

# Building and enhancing library services: Patrons' awareness of, and engagement with social media in academic libraries in Ghana

Journal of Librarianship and  
Information Science  
1–18

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DOI: 10.1177/09610006211036738  
journals.sagepub.com/home/lis



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## Abstract

This study sought to examine academic libraries' patrons' level of awareness of, and engagement with social media in the use of academic libraries services in Ghana. The study employed the cross-sectional survey whereby quantitative data were collected from a total of 417 respondents, who consisted of students and library staff from public, private and technical universities in Ghana. Findings indicated that the academic libraries have adopted and used a number of social media applications, with Facebook and instant messaging as the most popular and frequently used platforms, for the provision and access to library services and resources as well as for contacting the academic libraries. However, the level of awareness, extent of use, as well as the level of engagement with the platforms was low as social media tools adopted by the libraries were not prevalent among the library patrons. Recommendations and conclusions based on the research findings are offered in the paper. This study uses a cross-sectional survey, with the data being collected at a specific point in time. However, due to rapid technological change and trends, future research studies could consider longitudinal studies to investigate the adoption and use of social media in academic libraries across time and environment. The analysis of social media use for academic library services from both the library staff and library patrons' perspectives will inform decisions on how to improve the use of such platforms for effective and efficient library services delivery and access.

## Keywords

Social media, library patrons, students, library staff, user engagement, Ghana

## Introduction

The use of social media are becoming more alluring in academic libraries, giving their wide adoption by library patrons. Patrons of today's academic libraries are changing into clienteles with growing desires and different kinds of demands, who assume that any information they need is available somewhere on the web which they find to be more collaborative and interactive rather than static (Khan and Du, 2017). As such, to still stay relevant especially in the present technological era, as information providers and promoters of value-added services, against competition, rising cost of resources and budget cuts, academic libraries have begun to recognise and shift their information seeking sphere from collection developers to content managers

by adopting, and taking advantage of the numerous social media platforms available (Okite-Amugthoro, 2017; Shah and Khan, 2019).

Today, academic libraries have put in a lot of efforts to construct more interactive and lively services in assisting patrons to gain the most out of their learning experience (Awang, 2012) and have penetrated the online social network scene offering direct links from their corporate library websites to promote service delivery and the marketing of their products and services to patrons (Khan

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and Du, 2017). Indeed, the main purpose of academic libraries presence on social media is predominantly evident in its capacity as a tool for stirring up real-time interactions among users. Hence, the quest to meet patrons remotely is no doubt an important one to the academic library. As Hagman (2012) wrote, the primary goal of investing in social media in academic libraries is to engage patrons with the library. Thus, it is essential to assess patrons' awareness, ownership, and interest of, in using social media to interact with the library. The major concern, however, is whether academic libraries in Ghana are actively linking users with the available social media platforms and whether patrons (i.e. students) are receptive to the idea of using social media as an official tool for library services delivery.

### Problem statement

In Ghana, the use of social media for academic library services is still at its infancy level, with a sketchy understanding of how these platforms are deployed and used. In particular, the extent of social media engagement behavioural outcomes of library patrons towards the provision of library services in academic libraries is yet to be explored. Most Ghanaian academic libraries do not appear to recognise social media as a key instrument in accomplishing their service delivery obligations but seem to be operating as traditional libraries where most library services are accessed and delivered manually. This could however have an effect on the libraries communication and interaction with its user community, especially in this age of technology. For instance, observations of the webpages of the academic libraries in Ghana for evidence of social media tools revealed that, as at September 2019, only 23 out of the total of 95 academic libraries in Ghana had at least one social media icon attached to their webpages. Visiting all the 23 webpages to access some of the social media icons attached to the webpages, the researchers observed that only six of the academic libraries out of the 23 seem active on these platforms.

Furthermore, like the literature on social media in academic libraries in Ghana (e.g. Agyekum et al., 2016; Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah, 2017; Akeriwe and Thompson, 2014), existing literature on social media in academic libraries has largely concentrated on the views of the library staff, with their patrons views barely considered, resulting in lack of research from the analysis of library patrons. As such, for balanced implications on the use of social media in academic libraries, Joo et al. (2018), Kircaburun et al. (2020), as well as Jones and Harvey (2019) have advised that future studies should address questions relative to how to improve user engagement, what their needs are, what type of content they are most interested in and/or will contribute to. Certainly, the assessments of the library staff alone may not fully explain the

factors that contribute to the acceptance and use of social media platforms in academic libraries, since the user (patrons) constitutes the focal point and reason for which these services delivery tools are deployed and, as such, their level of acceptance and use of such platforms to access library resources and services are critical. This study therefore sets to examine the patrons' level of awareness, and engagement in the use of social media for provision, and access to library services, as well as contribute to the literature and implications towards understanding the benefits of social media use in academic libraries in Ghana.

### Study objectives/research questions

The study is guided by the following research objectives (ROs):

RO1: To find out the academic libraries' presence on social media and patrons' awareness of such presence for library services provision if any.

RO2: Examine patrons' interest in using social media to contact and interact with the libraries.

RO3: Examine patrons' likeliness to follow the academic libraries on social media.

RO4: To determine patrons' engagement in the decision to adopt and use social media in academic libraries.

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

RQ1: What social media platforms do academic libraries have presence on, and are patrons aware of such presence?

RQ2: Are library patrons interested in the use of social media to contact and interact with the library?

RQ3: How likely are library patrons to follow their university libraries on social media?

RQ4: Do academic libraries engage its patrons in the choice of social media applications to adopt and use for library services?

### Review of related literature

#### *Social media concept*

The concept of social media is often identified strongly as a technology with a socio-technical dynamic feature that unfolds as millions of people embrace its tools to collaborate, share information, and socialise. Apart from building social reputations, social media is known to have created social interactions previously considered inconceivable and transformed the process of acquiring and using information

(Shafawi and Hassan, 2018). They have permeated individual lives and are assuming a centre stage as indispensable tools for information sharing and relationship building (Emezie and Nwaohiri, 2017). Indeed, in recent times, the concept of social media has gained prominence globally, with an exponential increase in their adoption and use. As early as 2008, 75% of Internet users were already utilising social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Kemp (2017) affirms that almost one-third of the individuals around the globe are social media users. Likewise, recent research estimates an increase from 2.46 billion social media users in 2017 globally to around 2.77 billion in 2019. The continuous proliferation in the number of participants worldwide shows that social media is not a fad but an acceptable norm in society.

All the same, despite the proliferation of use, and research on social media, there are relatively few formal definitions of the term. The lack of formal definitions is potentially due to the continuous evolving nature of the term, coupled with a host of discrete and integrated products and services of social media networks which introduce a challenge of definition (Sloan and Quan-Haase, 2017).

Difficulties and deliberations on the provision of a formal definition of social media aside, some definitions have been identified in the literature. Existing definitions generally agree that social media goes beyond the provision of information to a forum for interaction where the target audience moves beyond passive viewing of web content to contribution to content through computer-mediated, web-based services (Sunstein, 2018).

Holistically, in line with the definition of a library social media as an aspect of library services that centres on the creation, organisation, and transferring of knowledge that has been improved through user interactions enabled by sharing technologies (Deodato, 2018), this study defines the term 'social media' as

Dynamic digital platforms that enable the creation, modification and dissemination of information using new generation of web technologies and communication networks that allow collaboration, communication, provision, access and sharing of library resources among staff and patrons of academic libraries.

Furthermore, regardless of the conceptualisation of social media in both research and practice, there seems to be a lack of clarity as to what social media comprises. As such, there have been several attempts to classify social media, and identify technologies that can be considered with it. While some authors classify social media on the basis of the functions linked with the type of application, others have categorised the concept based on how it is used for interaction. Nevertheless, although there are varying levels of approach to the classification of social media by researchers, there is an overlap in the functions of the tools, the type of human interactions and the content generated. For instance, after a

careful review of existing literature, Sloan and Quan-Haase (2017) listed 10 main types of social media including: social networking, bookmarking, micro blogging, scheduling and meeting, blogs and forums, media sharing, social news, collaborative authority, web conferencing and Geo location-based sites. Deodato (2018) reinforced that social media comprise of a range of technologies such as social networks, blogs, micro blogs, social bookmarking sites, social news sites, wikis, media sharing sites and social questions and answers.

### *Social media in academic libraries*

The use of social media by Academic libraries is well documented in the library literature in the form of research and opinions in three main phases. The first phase includes reports on academic libraries' awareness and application of social media, and the call to meet library patrons in their space through the use of varied social media platforms (e.g. Chu and Du, 2013; etc). The second phase comprises of researchers focusing on identifying and studying tools adopted and used by academic libraries as well as their perceptions and influences to adopt such tools (e.g. Xie and Stevenson, 2014). Research in the third phase comprises of studies concentrating on how best to use available social media platforms to promote and optimise library services, difficulties in implementing such platforms and ways to mitigate such challenges (e.g. Abok and Kwanya, 2016; Booker and Bandyopadhyay, 2013; Emezie and Nwaohiri, 2017; Howard et al., 2018; Stvilia and Gibradze, 2017).

In all three segments, integrating social media into academic library functions is noted to enable academic libraries to place themselves into a social realm with users and respond to changes relating to technological advancement. Indeed, with the concept of social media as a modern innovation, almost all academic library functions have been altered, and the traditional methods of performing its core functions are gradually going into extinction (Shafawi and Hassan, 2018). Booker and Bandyopadhyay (2013) attest that the adoption and use of social media in academic libraries globally to interact with patrons conforms to the affluent practice of libraries using innovative yet cost effective technologies to enhance the quality of services to their users. Similarly, Joo et al. (2018) endorse that social media facilitates and promotes the services, programmes, and events of libraries and ultimately creates a sense of belongingness among users. Consequently, social media is seen today as more than a fringe activity for academic libraries worldwide, to platforms that are seen as central to the library's outreach and promotional effort, and is becoming an integral part of the academic library system (Peacemaker et al., 2016).

Indeed, albeit there seems to be widespread consent that academic libraries globally are actively involved in

adopting and using varied social media platforms, although for different purposes (e.g. AlAwadhi and Al-Daihani, 2019; Jones and Harvey, 2019; Okuonghae et al., 2018), the main objective of academic libraries presence on social media is predominantly evident in its capacity as a tool for stirring up real-time interactions among library users. Noticeably, the primary goal of investing in social media in academic libraries is to engage patrons with the library. The provision of library services using new innovations such as social media should therefore be centred on the requirements and requests of its primary patrons which in the academic libraries situation are students and faculty. It is therefore essential to assess patrons' awareness, ownership and interest in using social media to interact with the library. Surely, with the scarcity of resources devoted to activities like social media applications, the interest and commitment of the intended user is critical. Subsequently, academic libraries need to find out whether its patrons actually use a social media platform prior to a decision to adopt or not adopt it. Specifically, there is the need to find out users' awareness of the existence of social media tools in academic libraries, their engagement in their use, and their views towards its use for library services because the total number of interest groups is an indication of how the library services via social media are popular or shared with or by the users.

### *User engagement with academic library social media*

The provision of library services using new innovations such as social media should be centred on the requirements and requests of its primary patrons which in the academic libraries' situation are students and faculty. Surely, with the scarcity of resources devoted to activities like social media applications, the interest and commitment of the intended user is critical. It is therefore important for an academic library to find out whether its patrons use a social media platform prior to a decision to adopt or not adopt it. Specifically, there is the need to find out users' awareness of the existence of social media tools in academic libraries, their engagement in their use, and their views towards its use for library services because the total number of interest groups is an indication of how the library services via social media are popular or shared with or by the users. Indeed, the crucial goal of an academic library is to ensure that library resources are made accessible to patrons, so if social media can help realise this aim, then it should be pursued vigorously.

Academic libraries, however, do not appear to be effectively reaching patrons where they are with the numerous social media tools adopted (Deodato, 2018). Comparable to an international survey by Chu and Du in 2012, a number of studies reported that existing research mainly

focuses on the ways social media sites are used in the libraries (marketing and promotion), and the librarians' attitude towards the library use of such platforms (e.g. Adetola and Okeoghene, 2016; AlKindi and Al-Suqri, 2013; Smeaton and Davis, 2014; Yi, 2014), with quite sparse empirical investigations on that which pertains to patrons' willingness to interact with the library on these platforms (e.g. Howard et al., 2018; Shafawi and Hassan, 2018). Smeaton and Davis (2014) observed that despite the fact that a number of academic libraries have hurriedly deployed social media applications by creating blogs, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts, an assessment of how these platforms have successfully enabled libraries to meet their stated goals and objectives and if such tools are being used to enhance participatory service has received little attention.

Winn et al. (2017) put it succinctly that even though the concept of social media has been associated with facilitating user participation and communication, most academic libraries use these platforms slightly more than extensions of their websites. Deodato (2018) confirmed that given that academic libraries have fervently accepted social media, few seem to accept and observe the principles on which it is based. These principles Deodato (2018) listed as including communication, collaboration, participation, collective intelligence, and trust. Deodato (2018) therefore questioned that, first, if the purpose of social media is embedded in interacting and engaging with others, why then do several libraries appear talking only to themselves? and second, are users apathetic or perhaps it may be that the academic libraries approach to use social media is profoundly in an anti-social manner? Addressing these questions is pertinent, because, as Shafawi and Hassan (2018) emphasised, the presence of social media tools without user engagement is worthless. Consequently, the effect of the extent of adoption and use of social media in academic libraries is additionally influenced by the level of awareness, acceptance, and usage of such platforms by its patrons. Academic libraries should hence plan and market their resources and services effectively by identifying the value users perceive in their services and their social media communication about those services (Stvilia and Gibradze, 2017).

Price and Richardson (2017) emphasised that social media goes beyond just a broadcasting platform to a probable space into users experience where they can complain, compliment, enquire and make suggestions. Academic libraries therefore need to go beyond promoting and marketing their resources and services, and endeavour to build an academic community that is supportive through effective user participation to achieve a true and comparable digital equivalent of the physical library: an environment their static website could not realise. There is therefore the need to stress the importance for academic libraries to realise that merely making resources accessible online via

adopted social media tools is not sufficient assurance that users will accept and use them (Deodato, 2018).

That said, reports from the literature on students' acceptance and use of social media as tools for library services delivery present a mixed picture. While some found students to be more receptive to the use of such platforms to access library resources and services (e.g. Cassidy et al., 2014; Howard et al., 2018) others found the opposite (Adewoyin et al., 2017; Booker and Bandyopadhyay, 2013; Jones and Harvey, 2019; Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), 2007; Olajide and Alao, 2016). For instance, as Olajide and Alao (2016) make known, although there is the need for users to interact with their library through social media platforms, the library users are not really interested in relating with their university libraries on such tools. Drawing data from six countries namely: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, and Germany. The OCLC (2007) in a survey asked 511 college students from six different universities to share their thoughts on libraries using social media technologies. This study revealed that most students were unlikely to participate in services offered by the library via social media because they believed the library had no place on social media. Likewise, in 2009, a study carried out to determine the extent to which students' desire to have a library presence on social media platforms such as, Facebook, MySpace, and Instant Messaging among others, established that many of the students (70%) use social software programmes but were uninterested on the use of these programmes for library questions or research (Epperson and Leffler, 2009).

Another study conducted in 2014 in several health institutions reinforced the study by the OCLC (2007) and Epperson and Leffler (2009), when it established that majority of the respondents who were students did not have any interest in interacting or friending the library on Facebook and Twitter (Wu et al., 2014). Recently, Jones and Harvey (2019) in a survey of educational institutions to investigate the usefulness of social media as a marketing tool for libraries reported on the difficult in having students to either engage with or follow the library on social media and comment on or share a library post. This, according to the authors has resulted in the lack of user engagement of the library's social media platforms.

Relatively, in a survey of students' use of social media in academic libraries, Brookbank (2015) attests that even though library patrons were aware of and used a variety of social media platforms for communication among their peers since the introduction of the technology, they generally lacked the interest in using social media for library services communication. However, given that the results from Brookbank's (2015) study show a general

hesitation to use social media for academic purposes, about half of the students reported the use of social media for academic activities to some extent. For instance, on the question about the type of content students and faculty were interested in, respondents noted research techniques, library logistics and campus-wide information and events. This could mean that the students desire to use social media for academic purposes is gradually increasing, offering a constant and extended library presence. In the same way, a survey of 164 library users on the use of social media for delivering services ranked social media next to last right above email. The study cautioned, however, that the finding could have been influenced by the selection of respondents who constituted only students who physically visited the library (Booker and Bandyopadhyay, 2013).

On the contrary, Connell (2009) from a survey of 366 fresher-men from the Valparaiso University reported the opposite. While 63 (17.2%) of the respondents were inclined to the idea and indicated their willingness to proactively accept a friendship request from the library if they were aware about the library's account, more than half of the respondents 211 (57.7%) were also indifferent when they indicated that although they would not be proactive, they would accept the library's friend request. Only 92 out of the 366 of the respondents indicated they would not friend the library even if they were invited. When asked their thoughts on the library sending announcements and communication to them through Facebook or MySpace, findings from responses showed that although 12% of the students responded more negatively to the approach 43% answered they would be more receptive to information received using Facebook. The authors observed, however, that when it comes to the use of social media for library outreach, a one-size-fits-all is usually not achievable, and as such, libraries should consider social media platforms they deem relevant for promoting the services of the library.

Likewise, to investigate the use of social media technologies to find out students' preferences on the technology, the library must use for a variety of services. Cassidy et al. (2014) reported that 71% of students were interested in the provision of library services using Facebook. Findings from the survey disclosed an increase in the use and the desire for basic library services to be made available on varied social media platforms. Just as Connell (2009) and Cassidy et al. (2014) reported, another survey of 104 undergraduate students from Florida University examined the perceived importance of different library social media postings to library patrons, and informed that students considered postings relating to operations, updates, study support, and events via social media platforms (Stvilia and Gibradze, 2017).

**Table 1.** Respondents' experience in using social media as a personal tool.

Social media experience	Cross-tabulation of responses			
	Library staff, N = 94		Library patrons, N = 323	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Less than 1 year	2	2.1	25	7.7
2–5 years	34	36.2	297	91.9
6–10 years	32	34	–	–
10 years+	25	26.6	–	–
I do not use social media	1	1.1	1	0.3

Source: Field data.

## Research method

Adopting the survey method, a sampling frame of 489 participants drawn from a total population of 30,116 was used for the study. The study population comprised 110 library staff and 30,006 library patrons from four universities in Ghana. These include one public university, two technical universities, and one private university category. Due to the size of the population of the library staff category (110), the census approach is applied to achieve a desirable level of precision and closer representation of the population category. Library staff included professionals and paraprofessional library staff whose core duties were directly related to library services provision and library social media activities. These comprised staff of reference services units, circulation services units, E-resources service units, the head of library ICT, and the university librarian. Selection of the library staff involved in the library social media activities was for the reason that they were in the right position to provide the information needed to answer the study questions. The library ICT staff were purposively selected because of their involvement in issues relating to the management of ICT in the academic libraries. Heads of the libraries were also purposively selected for their responsibility in the governance and overall management of the library.

For the library patrons (30,006), the Krejcie and Morgan's published table for determining sample sizes of a given population was applied to select the sample size of 379 (see Appendix 3). Library patrons consisted of third- and fourth-year students, who were selected based on the assumption that they had spent more than a year in the universities and would be more familiar with social media tools used by their university libraries. A quantitative data-collection method was adopted.

Two sets of questionnaires were designed and used for the study, one each for the for library staff (see Appendix 1) and students (see Appendix 2). The former required respondents to choose answers from a provided list of alternative answers, while the latter made way for answers

that did not fall into the provided choices (see Appendix 2). Overall, 489 copies of structured questionnaires were administered to participants, using the convenience sampling technique. Both questionnaires contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Questionnaires were administered and returned to the researchers within a period of 9 weeks. As an incentive to participate and to increase the response rate, participants were given pens, and or note pads and airtime credits. Prior to the data collection process, a pretest was conducted using a total of 30 questionnaires to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Respondents were assured of anonymity of their participation and were not forced to partake in the study. Data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23. Findings from the study have been presented with simple frequency count, percentage distribution, and statistical mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), standard deviation.

## Findings

The findings are presented according to the ROs. Even though the responses from library staff and library patrons on a particular study objective have been presented separately, where statements used to measure respondent's responses are the same for both library staff and library patrons, the responses obtained from both categories have presented together using cross-tabulations. Of the 489 questionnaires distributed, 417 were complete and usable for data analysis, giving a response rate of 85%. Out of the 417 usable questionnaires, 323 (77%) were from library patrons and 94 (23%) were from the library staff.

### *The study participants*

To better appreciate the level of awareness and experience in the use of social media tools, all the respondents were requested to indicate how long they had used social media for personal purposes. The responses from respondents surveyed as presented in Table 1 suggest that majority of both the library staff and library patrons have used social media as a personal tool for at least 2 years, indicating an appreciable level of awareness of such platforms.

### *Presence of academic libraries on social media, and patrons' awareness of such presence*

To determine the libraries' presence on social media, and patrons' level of awareness of such presence, if any, both library staff and library patrons were asked to identify platforms adopted and used by their libraries. A summary of the responses from both library staff and library patrons have being presented using a cross-tabulation as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Responses on academic libraries presence on social media.

Social media platforms	Cross-tabulation of responses			
	Library staff, N = 94		Library patrons, N = 323	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Facebook	77	81.9	173	56.6
Flickr	20	21.3	5	1.5
YouTube	43	45.7	51	15.8
Instant message	3	3.2	57	17.6
Podcast	1	1.1	–	–
Blogs	10	10.6	23	7.1
Bookmark	33	35.1	45	13.9
LinkedIn	65	69.1	12	3.7
Snap Chat	1	1.1	5	1.5
RSS	8	8.5	8	2.5
Twitter	61	64.9	59	18.3
Wikis	30	31.9	23	7.1
Pinterest	5	5.3	4	1.2
I do not know	-	-	131	40.6

Source: Field data.

For the library staff, more than half presented Facebook (81.9%), LinkedIn (69.1), and Twitter (64.9%) as the top three social media platforms the academic libraries had presence on. These were followed by YouTube (45.7%), Bookmark (35.1%), and wikis (31.9%). A total of 43.6% ( $n = 94$ ) of the library staff also indicated that their university libraries were present on Flickr, Blogs, RSS and Pinterest. Podcast and Snap Chat were selected by only 1 (1.1%) each of the library staff.

Regarding the library patrons, 53.6% indicated that their university libraries were present on Facebook, while 18.3% also indicated twitter. These were followed by instant messaging (17.6%), YouTube (15.8%) and Bookmark (13.9%). Other platforms the university libraries were present on as submitted by the patrons were Blogs, wikis, LinkedIn, RSS, Snap Chat and Pinterest. However, 40.6% of the patrons declared their unawareness of their university libraries presence on any social media platform.

### *Patrons interest in the use of social media to contact and interact with the libraries*

To ascertain library patrons' level of interest in the use of social media for the provision of library services as well as to contact the library, library staff were invited to indicate the type of information provided on such platforms, while library patrons were requested to indicate what kind of information they were interested in seeing on their university libraries social media platform(s).

**Table 3.** Library staff responses on information content provided on the academic library social media platforms.

Information content	N = 94	
	Freq	%
Library logistics	69	73.4
Research techniques and tips	41	43.6
How to use library resources/services	57	60.6
Library collections /resources information	54	57.4
Non-academic reading (e.g., business news)	32	34
Campus wide information	37	39.4
Library news	49	52.1
Library services updates	24	25.5

Source: Field data.

Beginning with the findings from library staff, as presented in Table 3, more than half indicated the provision of content such as 'Library logistics' as information provided on the academic libraries social media platforms adopted. This was followed by library staff who also indicated the provision of content such as 'how to use library resources and services', and 'library collections and resources', 'research techniques and tips', 'campus wide information', 'non-academic reading' and library services updates as content provided on the academic libraries' social media platforms.

For the responses from the library patrons, a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 = very uninterested, 2 = neither interested nor uninterested 3 = somewhat uninterested, 4 = somewhat interested, and 5 = very interested were used to measure their levels of interest in the content provided by the libraries on social media. As shown in the results presented in Table 4, the mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of responses from the library patrons was between 2.49 and 3.96 an indication that the library patrons were generally somewhat uninterested, and or somewhat interested in information provided by their university libraries on adopted social media platforms. For instance, majority of the library patrons cited 'research techniques and tips' as information content they were most interested in. This was followed by those who were 'very interested' in the provision of information on 'how to use library resources and services'. 'Library collections and resources', 'library logistics', 'library services update', 'library news', 'campus wide information services', 'non-academic reading' and community news.

### *Patrons likeness to follow academic libraries on social media*

Questions relative to this objective were in two folds and were only posed to library patrons, since it was expected that they would be in a better position to provide the required answers. Question asked were to predominantly

**Table 4.** Library patrons level of interest in information content provided on the libraries social media.

Information content	N = 323	
	$\bar{x}$	SD
Library logistics	3.74	0.87
Research techniques and tips	3.79	0.91
How to use library resources and services	3.96	0.78
Library collections and resources	3.81	0.86
Non-academic reading	2.48	1.06
Campus wide information and events	2.94	1.10
Library news	2.76	1.62
Library services updates	3.62	0.96
Community news	2.49	1.76

$\bar{x}$ : mean; SD: standard deviation.  
Source: Field Data.

**Table 5.** Patrons likeliness to follow the academic libraries on social media.

Likeness levels	N = 323	
	Freq	%
Extremely likely	310	96
Somewhat likely	8	2.5
Neither likely/unlikely	2	0.6
Somewhat unlikely	1	0.3
Extremely unlikely	1	0.3

Source: Field data.

find out social media platforms most preferred for accessing and contacting the university libraries. As such, the first part, requested library patrons to indicate how likely they were to follow their university libraries on social media, while the second section required responses on which social media platform(s) they were likely to do so, using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 = extremely unlikely, 2 = somewhat likely, 3 = neither likely nor unlikely, 4 = somewhat likely and to 5 = extremely likely.

First, the responses on how likely library patrons were to follow their university libraries on social media as presented in Table 5 were primarily positive, with a high mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of 4.89 (SD = 0.01). As reflected in the frequencies, 310 (96%) of the library patrons indicated they would be extremely likely to follow the libraries on social media, although a few totally 4 (1.2%), indicated they would be 'neither likely nor unlikely', 'somewhat unlikely' and 'extremely unlikely' to follow the academic libraries on such platforms.

Further, as demonstrated in Table 6, the follow-up question on how likely library patrons were to follow their university libraries on specific social media platforms were

**Table 6.** Social media platforms patrons are likely to follow academic libraries on.

Social media platforms	Likeliness level: N = 323	
	$\bar{x}$	SD
Facebook	4.34	1.118
Flickr	3.52	1.188
YouTube	4.20	1.059
Instant message	4.53	0.146
Blogs	3.62	1.134
Bookmark	3.51	1.178
LinkedIn	3.46	1.176
SnapChat	3.49	1.224
RSS	3.47	1.141
Twitter	3.73	1.176
Wikis	3.49	1.212
Pinterest	3.51	1.186

SD: standard deviation.  
Source: Field data.

largely positive with mean values ranging from 3.47 to 4.53, suggestive that the library patrons are somewhat likely, and or extremely likely to follow their university libraries on varied social media platforms.

### *Patrons' engagement' in the decision to adopt and use social media in academic libraries*

This objective sort to find out the level at which the library patrons were involved in the decision to adopt and use varied social media platforms in the libraries. To respond to this objective, respondents were presented with statements relative to engaging patrons in the choice of academic libraries social media platforms, and user feedback on academic libraries social media platforms. Statement used to measure each concept were self-rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = moderately agree, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. For the descriptive analysis, the 'mean values' are used to determine respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with a particular statement on each concept. Thus, a score of '1' indicates that respondents 'strongly disagree' with a statement used to measure a particular concept, while a score of '5' demonstrates that respondents strongly agree with the statement.

*Engaging patrons in the choice of academic libraries social media platforms.* In finding out respondents' views on the involvement of patrons in the choice of social media platforms the academic libraries have adopted or intend to adopt and use, four statements each were presented to both the library staff and the library patrons (see Table 7).



**Table 7.** Responses on patrons' involvement in the choice of academic libraries social media tools.

Measurement/statements	Cross-tabulation of responses			
	Library staff, N = 94		Library patrons, N = 323	
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
The library focuses on the social media accounts that are relevant to their users	4.34	0.765	2.41	1.876
The library decides on which social media platform(s) to use, based on an understanding of the needs and preferences of their library users	3.25	1.357	2.14	1.717
The library tailors the appropriate information to target users through their preferred social media platforms	4.36	0.256	2.46	1.987
Library users have a say in the choice of social media adopted and used by the library	2.56	1.562	2.15	1.968

SD: standard deviation.

Valid N (listwise; 417; maximum; 5; minimum; 1).

**Table 8.** Responses on patrons' involvement in the choice of academic libraries social media tools.

Statements	Cross-tabulation of responses			
	Library staff, N = 94		Library patrons, N = 323	
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
The library provides every opportunity to its users to provide feedback, both positive and negative on its social media platforms	4.52	0.631	1.58	1.979
Library patrons are encouraged to make constructive comments on library services through adopted social platforms	4.29	0.712	1.39	1.697
The library makes efforts to reward users who make the most constructive comments on different social media platforms	4.25	0.791	1.21	1.984

SD: standard deviation.

Valid N (listwise; 417; maximum; 5; minimum; 1).

With regards to the responses from the library staff, presented in Table 7, most of them 'agreed', that the academic libraries focus on social media accounts relevant to its users ( $\bar{x} = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.765$ ), and 'tailor appropriate information to target users on their preferred social media platforms' ( $\bar{x} = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.256$ ). These were followed by library staff who 'moderately agreed' on the decision to direct social media towards user needs and preferences with a  $\bar{x}$  of 3.25, and a standard deviation of 1.357. The library staff however 'moderately disagreed' with the statement relating to the library patrons having an influence on social media platform adopted by the academic libraries' as shown in the mean values ( $\bar{x}$ ) of 2.56 and  $SD = 1.562$ .

On the contrary, the responses from the library patrons did not support the indications from library staff, since the library patrons' moderately disagreed with all the statements relative to that the academic libraries focusing on social media accounts relevant to its users ( $\bar{x} = 2.41$ ,  $SD = 1.876$ ), 'tailoring appropriate information to target users on their preferred social media platforms' ( $\bar{x} = 2.46$ ,

$SD = 1.987$ ), directing social media towards user needs and preferences ( $\bar{x} = 2.14$ ,  $SD = 1.717$ , and library patrons having an influence on social media platform adopted by the academic libraries' ( $\bar{x} = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 1.968$ ) as shown in Table 7.

*Encouraging user feedback on academic libraries social media platforms.* To ascertain the views of respondents on feedback from patrons on the use of the academic libraries' social media platforms, three statements relating to 'user feedback opportunities' 'encouraging use feedback' and 'rewarding users' were presented. Generally, the analysis of responses from library staff did not support that of the library patrons. While all statements used to measure 'user feedback' recorded mean values higher than '4', demonstrating a strong level of agreement with the items on the scale for the library staff, (see Table 8), the library patrons as shown in Table 8, 'strongly disagreed' and or 'moderately disagreed' with the assertions that, the libraries had made provisions for patrons to provide feedback, both positive and negative, encourage patrons to make

constructive comments on library services through adopted social platforms, and made efforts by the academic libraries to reward patrons who make the most constructive comments on social media platforms adopted.

## Discussion of findings

### *Presence of academic libraries on social media, and patrons' awareness of such presence*

Findings from this study show that academic libraries in Ghana had adopted a number of social media applications including Facebook, twitter, and instant messaging among others for the providing and accessing library services. The findings conform to the literature on academic libraries use of social media (e.g. AlAwadhi and Al-Daihani, 2019; Deodato, 2018; Okuonghae et al., 2018) which state that a number of academic libraries globally have adopted at least one social media tool such as Facebook, twitter, and instant messaging among others to keep patrons informed and updated on the library's daily information services and support. Furthermore, the study findings also presented Facebook as the most prevalent social media tool adopted and used by the academic libraries in Ghana. This was not surprising, given that, amid all the social media platforms, the literature reviewed, alludes to the fact that, Facebook is currently the largest social media platform targeted for the academic environment and appears to be the most preferred social media tool in academic libraries (Booker and Bandyopadhyay, 2013; Okuonghae et al., 2018). Okoroma (2018) explains that the use of Facebook for providing and accessing library services is more popular among academic libraries, because, apart from being librarian and user-friendly, even a basic Facebook page on the library's website acts as a portal for advertising the library opening hours, location and other information.

However, although, the findings indicate the use of some social media platforms by the libraries, patrons' level of awareness of these platforms adopted is still a greater challenge in academic libraries as 40.6% of the library patrons surveyed were not familiar with, and or had never used social media platforms for accessing and contacting their university libraries. This findings supports that of Howard et al. (2018) and Deodato (2018). Shafawi and Hassan (2018) claim that most academic libraries have presence on one or more social media platform(s) but do not appear to have much interest in finding out patrons' awareness and knowledge of the existence of such platforms. This, Adewoyin et al. (2017) urged, has contributed to lowering the extent of use of social media in academic libraries. Yet the

primary objective of investing in academic libraries is fundamentally to engage patrons with the library. It is therefore paramount for academic libraries in Ghana to access patrons' knowledge and level of awareness of the existence of social media tools adopted, since the presence of such tools without patrons awareness is worthless (Shafawi and Hassan, 2018).

### *Patrons interest in content provided on academic libraries social media platforms*

Findings from the study shows that content related to 'library logistics', 'research techniques and tips', 'how to use library resources/services', 'library collections and resources information', 'non-academic reading', 'campus wide information', 'library news' and 'library services updates' were provided on the social media platforms adopted by the academic libraries in Ghana and were of most interest to the library patrons. This finding partly agrees with Howard et al. (2018) when they accentuated that library patrons do seem receptive to primarily more in-depth library-related content ranging from library logistics to research techniques and database instruction on varied social media platforms.

### *Patrons likeness to follow academic libraries on social media*

Questions on how likely library patrons were to follow their university libraries on social media and on which social media platform they were likely to do so was added due to the knowledge that, it is one thing for library users to acknowledge the importance of the library's presence on social media, and quite another to 'like' or 'follow' the libraries on such platforms. Findings here are therefore useful for the academic libraries to determine which social media sites to use to get the maximum exposure to their patrons. Findings from the study indicates that 96.3% of the library patrons would follow their university libraries on varied social media platforms, such as Facebook, instant messaging, twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and bookmarks among others. The findings supports that of Howard et al. (2018) in their study of four of the nine campus libraries in Purdue University, also reported positive reactions from respondents towards following the libraries on social media, with 57% of respondents who were mainly students, admitting they were either extremely likely or somewhat likely to follow the library. It is interesting to note however, that this finding confirms the earlier finding which indicates that the library patrons are actually not aware of their libraries presence on social media, as they were very interested in accessing the library services on social media platforms adopted by the libraries.

### *Engaging patrons in the academic libraries choice of social media platforms*

Findings showed that both the library staff and library patrons were content and supported the need for the involvement of patrons in the academic libraries social media selection decisions. Academic libraries in Ghana must hence dialog with its users to ascertain their social media preferences and decide on which platforms to use based on an understanding of their users, to avoid the possibilities of channelling efforts in a wrong direction. As set forth in the literature reviewed, social media services are functions performed through the collective support of all stakeholders. Successful social media programmes require stakeholder involvement in determining which tools to use, which ones to discard or maintain and how to assess outreach effectiveness. The principle of meeting patrons where they are is no doubt an important one to the academic library. However, the provision of library services using new innovations such as social media should be based on the needs and desires of its primary patrons which in the case of academic libraries are teaching staff and students. With the limited time and resources to devote to activities like social media promotion, the likely interest and engagement level of the intended audience is critical. It is therefore important for an academic library to find out whether its patrons use a social media platform prior to a decision to adopt or not adopt it. Consequently, the assessment of patrons' awareness, ownership, and interest of, in using social media to interact with the library, is very essential.

On the contrary, literature of academic libraries use of social media, seem to indicate that most academic libraries do not appear to be driven by the vision that is integrated into that of its user community (Deodato, 2018; Howard et al., 2018; Jones and Harvey, 2019; Kircaburun et al., 2020). Kircaburun et al. (2020) explicated, that, as most library patrons have generally fit into the social media age and are familiar and comfortable with the use of varied social media platforms, libraries often tend to make social media assumptions about their users, often without consulting them. The users' preferences of social media use however differ according to their individual differences and use motives (Kircaburun et al., 2020). Hence, the assumption that the use of social media for social purposes will generate into the use of such platforms for accessing library services is a tall tale (Jones and Harvey, 2019) and result in academic libraries inability to effectively reach its patrons where they are with the numerous social media tools adopted.

### *Encouraging feedback from patrons*

Findings from this study show that nearly all the library staff and library patrons believed that for academic

libraries to successfully and effectively make use of social media in providing and accessing library and information resources and services encouraging feedback from library patrons on the use of the libraries social media platforms is very important. More than just a marketing platform, social media permits a feedback function as a channel through which users can voice complaints, compliments, inquiries, and suggestions (Enis, 2017). The assessments of the library staff alone may not fully explain the factors that contribute to the acceptance and use of social media platforms in academic libraries because the user (patrons) constitutes the focal point and reason for which these services delivery tools are deployed, and as such their level of acceptance and use of such platforms to access library resources and services is very critical. It is therefore not enough for libraries to simply talk on social media; they must also listen.

### **Recommendations/practical implications**

A key measure of social media success is the engagement of users. To give valuable benefits to patrons and the academic libraries, engaging library patrons' right from the initial stages on the decision to adopt and use social media is critical. The involvement of patrons in the academic libraries social media activities could be beneficial in terms of coming up with content for the library's social media accounts and to help ensure posts are tailored to patrons needs and interests, especially when patrons expressed a greater willingness and interest to interact and follow the libraries on adopted social media platforms.

However, in view of the lack of awareness on the presence of social media in the academic libraries as found in this study, what the academic libraries need to do is to create awareness among their patrons about the existence and use of such platforms. It is recommended that each of the academic libraries in creating well-informed decisions through awareness programmes may offer social media literacy programmes, keeping in view the patrons information needs. This can be offered as part of the library orientation programme in the first semester of each academic programme, by having regular literacy classes, to inform patrons of the library's presence on social media and what they offer using these media. Besides, the academic libraries may embark on promotional campaigns of social media services and capitalise on the existence and positive benefits associated with the use of such platforms for the provision and access to library resources and services as well as for contacting the libraries. Again, to clearly understand what patrons want from the library's presence of social media, a user-needs survey should be an important part of the academic libraries' awareness creation strategy towards the use of social media. More also, the academic libraries can make use of their

official library home pages, or websites to relay and boost the attention of patrons on current information pertaining to social media and its application for library services. This can be done by producing and displaying the list of social media adopted, the services offered on each, and what patrons can do with these platforms.

Moreover, the success of social media use is dependent on the users' acceptance of it, especially for academic libraries. Indeed, the popularity of social media applications in academic libraries is mainly because of patrons' interest in the use of such platforms. Based on the study findings, the interest of library patrons in information content provided, and the type of platform adopted and used should be central to the academic libraries' social media strategy. This can be achieved through the establishment of feedback systems. To help build relationships and secure patrons' interest, the academic libraries should plan posts which ask questions of their patrons to encourage engagement and show that the libraries are willing to listen to them. The libraries must strive to have a good rapport with patrons to have favourable opinions which may further help in spreading positive word-of-mouth, subsequently resulting in the increased awareness of such platforms among its users. Another tactic of increasing user engagement can be for the academic libraries to offer some benefits or rewards to patrons who make constructive comments, as well as to those who invite their colleagues who have never used the library social media. The libraries could implement a reward system by entering all patrons who follow them during a particular period into a draw to win a prize.

## Conclusion

From this study's findings, social media tools adopted by the libraries were not prevalent among the library patrons although they were not novice in the use of such platforms as these tools are very popular among them. More than 50% of the library patrons to whom these platforms were adopted to serve were not previewed to the existence and use of such tools by their university libraries. The limited use of the library social media by the patrons for accessing library services and resources as well as for contacting the library, the study noticed was because of the level of unawareness and ignorance of the use of such platforms by their respective university libraries. Information content provided on the academic libraries social media platforms and which were of interest to the library patrons included content relating to library logistics, research techniques and tips, how to use library resources and services, library collections and resources information, non-academic reading, campus wide information, 'library news, amd and library services updates. Almost all the library patrons were interested and willing to use social media for accessing

library services and recourses, and for contacting their university libraries, a confirmation of the library patrons' desire, yet ignorant of the existence of such platforms in their university libraries for such purposes.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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## Appendix I

Questionnaire for library patrons

### Dear Respondent,

You are kindly being invited to participate in this study by answering the following questionnaire. Please answer questions by ticking (✓) next to your preferred

answer and explain where necessary. Where the writing space is not enough, please use a separate page and indicate the question number next to the answer. The questionnaire contains five sections with seven questions, which will take about 5–10 minutes to complete. Once again, we assure you of the anonymity and confidentiality of all your responses. Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire.

## Section A: Background information

### 1. How many years have you used social media for personal purposes?

- Less than 1 year
- 1–2 years
- 3–4 years
- 5–10 years
- 10 years+
- I do not use social media

## Section B: Library social media presence

### 2. On which of the following social media platforms does your university librarian have presence on?

Social media platforms	Select all that apply
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flickr	<input type="checkbox"/>
YouTube	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instant message (e.g. WhatsApp, Chat with the Librarian etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Podcast	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blogs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bookmark	<input type="checkbox"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="checkbox"/>
SnapChat	<input type="checkbox"/>
RSS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wikis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pinterest	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not know	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Section C: Library content on social media

### 3. How interested are you in seeing the following types of content on your university library social media platform(s)?

Library content	Very interested, 5	Somewhat interested, 4	Somewhat uninterested, 3	Neither interested nor uninterested 2	Very uninterested, 1
Library logistics (e.g. library hours and events, tutoring hours, library instruction information, library policies)					
Research techniques and tips					
How to use library resources and services (e.g. find books, renew, checked-out items)					
Library collections and resources information (e.g. info about books, digital collections, journal availability)					
Non-academic reading (e.g. business news)					
Campus wide information and events					
Library news (e.g. if the library wins an award)					
Library services updates					
Community news					
Any other, please specify					

## Section D: Following the library on social media

### 4. How likely are you to follow/like your university library on social media platforms?

Extremely likely = 5    Somewhat likely= 4    Neither likely nor unlikely = 3    Somewhat unlikely = 2    Extremely unlikely = 1

### 5. On which of the following social media platforms are you likely to follow your university library?

Social media tools	Extremely likely = 5	Somewhat likely = 4	Neither likely nor unlikely = 3	Somewhat unlikely = 2	Extremely unlikely = 1
Facebook	=	=	=	=	=
Flickr	=	=	=	=	=
YouTube	=	=	=	=	=
Instant Message (e.g. WhatsApp, Chat with the Librarian, etc.)	=	=	=	=	=
Podcast	=	=	=	=	=
Blogs	=	=	=	=	=
Bookmark	=	=	=	=	=
LinkedIn	=	=	=	=	=
Snap Chat	=	=	=	=	=
RSS	=	=	=	=	=
Twitter	=	=	=	=	=
Wikis	=	=	=	=	=
Pinterest	=	=	=	=	=
Any other, please specify					

## Section E: Patron's engagement

On a scale of 1–5 where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Moderately Disagree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, please answer questions 6–7 by indicating the appropriate response that reflects your level of agreement with the statements provided in relation to your opinion on your library's level of engagement with its users on the types of social media to adopt and use for accessing and providing library services.





## Section B: Library social media presence

### 2. On which of the following social media platforms does your university librarian have presence on?

Social media platforms	Select all that apply
Facebook	
Flickr	
YouTube	
Instant message (e.g. WhatsApp, Chat with the Librarian etc.)	
Podcast	
Blogs	
Bookmark	
LinkedIn	
SnapChat	
RSS	
Twitter	
Wikis	
Pinterest	
I do not know	
Any other, please specify	

## Section C: Library content on social media

### 3. What content does the library provide on social media?

Library content	Select all that apply
Library logistics (e.g. library hours and events, tutoring hours, library instruction information, library policies)	
Research techniques and tips	
How to use library resources and services (e.g. find books, renew, checked-out items)	
Library collections and resources information (e.g. info about books, digital collections, journal availability)	
Non-academic reading (e.g. business news)	
Campus wide information and events	
Library news (e.g. if the library wins an award)	
Library services updates	
Community news	
Any other, please specify	

## Section D: Patron's engagement

On a scale of 1–5 where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Moderately Disagree, 3 = Moderately Agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, please answer questions 6–7 by indicating the appropriate response that reflects your level of agreement with the statements provided in relation to your opinion on your library's level of engagement with its users on the types of social media to adopt and use for accessing and providing library services.

6. Library users engagement in the choice of library social media platforms	1	2	3	4	5
The library focus on the social media accounts that are relevant to their users					
The libraries decides which social media platform(s) to use based on an understanding of the needs and preferences of their library users					
The library tailor the appropriate information to target users through their preferred social media platforms					
Library users have a say in the choice of social media adopted and used by the library					

(Continued)

