play crucial role in distance learning. However, prevalent unethical practices on the platforms by users and the operators themselves have raised serious concerns and ignited discourses of how to regulate the social media. Governments of different countries including Nigeria are mulling over regulations that would control the content and the privacy of users on these platforms. Regulations by government over media have critical implications for access to information and censorship. Operators of social media platforms can self-regulate through setting standards of suitable rules of behaviour and content by and for the operators of social media platforms that are necessary to support freedom of expression and right to access of information and that stipulate how those behaviour will be monitored and enforced. Libraries are irrevocably committed to the right to access information and would advocate that a balance be struck between outright legislation that 'muzzles' social media and ensuring that the sustenance of freedom to access to information is guaranteed. Beyond self-regulation by owners of social media platforms, librarians can also teach the public how to self-regulate themselves as they access and share information on social media. Learning to discern fake news and staying safe in online spaces including the social media are embedded in information and media literacy propagated by libraries. It is recommended that librarians from different types of libraries collaborate on how to use the social media platforms as avenues to teach wider society on how to self-regulate their use of the social media.

Keywords: Libraries, Social Media Regulation, Privacy Issues, Fake News, Digital Footprint, Digital Natives.

Introduction

Social media is a variety of Web 2.0 Internet applications that provide platforms for people to communicate, interact and work collaboratively. The applications are being used by millions of people all over the world. They enable users to create a visible, public profile or a semi-visible private profile within the network of users. Subscribers have a list of other users with whom they connect and interact on the platforms. Social media platforms are being increasingly used by millions to get answer to questions, learn, discover and connect with people, services, clientele and brands. Unlike the traditional regular media where one listens, watches or read information without the immediate opportunity to respond and share one's thoughts on the information, social media provides information and allows one to interact with that information through features that will enable comments, votes or recommendations on where to access more similar information (Nations, 2018).

Social media could be categorized by their diverse and overlapping functions. Social media platforms that are used for communication purposes are among the most popular. They include Blogging websites such as WordPress and Blogger with features that can enable one to create articles of more than 3,000 words visible to others online who subscribe or follow the blog and can comment on the articles. Social network platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Snapchat, Instagram and LinkedIn can also be categorized under communication function as they allow people to post stories, comments, personal details, media such as photos and video, or establish relationships with other users (For instance, 'Friends' on Facebook, or 'Followers'

on Instagram and Twitter). Kickstarter or Zopa are crowd-funding sites which assist people or businesses to communicate and raise funds from each other. While Zopa (Zone of Possible Agreement) is a peer-to-peer lending platform which directly matches people looking for a loan with people looking to invest thereby cutting out banks. Kickstarter is the largest platform for raising funds and creating a community around creative projects in music, publishing, crafts, journalism, theatre, photography, games, technology and arts (Cave, 2016; Lagorio-Chafkin, 2010).

There are also other social media platforms that can be grouped together because of their media sharing functions such as YouTube, Open Film, Mixx and Vimeo whose features allow users to upload and view videos, have personal channels, add comments and connect with different users. Spotify and Soundcloud also belong to this group as they have started increasing their features to allow users have playlists, listen to, upload and download music. Flickr, Pinterest, Zoomr and Picasa are platforms with social features that allow the sharing of pictures and belonging to communities based on indicated subject areas. There are also social media platforms that enable collaborations among different people. Wikipedia, Google docs and Dropbox are collaborative tools have a tinge of 'social' as they enable users to share, edit and upload documents from a central point (Fernando, 2018). However, these categorizations mutate as new platforms emerge and existing ones change regularly in the social media world, new features are added and current ones are modified (McGough, 2016).

Social Media and Education

Over the years social media has become a credible source of information especially for students who use the analytic tools of the different platforms to get useful information and broader perspective for their assignments and projects. The platforms also provide information and enable young people to connect to experts in their various fields of study, other learning groups and educational systems thereby extending learning and building up quality (Dlamini, 2017). Data from successful MOOCs point to the fact that incorporating social media platform in the discussion and teaching process encourages more participation and leads to the lower drop-out rates. A huge number of students use the social media and many teachers in tertiary institutions are finding it beneficial to use the platforms to share content, stir up debates and even assist students to have discussion groups on their courses. Many tertiary institutions use Learning Management Systems such as Moodle and Blackboard to pass on lecture notes and course information. Recognizing the importance of social media in 21st century, both platforms allow for easy integration of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (BBC Active, 2010).

Social Media and Libraries

The core function of libraries is to make information accessible to everyone. Social media has seemingly made it easier for people to create, access, store and share information. Democratic values are inbuilt in social media outlets as they provide their subscribers with access to information while allowing them to actively participate in creating and communicating information. The different platforms offer individuals, brands, organisations and businesses the flexible and convenient opportunities to create awareness about who they are and what they do. Social media also provide avenue to connect with established, new and potential people and organisations that can advance, establish and bring about collaborations for the cause that anyone is propagating on the platforms (Newberry, 2018). Libraries always make effort to align their services with any new technology that can assist in extending access to information to their user communities. It is therefore only natural that libraries utilize the opportunities provided by the social media to put their services in front of their patrons in new ways (Griffey, 2010).

Many libraries have been exploring how the social media can help them create closer relationship with their clients. This is crucial for libraries in developing countries especially those without website who wish to extend their services beyond the four walls of their libraries to people in the community. Social media sites not only offer global reach, they also provide platform to share content thus increasing the flow and availability of information, and their reach and impact is easily measurable (Courtney, 2013). According to Canty (2012), social media has the ability to cheaply imbue libraries with competitive edge technologically as it helps in reaching out not just to users but also non-users who through that avenue will buy into the relevance of libraries for gaining access to information.

Some libraries have effectively incorporated social media into their services by using it to market library events and services, promote their online resources, and provide links to resources in different format that might be useful to library users and non-users. A number of libraries also use social media to connect more with their user communities, ask for feedback on their services and as platforms to gather the views of the community on topical issues (Macmanus, 2012). It is believed that social media is mostly populated by the youth who are mainly 'digital natives' familiar with sharing information, collaborating and participating in online conversations. Libraries use the different platforms of the social media to reach out to them with their services and resources. This has the capacity of establishing the library in their minds as a 21st century brand that they can identify and align with. According to Bacon (2017), a survey about how libraries are using social media in the United States of America show that libraries post more on Facebook, followed by Twitter then Instagram. The survey also found out that the most frequent activities libraries use the social media for are – sharing library events and pictures, promoting services being offered in the library and highlighting the library collections in different subject areas.

While libraries also use the social media to share community news, topics of local interest and to invite comments of Followers/Friends on library posts, the least frequent activities they do on social media are focused engagements with particular individuals, brands and/or organisations, live streaming of events at the library and public policy advocacy. According to Akporhonor and Olise (2015), university libraries in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria mostly use Facebook and Blogs to communicate with their user communities, to receive feedback information from them and to promote collaborative interactions. Ogunkola (2018) quoting the Nigerian Minister of Communications Adebayo Shittu noted that 'about 75 percent of Nigeria's population that use the internet are on social media and the number keeps on growing…'.

Use of social media by libraries has great potentials of making them user-centric as they provide personalized information and reference services to their user community. Libraries are trusted sources of information. However, Maharana, (2016), opine that usage of social media by libraries might expose them to issues that may erode that trust due to the possibility of cloning library social media accounts and using such to disseminate fake news, distort information or outright misinformation. According to Mabweazara (2014), absence of social media policies by most libraries might lead to use of the platforms for wrong purposes by library staff.

Regulating the Social Media

Not everything is celebratory about the social media. The rise of fake news, alternative truth and disinformation have all been attributed to the rampant freedom, accessibility and reach of the social media in creating, sharing and disseminating information. Cyber bullying, stalking, trolling, spam, fraudulent accounts, information overload, automated broadcasting by bots and the ability to remain anonymous on different social media platforms have raised concerns of

propriety, privacy and regulations for social media platforms. Social media allow people to contribute to content and/or conversations thereby potentially exposing them to the risk of loss of privacy as considerable quantity of data are gathered that users voluntarily surrender in order to use the sites without payment of any fee.

Social media also portends serious security threats of national and global concern. Recently, thirteen Russians were charged with interfering in the 2016 USA presidential election. The Russians' primary chief tool for meddling was the social media, which they used to promote Donald Trump's presidential candidacy and disparage Hillary Clinton's campaign (Levinson, 2018). The incident on October 31st, 2017 in Manhattan where a truck ploughed into a crowd and killed eight people was inspired by information resources released by the terror group ISIS on social media on how to carry out such attacks (Patrikarakos, 2017). Other terrorist and extremist groups as well as authoritarian governments have at different times used the social media for propaganda and recruitment (Watts, 2018). Cambridge Analytica, a British voter-profiling firm, improperly harvested the data generated from about 87 million Facebook users and used such to meddle in elections in different countries (Schultz, 2018). These have prompted the governments of different countries to seriously consider and take hard looks at regulations for the use of social media.

In Nigeria, the National Council on Information (NCI) which is the highest policy making organ for information articulation and delivery has been mulling over the creation of another Body to regulate the use of social media in the country (Adepoju, 2017). The Minister of Communications has also averred that it would be irresponsible for government to allow absolute freedom to social media which are notable platforms for information dissemination to thrive without some measure of regulation (Ahamefule, 2017). However, in 2015, the Frivolous Petitions Bill also known as the 'anti-social media bill' was sponsored in the Senate for possible passage into law. The Bill passed the first and second reading. At the Committee stage, where it is statutorily mandatory for the public to contribute to the passage of a Bill into law, it was thrown out after due consideration. The Bill had provisions to repress the social media and sought to impose pre-conditions for exercising the right to free expression and dissemination of information (Media Rights Agenda, 2015). Cameroon, Ghana, Congo, South Africa and Uganda have also at different times attempted to regulate social media because of fake news, misinformation and terrorism (Omolayo, 2017).

The call for governments to have clear legislation controlling the social media apparently has some merits. However, there are many issues to be considered. First, the most notable international instruments on human rights (the United Nations Charter; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity and Cultural Expressions, on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) from different perspectives all dwell on the necessity of guaranteeing each individual's right to freely seek, receive or impart information while interacting with other individuals (Puddephatt, 2011).

Second, media is the medium for transmission of information to the public. Regulating social media by the government has great possibility of negative impact on freedom of expression, information dissemination and right of access to information. This could easily spiral out of control to censorship. Access to information will be hampered as people will be fed on 'sterilized' and 'approved' information. This would be anti-democratic and against the UN Charter on Human Rights. How then can a balance be struck between safe online environment and free unfettered dissemination and access to information?

Social media platforms are privately owned corporations. They can make their own rules about who uses their products and what can be posted and shared on their platforms (Cummings, 2018). Self-regulation of social media involves setting standards of appropriate codes of behaviour and content by and for the operators of social media platforms that are necessary to support freedom of expression and right to access of information and that stipulates how those behaviours will be monitored and enforced (Puddephat, 2011). Two major areas of regulation concern the content posted on the platforms and information privacy of the users of the platforms. Grigoris (2018) argues that social media platforms can on their own regulate and moderate the content on their sites with limited government involvement. This could be achieved through a refining of algorithms to include more trigger words for fake news, hate speech and propaganda, set up protocols to check when infringement occur, issue more warnings and notifications for suspicious content and employ more people to review content instead of leaving the task to machines. This would ensure that there are more safeguards to protect against the intentional manipulation of information.

Regulations over privacy issues on social media concern what data should be collected by the platforms, what data can be sold, what content should be online and who should be in control (Tusikov, 2017). Again, self-regulation is advocated. Gattuso (2018) opines that social media could self-regulate by using plain language in user agreements so that people will clearly understand what they are signing up for, disabling consumer data tracking and collection, providing notice of data breach of their users within 72hrs, delete user data and provide copies of data collated about users when they receive such requests. Most importantly, social media operators could be made to get clear well-spelt out consent from users before using their data. The operators could also voluntarily forfeit some disclosure rights and publish information about those who advertise and keep a record of political advertisements that can publicly be viewed by anyone.

Access to Information

Access to information imbues individuals and communities with competitive advantage and the ability to exploit opportunities for growth and empowerment. Libraries as gateway to knowledge and culture enable access to information in all formats and this helps in building a fair, democratic and prosperous society. Article 19 of the United Nations (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly affirms that it is a basic human right to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas in any media and regardless of frontiers". According to IFLA (2016):

> 'The core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy. Librarians and other information workers reject the denial and restriction of access to information and ideas most particularly through censorship whether by states, governments, or religious or civil society institutions'

Libraries are irrevocably committed to the right to access information and would advocate that a balance be struck between outright legislation that 'muzzles' social media and ensuring that the sustenance of freedom to access to information is guaranteed. Nevertheless, no right is absolute. Social media companies make access to information easy but that should in no way be utilized to spread fake news and/or compromise personal data of their users for commercial purposes. Libraries can act as intermediary in the promotion of 'right to access information' and protection of society from the ills of the social media. According to Jadoo (2017), public education on social media has become very needful. Libraries are best suited to tackle this as

already they teach information literacy which encompasses skills needed to access information and stay safe in online spaces.

Role of Libraries in Driving Self-regulation

While social media companies are urged to self-regulate in order to continue giving access to information and prevent hate speech, propaganda, misinformation, disinformation and breach of users' privacy on their platforms, libraries can help the society to 'self-regulate' through widely teaching the principles of literacy and media literacy. IFLA (2017) realized that the recognition of the of 'post-truth' as the 2016 Word of the Year by the Oxford Dictionaries was a call to arms for librarians to focus more on critical thinking as a crucial component of information literacy in the 21st century. Eight steps were delineated on how to spot fake news.

- Every source of information on social media should be critically considered. Check the website for the stated mission/vision and contact information
- Some headlines are click-baits. They are mainly sensational and would tempt one to believe what they proclaim. Librarians should encourage people to always read the body of a story to ensure it tells the story as outlined in the headline. People need to be taught that 'liking', 'retweeting' or 'sharing' such click baits on social media is promoting fake news, misinformation and propaganda.
- Every author of a news item or picture on social media should be checked online. Digital footprints of everyone that publishes, writes and posts online can always easily be identified.
- Are there embedded links in the news item or post in the social media? Click on them to make certain that they support the story.
- Sometimes stale news is reposted as a current event in social media to drive propaganda. This is often true of political news. Check the date of the post before sharing or clicking on the 'like' button.
- Is the post in social media nuanced; laced with sarcasm and satire and not truly a real rendition of facts? This can be determined by checking the author and through the site linked with the author,
- Personal biases can make one to quickly believe a post on social media without going through the aforementioned steps. Check prejudices before 'sharing', 'liking' or 'retweeting' a social media post.
- Libraries and librarians should identify themselves and speak up on different social media as professionals in 'self-regulation' on social media so that people can ask them to verify the authenticity of posts and news items on such platforms.

Libraries also need to embed the issues of online privacy into their Information and Media Literacy lectures. According to Teaching Privacy (2016), there are crucial principles that can help people make better decisions about their privacy as they use the social media –

- Digital footprints are real. Every post a person sends to a social media platform or that others post about someone and the sites one visits all generate information from which inferences can be drawn. Every Internet connection always transmits the IP address of a user. Websites and applications store all of this information and can easily exchange them with other applications and devices without the knowledge of the user. Cookies track browsing history. Data mining techniques can expose personal data to unethical users. Librarians can teach people how to check their privacy settings to curtail unnecessary sharing of private information through use of 'opt-out' functions, disengagement of location tags on devices, communicating privacy status preferences and deleting online accounts that are no more being used.
- Control of over information is given up to social media platforms once a post is sent. The sender cannot control the reaction and/or interpretations of what is posted, the content can be reposted to unknown audiences in widening circles, manipulated,

misrepresented and replicated without consent. Search engines crawl, analyze and cache websites. There is no guarantee of control over any post sent online. Librarians should teach people to 'self-regulate' on social media by thinking critically before sending a post – 'Do I want to be identified always by this post? What would my reaction if this post goes beyond my target audience? Do I trust my target audience to understand and keep sensitive information about me to themselves?

- It is deceitful to believe that one can post anonymously on social media and get away with it. Librarians should make posters and put up all over the library – 'Do not do anything online that you would not do in public physically'. Private browsing and incognito modes are no guarantee as cookies on websites track browsing history as well as browse configuration. Librarians should educate the public to understand that personal information should be given out when and as much as is necessary.
- Search engines are getting more proficient and eliciting information thought to be 'hidden' by connecting devices and applications. Librarians should encourage the public to always check their 'digital footprints' and assume that every information about one that has been posted on the social media will eventually surface one day.
- Everyone's data eventually ends up online. Technology keeps on improving. A picture with a person in the far, furry background can be used for identification purposes. Librarians can lead the public to understand that people need to get intentional consent from others before sharing their private information and pictures. That someone takes a picture with a group is not tacit consent to post on social media platforms.
- Information is valuable. Information that is posted to social media can be used to benefit others, contrary and maybe detrimental to your interests. Librarians should help people 'self-regulate' by advising that if one is not sure of how information in social media posts can be used, it is better not to post it at all. Social media platforms are business organizations with great potentials of trading with information in one's post to the platforms or the information footprints one leaves in using the platforms. Unethical data miners can use such information to bully, blackmail or coerce people.
- The online world is as real as the physical world that is touched and felt. Librarians should make it clear that posts on social media can affect the physical world. In sending posts to social media platforms, people should be advised to be truthful, circumspect and respectful. Also, the digital footprints generated by anyone is part of the identity of the person online and in the physical world. Some employers now check the online profiles of applicants and their persona on social media platforms to help in arriving at a decision of whether to employ or not.
- No one will guarantee online privacy for the other person. It is a private decision backed up by personal efforts. Privacy policies by websites, applications and devices are primarily for their own protection against legal actions, not to protect the user. Librarians need to educate the public on this issue so as not to be misled into believing that the click on 'acceptance of privacy policy' is for their own good.
- Identity on social media is not guaranteed as with a few clicks some other entity can clone your account or that of others. Collaborating and sharing on social media platforms requires rigorous checking and rechecking to ensure that one is not communicating with fake accounts.

Librarians can teach all these steps and principles in their libraries to their user communities as well as share them online through social media so that it can reach the target audience. The knowledge would help people put in proper 'regulations' as they use the social media platforms for information.

Conclusion

Social media offers great opportunities for education and access to information in the 21st century. Libraries use social media platforms to deliver information services. However, examples of the unethical use of social media to spread hate speech, propaganda, misinformation and disinformation abound. Additionally, breaches to the data of the users have also become a major issue. Regulations to guide content and respect of the privacy of users of the platforms would best be done by the providers of the platforms as government regulations might lead to censorship and information 'sterilization'. Beyond self-regulation by owners of social media platforms, librarians can also teach the public how to self-regulate themselves as they access and share information on social media. Learning to discern fake news and staying safe in online spaces including the social media are embedded in information and media literacy propagated by libraries. The society need to learn that not everything online is true, what gets posted online invariably stays there and important practical steps on how not to divulge private information online.

Recommendations

Based on all the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

- The Librarian Registration Council should draw up programmes to train librarians in Nigeria on the need to self-regulate people on use of the social media.
- Beyond the 'Use of Library lectures' in tertiary institutions, academic librarians need to reach out to other types of libraries especially the public libraries so that they could collaborate and teach the principles of how to spot fake news and stay safe online.
- Librarians should use the social media platforms as avenues to teach people on how to self-regulate their use of the social media.
- Librarians should join the policy discourse on the regulation of the social media and offer the teaching of information and media literacy as a panacea to fake news, disinformation and breaches of privacy online.

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