

Implication Of Information Policy for Open Access And Use Of Social Media Among Librarians

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Abstract

Information creators are creating a piece of valuable property. Sometimes it may be so valuable to the creators and processors that it cannot be made generally available to all. Hence, the relationship between information and the society requires social attractions that would allow access to and use of information by the general public on social media through open access opportunities even in the remotest areas of the world. This actually leads to the formulation of information policies that ought to regulate, protect, and guide the general public the right to have access to information. Therefore, this paper intends to examine how information policies affects Open Access (OA) and Social Media Usage by the information managers, especially the Librarians in their working environments.

Keywords: *Information policy, open access, social media, librarians, government*

Introduction

The implication of information policy varies from country to country. What is important about policy formulation is that policies must be made to cater for everybody in the society in terms of its interpretation, clarity, and understanding and must be universally accessed. Before dredging into information policy, it is necessary to understand what information is all about?

According to Islam & (Mezbah-ul-Islam (2010) defined information as a message communicated by a communicator to a receiver. While information policy is the set of all public laws, regulations and policies that encourage, discourage or regulate, create, use, storage and access to communication and dissemination of information (Wikipedia). In a broad sense McClure & Jaeger (2008) gave definition of information policy as a directives that intended to shape decisions and actions of the role of information in a society of an individuals, organizations, and government agencies. Others sees information policy as a guideline to regulate participation.

Open Access is of course, an online research output that is free of all restrictions on the right to have free use of information on intellectual work without any restrictions whatsoever. Open Access is free of any information policy including copy-right and other restriction license of usage. Open Access allows researchers to have free accessibility to research and disseminate quick and widely research processes for efficiency and effectively service delivery. It is a good source of research findings in an online-publications. Open Access (OA) increase the uses of social media such as Google, Yahoo, E-mail, Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and other search engines. Open Access also increases Information Access and Technology Innovation in terms of new methods of approach in usage.

Social media on the other hand, encompasses all online platforms that enabling communication and interaction between people who share common interest or real-life connections among themselves. Social media is more than the mere well-known networks platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp etc. Social Media include forums, group discussion, comment sections on mainstream media sites, where people creates, shares, interacts and exchange information and ideas in virtual communication in an online network services. It is obvious that social media has contributed immensely in the area of information and communication technologies development of the society in this era of information age.

Concepts of Information Policy

Carlson (1985) defines policy as a standing guide for making administration decisions on a given subject, an organization point of view, an established way of doing business and directing actions on specified areas of management, an internal administrative law governing executive actions within an organizations, a statement indicating the general pattern of actions to be followed to secure the implementation and achievement of organizational goals. Policy is not an order or a command. It is a normative guide for management thinking and action taking on decision-making. Information Policy determines the kind of information collected, created, organized, stored, accessed, disseminated and retained. Who can use the information, whether there will be charges for access, and the amount charged, is also covered. Usually associated with government information, information policy also establishes the rules within which private information providers and the media operators.

The rationale behind information policy comprises literacy or education, privatization and distribution of government establishments, Information, Freedom of Information accessibility, Protection of personal privacy, Intellectual property rights, Retention of archival resource materials for prosperity and National heritage. Information policies in an organizations are made to guide and prevent misconduct of people towards misuse of information accessibility. It is majorly used to avoid conflict and diverse crisis that can cause ethnic wars and so on. Policies are not laws but it regulates and provides protection of the citizen rights on different needs of activities. Importance of policy in any given society cannot be over emphasized. Hence, it is important to use policy to enforce and further enlighten citizens within the society of awareness and educate them on their rightful obligations on certain social activities and engagements.

Reasons for information policy may include equal rights to have access to information, danger and damage prevention caused by information, privacy and security of information, protection of Intellectual property, quantity and quality of information in Governance, cultural identity preservation, overcoming the digital divide, processing information (creation, update, deletion), responsibility for information ownership and use, requirements and standards of work with information. However, the need for information policies are associated with the following activities - political parties, business communities and unions, Regional and local governments, education, professional, experts, researches and scientists, citizens (The public society), legislative authorities and so on. It is also very important to mention the importance of information policy to any organisation as well as to the society. These include (i) It provide for basic maintenance of consistency of action. (ii) It ensure fairness, justice, and predictable pattern of behavior among organization members. (iii) It helps to simplify the process of decision making by guiding the thoughts and actions of stakeholders. (iv) It allays fair of oppression, intimidation of the people in the society. (v) It also minimizing the dilemmas by clarifies view points of actions and operations. (vi) Policies ensure quicker decision by standardization and (vii) It also ensure the strategic position of implementation of decision takings by the stakeholders.

Implication of Information Policy for Open Access, Social Media and Library Usage

Open Access to information started long ago with the third law of the library propounded by R.S. Ranganathan. Open Access is now a powerful means of communicating by informing users of what is the most current information available in the library. Users can access libraries from their own environments and even contribute to the library selection of resources. Gone are the days when a user will pass a comment with an exclaiming surprise (!) That “I didn’t know that your library had the book”!!! Another important of open access for librarians on the use of social media is the broken down the barriers of the traditional ways of researching by the researchers in libraries which is usually being assisted by the librarians are all over. Considering the time tag and policy and contrast with the potential value of a broad range of social indicators that are up-to-date or even real time information dissemination and service delivery to the people. The implication of Information policy for Open Access may be used in the direction of intervening to serials/scholarly communication crisis, which may be referred to as a system where information is locked or censored up for or un subscription to journals and data bases, whose demand on prices keep rising that Library and University budgets stagnate or decreases or Universities and Libraries are forced to pay for the creation of the research as well as to buy it back through subscription. Open Access is also about democratization, transparency and transformation of information and knowledge innovation driven- mechanism.

Social Media and Social Networking have been the most impressive aspects of the internet in the recent years. Its popularity is undeniable. Research has it that about Seventy-two percent of all time spent online is spent on social websites. Canty (2010) opines that library has engaged with the house-holds-brands that are familiars to all platforms of social media regardless of their location geographically. That there are no surprise in how the platforms are being used and what content that are made available by each library. What is important to Libraries and Librarians is how to make use of these platforms of information technologies outlets to the full advantages of information dissemination to satisfy library users.

Although, some libraries are fully engaged and embraced in all platforms of social media while some concentrates on fewer, but the most important thing is the overall impression of the high quality images of websites that are seems to succeed in engaging every library users.

Another implication of information policy for social media for libraries and the librarians may be the question ‘Why use social media in the Library’? Social Media can be powerful information dissemination tools. It offers a way for Libraries to promote their activities, resources and services by allowing a two ways dialogue with the library users or stakeholders. Canty (2010) stated that a survey was carried out in 2010 by some selected Chief Librarians in the UK, to find out the effective use of internet in libraries. It was found out that users trusted Library Staff more than most other providers of online information vendors or supporters. Public libraries were rated second only to Doctors in terms of trust placed in Librarians by seekers of information. The core values and works of Librarians are to sharing information, therefore, it can be suggested that Librarians are in a unique position to implements and exploits social media to their own advantage and their users as well.

Social Media in the Libraries can be used in varieties of communication methods in the following ways. I). Broadcast Messages. II). Response to Enquiries. III). Social Media can equally give a competitive edge in a time of major technological changes or hitches. IV). Librarians has to demonstrates the value of their proposition with information accessibility and availability in a wide range of sustainability. V). Social Media gives Librarians the opportunities to reach out to their users who may not have considered that the library serves as a source of information resources for their information needs and to those who are at the mercy of Library’s disadvantages of usage. Again, here are some of the few merits of the social media and open access usage in the libraries apart from those mentioned above. Open access is cost effective, easy to use at user’s convenient time, it is time saving, it is always available, less stress, it erases proximity and so on and so forth.

Information Policy and Librarian’s Roles

The issues that are mostly concerns the librarians on information policy would be the hope that a national policy would guide the development of both infrastructural facilities of information such as telecommunication networks, computers availabilities and establishing or building libraries and connect everything from copyright agreements to actual documents in term of usage and accessibilities. Just as (Case, 2010) reiterated that library and information policy could be defined on those laws, regulations and practices intended to facilitate the creation and dissemination of information through society, using computer network and libraries as the

channels examples of information policies. In the social realm or matrix libraries are connected and concerned with the promotion of human infrastructure and human development that improves the society as a whole. Therefore, libraries and librarians belong to social, education, culture, economic, political and provision of accessibility of all these categories of information and human infrastructure so that information policies made by policy makers should be structured to encompass all impact of librarianship in all ramifications.

Again, (Case, 2010) critically argued that policies must be developed to allow librarians and other information agencies foster literacy among the people in the society. The information policies must be made to cover the support of education, public libraries to teach and encourage reading, so that citizens could learn to use computers and understand what information they find on internet, or any other social media sources of information. Moreover, it is obviously suggested that national and institutional policies that governing internet services and also the exchange of electronic and physical materials for use in telecommunication technologies should equally be extended to the library and information resources under Freedom of Information Act. Librarians will also continue to face question of intellectual property, who create information and who has the right to access or distribute information. Copyright is a confusing aspect of information policy. Add to it the complexity of information created online in the form of blogs or other social media posts as the information professionals are left with lot of uncertainty.

Librarians and information scientists are imbued to serve people through the provision of access to quality information resources in either print or electronic formats through which people's standard of living are improved, dreams are actualized, education is sustained, sound decisions are made and executed, freedom of expression is enhanced and information resources are preserved for posterity. The proliferation of information in different formats and the attendant complexity in retrieval processes have promoted and sustained the need for society to share resources, work, ideas and information. This provides the rationale for library and information practice. The belief in the need for human beings to share information and idea implies the recognition of information rights as expressed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 19 which sets out the right to freedom of opinion, expression and access of information for all the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas in any media, regardless of frontiers (IFLA, 2011).

The Library as an institution exists for the benefit of a given constituency, whether it is the citizens of a community, members of an educational institution or some larger or more specialized group those whether the library profession assume an obligation to maintain ethical standards of behavior in relation to the governing authority under which they work, to society in general. IFLA (2011) posits that the core mission of library and information professionals is to facilitate access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy. Librarians do not encourage censorship, denial and restriction of information to anybody by any person or groups of persons and use the most efficient and effective methods and standards to serve their clientele. The IFLA governing body 2012, endorsed the following in relation to information policy on the influence of the roles of the libraries and librarians. These include:

i. **Open access and intellectual property**

Librarians and other information workers' interest is to provide the best possible access for library users to information and ideas in any media or format, whilst recognizing that they are partners of authors, publishers and other creators of copyright protected works. Librarians and other information workers seek to ensure that both user's rights and creator's rights are respected. They promote the principles of open access, open source, and open license. They seek appropriate and necessary limitations and exceptions for libraries and, in particular, seek to limit the expansion of copyright terms.

ii. **Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills**

Librarians and other information works are strictly committed to neutrality and an unbiased stance regarding collection, access and service. They seek to acquire balanced collections, apply fair service policies, avoid allowing personal convictions to hinder the carrying out of their professional duties, combat corruption and seek the highest standards of professional excellence.

iii. **Colleague and employer/employee relationship**

Librarians and other information workers treat each other with fairness and respect. To this end they oppose discrimination in any aspect of employment because of age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation. They support equal payment for equal work between men

and women, share their professional experience, and contribute towards the work of their professional association.

iv. **Access to information**

The core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy.

To this end, librarians and other information works reject censorship in all its forms, support provision of services free of cost to the user, promote collections and services to potential users, and seek the highest standards of accessibility to both physical and virtual services.

v. **Responsibilities towards individual and society**

To enhance access for all, librarians and other information workers support people in their information searching, assist them to develop their reading skills and information literacy, and encourage them in the ethical use of information (with particular attention to the welfare of young people).

In order to promote inclusion and eradicate discrimination, librarians and other information workers ensure that the right of accessing information is not denied and that equitable services are provided for everyone whatever their age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender identity, heritage, education, income, immigration and asylum-seeking status, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.

vi. **Privacy, secrecy and transparency**

Librarians and other information workers respect personal privacy, and the protection of personal data, necessarily shared between individuals and institutions. At the same time the support the fullest possible transparency for information relating to public bodies, private sector companies and all other institutions whose activities effect the lives of individuals and society as a whole.

Implication of Information Policy and Freedom of Information Act 2011 on Library and Information Services

All over the world, governments regulate various fields of human endeavor. Thus, banking, education, healthcare delivery, hotels, etc., are regulated, which means these industries were provided with basic structures for their operations. Aminu, et al (2011) stressed that the mass media industry was equally regulated. However, because of the peculiar nature of the mass media as vehicles for free expression, which is a fundamental human right, government was careful to regulate the media only to the extent consistent with the expectations of a democratic society. Thus, over-regulation of the media which stifle free expression brought about the underground press and even rebellion. Malemi (1999) identifies four formal regulatory mechanisms of the mass media to include; constitutional provisions, statutes, ethical guidelines and informal restraints. It was against this background that Nigeria decided to give the press and its citizens the freedom of information by promulgating the Act called Freedom of Information Act 2011.

The Act indicated that every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to have access to any records under the control of the government or public institution provided he apply for and has no specific interest to the information being applied for. However, one has to analyze the right of access to records as there is no way one apply for even information without having personal interest except if the candidate has been sent by his employer. Even such, the employer provided “he” is an employee of that organization in one way or the other has vested interest of his employer as the information applied for may be for the benefit of the employers. The implication of freedom of information Act on records and security management is that it gives the needed protection against public officers by stating that notwithstanding anything contained in the Criminal Code, Penal Code, the Official Secrets Act, or any other enactment, no civil or criminal proceedings shall be made against any government or public institution, and no proceedings should be made against the Federal Government, State or Local Government or any institution. Therefore for the disclosure in good faith of any record or any part of a recovered pursuant of this Act, for any consequences that flow from that disclosure, or the failure to give any notice required under this Act, if care is to give the required notice.

One area of worry in this Act, it did not specify who is eligible to get records from public institution or government. Does it mean, a man on the street can just apply for information from government or public institution and get it easily and free from interference. Otherwise, you cannot get information on the causes of the death of Abiola/Yar-Adua. There are certain official records that are difficult to get because official records are regulated such as secret file/confidential file, medical records, bank records, etc. The essential records of information/documents that every citizen has right to access in an organization include:

1. Orders made in the adjudication cases
2. Statements and interpretations of policy of an institution
3. Factual reports, inspection reports and studies prepared by the institution on their behalf.
4. Information related to receipt of expenditure or funds
5. Document confirming information on names, salaries, titles and dates of employment of all categories of employees and officers.
6. Documents containing the right of the state, the public and local governments
7. Files containing applications for any contract, permit, grants or agreements.
8. List of reports, document, studies or publication prepared by independent contractors for the institution.

The Act stated how to apply to have access to record which shall be made in writing by person who made the application as to whether or not access to the record or a part thereof will be given. A total of (fourteen) 14 working days is required to get the information from the date applied. The date fee is paid is exclusive. A seven day extension of time limit may be given according to the Act. Where access to information is refused by government or public institution, it is expected that the person seeking for the information need to be informed about the refusal and he has the right to be reviewed by a court. Any notification of denial or any information for records shall set forth the name of each person responsible for the denial for such application.

The Act in section 9 (i) gave the provision for the payment limited to reasonable standard charges for document search, duplication, review and transcription. Where records are applied for commercial use or not sought for commercial use. The fees schedule shall provide for the recovery of only the direct cost and no fee may be charged by any government or public institution. The freedom of information Act section 10 stated that it is a criminal offence for any

officer or the Head of any government or public institution to who willfully destroy, alter or doctor any records kept in his/her custody before they are release to any person or community applying for it. Access to record by applying institution or person shall be released to him in a standard form. Where the person apply for access to information in a particular form and access in that form is refused, but given in another form. In this situation, the person applying for access shall not be requested to apply a charge higher than what has been charged initially.

The Head of a government or public institution may refuse to disclose any record that is sought for provided such will be injurious to the conduct of international affairs or the defence of the Federal Public of Nigeria. However the court has the right to override the refusal. Some of the important records that Head of the government or any public institution may refuse disclosure according to Section 14 of the Act include information that will:

1. Interfere with law enforcement and investigation
2. Interfere with administrative proceedings of government or public institution
3. Preventing a person from fair trail
4. Disclosure of a confidential source.
5. Information that will facilitate the commission of an offence thus:

The Heads of a government or public institution may refuse to disclose any economic interest of the Federal Public of Nigeria. Section 15 of the Act clearly pointed out that such information not be discloses are -trade secret, financial, commercial or technical information that belongs to the government and has a substantial economic values or likely have value; Material/information that is prejudice to competitive position with government; Materials injurious to the financial interest of the Federal Public of Nigeria either Federal, state or local government. The Freedom of Information Act allows for the disclosure or personal information about patients, students, residents, other individuals receiving social, medical, educational, vocational, financial, supervisory or custodian care or services directly from Federal agencies or government or public institution. Also, the Head of government or public institution may refuse to disclose any record applied for that contains information pertaining to;

- Test questions, scoring keys and other examination data used to administer academic examination or determine the qualifications of an application for license or employment

- Architects and engineer's plans for building that may constitute security risk.
- Finally, the freedom of information Act spelled out any record in the custody of government or public institution is kept by that institution under security classifications or its classified document within the official secret Act does not preclude it from being disclosed pursuant to an application for disclosure thereof under the provisions of the Act but in every case the head of that government or public institution to which an application for such record is made shall decide whether such record is made shall decide whether such record is of a type referred to in section 14 to 21 of this freedom of information Act.

In pursuant of the understanding of the Freedom of Information Act 2011, Administrative manager are expected to be remained by what is classified document. With proper understanding of that, it will give Administrative managers the zeal to perform their administrative responsible with a good understanding of what constitutes classified documents.

Role of Government

Government has been identified as the role model and key players of freedom to have access to information by the Citizens of any given society. Government at all levels have been the instrumental and value-driven of information policy by regulating, moderating, collecting, producing, providing and mostly the information users.

The role of government in information policy is critically needed to be clearly understood. How government will intervene with respect to have access to information dissemination is an essential question to be asked. For an instance, some information may lack authenticity. Thus, its publication may cause further problems than better be left unpublished. Again, another question that needs to be checked by information policy makers is to ask who is responsible for keeping user's individual information privacy, is the government or the organization? The basic mechanisms of government in relation to its role on information policy include decision making, conflict resolution and information policy changes when dim - fit.

Conclusion

Information policy makers and Managers in some cases are not reputed to be highly principled and ethical in discharging their official assignments on record keeping and information security management. Administrative Managers deals with human and financial information that require

proper records in terms of security often referred to as classified documents. Information policy Administrative Managers especially the Government should be seen as catalyst for change if the Freedom of Information should be followed strictly according to the law. Every Citizen who wants to achieve success in his career must adhered strictly to information security in line with the Freedom of Information Act.

Open Access and Social Media and Libraries have considerably contributed immensely to information accessibilities and opportunities are bounds everywhere globally for Self-discovery. The Public should be re-orientated and take the advantages of information policy on Freedom of Information Act to actualize their fortunes for the development of the society, because, the Freedom of Information Act has made the records or information accessible in such a way that every person of the society has equal right to access information at will in accordance to the Freedom of Information Act 2011.

Recommendations

The following are recommended for information policy to be effective in an organization.

1. All elements of agreement between the levels of government including the purpose, roles and responsibilities, terms and conditions should be strictly adhered.
2. Dispute resolution processes and sometimes liability/responsibility clauses in various circumstances for failure to abide by terms and conditions or for negligence or privacy breach to be checked from time to time.
3. Information to be exchanged &/or integrated services to be provided, limitations on access, use and disclosure of information, confidentiality requirements, information protection and management, disposal of information, audit requirements must be adequately taking to consideration whenever and wherever it necessary.
4. Legislation authorizing the proposal and legislative/policy requirements must always be made readily accessible and available on demand all the time.

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