

The Transformative Role Of Library Blogs In Marketing Of Library And Information Products And Services

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Abstract:

The article deals with the transformative role played by library blogs for information dissemination and community engagement. The article talks about adaptation of libraries to the changing needs. To cater to a large population, present on the internet library blogs and websites have become important means for attracting younger generation. The article also deals with the challenges and limitations of the library blog.

Keywords: Library, blog, community, engagement, information, platform, digital, online.

INTRODUCTION

Library blogs play a transformative role in everyday library access through information dissemination and community engagement. Over a period of time Library blogs became a dynamic online platform in the academic world by displaying multiple virtual interactive venues for students, professors and staff. In words of Diane L. Schrecker:

“Blogs, or web logs, are versatile platforms for presenting information to academic library patrons. When combined with academic library web sites, as well as specific websites for curriculum resource centres, they are capable of enhancing existing web presence and providing opportunity for conversation and communication. A certain amount of time and effort is required to create and maintain a blog, be it a simple library collection blog, a course blog, or a professional development blog aspiring to present topics of scholarship.”(Diane L. Schrecker)

These blogs are making new breakthroughs in the library world by transcending boundaries of traditional library resources by providing new space for librarians and community members to share information, resources, and updates instantly. Library

blogs are showcasing new acquisitions, highlight community events, organise research webinars and offer valuable insights through their blog posts. An active participation from professors and students makes the library blog an active information-sharing platform (Susan E. Searing et.al). Outside academic world in local community the blog helps in igniting interest of new generation through online platform. This digital presence enhances information accessibility, fosters a sense of community, and encourages interaction between libraries and their patrons, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and engaged academic world and local community (Steven Bell). The current article will discuss the transformative role library blogs play in information dissemination and community engagement. The current state of information access and community engagement is shaped by a dynamic interplay of technological advancements, social changes, and evolving communication methods. In the digital age, information access has become more widespread and essential and there is a general perception regarding declining community engagement. However, the use of digital means can enhance community engagement. The library blogs will work on deepening information access and widening community engagement. Library blog can be used to announce community engagement events like seminar, book release, book discussion, seminar over academic software awareness. In short issues relating to across discipline. and can bring wide range of university community under engaging wider university community has taken on new forms, both online and offline. Library blog has also created new avenue for community engagement (John B. Stephens).

Information Access

Before going any further in Library blog elaboration, we would like to talk a little more on the information revolution and how it has transformed the library from traditional resource centre to most advanced online resource depository. The digital revolution has dramatically transformed information access. The ubiquity of the internet has democratised information, enabling individuals to access a vast array of resources from anywhere in the world. The pride of possessing exclusive books and resources of any particular library still exists but the access is not limited to physical. Online Platforms such as search engines, and digital libraries have become primary gateways for information retrieval. Users can access articles, e-books,

videos, and other digital content with just a few clicks, expanding the breadth and depth of available knowledge. There are many institutional access or limited access, however, open access initiatives have gained momentum, making scholarly research and educational materials freely accessible. This movement aims to remove barriers to information, fostering a more inclusive and equitable global knowledge landscape. A shift from desk-tops to laptop and then smartphones and tablets have made information available on-the-go. While reaching the library or university students can download or find resources to be consulted for the day. The widespread adoption of mobile technology has further enhanced information access making learning and research more flexible and convenient. Now with the coming of AI (artificial intelligence) learning and research have become more personalised. Recommendation systems tailor content suggestions based on users' preferences, creating a more tailored and efficient information-seeking experience.

Library and Information Revolution

In light of swift changing information technology, the library was bound to adopt these changes. To stay up-to-date library and especially academic library function in a highly competitive environment (Susan E. Searing, 2011). Libraries started responding to new technology and we can trace early Library blogs to year 2000. Till year 2003 library blogs were not very popular. However, 2005 onwards gradually these blogs met more responses and library blogs started emerging with more attractive information and events (Judit Bar-ilan, the use of Weblogs (blogs) by librarians and libraries to disseminate information). Library blogs started posting conference reports, book reviews, new book launch, or research related information on a regular basis making blog active and dynamic.(Judit Bar-ilan)

Libraries started running different categories of blogs. Libraries kept looking for innovative ways to reach out to the university community and local community. Blogs like Instructional resource center blog at Ashland University Library is a specialised curriculum library committed to providing quality course program and educational technology resources to students and faculty in the Dwight Schar College of Education at Ashland University. IRC book reviews blog contain college education course curriculum. In the blog all the new juvenile titles are displayed with initial placement in the "New Books"

reading areas. While EDCI 132/504: instructional technology lab blog at Ashland University Library provides resources for non-certified Bachelor's plus students with basic technology competencies. All these blogs have different functions and audiences. They are directed for specific purposes and reach out to a broader community with accurate information. (Diane L. Schrecker, Using blogs in academic libraries: versatile information platforms). We see such innovative blogs and their specific goals serve library purposes best by the target audience. Rather than general information categorised blogs cater to more specific needs. However, a general homepage kind blog serves as a general guideline for library users to go for more specific information.

Library Blog and Community Engagement

The rise of social media and online forums has redefined community engagement to some extent. People can connect, share ideas, and collaborate on a global scale with a click of a button. These platforms serve as virtual communities where individuals with shared interests or goals can interact. Virtual events, webinars, and online conferences have become integral to community engagement. These platforms facilitate knowledge exchange, networking, and collaboration, overcoming geographical barriers and allowing diverse communities to come together and exchange a wide range of information. Through library blog academic community world over can interact and exchange idea specific to research. Libraries can invite experts and publish event which can be attended by university students and through social media live could be made accessible to broader university community world over. (Tom Goodfellow and Sarah Graham, The Blog as a High-impact Institutional Communication Tool)

Local libraries can organise physical seminars and conferences which could be published on library blog. The event can attract interested local community and through social media live it can be made accessible to broader population. Communities can share local news, experiences, and perspectives in real-time, amplifying voices and fostering a sense of shared identity.

Library blogs can organise a variety of programs and events that cater to different age groups and interests within the community. This might include book clubs, workshops, author talks, and cultural events. Actively promote these events through the library blog and other communication channels. It

can also establish partnerships with local schools, community organisations, and businesses. Collaborative initiatives can include joint events, shared resources, and co-hosted programs, strengthening the library's ties with the community.

Library blogs can invite regular feedback from patrons through surveys and comment sections on the blog by keeping privacy policy very intact. The information gathered through feedback can be used to assess the effectiveness of library services and to make improvements. Demonstrating that their opinions matter fosters a sense of ownership among community members. At the same time responding promptly to comments would encourage participants and leverage social media platforms to engage with the community in real-time. An active platform would make updates and event reminders wide reaching.

A creative, innovative and inclusive library blog and programs would attract a diverse community making library blog more popular and accessible. This may involve curating a diverse collection, featuring authors from different backgrounds, and hosting events that celebrate various cultural perspectives.

Community engagement often involves educational initiatives and empowerment programs. Online courses, workshops, and skill-building activities contribute to the intellectual and socio-economic development of communities. The current emphasis on diversity and inclusion has influenced community engagement efforts. There is a growing recognition of the importance of amplifying marginalised voices and creating spaces that are welcoming and representative of diverse perspectives. (Stefanie Panke and John Stephens, *Beyond the Echo Chamber: Pedagogical Tools for Civic Engagement Discourse and Reflection*)

A successful library blog and community engagement strategy require a thoughtful and dynamic approach. By consistently providing valuable content, embracing digital platforms, and actively participating in community events, libraries can strengthen their connection with patrons and contribute to a vibrant and thriving community.

Some successful library blogs

British Council Library Blog:

The British Council Library has several blogs related to its several branches all over the world. These blogs feature updates on new book arrivals, upcoming events, and literary discussions. Such blogs often serve as a platform for engaging with the library community.

<https://www.britishcouncil.in/blog>

ALSC Blog:

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) is a network of more than 4,000 children's and youth librarians, children's literature experts, publishers, education and library school faculty members, and other adults committed to improving and ensuring the future of the nation through exemplary library service to children, their families, and others who work with children.

https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/?utm_source=feedspot

Free Library of Philadelphia Blog:

Blog posts cover libraries in the news, history minute, literacy, literary history, literature, online learning, picture book highlights, recommendations, and exhibitions. Free Library of Philadelphia is one of the largest public library systems in the world that advances literacy, guides learning and inspires curiosity.

https://libwww.freelibrary.org/blog/?utm_source=feedspot

Smithsonian Libraries Blog:

The Smithsonian Library blog features a new book launch, information of upcoming events, interaction with authors and archive for research. At the centre of research across the Smithsonian are the specialised branches and librarians of the Smithsonian

Libraries. https://blog.library.si.edu/?utm_source=feedspot

Duke University Libraries:

Duke University Library blog provides a rich array of resources assembled to support the learning, teaching and research of the Duke community. It also makes available information regarding library events like book launch, book reveal,

interaction with authors and similar such events. https://blogs.library.duke.edu/?utm_source=feedspot

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Library Blog:

Academic institutions like TISS have library blogs focusing on academic resources, research support, and library services. These blogs often cater to the information needs of students, faculty, and researchers. <http://library.tiss.edu/?q=node/89>

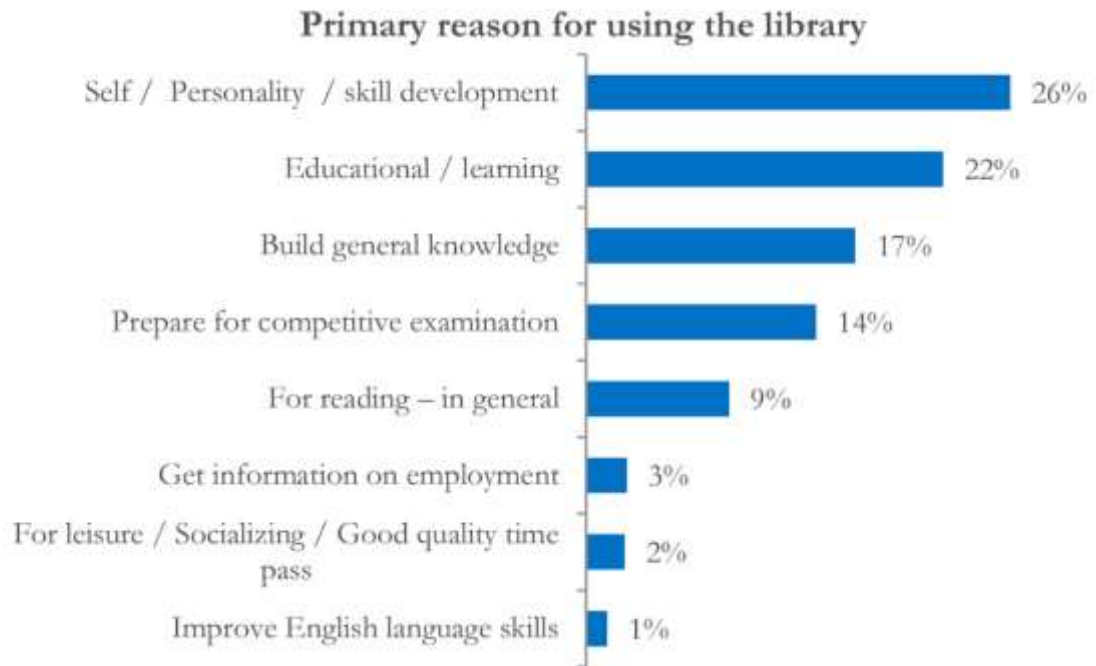
Delhi Public Library Blog:

Delhi Public Library, with its multiple branches, has blogs featuring updates on library services, reading programs, an archive and community outreach efforts. These blogs often highlight the library's commitment to promoting reading and education. <http://dplibraryshubh.blogspot.com/>.

Library blogs are becoming more popular among the library goers for gathering information regarding their research and regarding events library holds. It is always better to visit the official websites of the respective libraries or conduct an online search using specific library names and locations to find the most current and accurate information. Library blogs become more a personalised platform to access information and interact with the library.

Limitations

Library blogs offer valuable platforms for information access and community engagement and with the increased presence of the world on internet blogs are becoming popular platforms for library goers. However, in general a decline in library footfall has been witnessed in the recent past, the main reason people gave was lack of time, distance and lack of books. People are seeking free online information and unpaid online library platforms. "Instead, the non-users have been found to refer to the Internet to gain information. When the library users (academic/cultural/mission/embassy & private lending libraries) were questioned about their not visiting public libraries, their response indicated their lack of exposure to public libraries." (ANTAR, p.37). The following data from KANTAR, 2018 survey, p.38.



Understanding these limitations is essential for libraries to address challenges and optimise their digital communication strategies.

The survey has also suggested that the relevance of the Public Library System is the key barrier for 60 per cent of non-users. In the context of Indian libraries in general and public libraries in particular, library visit is reducing from popular culture. It is mostly the college students and academicians who are the main users of the library. KANTAR survey also suggests there is a dire need to modernise libraries and equip them with wifi, new collection of books and well-trained staff. The survey has also suggested that the libraries should stock books to cater to the needs of the children, teen and younger generation. It should also stock books keeping the job, stock, business and lifestyle requirements. In this perspective library digitisation becomes the primary task. Blog and online platforms to promote library use will help to popularise libraries. The reason is the online presence of the younger generation. Library blogs become a popular medium to attract the younger generation. Despite limitations, library blogs are becoming platforms for dissipation of information and community engagement.

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