

USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR READERS' SERVICES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES LIBRARIES IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study examines the use of social networking sites for reader's services in public university libraries in Imo State. Three objectives and three research questions were used for the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consists of two hundred and sixteen (216) library staff which is made up of all the professional librarian and para-professional librarian in Imo State University IMSU, Federal University of Technology Owerri FUTO and Alvan Ikoku University of Education Owerri library in Imo State. Data was analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean scores and standard deviation. The findings from the study shows that wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blog, Myspace, YouTube, Slideshare, Meebo and Ning were the types of social networking sites available in public universities library in Imo State. Cyber or E-crimes, unprotected information, inadequate awareness, epileptic power supply, low level of technology penetration, predators and Stalkers, time consuming, network problems, can damage relationship, cost of social networking facilities, low literacy of use of social networking sites and it causes distraction to me were major challenges facing the utilization of social networking site. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the university library should make efforts to reduce cyber or E-crimes in university libraries, the university librarians should ensure that library staff are adequately aware of the use of social networking sites for effective service delivery, the government and library management should ensure that the library have steady power supply, that the university library should ensure that the issues affecting network are resolved in order to boost the use of social networking sites among library users and that the library management should ensure that the cost of using social networking facilities in the library are subsided for it users.

Keywords: Imo State; Information Service Delivery; Public University Libraries; Readers' Services; Social Networking Sites

Introduction

The proliferation of social networking sites (SNSs) has significantly reshaped communication practices across educational and information environments, including university libraries. Social networking sites represent modern, interactive communication platforms that enable individuals and organisations to connect, share ideas, exchange information, and disseminate content rapidly to diverse audiences (Okenwa, 2018). In recent years, libraries have increasingly explored the potential of these platforms to enhance service delivery, user engagement, and institutional visibility. Within the university context, the integration of social networking tools into library operations has become particularly relevant for the promotion of readers' services.

University libraries are integral components of higher education institutions, established to support teaching, learning, research, and community service through the provision of relevant information resources and services (Obi, 2019). They function as intellectual hubs where students and academic staff access scholarly materials necessary for curriculum implementation and research advancement. John (2020) aptly describes the university library as the “heart” of the academic community, underscoring its central role in knowledge creation and dissemination. Through the efforts of librarians and library staff, university libraries deliver a wide range of services designed to address the diverse information needs, interests, and learning patterns of their users.

In Nigeria, university libraries exist within various institutional settings, including public, private, faith-based, agricultural, and technology-oriented universities (Obinyan & Aidenojie, 2019). Regardless of ownership or orientation, these libraries are often described as the engine rooms of knowledge, as the effectiveness of universities is closely linked to the quality of library

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services they provide. The absence of a functional and responsive library system significantly undermines the pursuit of quality education and research excellence. Consequently, university libraries are mandated not only to acquire and organise information resources but also to ensure their effective dissemination and use.

Readers' services constitute a core functional area of university library operations. These services establish direct contact between the library and its users and encompass activities such as reference services, user education, circulation, and information literacy support (Dinesh & Nikam, 2019). Traditionally, readers' services relied heavily on face-to-face interactions within the physical library space. However, evolving user expectations and advances in digital technologies have necessitated more innovative and flexible approaches to service delivery.

Social networking sites offer libraries opportunities to extend readers' services beyond physical boundaries and traditional working hours. Boyd and Ellison (2017) define social networking sites as web-based services that enable users to create profiles, establish connections, and interact within a bounded system. For libraries, these platforms provide avenues for promoting services, disseminating information, responding to user enquiries, and fostering virtual communities of users. Platforms such as Facebook, blogs, instant messaging tools, wikis, podcasts, and RSS feeds have been identified as effective tools for enhancing library-user interaction and promoting awareness of library resources and services (Anim, 2019).

The use of social networking sites in promoting readers' services has been associated with improved user satisfaction, enhanced institutional image, and increased library visibility within the university community (Oluwunmi, Durodola, & Ajayi, 2019). By leveraging these platforms, libraries can provide real-time assistance, share updates, recommend resources, and engage users in participatory knowledge exchange. Despite these benefits, the extent to which university

libraries effectively utilise social networking sites for readers' services varies, particularly within public universities in Nigeria (Aina, 2018; John, 2020). Against this backdrop, examining the impact of social networking sites on the promotion of readers' services in university libraries in Imo state is both timely and necessary. Understanding how these tools influence service delivery and user engagement will contribute to more responsive, user-centred, and technologically driven library practices in contemporary university environments.

Statement of the Problem

Social networking sites have evolved from limited-user platforms into dominant digital environments that support communication, information exchange, and social interaction among university students. Their widespread adoption has attracted the attention of scholars and university administrators due to both their educational potential and their implications for students' information-seeking behaviour. In the context of university libraries, social networking sites offer valuable opportunities to enhance readers' services by promoting library resources, facilitating user engagement, disseminating timely information, and obtaining feedback to improve service delivery. When effectively integrated, these platforms can expand the library's reach and improve access to information in increasingly digital academic environments.

Despite these benefits, observations indicate that many public university libraries in Nigeria have not adequately harnessed social networking sites to support students' academic and research needs. Limited funding, inadequate ICT infrastructure, insufficiently trained library staff, and negative staff attitudes toward digital platforms have constrained effective adoption. As a result, students may experience reduced access to current information and diminished exposure to emerging scholarly resources and innovations. This gap between the potential and actual use of social networking sites undermines the capacity of university libraries to deliver responsive and

user-centred readers' services. Against this backdrop, this study examines the use of social networking sites for readers' services in public university libraries in Imo State.

Objective of the Study

The general objectives of this study is to examine the use of social networking sites for readers' services in libraries of public universities in Imo State; while the specific objectives are;

- i. Identify the types of social networking sites available for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State.
- ii. Identify the benefits of using social networking sites for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State
- iii. Find out the problems of using social networking sites for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State.
- iv. Find out the strategies to improve the use of social networking sites for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is set to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What are the types of social networking sites available for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State?
- ii. What are the benefits of using social networking sites for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State?
- iii. What are the problems of using social networking sites for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State?
- iv. What are the strategies to improve the use of social networking sites for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State?

Literature Review

Academic libraries have increasingly adopted social media and SNS as tools for extending their reach, enhancing communication with users, and supporting service delivery (Igere & Otuya, 2025). A recent empirical study in Nigerian university libraries found that SNS tools are used for activities such as promoting services, communicating with users, and increasing library visibility; however, challenges such as internet connectivity, lack of training, and policy gaps persist (Arinola et al., 2025). In addition to general utilisation, Nigerian research highlights that librarians are engaging on social media not only to market resources but also to build professional authority and credibility online, suggesting a shift toward infopreneurial roles within the profession (Igere & Otuya, 2025). This aligns with global trends where academic libraries innovatively integrate social media into hybrid and digital service models (Liu & Hussin, 2025). Scholars also emphasise that SNS can improve reference service responsiveness by enabling real-time interaction and outreach, although effective implementation requires institutional support, training, and strategic planning (Adewojo & Momoh, 2025). Moreover, studies of hybrid library services and digital innovation show that university libraries are rethinking traditional models to accommodate online engagement and improve user experience in emerging digital ecosystems (Cartwright *et al.*, 2022).

Readers' services in university libraries encompass activities aimed at enhancing users' access to and use of information resources, including reference assistance, reader education, and outreach activities (Aina, 2017). Empirical studies show that Social Networking Sites can support these functions by providing platforms for user interaction, feedback, and information sharing (Smith & Koul, 2020). For instance, Nwosu (2021) found that academic libraries that actively use Facebook and WhatsApp groups report higher levels of user participation in library programmes, particularly among undergraduate students. Ojedokun's (2019) study in Nigerian university

libraries revealed that SNS platforms are effective in promoting reading culture by broadcasting reading tips, links to e-resources, and interactive quizzes that engage learners. Similarly, Ekere and Okiy (2018) observed that Twitter and Instagram are used by library staff to answer reference queries and alert users to digital resource availability, thereby improving the timeliness and responsiveness of readers' services.

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are digital platforms that support user interaction, content sharing, and online community formation. These platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are increasingly used in educational and professional contexts due to their widespread adoption and interactive features (Abdullah et al., 2025). Research shows that academic communities engaging on SNS can enhance knowledge sharing, collaborative behaviour, and relationship quality, illustrating the platforms' potential beyond social interaction to support academic tasks (Sivakumar, Jayasingh & Shaik, 2023). Empirical studies in higher education contexts suggest that SNS usage influences students' information behaviour and academic engagement, highlighting both positive outcomes like enhanced knowledge sharing and potential challenges such as time management and distraction (Sivakumar et al., 2023). Although not specific to libraries, these findings underline the broader role of SNS in shaping how learners access, share, and engage with information in digital learning environments, which is relevant to libraries seeking to integrate SNS into service delivery.

Despite the widely acknowledged potential of social networking sites (SNS) to enhance readers' services, empirical studies consistently identify significant barriers to their effective integration within academic libraries. Prominent among these challenges are inadequate ICT infrastructure, including unreliable internet connectivity and limited access to digital tools, which restrict consistent online engagement with users (Emezie, & Nwaohiri, 2017). In addition,

insufficient digital literacy and limited professional training among library staff reduce their capacity to deploy SNS strategically for reference services, user education, and information dissemination (Abubakar, & Garba, (2020). The absence of clear institutional policies and guidelines governing SNS use further compounds the problem, often resulting in fragmented, informal, and unsustainable utilisation patterns (Arinola et al., 2025).

These challenges reflect broader structural issues associated with digital transformation in African academic libraries, where uneven technological development, funding constraints, and skills gaps continue to undermine the effective delivery of technology-driven services (Shikali & Muneja, 2024). Consequently, SNS adoption in many academic libraries remains exploratory rather than embedded within core service frameworks.

To overcome these constraints, IFLA (2020) strongly advocates targeted capacity-building initiatives to improve librarians' digital competencies, alongside the formulation of clear SNS usage policies to guide professional practice. Furthermore, sustained institutional investment in digital infrastructure is essential to ensure reliability and scalability (Cox et al., 2019). When strategically implemented, these measures can position SNS as sustainable tools for library outreach, enabling timely information delivery, strengthening user engagement, and enhancing the visibility and relevance of library resources in dynamic academic environments.

Despite the extensive body of literature on the adoption and use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in academic libraries, a clear gap remains evident. Most existing studies concentrate on general patterns of SNS utilisation, promotional activities, and broad digital engagement strategies, with limited empirical attention to how SNS specifically enhance core readers' services such as reference delivery, reader education, and user advisory support within defined institutional contexts. Furthermore, while infrastructural deficits, training gaps, and policy limitations are

frequently acknowledged, these challenges are often discussed in broad terms of digital transformation rather than being systematically linked to the effectiveness and sustainability of SNS integration in readers' services. There is therefore a need for a focused, context-specific investigation that examines the extent, effectiveness, and institutional determinants of SNS integration into readers' services within a particular university library setting.

Research methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprise of 216 professional librarians and para-professional librarian working in public university libraries in Imo State. Because of the relative size of the population, there was no need for sampling. It employed two distinct research instruments which were validated by three experts in library and information science for data collection. The final instrument were then administered to the respondents by three research assistants who were briefed on mode of administration. The data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics of frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation.

Results and discussions

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Option	No. Distributed	No. Returned	Percentage (%)	No. not returned	Percentage (%)
IMSU	72	68	32.5	5	2.5
Alvan	72	67	30.5	6	3.0
FUTO	72	65	28.5	7	3.0
Total	216	200	91.5	16	8.5

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 above shows that 216 copies of questionnaires were drafted and distributed to public university library in order to generate relevant data for the study. A total of 200(91.5%) copies of distributed questionnaires were duly filled and returned in this order: IMSU 68(32.5%), Alvan 67(30.5%) and FUTO 65(28.5%).

Research Question one: What are the Types of Social Networking Sites Available in University Libraries in Imo State?

Table 2. Researchers' observation checklist on the types of social networking sites available in public university libraries in Imo State.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	IMSU		ALVAN		FUTO	
		A	NA	A	NA	A	NA
1.	Wikipedia	√		√		√	
2.	Facebook	√		√		√	
3.	Twitter		√	√		√	
4.	LinkedIn/Internet Forum	√			√	√	
5.	Blog	√			√	√	
6.	MySpace		√		√	√	
7.	YouTube		√		√	√	
8.	SlideShare		√		√	√	
9.	Whatsapp	√		√		√	
10.	Ning		√		√	√	
11.	Instagram		√	√		√	
12.	Snapchat		√		√	√	
	Total	5	7	5	7	12	-

Source: *Researcher' Field Survey 2025.*

Table 2 reveals the results of research question one which examines the types of social networking sites available in university libraries in Imo State. It shows that out of the 12 items under investigation, 5 items which includes Wikipedia, Facebook, LinkedIn/Internet forum, Blog, and Whatsapp, were the types of social networking sites available in IMSU, 5 items including Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and Instagram were available in Alvan and 12 items which includes Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn/Internet forum, Blog, were available in FUTO library.

Research Question two: What are the benefits of using social networking sites for readers' services in public universities libraries in Imo State?

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the benefits of using social networking sites in university libraries in Imo State (*n=200*)

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1.	For web engagement by students	89	67	29	15	3.05	Accept

2.	For educational purposes	81	79	30	10	2.88	Accept
3.	For students or individual identify and self-expression	90	60	30	20	2.99	Accept
4.	For strengthening interpersonal relationships among students	100	59	25	16	3.14	Accept
5.	For socialization by students	113	50	36	1	3.27	Accept
6.	Help in collaboration	77	90	20	13	3.11	Accept
Grand Mean						3.07	Accept

Source: *Researcher' Field Survey, 2025.*

Criterion Mean 2.5

The result in *Table 3* shows the benefits of using social networking sites in university libraries in Imo State. From the result, it is obvious that all the items raised were accepted by the respondents as their mean responses exceeded the criterion mean of 2.5 (3.04, 2.88, 2.99, 3.14, 3.27 and 3.11 > 2.5 respectively), However, it is necessary to conclude that for web engagement by students, for educational purposes, for students or individual identify and self-expression, for strengthening interpersonal relationships among students, for socialization by students and help in collaboration were the benefits of using social networking sites in university libraries in Imo State.

Research Question three: What are the Problems of Using Social Networking Sites Your University Library?

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the problems of using social networking sites your university libraries in Imo State (*N=200*)

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1.	Cyber or E-crimes	98	67	35	-	2.86	Accept
2.	Unprotected information	88	73	30	9	3.04	Accept
3.	Inadequate awareness	93	78	21	8	2.63	Accept
4.	Epileptic power supply	79	80	15	-	3.2	Accept
5.	Low level of technology penetration	89	66	28	17	2.86	Accept
6.	Predators and Stalkers	97	52	41	10	3.08	Accept
7.	Time consuming	100	78	20	2	3.13	Accept
8.	Network problems	109	85	6	-	3.00	Accept
9.	Can damage relationship	99	58	33	10	3.07	Accept
10.	Cost of social networking facilities	101	47	30	22	3.05	Accept

11.	Low literacy of use of social networking sites	89	66	28	17	2.86	Accept
12.	It causes distraction to me.	88	73	30	9	3.04	Accept
	Grand Mean	2.73					

Source: *Researcher' Field Survey, 2025.*

Criterion Mean 2.5

Table 4 examines the problems of using social networking sites in university library in public Imo State. All the items raised were accepted by the respondents as their mean responses exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50 respectively (2.86, 3.04, 2.63, 3.2, 2.86, 3.08, 3.13, 3.00, 3.07, 3.05, 2.86 and 3.04), however, it can be concluded that cyber or E-crimes, unprotected information, inadequate awareness, epileptic power supply, low level of technology penetration, predators and Stalkers, time consuming, network problems, can damage relationship, cost of social networking facilities, low literacy of use of social networking sites and it causes distraction to me were the major challenges facing the utilization of automated security system in Imo State public universities library.

Research Question four: Strategies to improve the use of Social Networking sites in University Libraries in Imo State?

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the strategies to improve the use of social networking sites in university libraries in Abia State (*n* = 200)

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1.	Users should also carefully control what information they post on social networking sites accounts.	88	73	30	9	3.04	Accept
2.	Training and retraining of library staff on the use of social networking sites.	93	78	21	8	2.63	Accept
3.	The university library should intensify efforts in adopting social networking sites.	79	80	15	-	3.12	Accept
4.	Know whom one is communicating with.	89	66	28	17	2.86	Accept
5.	Users should be aware of phishing attacks	97	52	41	10	3.08	Accept
6.	There should be adequate hardware and softwares to aid the use of social networking sites.	100	78	20	2	3.13	Accept
7.	Review the threat from insufficient authentication controls	109	85	6	-	3.00	Accept

8.	Provision of alternative power supply	99	58	33	10	3.07	Accept
9.	Creation of awareness to educate user on how to use social network site.	101	47	30	22	3.05	Accept
Grand Mean		2.99					

Source: *Researcher' Field Survey, 2025.*

Criterion Mean 2.5

Table 5 examines the strategies to improve the use of Social Networking sites in public university libraries in Imo State. All the items raised were accepted by the respondents as their mean responses exceeded the criterion mean of 2.5 respectively (3.04, 2.63, 3.12, 2.86, 3.08, 3.13, 3.00, 3.07 and 3.05), however, it can be concluded that users should also carefully control what information they post on social networking sites accounts, training and retraining of library staff on the use of social networking sites, the university library should intensify efforts in adopting social networking sites, know whom one is communicating with, users should be aware of phishing attacks, there should be adequate hardware and softwares to aid the use of social networking sites, review the threat from insufficient authentication controls, provision of alternative power supply and creation of awareness to educate user on how to use social network site were some major strategies to improve the use of Social Networking sites in University Libraries in Imo State.

Discussion of Findings

Types of Social Networking Sites Available in Public University Libraries in Imo State:

The study examines the types of social networking sites available in public university libraries in Imo State. From the result, it was revealed that Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn/Internet forum, Blog, Youtube, Slideshare, Whatsapp, Instagram and Snapchat were the types of social networking sites available in public universities library in Imo State. It agrees with the findings of Martell, (2019) that Wikipedia, Facebook and twitter are the types of social networking sites available and mostly used in Nigeria universities.

Benefits of using Social Networking Sites for Readers' Services in Public Universities Libraries

The study examines the benefits of using social networking sites in public universities libraries in Imo State, hence from the analysis it was revealed that web engagement by students, educational purposes, students or individual identify and self-expression, strengthening interpersonal relationships among students, socialization by students and help in collaboration were the benefits of using social networking sites in university libraries in Imo State. This finding is in line with Ekong, (2018) who opined that self-expression and for strengthening interpersonal relationships among students are the benefits of using social networking sites in Nigeria academic libraries.

The Problems of Using Social Networking Sites your University Library:

The study equally examines the problems of using social networking sites your university library. The findings of the study revealed that cyber or E-crimes, unprotected information, inadequate awareness, epileptic power supply, low level of technology penetration, predators and Stalkers, time consuming, network problems, can damage relationship, cost of social networking facilities, low literacy of use of social networking sites and it causes distraction to me were the major challenges facing the utilization of social networking site in Imo State academic libraries. This finding corroborates Kim (2021) that poor funding and inadequate power supply as major challenges facing in the use of social networking in Nigeria academic libraries.

The Strategies to Improve the use of Social Networking sites in University Libraries in Imo State:

The study examines the strategies to improve the use of Social Networking sites in University Libraries. The findings of the study revealed that users should also carefully control what information they post on social networking sites accounts, training and retraining of library staff on the use of social networking sites, the university library should intensify efforts in adopting social networking sites, know whom one is communicating with, users should be aware of phishing

attacks, there should be adequate hardware and softwares to aid the use of social networking sites, review the threat from insufficient authentication controls, provision of alternative power supply and creation of awareness to educate user on how to use social network sites were some major strategies to improve the use of social networking sites in university libraries in Imo State. This findings agrees with Idakwo (2021) who argued that users should be aware of phishing attacks and there should be adequate hardware in Nigeria academic libraries.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded, that wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Blog, Myspace, YouTube, Slideshare, Meebo and Ning were the types of social networking sites available in public universities library in Imo State. Cyber or E-crimes, unprotected information, inadequate awareness, epileptic power supply, low level of technology penetration, predators and Stalkers, time consuming, network problems, cost of social networking facilities and low literacy of use of social networking sites were the major challenges facing SNS in public universities libraries in Imo State.

On the strategies to improve the use of social networking sites in public university libraries in Imo State, users should carefully control what information they post on social networking sites accounts, training and retraining of library staff on the use of social networking sites, the university library should intensify efforts in adopting social networking sites, know whom one is communicating with, users should be aware of phishing attacks, there should be adequate hardware and softwares to aid the use of social networking sites and review the threat from insufficient authentication controls.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher proffered the following recommendations that:

- I. The university library should make efforts to reduce cyber or E-crimes in university libraries.
- II. The university librarians should ensure that library staff are adequate awareness in the use of social networking sites for effective service delivery.
- III. The government and library management should ensure that the library have steady power supply.
- IV. The university library should ensure that the issues affecting network are resolved in order to boost the use of social networking sites among library users.
- V. The library management should ensure that the cost of using social networking facilities in the library are subsidised for its users.

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