Social Media in Academic Research and Development

[1]Dr. V. Rama Devi, [2] Mylabattula. Sundhi, [3] Sodadasi. Vineela Evan,
[1] Professor of English, Vishnu Institute of Technology, Bhimavaram, A.P, India
[2]Asst. Professor of English, Vishnu Institute of Technology, Bhimavaram, A.P, India
[3] Asst. Professor of English, Vishnu Institute of Technology, Bhimavaram, A.P, India

Abstract:
Social media are ubiquitous in today's technological world making their foray into the personal and professional lives of the people. While most of the time social media are being used for social interaction, they also play a vital role in research and academic development. Since social media provide a platform for sharing of information, they could be used effectively in research. There are several social media services being offered to research scholars. This paper studies the support social media give to research scholars and the different options available to them. It also traces the concerns of the users and attempts to look at areas which could make academic research through social networking services effective.

Keywords: Social media, networking, academic research and development, information, options, concerns

"Distracted from distraction by distraction" quipped T.S. Eliot once. This is precisely the belief and experience of most of the people. Social media sites have emerged as a powerful tool to connect people very easily and this has brought about tumultuous changes in the life style of the people. It has sparked a revelation that it is entirely democratic and as Brian Solis so aptly remarked "...we, the people, have a voice, and through the democratization of content and ideas we can once again unite around common passions, inspire movements, and ignite change." Social media, hence, has emerged as a powerful platform for communication ranging from the most informal chatting to social interaction.

But now the question arises - Could we use this very powerful tool for academic research and development. Once we perceive this idea, questions galore. Do social media and academic research fit with each other? If so, what advantages would accrue to the researchers and academicians? What are the further opportunities that social media would provide these people in quest of knowledge? And what may be the risks?

A survey around shows that the process has already begun. The ball has started rolling. There are a number of social networking services that are of use to the researchers and scientific community. Calls are being given to academicians to use these social media tools and platforms. Prior to social media, blogging started where people shared their ideas and findings. Initially it was looked at suspiciously, but later bloggers using their writing to test and fine tune their ideas before presenting it formally. This is now being accepted. This academic blogging assumes the form of 'conversational scholarship'. (Gregg 2006).

Several social media tools and services have emerged to support the academic fraternity. This paper aims at studying how these services cater to the needs of the academicians. The social media can be classified as non scholarly and scholarly. While Twitter, Face book and Google plus are a few websites that people use for academic purposes in addition to personal aspects, there are some exclusive scholarly services like Research Gate, Academic Research R&D that add significantly to a researcher's armoury.

Face book and Twitter offer a platform to share resources and information and also to discuss their experiences in the academic arena. They can also offer and receive advice. In this process scholars also cite articles during their conversation online. Once an article is cited online there are bound to be views of that article and comments on it are posted. This would form a very valuable feedback to the scholar. A scholar would know how many views his or her article would get. But the other side of the coin is that when, for example, researches and academicians use Face book both for personal and professional purposes the boundaries between their personal and professional identities are becoming blurred. Academicians might not be willing to be friends with their students. In this context personal disclosures may also be a very sensitive issue.

Resolving this problem the scholarly social media sites focus exclusively on research. They cater to the various needs of the researcher. During research which is a process of systematic acquisition of knowledge, a person has to identify a potential area, explore the ideas and work done in that area. Just as in the past, even now it is difficult to keep update with the tempestuous developments in science, technology and the society. It is precisely here that these social media services come into the picture. Now owing to the tremendous development of information technology, there are several databases which support researchers.

Academic Search R&D for instance, is a leading multidisciplinary database playing a crucial role in research and development. This database provides highly useful content straddling across various areas for research and development activities. It has a huge database of journals from the industry, in addition to magazines, reports and books. Users can access the vast information available in the form of books, articles or reports. It provides vital information on various subjects like engineering, biological and physical sciences, geology, IT pharmaceuticals and so on.

Content Includes ("as the website of Academic Search announces")

- More than 16 million records with subject headings from an extensive thesaurus

- Over 6,200 full-text journals, including more than 5,600 peer-reviewed journals

- Articles from more than 10,000 publications such as journals, monographs, reports and conference proceedings

- Searchable cited references for nearly 800 journals

- Daily updates

It allows the researchers to create searches, save them, set up alerts for new funding opportunities based on key

words and deadlines and add them to the calendar.

EBSCO Information Services is a pioneer in the service industry and 'delivers quality research content, powerful search technologies and intuitive delivery platforms'. This rich technology along with partnership with several libraries has made this service available to researchers at all levels. In addition to the books, journals, magazines, it also helps in the management of work. It supports the researchers in content mapping and workflow integration. It helps in Skill development of the researches like soft skills, presentation skills, project planning and competitive drive and so on. Such databases also have competency centres which focus on organizational competencies of employees. They provide training in the competences required by the employee.

Work shared is work done well. It has been observed that collaborative research work yields fruitful results. Research Gate (www. researchgate.com) is a social networking service that offers such an opportunity. It is a platform for the scientists and researchers to collaborate with one another to share their findings, discuss, ask and give information, it would also prevent research redundancy. Quite often researchers and scientists are unaware of the kind of research going on and there is scope for redundancy of research. Otherwise work done toiling for hours goes waste if it is mere repetition.

The website provides the scientists and researchers with public resources which enable them to compare their work with others. This not only prevents redundancy of work but also facilitates discussions which provide the much needed criticism which differentiate science from superstition. It would also enable a scientist to collaborate with people with similar interests and required specific skill sets.

Like LinkedIn, Research Gate provides a network where scientists can upload their profiles, professional details, research work, areas of interests, publications and so on. It facilitates effective connecting with co-authors, discovering new publications that could suit their research and viewing all the citations of their work within their individual networks. This website provides opportunities to upload, share and store the data. It also examines the data and based on the content suggests connections with other members. Further, the researchers can create discussion groups which could be public or private and share their materials with them. Viewers can comment on the shared information. Just like Face book" like" and "follow" options are provided.

In a way all the work of a scientist, the entire raw data would be available for future reference. Earlier unwanted data was discarded. But storing it online makes it available. Such websites would enable the researches to do post publishing peer review as well.

The Mission statement of Research Gate summarizes all that is being done through this service. It helps scholars share their publications, access millions of publications and also publish their data. A scholar can also get the statistics of readership and citation of his work. The scholars can connect and collaborate with colleagues, peers, co-authors, and specialists in their respective fields. During the process of their work they can ask questions, get their doubts

clarified and find solutions to research problems. The plum on the cake is that Research Gate offers 'research focused job board' using which people can find the right job.

Information regarding funding agencies can be obtained a lot more easily than in the past. There are databases that provide information about funding. Research Professional, for example, is an online research funding and news service. It is a searchable database providing information regarding funding opportunities and is extended across several disciplines. It informs us about the type of funding available internationally. It offers a searchable database of national and international opportunities. It is a source of information about the research world and provides access to discussion forums.

In today's world as the funding landscape grows bigger, it is important to know the process of funding, how it percolates from the government or private funding agencies to the researcher. Databases like these will help the researcher to identify where there is a matching of interests between themselves and the funding agencies. Several international universities subscribe to this service.

While many people are very positive about using social media, several have voiced their concerns too. Scientists complain that these websites send automated friendship requests in their names and lure people to join the service. When it comes to profiles also it has been found that not all profiles are authentic. The social media websites are equipped with tools that gather data about people's affiliations, publications and so on from around the web and create profiles. This troubles researchers who

do not want to join the service. Some people are reluctant to use these media as there are issues of privacy. For some the there is fear of becoming a target of attack, or else plagiarism of ideas poses a big threat. Commercialization of content and copy right issues is the other problems involved.

In spite of these concerns social media continue to be used. They are making roadways into traditional research. Yet, when it comes to the overall picture, scholars continue to publish their articles through traditional journals. In this context two issues need to be addressed. Do social media make research better in terms of collaboration and publication? The next question is how many of the researchers actually use them? If there is good citation advantage for articles published through these media, then researchers would definitely subscribe to them in large numbers. This would transform the entire research scene.

References

Gregg, M. (2006) Feeling ordinary: blogging as conversational scholarship. Continuum, 20 (2), 147-160.

The Importance of Research: //www.ranzcr.edu.au/research/overview/the-importance-of-research

Lin, Thomas (16 January 2012). "Cracking open the scientific process". The New York Times. Retrieved 26 June 2014

http://unity.ac/

https://www.ebsco.com/

http://techcrunch.com/2013/06/04/bill-gates-benchmark-and-more-pour-35m-into-researchgate-the-professional-network-for-scientist