An Exploratory Study into Social Media Literacy Skills among Librarians at the University of Zambia

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Abstract
Social media literacy skills refer to the acquaintance, adoption, and productive use of social media technology in any given setting. These skills are critical for improving library service delivery. This study explores social media literacy skills among librarians at the University of Zambia. The study adopted a survey method in which a sample of 41 librarians participated via a questionnaire. Collected data sets were analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Results show that 63.4 per cent of librarians were social media illiterate, while only 7.3 per cent were literate. As for skills acquisition, 34.1 percent acquired their skills with the help of friends, 21.9 percent through formal schooling and self-study. Major constraints included a lack of training opportunities and ignorance of new social media tools. Based on the findings, it has been recommended that the library should be running capacity-building workshops to enhance social media literacy skills acquisition.

Keywords: Social media; Social media literacy; Social media literacy skills; Librarians
         University of Zambia Library

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid use of social media in academic library service delivery has resulted in a paradigm shift in library service activities, triggering the need to evaluate librarians' social media literacy skills. Social media literacy (SML) is described by Ouedraogo (2021) as a collection of realistic, intellectual, and emotional abilities required of social media users to create content. Bridges (2012) posits that Social Media Literacy should be considered as one form of information literacy within almost any of the current definitions or frameworks of information literacy used by librarians. In higher education, librarians often rely on the Information Literacy Competency Standards developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) when creating a framework for teaching information literacy (2000). Therefore, social media literacy is one form of literacy under the information literacy umbrella.

Due to technological advancements and changing information-seeking behavior of users, the changing information environment in which libraries work is becoming increasingly complex, particularly in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, where librarians are required to provide information services remotely. As a result of these developments, the demand for a digitally trained librarian has increased significantly. According to Adeleke (2016), librarians need a specific set of skills to function effectively. Emiri (2015), posits that all academic librarians need to be equipped with digital technology skills such as resource sharing, social networking, and instant messaging, and so on.

Despite the numerous studies that have looked at the use of social media in libraries, the subject of librarians' social media literacy skills is still under-researched. While some studies (Vanwynsberghe et al. 2015 & Yap, 2016) have reported on librarians' social media literacy skills in Flemish public libraries in Belgium and the Philippines respectively, no research has been conducted in Zambia on this subject. Therefore, this research fills a void in the literature.

1.1 Research questions
This study was guided by three research questions as follows.

(i) What is the level of SML skills possessed by librarians working at UNZA?

(ii) Through what means do librarians acquire SML skills?

(iii) What constraints do librarians encounter when acquiring SML skills?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
There is a rising appreciation around the world of the significance of social media literacy skills in preparing librarians for an increasingly digital 21st century. Concerning librarians' social media literacy, several studies exist that have empirically identified key competencies that librarians perceived they need in the current social media culture (Huvila et al., 2013). Concerning awareness of social media tools among librarians, Okuonghae (2018) investigated librarians' awareness of social media usage for informal scientific communication in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The findings indicated that librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria use that Facebook, WhatsApp, Google+, Twitter, and YouTube for informal scientific communication. The study also revealed that librarians are aware of social media usage for informal scientific communication, although the extent of awareness is low. The study recommended that University librarians and other library administrators should sensitize

library staff on the use of different social media tools for informal scientific communication because the world is now a global village. The study concluded that for there to be improved informal scientific communication among librarians, there is a need for librarians to be aware and fully adopt social media and other emerging technologies

Results of a study on digital literacy skills possessed by library and information professionals working in university libraries in Africa by Baro, Obaro, Aduba (2019) found that librarians rated their database search skills, uploading documents to online platforms, skills in using different social media, skills in applying new technologies into library services, and ability to use open source software as very high.

Semode, Ejitagha, and Baro (2017) investigated the extent to which librarians use social networking sites (SNS) and the level of skills possessed by librarians in Nigeria to effectively use these tools. The study revealed that librarians in Nigeria rated their skills such as interacting with friends and relatives, searching and navigating different SNS, etc to be higher than others. A study by Vanwynsberghe et al. (2015) reports on the identification of librarians' social media literacy profiles. These profiles were developed through the construction of scales measuring social media competencies. An online questionnaire was developed and administered to a sample of 184 librarians working in Flemish public libraries in Belgium. Cluster analysis revealed four social media literacy profiles: (1) social media workers; (2) social media laggards; (3) social media literates; and (4) social media spare-time users. This typology of social media literacy profiles is necessary information when developing a successful social media literacy strategy in libraries. Findings further indicate that librarians who fit the social media literate profiles are expected to play a central and facilitating role in the adoption and implementation of social media within public libraries.

An article by Murphy and Moulaison (2009) suggested a set of skills that librarians should possess as social networking literate information professionals capable of implementing library services and utilizing information within social networking sites. These include skills for interacting with patrons within the sites, understanding and articulating the nature of social networking sites and their potential roles related to library services, creating presences and content, evaluating and applying information and having the ability to assist patrons with gaining

and applying these skills. They posit those librarians possessing these skills are capable of efficiently and effectively navigating online social networking sites and applying their expertise to services with and within this now central realm for interacting with information.

About constraints associated with the acquisition of SML skills, Singh and Pinki (2004) at the University of New Delhi, India found that academic libraries are facing many challenges posed by the contemporary environment, most of which are as a result of ICT and the digital revolution. The paper discusses the impact of emerging changes on academic libraries and the need for acquiring core competencies and new skills to manage modern-day academic libraries. It further discusses different sets of skills (generic, managerial, and professional skills) required by LIS professionals to manage the contemporary change brought up by technology accelerated environment. The article emphasizes that the acquisition of new sets of skills has become essential to survive in this technology-based environment.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design in which questionnaires were used for data collection. This study was therefore quantitative in nature. The target population for this study comprised all the 60 librarians at UNZA with a minimum qualification of the first degree in Library and Information Science (LIS). However, the study deliberately targeted librarians Therefore; a study sample of 41 respondents was purposively selected. The choice of the study sample was premised on the assumption that respondents with a first degree and above were deemed to have a deeper theoretical grounding and therefore a better understanding of social media tools and their relevance to library service delivery. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Analysis of the questionnaire results took place via statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 to generate meaningful statistical inferences. The data was then presented in form of charts, and tables, with frequencies and rational representations in form of percentages.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Out of the 50 questionnaires sent, 41 were returned representing a response rate of 82%.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Population

Item		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	17	41.5
	Female	24	59.5
Education	Total	41	100.0
	First degree	22	53.7
	Master's	17	41.5
	PhD	01	04.8
Total		**41**	**100.0**

As it can be seen in Table 1 above, 53.3 per cent of the respondents were females while 46.3 per cent were males. This gender distribution probably reveals a female dominance in the library profession. Concerning academic qualifications, 53.7 per cent of the sample was holders of a Bachelor's degree in LIS, 41.5 per cent were Master's degree holders and 1.2 per cent was a doctoral degree holder. This implies that all the respondents were professionals who should be well versed with SML skills.

4.2 Familiarity with Social Media Tools

A list of various social media tools was provided for them to choose the ones they were familiar with. The choice of the social media tools was based on their prevalence in the literature.

Table 2: Familiarity with Social Media Tools

Social Media Tool	Frequency	Percentage
Twitter	14	34.1
Reddit	3	7.3
Tumbler	7	17.0
WhatsApp	41	100.0
Snapchat	5	12.1
MySpace	19	46.3
WeChat	3	7.3

As shown in Table 2 above, all 41(100%) respondents were familiar with WhatsApp, Myspace 46.3 percent, and Twitter 34.1percent. Conversely, a few respondents ranging from 17 per cent

to 21.1 per cent were familiar with Tumblr and Snapchat whilst a further 7.3 per cent were familiar with Reddit and Wechat. This finding indicates that WhatsApp is the most widely known and used social media platform among librarians at UNZA. WeChat and Reddit are not familiar tools among the respondents partly because these platforms are relatively new. These results contradict those of Okuonghae (2018) who found that librarians in Nigeria were aware of social media usage for informal scientific communication, although the extent of awareness was low.

4.3 Level of Awareness of Social Media Literacy

As regard awareness of the concept of social media literacy, Figure 1 shows that 27 per cent of the respondents were aware of social media literacy, 63.4 per cent were not and 9.7 per cent were not sure.
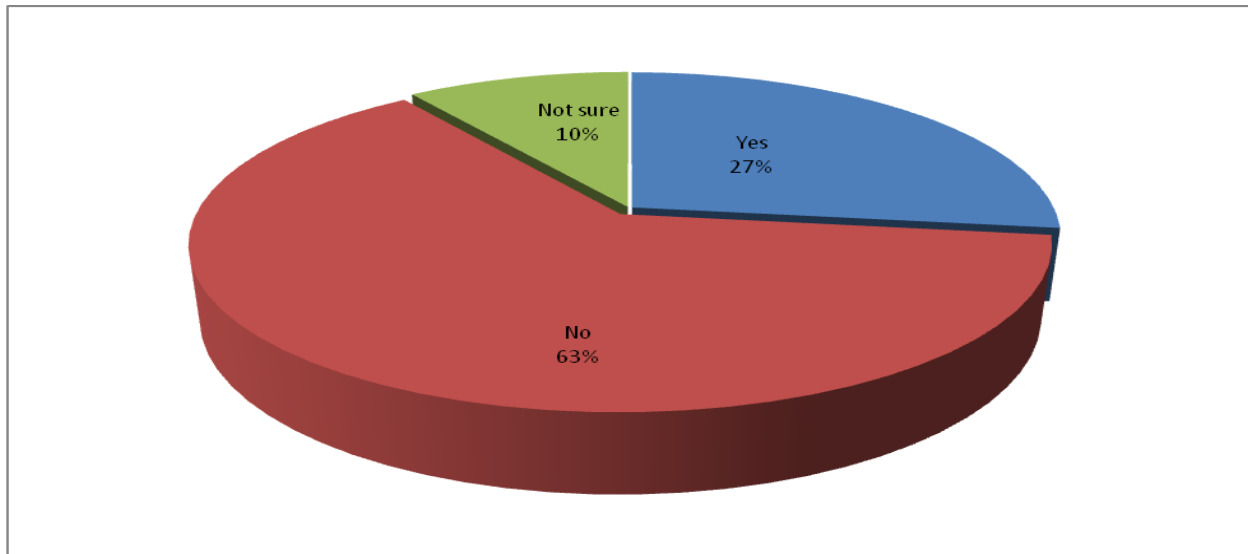

Figure 1: Awareness and Experience of Social Media Literacy

This is surprising considering that all the participants had a minimum qualification of the first degree in LIS. It is expected that at their level of education, respondents should be fully aware of social media literacy. This result agrees with that of Okuonghae (2018) who found that the extent of awareness of social media tools is low. The possible explanation for this could be that the library and information (LIS) curriculum being taught in library schools does not include social media modules.

4.4 Social Media Literacy Skills Possessed by Librarians

Social media skills are very much needed for every librarian in the digital environment. Many social media literacy skills are listed and respondents were asked to indicate the ones they possessed.

Table 3: Social Media Literacy Skills Possessed by Librarians

Social Media Literacy Skills	Frequency	Percentage
I can critically analyze info through SM	5	12.1
I can evaluate info through social media	7	17.0
I can share info through social media	23	56.3
I can create new info from social media.	6	14.6
Total	**41**	**100.0**

Findings in Table 3 above indicate that 56.3 per cent of the respondents were able to share information through social media, 17.0 per cent were able to evaluate information, 14.6 per cent were able to create new information from social media and 12.1 per cent were able to critically analyse information through social media.

It is clear from these results that the majority of the respondents did not possess the requisite skills to effectively operate in a social media environment. This scenario could be attributed to several factors such as the LIS curriculum that is devoid of social media modules in training schools and the general lack of relevant in-service training workshops.

These findings contradict those of Baro, Obaro, Aduba (2019) who posted that librarians working in university libraries in Africa rated their database search skills, uploading documents to online platforms, skills in using different social media, and skills in applying new technologies into library services as very high.

4.5 Level of Social Media Literacy of Librarians

Respondents were asked to rate their overall level of SML. Results revealed that 63.4 per cent considered their level of SML as low, 31.7 per cent perceived their level as a medium while 8.3 per cent considered their level as high. This is surprising considering the high academic

qualifications of the respondents. This might be attributed to an inadequate LIS curriculum and the lack of an adequate technological environment in the workplace.

Table 4: Level of SML of Librarians

Item	Frequency	Percentage
High	03	07.3
Medium	12	29.2
Low	26	63.4
Total	41	100.0

The above findings disagree with those of Baro, Obaro, Aduba (2019) who established that librarians working in university libraries in Africa rated their skills in using different social media tools as very high. The growing use of social media calls for academic librarians to develop social media literacy skills to be relevant in the ever-changing library environment. In the information age, library professionals are expected to be more knowledgeable, forward-looking, creative, productive, more focused, and more competitive.

4.6 Acquisition of SML Skills

Respondents were asked to indicate the means through which they acquired SML skills. Majority (34.1%) of the respondents who acquired social media skills through the support of colleagues, 21.9 per cent through formal education, 21.9 per cent indicated self-study, 14.6 per cent stated workshops and 7.3 per cent mentioned other means as shown in Figure 2 below.
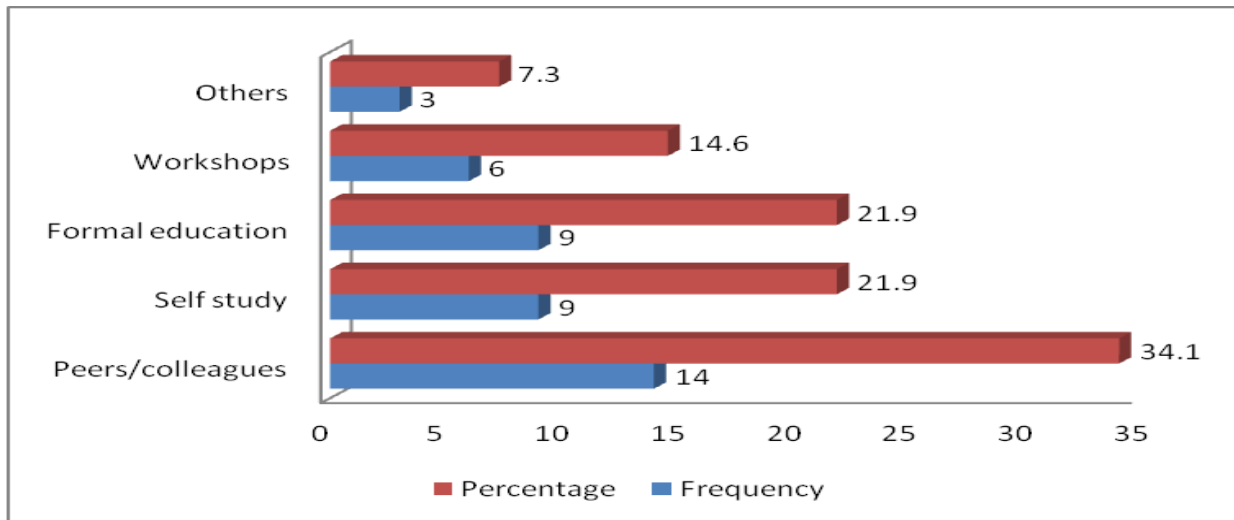

Figure 2: Means of Acquiring SML Skills

This finding concurs with the studies conducted in Nigeria and Iran that related to how academic librarians acquired ICT-based skills. For example, Safahieh and Asemi (2010) revealed that a majority of the librarians at Isfahan University (Iran) have acquired their computer skills through informal channels. With the proliferation and adoption of Social media technologies, it has become imperative for the establishment of formal channels through which librarians can be encouraged to acquire social media literacy skills.

4.7 Constraints Encountered During SML Skills Acquisition

Respondents were asked to state the constraints they encountered in the process of acquiring SML skills. Results in Figure 3 below show that 26 per cent complained of inadequate training, 22.8 per cent mentioned limited in-service training opportunities, 18.4 per cent stated poor internet connectivity, 14.1 per cent indicated ignorance of new social media tools, 9.8 per cent stated inertia on the part of librarians, 7 per cent lamented heavy work load, and 2.1 per cent cited other constraints.
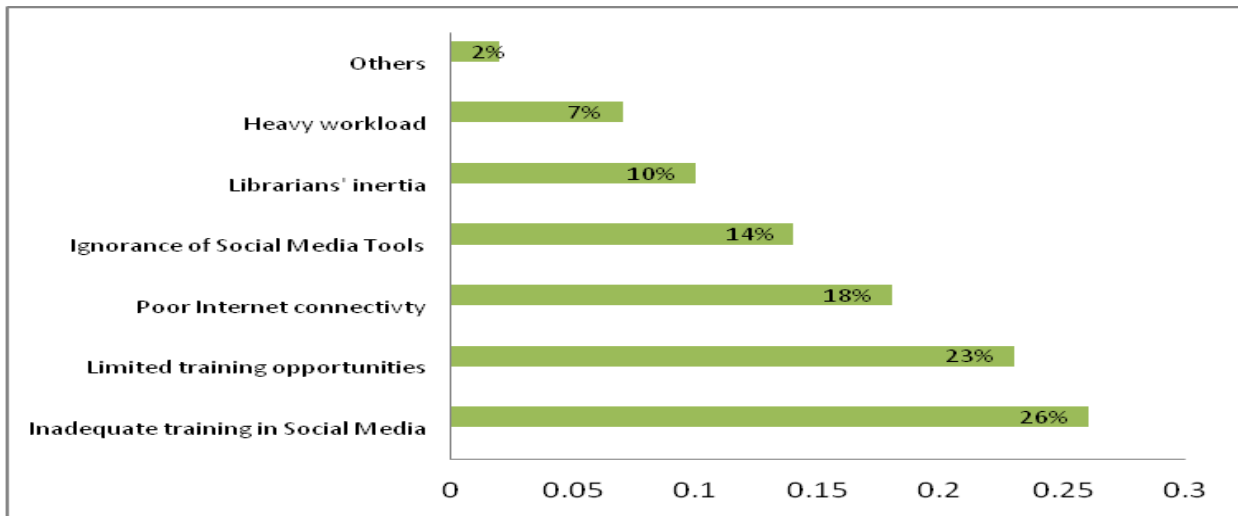

Figure 3: Constraints Encountered During SML Skills Acquisition

4.8 Constraints Associated with the Acquisition of SML Skills

These findings are in line with that of Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) who mentioned lack of awareness, and lack of training as some of the constraining factors. The researchers posit that this could be a result of the lack of a roadmap for the SML program in the country. It should be observed that the acquisition of social media literacy skills is indisputably a step in the right direction towards the effective   utilisation of digital library resources and services.

4.9 Strategies to Enhance Acquisition of SML Skills

According to the findings in table 5 below, 88.2 per cent of the respondents called for regular in-house training, 71.9 per cent called on librarians to be regularly searching the Internet for professional information related to social media, 33.2 per cent indicated that UNZA library needed to be equipped with state of the art digital technology infrastructure and 3.2 per cent suggested that the library should consider employing graduates with social media literacy skills.

Table 5: Strategies to Enhance Acquisition of SML Skills

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
In-house training	36	88.2
Internet searching for professional information	29	71.9
Adoption of state of the art digital technological infrastructure	13	33.2
The library should be employing graduates with SML skills	1	3.2

This finding is supported by Singh and Pinki (2009) who stressed the need for library professionals to develop digital competencies and skills to manage change and fulfill the information needs of users. Therefore, it has become inevitable for librarians to acquire digital literacy skills to remain relevant in the profession. These findings imply that there is a need for the UNZA library to relook at the road map for staff training opportunities for the betterment of both the institution and its staff.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been established that the librarians' level of SML at UNZA library was low. Further, it has been revealed that librarians acquire SML skills, through their friends, formal education, and self-study. The study has also established that insufficient social media preparation, restricted in-service training opportunities, and ignorance of modern social media technologies were some of the constraints affecting librarians' ability to acquire social media literacy skills. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

(i) Need for a robust social media curriculum in training schools to address the challenge of inadequate training.

(ii) UNZA Library should be running capacity-building workshops to enhance social media literacy skills acquisition.

(iii) Need for UNZA Library to improve its ICT infrastructure to address the problem of poor Internet connectivity.

(iv) Librarians should be encouraged to keep abreast of current trends in social media platforms to mitigate the challenge of ignorance of new social media tools.

(v) Inertia on the part of librarians- UNZA Library should have a deliberate policy of motivating librarians to acquire social media skills.

(vi) UNZA Library should be employing librarians who are social media literate to mitigate the constraint of heavy workload.

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