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Library 2.0: The effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool for libraries in educational institutions

Abstract

In an attempt to market their services and connect with potential users, and particularly young people, many libraries are opening accounts on social media platforms. Research suggests a contradiction between the advice relating to marketing and that regarding the use of social media in libraries, with the former emphasising the importance of the user at the centre of all considerations and the latter placing library staff as central to decisions. In this work we attempt to re-address this imbalance by surveying the current state of library activity on Twitter and, by means of questionnaires, investigate the experiences and motivations of librarians (n=58) in using social media and whether students (n=498) are willing to engage with the library in this manner and why. Our findings confirm that libraries in the sector are indeed struggling to foster interest in their social media activities and go some way to understanding why this is so, leading to a number of conclusions and recommendations for practitioners.

Keywords
Library 2.0, social media, marketing

Introduction

After only a decade in existence, social media (henceforth 'SM)' has become a significant presence in our lives, not just personally but also professionally (Brenner and Smith, 2012; Bradley, 2015). Millennials employ SM tools as their primary communicative channels (Read et al. 2012) and make little distinction between their online and offline social interactions (Brook 2012). As a direct result of this, in the library and information profession there has been increasing uptake of these tools with over 70% of libraries worldwide now using SM tools and 60% having had their accounts for 3 years or more and 30% of librarians posting daily (McCallum 2015). Research suggests that conversations about libraries and their resources take place on Twitter and Facebook, regardless of whether the library has a presence on them or not (Bradley 2015).

SM affords the library the opportunity to get out from behind the desk and go to where the conversations are, thus becoming part of this discourse (Bradley 2015). However, the ease of transition to using these new tools has led to overconfidence in what they can achieve. Studies indicate that, although the utilisation of such applications in libraries has been a fairly positive change (Anttiroiko and Savolainen 2011), this brings with it the need to develop new skills and competencies. This is something which many find intimidating and is not representative of the kinds of skills the majority of librarians already possess (Vanwynsberghe et al. 2015; Huvila et al. 2013). Even if libraries do begin to actively use such services and train their staff appropriately, it is not clear that users will necessarily respond with any real enthusiasm (Swanson 2012). It is not enough to understand *how* to use such tools; to use them effectively libraries need to examine and understand the behaviour, culture and etiquette of the user community (Luo et al. 2013).

Existing research is somewhat sparse and mostly contradictory, with that which pertains to marketing of libraries through SM stressing that users should be central to all considerations, while studies on the use of SM in libraries emphasise more the importance of staff in any decision making. In many studies staff are the only stakeholders consulted (e.g. Khan and Bhatti (2012); Chan (2012)) or in some cases libraries are recommended to follow practises of other similar institutions (Garoufallou et al. 2013). Although much library marketing literature mentions user needs, very few studies ever actually consult users and most fail to consider that the target audience may simply not be interested or would prefer not to interact with the library is this manner.

This research will attempt to determine whether this apparent apathy towards the library's presence on SM is replicated across the sixth form and FE library sector (hereafter "FE libraries"), which represents over 200 libraries. We first consider these libraries' presence on SM and ask librarians about their experiences in and motivations for using SM in their marketing activities. Key to the research, though, is the inclusion of those people at the other end of the SM conversation: the students whom librarians are seeking to reach and engage with via SM. We seek to uncover not only why they are reluctant to interact with the library in this manner, but also whether this was something the library should be doing at all. The results of this work therefore serve to expand our understanding of the aforementioned lack of success that libraries have had when using a medium which otherwise typically represents a highly fruitful marketing and communication strategy.

This aims of this research will be achieved by addressing the following objectives:

1. Investigate whether the problem of students lacking in, and failing to engage with, library Twitter feeds is replicated across the FE college sector.
2. Interrogate the experiences of librarians working in the sector regarding their use of SM.
3. In doing so establish their motivations for selecting and launching their SM presence.
4. Investigate whether students are, as assumed, using SM heavily in their social lives and why there is a reluctance to engage with the college library in this way.
5. Discover how students would prefer to engage with the library.

Related Work

In the information community there is an increasing consensus that it is no longer adequate for libraries to simply offer the services they themselves perceive to be the best for their users. With greater pressure on budgets, librarians are more accountable to ensure that their work and activities are effective and worthwhile and user satisfaction in now used to evaluate success (Biblarz et al. 2001, p2). A library needs to be driven by a vision that is integrated into that of the community that supports it, however, in order to achieve this it needs to understand how this community works and what it needs (Pantry and Griffiths 2009, p17). In FE this means understanding what students need and deciding what the library should offer to support their endeavours.

There must be, therefore, a dialogue with users to ascertain what their needs are, otherwise there is the possibility of channeling efforts in the wrong direction. Librarians tend to make assumptions about their users, often without asking them (Crump and L.S. 2012, p4). For example, by characterising all millennials as digital natives, assuming that because students have been born into the SM age that they are *au fait* with it.

Marketing

Marketing has long been integral to library practice, however there is currently a disconnection between what the library offers and their users' knowledge of this. It is no longer sufficient to simply be good at what you do, you must also be adept at communicating it (Dryden 2013, p1). Kaur (2009, p455) suggests that some of the current pressure for libraries to engage in marketing activities comes from underestimation of the impact of search engines. The failure of libraries to market themselves as a stronger alternative to these has led to a generation of users whose first thought when searching is Google, rather than the library and its resources.

Gupta and Jambhekar (2002, p25) discuss how the user should be central to the library's marketing philosophy and that who they are, what services they want and what benefits they seek should be key to any marketing strategy. Marketing strategies must contribute to developing a bond between the library and its customers by emphasising their values, their concerns and their needs (Kaur 2009, p455). Chaney and Lynch (2014, p36) describe audience engagement as a collaborative process - libraries should be open to learning from their users and changing their practice accordingly.

Marketing strategies should begin with an awareness of your audience, rather than starting with the means of delivery and trying to fit it to the users Pantry and Griffiths (2009, p17).

Concerns still prevail about making assumptions of library users and, particularly, their use of SM. McKenna (2011, p34) states that SM has afforded libraries and their users the ability to become publishers and thus marketers. However, marketing clearly has to be a two way conversation, since tweeting when you have no followers cannot be marketing in the truest sense. Owens (2003, 11) highlights the distinction between marketing and promotion, stating that most libraries only "promote" their services, while marketing involves conducting market research and tailoring activities to the needs of customers. Levitt (1960, quoted in Brewerton (2003, p268)) makes a distinction between marketing and selling stating that "selling focuses on the needs of the seller, marketing focuses on the needs of the buyer'.' In a library context, selling is promotion and involves a desire to make it more visible and relevant in the digital age.

Marketing is not necessarily a natural fit for the academic library as marketing activities are normally the domain of extroverts, something of a contrast with the traditional stereotype of the introverted librarian (Estall and Stephens 2011). Considering SM use, this could include the generational gap between the "digital natives" who make up the student body, and the "digital immigrant" library staff. If SM is outside their comfort zone, why are academic librarians attempting to use it for marketing? Potter (2012, p1) suggest an answer: they define marketing as users trying to get from A to B, on a path from which they will not voluntarily deviate. If libraries are not on that journey they need to find a way to do so, which could explain why many have begun to engage with SM. There is an assumption that this is where their users are undertaking their journey and so institutions are clamouring to participate.

Social Media

It is evident that knowledge of the user and their needs is absolutely key to the success of library marketing. However, in a large proportion of the literature relating to SM use in academic libraries this is far from prominent, with a contradiction apparent between the advice relating to marketing and the advice relating to the use of SM tools. SM allows us, much more so than traditional forms of marketing, to do more than just talking at our users, it affords us the ability to engage them in conversation (Potter 2012, p91) and, since many of our users are on SM, it is the right place for us to be (Potter 2012, p91). However, this assumes that users will want to interact in this way; a common assumption that because other services have had success in this manner, libraries should follow their practice.

Other reasons given to encourage libraries to engage in SM practice include the supposed natural transition of services and the ease of use of such tools. Bradley (2015) points out that the use of SM in libraries isn't really that great a step outside the library's normal remit, it is in fact just a different way of doing what is already being done. SM tools can be used for communicating, presenting, promoting and marketing, all of which the library currently does, it's just a case of using different tools to complete these actions. Dankowski (2013) highlights the attractions of SM as being

its low cost and ease of use, that it can be done in-house and that there is no need for the involvement of external departments or advisors.

The ease of this transition to using these new tools has, however, led to a degree of overconfidence in what they can achieve. In their case study of marketing via SM, Luo et al. (2013, p463) conclude that it is not enough for libraries to figure out how to use the tools; they also need to examine and understand the behaviour, culture and etiquette of the user community. As they state "it is not sufficient to just go where the users are - we need to make our presence relevant and useful". Swanson (2012, p75) acknowledges that there has been little enthusiasm from users in response to libraries' attempts at using SM, but makes the argument that a decade ago users never would have thought to email the library and yet this is now the primary form of communication. He suggests that, given time, the same change in attitude will occur with SM. This seems a somewhat naïve approach: can libraries be expected to continually post to empty social network boards waiting for a sea change in opinion from their users? They should be proactive in either instigating this change, or asking their users what they want from the service, if anything at all.

Perhaps one reason for the lack of dialogue with users as to whether SM was something they wanted libraries to utilise was the speed at which the technology developed. Tools such as Facebook and Twitter seemingly came out of nowhere and were all of a sudden perceived to be *de rigueur* in library interaction. With pressure upon libraries to get involved in this revolution, pages and feeds were set up without users being consulted as to how these new tools might be used to serve them (Godwin 2012, p5).

Fernandez (2009, p36-37) provides a SWOT analysis to recognise the potential benefits and risks for libraries in adopting SM as a tool for promotional and marketing activities. The strengths and opportunities are plentiful; mining the various positive aspects of SM such as its low cost, ability to take the library beyond its physical constraints and the potential for two way conversation with users. The weaknesses and threats however, concentrate on the negatives inherent in the tools themselves, such as the limiting nature of the design, the technical capabilities of the staff and institution and that these sites are hosted beyond the control of libraries. There is no consideration here that users may simply not be interested in this kind of activity; in fact there may be the assumption that because they are perceived to be using these socially they will also want to use them in their academic lives.

Investigation of the social network information behaviour of millennials showed that they employ SM as their primary communicative channels and the "social space" in which they create and define their self-image (Read et al. 2012). With this notion of self being so important for the age bracket encompassed by sixth form college students, how will the library fit into this? Will students want the library to be part of this social profile? Most students view little distinction between their online and offline social interactions and the separation between SM and "real life" discourse is difficult for them to comprehend (Brook 2012, p121). Perhaps if the library can curate a positive attitude amongst its users within the social community of the institution, then this would filter through into their online interactions. So, as with the overall library service and marketing, we find that the user is central to the success of the library's SM endeavours.

Investigating SM marketing for libraries

The contradictions outlined above in the advice on libraries using SM continues to be apparent in the studies that have been carried out in this area.

A survey on marketing opportunities for university libraries in Pakistan concluded that SM is integral to marketing library services and affords users the opportunity to create, connect, converse, contribute and share, enabling libraries to get closer to users (Khan and Bhatti 2012). However, the respondents in this survey were exclusively university library staff. Similarly, Del Bosque et al. (2012) looked at trends in academic library use of Twitter, discovering that, while only a small number of the libraries studied were using the tool effectively, there was significant potential for a deeper level of engagement with users. However, once again there is no question of whether users have any desire to engage in this two-way conversation. Chan (2012) investigated how SM advertising could be used to raise a library's SM presence. While this campaign was not a wholly successful endeavour, blame for its failures was directed toward the advertising campaign itself, without any consideration that perhaps the targeted audience (the students) simply aren't interested.

Garoufallou et al. (2013, p320-322) conducted a literature review of the use of marketing concepts in library services. In each strategy they discuss, investigating or an awareness of user needs features as the primary concern, and yet they conclude by recommending SM tools be selected by looking at what other libraries are doing, rather than considering which would be most appropriate for their users or even if their users want such a service at all. Xia (2009) investigated the possibilities of marketing library services via Facebook groups and found that, whilst this format did allow libraries to interact with their patrons in a more casual and fashionable way, many groups struggled to survive. He attributed this to the limited topic discussion areas available and to poor management on the behalf of the staff, but there was no consideration of whether users want to interact with the library in this manner.

Some studies have at least considered the place of the user in the SM activities of the library. Chu and Du (2013, p72) found that many libraries had already abandoned attempts at SM with a key factor in this decision being the limited user interest. They do not query users as to why there is this lack of interest, although do recognise that any further studies should include students in the research. Similarly, Kim and Abbas (2010) found that librarians were more invested in the library's SM applications than the students, and that their perceptions of their users' interest in, and prowess at using, SM tools was severely misjudged. However, once again this is simply recognition of the problem and fails to offer any qualitative reasoning for user apathy towards the library's SM presence.

One of the few studies to ask whether students were actually interested in connecting with the institution via SM was conducted by Lupien and Oldham (2012, p91) at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. They criticised

previous studies for concentrating on millennials' use of technology socially, not attempting to interpret what this may mean for the academic world. Their findings indicate that students were reluctant to mix SM - which they saw as a personal world - with the academic world, pointing out that tools such as Facebook would no longer be fun were they to be used for academic purposes. This research, though, was conducted in a HE environment and collected attitudes on an institutional level. We instead aim to investigate attitudes with a focus on the academic library and in a FE environment.

It seems there is a contradiction and gap in the literature in regard to the use of SM tools for marketing purposes in the academic library sector. This gap can be seen to have influenced the practice of libraries as evidenced in McCallum's 2015 worldwide survey of library practice on SM in which the most significant challenges relating to SM for librarians were seen to be the time required and judging an appropriate tone for communications. There was no mention of user interaction being an issue. Perhaps in the wider information community there is not so much of a problem in getting users interested in the library's SM endeavours. Or perhaps as Crump and L.S. (2012, p5) suggest, libraries are so desperate to seem contemporary and cutting edge that they adopt innovative services without considering if this is something their users really want.

If, however, as Bradley (2015) claims, SM isn't much of a leap from what libraries are already doing, then surely the same principles of the user being central to marketing strategy and the library service must still apply. Pantry and Griffiths (2009, p42) identify a further problem in this regard, stating that the current group of users are no longer predictable and that there is a greater generational gap than ever before between the digital natives populating today's libraries and the older generations staffing them. This makes user feedback essential to help bridge this gap and develop, if not a level of understanding, at least some acceptance of what they want and how to provide it.

This research seeks to fill this void, by not only asking if SM has been an effective tool for those using it in their marketing and promotional activities, but also involving the users and seeking answers from them as to whether they value SM as a form of communication with their library.

Research design

The literature review identified a lack of understanding of the use of SM in academic libraries in regard to user evaluation of its effectiveness. This is recognised by Dickson and Holley (2010, p477), who concludes that there is a need for both quantitative and qualitative research to assess the effectiveness of SM tools in academic libraries. We therefore take a mixed methods approach, making it possible to not only find out how much (or little) libraries' SM efforts are being used but also to ask *what* students and librarians are doing and *why* they are doing it.

Firstly we wish to ascertain the extent to which FE libraries use SM and how successful they are in reaching their intended audience. To do this, we followed the Twitter feeds of some 20 FE libraries for a period of two weeks, maintaining counts of relevant statistics such as the number

of followers, number of actions by users on posts made by the library, etc. Such an approach allowed us to establish the current state of SM use and engagement in a practical way (Walliman 2010),.

To discover feeds to observe, an initial email was sent to members of the Wessex Consortium of Sixth Form Colleges Library Panel, asking if any currently use Twitter and, if so, what their username is. Responses to this request provided a small list of feeds from which to work, which was expanded by searching Twitter itself and Google as well as looking at the followers of other libraries' Twitter feeds as they often connected with other libraries in the sector through the tool. Via these search techniques we identified twenty Twitter feeds which were managed by libraries in sixth form or FE colleges, an example of non-probability sampling (Creswell 2014, p158).

To understand *what* students and librarians are doing and *why*, we conducted two surveys based on SurveyMonkey questionnaires. Using this method enabled us to reach a far wider sample of the research population and provided respondents with a response method which required minimum effort on their part and with which it was anticipated they would be familiar, hopefully increasing the response rate.

Both questionnaires contained several closed quantitative questions and scaling questions, employing Likert scales, and were kept as short as possible to further increase response rate. There were more open questions in the librarian questionnaire as it was anticipated they would be more willing to invest time in completing the survey. Each of these questions also gave the respondents the opportunity to expand upon their choice in an open comments section, giving us an extra source of qualitative data. Before running the surveys, a small group of students and librarians were asked to pilot a test version of the questionnaire under real conditions.

Study participants

To gather data from respondents who represent a cross section of the target population, be they librarians in FE colleges or students in the same sector, the questionnaire was sent to all members of the CoLRIC (Council for Learning Resources in Colleges) email mailing list. CoLRIC constitutes some 200 library and learning resource centre managers in FE colleges across the UK. We received 58 responses and, assuming each respondent was from a different college, this suggests an approximate response rate of 29%.

The user questionnaire was sent to all students at a large sixth form college in the UK, which at the time totalled approximately 2900. These were selected to represent users of FE college libraries in the UK, not only due to the convenience of accessing them but also because of ethical considerations - the researcher already had a duty of care for these individuals and an awareness of institutional policies and procedures. There were 498 respondents to this questionnaire, giving a response rate of 17%.

Data analysis

The use of a mixed methods approach meant that a decision had to be made in terms of data analysis to ensure that the data gathered via the two methods were comparable. Therefore the qualitative data was transformed into a format which would enable it to sit more comfortably alongside the quantitative by coding responses and grouping answers by subject, thus allowing the data to be translated into graphs in the same manner as the quantitative data. This technique was used for the open questions contained within the two questionnaires as well as in the analysis of the subject matter of the tweets in the observation element of the research. This comparability was essential in achieving triangulation, as discussed in the selection of the mixed methods approach.

The raw data from SurveyMonkey was exported as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analysed manually, rather than relying on the automated analysis of the program, enabling the data to be manipulated in ways in which the program did not allow and to extract a deeper level of significance from it.

Analysis of Twitter feeds
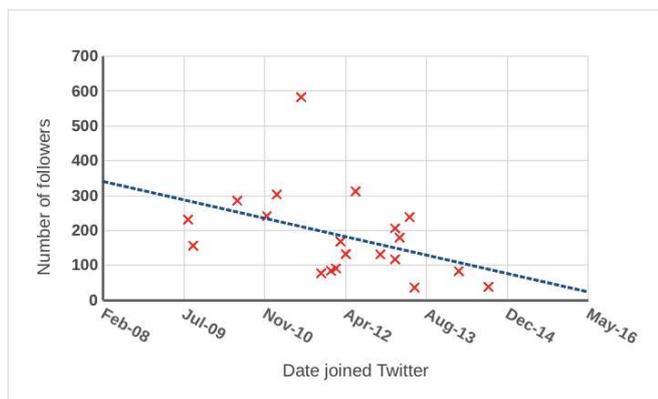
Figure 1. Number of followers by creation date.

Twenty Twitter feeds belonging FE libraries were analysed over a two week period between 20th April and 3rd May 2015, yielding 335 tweets. To determine whether number of followers increases over time we obtained the date each library launched their feed and the number of followers they had at the start of the survey period. The data ranged from 582 followers of City of Liverpool College Library's feed (instigated November 2011) to 36 followers of East Norfolk Sixth Form College Library's feed (started June 2013); the median was 162 (IQR=149.5). Considering that most of these libraries serve a student population numbering between one and three thousand, with a new intake each year of just over half that, 162 is a only a small percentage of the potential audience. Figure 1 demonstrates the degree of correlation (coefficient=0.42, $p \ll 0.01$) of this relationship.

The frequency of tweeting during the two week observation period showed some degree of variation with the most frequent posting 66 times and the most sporadic tweeter posting just 3 times across the 14 days. The median number of tweets per library over the period was 13 (IQR=9.75), approximately once a day.

A key to analysing the potential of Twitter as a marketing tool is the numbers of interactions with tweets from other users of the social network Petrovic et al. (2011). In total the tweets were retweeted 99 times, favourited 214 times and replied to 14 times, therefore each tweet posted would, on average, receive 0.3 retweets, 0.6 favourites and 0.04 replies. It should be noted, however, that these results are heavily skewed by one tweet which was retweeted by the author of the book it was promoting, resulting in a total of 38 retweets, 143 favourites and 4 replies. Removing this, the averages per tweet were 0.17 retweets, 0.2 favourites and 0.03 replies.

It is also instructive to consider not just how many people are interacting with a feed but, instead, *who* is interacting as this highlights whether or not the posts were engaging with the intended audience. The Twitter biography and feed of each user who interacted with a tweet during the observation period was analysed and, using the information available, was classed as either a "user" (a student of the college) or "other" (not a student but perhaps a member of staff or a member of the general public). Of the 99 retweets during the period, only 1 was by a user, of the 214 favourites only 2 were from users and of the 14 replies only 1 was from a user.
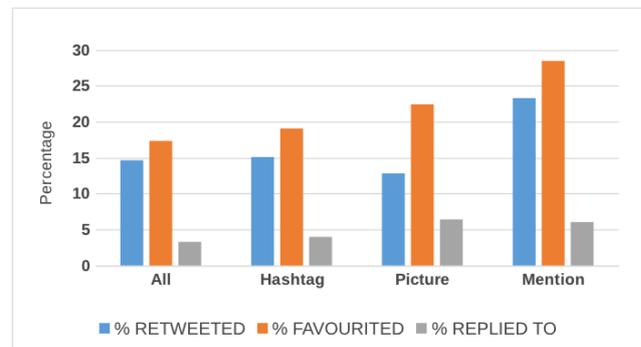
Figure 2. Level of engagement by tweet feature.

Overall 49 of the posts (14.63%) were retweeted at least once, 58 (17.31%) were favourited at least once and 11 (3.28%) were replied to. Tweets were examined to see if the use of a hashtag, a picture or a mention had an effect on engagement. 126 tweets posted contained at least one hashtag and, of these, 19 (15.08%) were retweeted, 24 (19.05%) were favourited and 5 (3.97%) were replied to. Pictures were attached to 125 of the tweets, of which 16 (12.8%) were retweeted, 28 (22.4%) were favourited and 8 (6.4%) were replied to. Of the 335 posts, 116 contained a mention of another user. Of these, 27 (23.28%) were retweeted, 33 (28.45%) were favourited and 7 (6.03%) were replied to. Figure 2 illustrates this data, showing the effect that different types of tweets had on engagement.

Tweets were coded based on their content to see what libraries were posting about. Table 1 shows the subjects posted about, including how often each was interacted with. Tweets about library resources (24.78% of all tweets), library events (19.7%) and library services (9.25%) were the most frequent topics. 186 tweets (55.52%) had a subject matter relating specifically to the library sending it, which garnered much more engagement from followers - 36 (19.35%) were retweeted, 45 (24.19%) were favourited and 10 (5.38%) were replied to - than those not related to the library, of which 13 (8.39%) were retweeted, 12 (7.74%) favourited

Table 1. Breakdown of tweets by subject.

Subject	tweets	RTs	favs.	reps.
Library resource promo.	83	16	18	3
Library event promo.	66	17	21	5
Library services promo./info.	31	1	4	1
College event promo.	23	1	1	-
General literary info.	21	-	-	-
Non-College event	20	4	3	-
Humour	18	-	-	-
Study skills tips	17	2	3	-
General message	10	4	4	1
Careers promo./info.	8	1	1	-
Motivational quote	7	-	-	-
Local info.	7	-	-	-
College info./promo.	6	1	-	-
Educational debate	6	-	-	-
Promo. of library's other SM accounts	4	1	1	1
Other	8	1	2	-

and 1 (0.65%) replied to. Tweets promoting library events garnered the most engagement from followers with 26%) being retweeted, 32%) being favourited and 8% eliciting a reply. Of all the tweets, 107 were retweets from other Twitter feeds and 14 contained a quote tweet from another account, therefore 121 (36.12%) of tweets posted during the observation period contained material not written by the library posting it.

Only 7 (2.09%) of the tweets were worded as a question to followers, or in such a way that would encourage a reply or some kind of engagement, only two of which were favourited. There were no retweets and no replies. As they were written in a manner to encourage a response it would be fair to say they failed in their purpose.

Librarian questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent out to to all members of the CoLRIC email mailing list, of whom 58 responded.
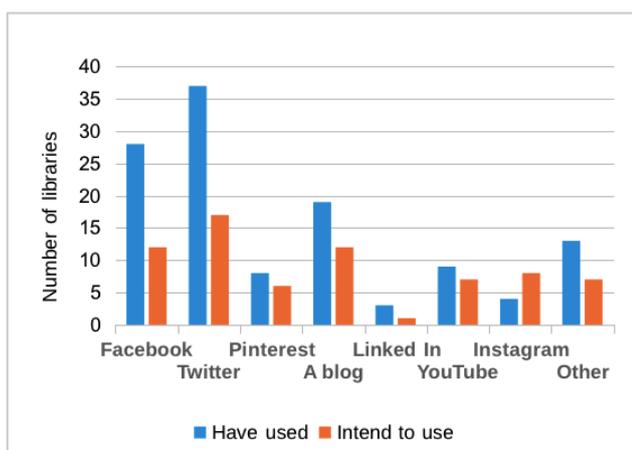

Figure 3. Use of, and potential future use of, SM tools by libraries.

Use of SM tools The first question asked which SM tools libraries were currently using, or had previously used, for the purposes of promoting library services and resources. The responses (blue bars in Figure 3) showed Twitter to be the clear favourite amongst the respondents, with 63.79%

of the libraries using it, followed by Facebook, which was used by 48.28%. Despite 22.41% selecting the 'other' option, when asked to specify the tools they were using most just left further comments on the options already mentioned with only Google+, Issuu, Scoopit and Delicious getting a single mention each.

Following on from this we asked which tools, if any, they were intending to use in future. 18 respondents skipped this question, implying that they are content with their current roster of SM tools, or perhaps that their experiences with the tools they have used so far has led them to decide not to use any more. Twitter was again the most popular tool with 42.5% considering using the tool in the future. 30% are thinking about using Facebook and a blog, while 20% are interested in using Instagram.

Motivating factors and benefits of using SM As established in the objectives, we wish go beyond the *what* and *how* of SM use by also understanding *why* they are being used. Presented with 6 factors identified from the literature as being motivations for libraries using SM, participants were asked to rate each factor on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was unimportant and 5 was very important (Figure 4).
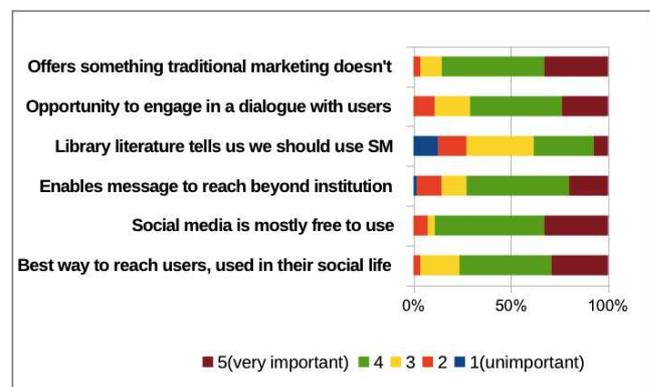
Figure 4. Motivating factors for using SM

The most important factors were that SM offers something which traditional marketing doesn't and that it is typically free to use (both have a weighted average score of 4.15). The assumption that students use SM constantly in their social lives, and so it is the best way to reach them, is also regarded as being important in motivating libraries to use the tools (average 4.02). Less important, but still not perceived to be insignificant, are that SM enables libraries' messages to reach beyond the confines of the institution (average 3.76) and that it offers libraries an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with users (average 3.73). The least important factor (average 3.05) is that library literature keeps advocating the use of use by libraries.

Participants could list any benefits they perceived from using SM not mentioned in the previous question. One theme was instantly apparent with 7 of the 11 responses to this question mentioning the speed with which messages can be sent out via SM. Two of the benefits mentioned were expansions on the themes from the previous question: how SM allows non-users, particularly community stakeholders, to see what the library is doing; and how SM can work alongside traditional methods, rather than replacing them. Other benefits included giving users a choice in how they

connect with the library, making the library seem more current and relevant and giving the library a voice showing the positive side of what it does, as opposed to the sometimes negative interaction that can occur in trying to administer behaviour management policies in the library.

We have seen that libraries have a strong preference for certain SM tools so to better understand the reasons for this, and whether consideration of users had been a factor, we asked participants why they chose the tools they did. This was an open text question and so answers were coded and percentages were calculated. The most widely cited reason (15; 33%) was that the tool was the one library staff perceived to be most popular among students. Some chose to use tools that were already being used elsewhere in the wider institution (11; 24%), although in some cases this was dictated by college management, and a small number (4; 9%) were influenced by what other similar institutions were using. Speed and ease of use was another important factor (9; 20%). Given the literature review, it is perhaps unsurprising that only a single library cited asking their users which tools would benefit them. Other concerns included what staff members preferred (2) and which would best fit the library's intended activities (2).

Barriers to using SM This open question asked librarians what barriers they had confronted in their attempts to use SM.

The biggest barrier cited was the controls placed upon them by their parent colleges, which included management dictating what tools they could use and how, SM sites being blocked and a lack of policy. The next most significant barrier was a lack of interest from students in engaging, or in many cases even following, the library on SM. The majority of the other barriers could be grouped as library management issues with complaints about the effort involved in generating content, the time required to manage the tools and the lack of enthusiasm or knowledge of the staff, all items which would need to be addressed by the learning resources manager.
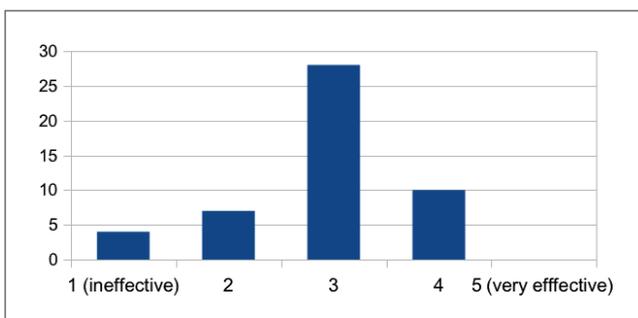

Figure 5. Effectiveness of SM

Perceived effectiveness of SM The final question asked librarians to rate the effectiveness of SM as a promotional tool for their library on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was ineffective and 5 was very effective (Figure 5). The weighted average of the responses was 2.9, just above the centre ground and confirmed by the modal response of 3, and no respondent rated it 5.

In addition to rating the effectiveness numerically, participants could explain their choice, giving us the opportunity to obtain more qualitative information. In total 50 responses were given, which we subsequently coded as being negative or positive, yielding 36 negative and 14 positive responses. Some responses indicated that students did not see SM as a method they'd use to engage with the library as they saw it as being intended for other purposes: "our learners tend not to use their SM much for contact with us, they prefer to chat to friends etc," "I'm not too sure how interested our students would be in receiving information about libraries via SM, unless it is entertaining." Lack of staff knowledge or willingness to invest time were also stated as negative reasons: "I feel we are not able to use SM to its full effect because my staff lack the skills to do so and I do not have the time to dedicate to it," "It is time consuming... you need to have at least one member of the team in charge of it, otherwise it can get ignored." Interestingly, several comments bemoaned the fact that most of their followers were not students: "most of our audience seems to be other college libraries and other departments in [our] college," "our followers are mostly staff and other libraries."

As highlighted earlier, many participants were influenced by the choice of SM tool of the parent institution. This was borne out by some of the comments: "A number of our HE courses use Twitter so this has been a useful link," "being amalgamated with the main college FB page means we reach more people." Some participants clearly understood the importance of building a strong follower base and the impact retweets have on the reach of posts: "our main task is to build followers - so that we can reach students," "if the tweet ... is retweeted it gets the message even further." One participant demonstrated an appreciation that understanding users' needs is important "SM tools used correctly can enhance our services [but] not everything we do will fit in with it."

User questionnaire

The user questionnaire was sent to all students of the school, which at the time totalled approximately 2900. There were 498 respondents to this questionnaire (a response rate of 17%).
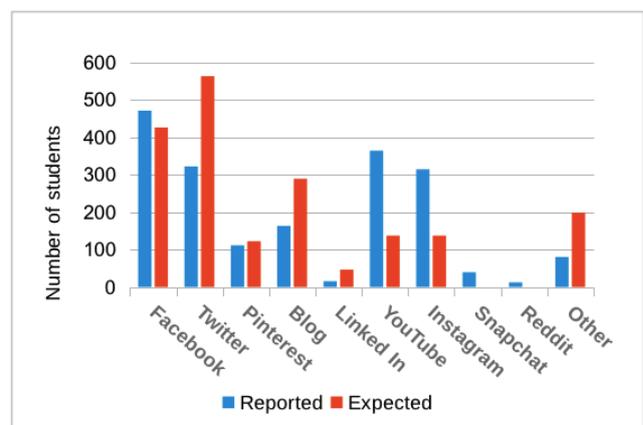

Figure 6. SM tools used by students.

Use of Social Media The first question asked students which SM tools they had a personal account with. Facebook is used almost uniformly across the student population (94.95% of respondents, YouTube is the second most used

tool (73.09%) and Twitter (64.66%) and Instagram (63.05%) are also widely used. The blue bars in Figure 6 illustrate the complete breakdown of SM tools and their use.

The red bars in Figure 6 show the expected counts for each tool, which are the usage counts from the librarians' questionnaire scaled up appropriately. Comparing these with the actual usage, we can see that in many cases these values do not even remotely correspond with each other - the libraries are perhaps overusing Twitter and underusing YouTube and Instagram. This is confirmed by a significant Pearson's chi squared test (p $\ll$ 0.01; $\mathcal{X}^2$ = 441.7; d.f. = 7).

Willingness to follow Having established the extent to which students use SM tools personally, we sought to uncover their willingness to engage with institutional users of the same tools. Students were presented with the same options as question one but this time asked whether they would be willing to follow any of the following three options:

- The college
- Their teacher or a general subject related feed
- The library
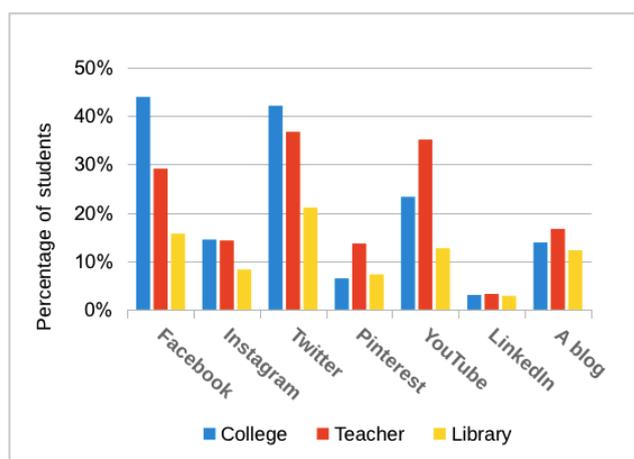
Figure 7. Willingness of students to follow institutional SM feeds.

As shown in Figure 7, students are far more interested in following the college or their teacher than they are the library. The SM tools students are most likely to use to connect with the library are Twitter and Facebook, however only 21% and 16% of students would be willing to do so. This is under half the amount of respondents who would be willing to follow the college, with 42% saying they would follow the college on Twitter and 44% saying they would do so on Facebook. On average across all options given, 21.02% of students would be willing to follow the college and 21.26% would follow their teacher/subject area, but only 11.41% would consider following the library.

Perceived benefits of connecting with the library Question three attempted to gather qualitative data from the students regarding the benefits they believe they gain from connecting with the library via SM. They were asked to list up to three positives each, with 233 respondents offering 578 benefits between them. These were coded, organised by theme and enumerated in Table 2.

The top three responses make up nearly half of the total. The most quoted benefit (20.24%) was keeping up to date

with general information regarding library services, this included changes in opening hours and loan allowances over the holidays as well as reminders of rules and regulations. The second most mentioned (14.36%) was a perceived improvement in communication, offering students the ability to better contact the library with questions or for help and make requests or recommendations for new stock. There was some confusion, however, that the library being on SM would mean that it could be contacted out of hours (evenings and weekends).

The third of these dominant responses was the potential SM offers for easier, more immediate or speedier access to information (13.67%). A number of students reported that the SM feeds were a better way to digest information from the library/college than the usual route of mass emails: "up to date info - most students don't see emails the day are sent," "could find out about events taking place through SM rather than emails (that the majority of students ignore/don't read) clogging up email inboxes."

Negative aspects of connecting with the library Following the format of the previous question, the question asked respondents to list three negatives about connecting with the library via SM. 202 respondents offered 430 negatives between them. These were then coded and arranged numerically, as summarised in Table 3.

The most cited negative (17.91%) was the blurring of the boundaries between students' social and college lives and the potential for a breach of privacy. Students were also concerned that the information given out by the library on SM wouldn't be relevant to them or might be annoying (14.65%). Similarly, they were concerned about the library posting too much and clogging up their feed, spamming users with content (14.42%).

Some of the concerns regarded negative effects use of SM could have on the library itself such as it not being an improvement on current systems and actually having a negative impact on the current physical space (5.35%), or that the library could be opening up itself and its students to trolling or cyber bullying (3.95%). Related to this is the perception that it is not "cool" to follow the library on SM. 19(4.42%) students would be concerned about what their friends might think if they found out that they followed the library. Some concerns were related to the larger problems SM presents in the college. 19 (4.42%) students pointed out that not everyone is on, or can access SM, with some pointing out that the college currently blocks applications such as Facebook and Twitter. There were also concerns that allowing access to SM tools in order to engage with the library might be abused by some students and it could become a distraction from college work (6.74%).

Preferred promotional tools The final question sought to discover where SM fits into students' opinions alongside how much they value other methods of finding out about library resources and services that are available to them. Students were asked to tick all options that they would be open to and 329 students responded. As can be seen from Figure 8, SM factors reasonably far down the list of students' considerations (achieving only 26.75%), indicating that they would prefer to hear about the library via college email

Table 2. Perceived benefits of connecting with the library via SM.

Benefit	Count	%of responses
Keeping up to date with general information regarding library services	117	20.24
Improved communication. Can personally connect with library, ask for help and make recommendations	83	14.36
Easier/immediate/speedier access to information	79	13.67
Awareness of new resources	61	10.55
Finding out about resources including reviews and recommendations	51	8.82
Promotion of events/activities/competitions	48	8.3
No benefits	39	6.75
Increased visibility of the library, makes it more appealing and modern	36	6.23
Unrelated answers	14	2.42
Alternative to college systems such as email	12	2.09
Can connect with the library without having to go into it	11	1.9
Can connect with other users and share information	11	1.9
Get study and revision tips	9	1.56
Access to research materials/resources	7	1.21

Table 3. Negative aspects of connecting with the library via SM.

Negative aspect	Count	%of responses
Blurring of boundaries between college and personal life/breach of privacy	77	17.91
Information might be irrelevant or annoying	63	14.65
Potential for too much or unwanted info/spamming	62	14.42
A lack of interest or willingness to engage will render it ineffective	46	10.7
None, N/A	39	9.07
Could be a distraction to students or be abused by them	29	6.74
Not as effective as current systems and will have impact on physical space	23	5.35
Staff may not use it well and so updates missed or feed ineffective	23	5.35
Uncool, lack of credibility	29	4.42
Not everyone is on or can access SM	29	4.42
Could be exposed to trolling/cyber-bullying	17	3.95
Unrelated answers	11	2.56
Limited period of use - students only in College 2 years	1	0.23
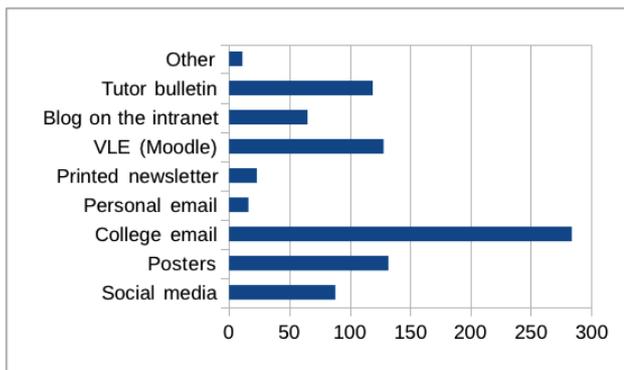
Figure 8. Students' preferred method of library marketing.

(86.32% of all respondents), posters (40.12%), on the college VLE (38.91%) and the tutor bulletin (36.17%).

Discussion of findings

A number of themes and discussion points have become apparent across the findings from the three elements of the research, many of which relate back to debates identified in the literature review. This section will examine each of these points and their relevance to wider discussions.

Time

It is clear that one must invest time in order to build a following on SM tools. It is necessary, therefore, for libraries to be patient in their use of such tools - they can't expect it to be an instant success. Time is also a factor in the perceived benefits of using SM. When asked to list any benefits not already listed in the questionnaire, 7 of the 11 responses mentioned speed and ease of use as a positive. This was also an important factor in selecting which SM tool to use - 20% listed this as an integral reason for their choice of tool. This perhaps suggests that this is indicative of librarians' attitudes towards using SM for marketing purposes: they don't value it and so don't want to have to spend too much time on it.

This somewhat contrasts with the barriers librarians identified. 19% complained about the amount of time that using SM necessitated and a further 4% raised the issue of coming up with content as a barrier - another time consuming activity. Furthermore, cost was raised as an important motivation in librarians using SM and the fact that many of these tools are free was the joint highest scoring factor. This could be indicative of the spending cuts that have taken place in the sector over the last few years, with a greater pressure on library budgets. However, this doesn't factor in the cost of staff time to administer these tools, something which is seen as a problem, despite the perceived ease and

expediency of using SM having been an important factor in deciding to use it in the first place.

Staff skills and knowledge

That libraries choose tools based on their perceived ease of use, only to discover they are more complicated and time consuming than initially thought, could be down to a lack of knowledge on the part of the library staff. This is a theme which appears in various aspects of the findings.

In the barriers listed by librarians, 12% were related to a lack of staff enthusiasm or knowledge in administering the tool, 19% regarded the time-consuming nature of using SM and 4% were concerned with having to come up with content. These could all be regarded as issues which are down to library management - if there is a skills gap then appropriate training needs to be given. There should also be recognition that using SM on behalf of an organisation is very different to personal use. Perhaps this skills gap can be attributed to staff naively creating an account for the library on the assumption that it will require much the same effort and attention as their personal account.

This lack of knowledge and skills is also reflected in the tools selected - the most common (Facebook, Twitter and blogs) are all mostly written forms of communication, perhaps suggesting that this is a medium with which staff are more comfortable working. Tools such as YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest are less popular with libraries, despite them being popular with the target audience of students. This may be because they are more creative tools, requiring a different skills set than that possessed by a traditional librarian. There is also the consideration that these tools necessitate skills other than just the ability to work the application, for example the ability to shoot videos for YouTube or to take photos for Instagram, as well as access to equipment, e.g. cameras, needed to do this.

These concerns were also apparent from the student questionnaire. When listing negative aspects about connecting with the library via SM, students raised several issues which could be classed as a lack of trust in the skills and capabilities of staff. The second and third most mentioned negatives were that information might be irrelevant or annoying (14.65%) and the potential for too many posts or unwanted information (14.42%). 5.35% of responses suggested that staff may not use SM well enough, i.e. by not taking advantage of important features such as hashtags (Harvey and Crestani 2015), and so the feed will become ineffective. These included staff not posting at times when students would pick up on messages and so important information might be missed, highlighting that using SM as a marketing tool is a more difficult task than librarians may think.

Such issues are also highlighted by Bradley (2015, p15), who states that a major advantage of SM is the way in which it has changed the information retrieval dynamic: It is no longer essential to go searching for information, you can use SM as a curation tool where the individual becomes the centre of their own web of information, sifting through it as it appears and discarding anything deemed to be irrelevant. Indeed, research shows that people often find the amount of information available to them on SM feeds to be overwhelming and struggle to narrow this torrent down to posts that are actually useful. If posts are not seen quickly

then they are likely to be missed and are often very difficult to re-find (Elsweiler and Harvey 2015). Therefore staff need to be trained and at ease with the tools they are using and the best ways to provide the content that their users want, when they want it.

Promotion or marketing

A key issue from the literature os the distinction between promotion and marketing, which Owens (2003, p11) described as the inclusion of the customer and their needs in any promotional activities. What is clear from the librarian questionnaire was that, although there was some consideration of users' needs, this was more in terms of making assumptions rather than actually engaging in any market research. The assumption that students use SM constantly in their social lives was one of the most important motivations for using such tools: 33% said they chose which SM tool to use based on what they assumed their students were using. However, only one library indicated that they had engaged in any kind of user survey and it could be argued that libraries are currently only using SM for promotion and not as a true marketing tool.

This lack of communication between feeds into the barriers discussed above, whereby many students identified the irrelevance and frequency of posts as potential negatives. Some communication between the library and students to establish what kind of service would best support them may allay some of these fears and encourage the students to engage. Perhaps making such assumptions wouldn't be a major issue if they had a more accurate basis. The student questionnaire identified that Facebook and YouTube were the most popular SM tools with library users, closely followed by Twitter and Instagram. That libraries are mostly using Twitter and barely using YouTube and Instagram at all shows that their assumptions do not match with reality.

The place of the library in the wider institution

The most significant barrier identified by librarians was institutional controls, ranging from college management dictating which SM tools libraries could use, or only allowing them to post messages via the main college feeds, to controls put in place by the IT department, such as blocking SM on the college network. Indeed Stuart (2010, cited in Dryden, 2013, p3) identified libraries setting up accounts on services blocked by college networks as being a prime frustration for students. This is a question of management - a simple discussion prior to launching any SM strategy would at least make these issues clearer, if not resolve them.

Students showed a far greater willingness to follow the college or a subject related feed than the library, so perhaps disseminating library information through these outlets would be preferable. Two responses from the librarians did highlight a problem with this approach in that the main college feeds are often more aimed at the local community and as a tool to recruit new students, whereas the library want to communicate with their current students. Another option could be to use subject feeds which are twice as likely to be followed and would allow content to be tailored to the students of those subjects, thus diminishing concerns of irrelevant material. This may also mitigate the issue of

library staff lacking the necessary skills as, if other staff are operating the feeds, then the library can just provide the content and they can manipulate it in a manner best suited to the tool and the needs of the cohort.

Engagement

Analysis of the Twitter feeds and the librarian survey found that it is difficult to get students to engage with the library via SM, both in terms of following them, and in the more desired interaction of commenting on and sharing library posts. Cuddy et al. (2010, cited in Del Bosque et al., 2012, p202) suggested that a key advantage of SM is the opportunity to monitor what users are saying and provide instantaneous feedback, to get user opinions and observe mini-focus groups without having to formally gather users. This aligns with responses to the student questionnaire, where improved communication and more immediate access to information were both recognised as benefits. However, if students are unwilling to follow the library then this leaves libraries in a difficult situation. To be able to listen to, and respond to, what their users are saying they would need to seek them out and follow them, a common practice when using these tools personally. In an academic environment however, where users are under the age of 18, this would raise ethical issues and certainly represent a breach of privacy, an issue raised by students in the survey. This emphasis on privacy may also be why college email was the preferred method of hearing about library services and resources as this is an acceptable form of communication in this context, mitigating the blurring of social and professional boundaries that SM can cause.

Libraries certainly recognise a lack of engagement from their users, with 24% mentioning this as a barrier to effectively using SM. However, the responses to the ratings of factors motivating use of SM indicated that the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with their users was less important than other considerations. The student data highlighted the ability to communicate on a personal level with the library as an important benefit, again displaying a mismatch in the intentions of library SM output and what users want from it. Perhaps this is due to the tools being used. Thelwall et al. (2011, p407) suggested that Twitter is less a social networking site and is more a tool for information dissemination - Twitter is used to post and consume information rather than interact with it and other users. This can be seen in the analysis of the library Twitter feeds, where only 2% of the tweets were worded in a manner that attempted to encourage a response from their followers and where only 22% of the tweets received any kind of engagement from users. This is further reinforced when it is considered that the majority of these interactions came from non-users and that only one of the 14 replies was from a student. Again this may be due to the nature of the tool. SM is designed for global connectivity while libraries are attempting to use these tools to promote resources and services only available to their users, thus trying to contain their message in a way that SM is not designed to allow.

Perceptions of the library

Much of the criticism from the findings was levelled at the libraries for failing to consult their users when developing marketing strategies, but there is also evidence that students' misperceptions of libraries are also a factor in SM's ineffectiveness. Students commented that: "traditionally a library is a place of study and books, 'uncontaminated' by technology/SM" and "SM is associated with friends and 'play'; library with work." This shows an ignorance of the ever-growing place of digital material in libraries and the development of what Brophy (2005, p50) terms the "hybrid library," where physical and electronic resources complement and enhance each other. The library is no longer just a building, but an intermediary between the user and information in various forms and it is no longer enough for the library simply to be good at what it does but it must also be adept at communicating it (Kenneway, 2007, cited in Dryden, 2013, p1).

Students were also concerned that connecting with the library via SM would open them up to ridicule from their peers due to it not being "cool." One user commented that they "would be embarrassed" to connect with the library and another that they "would worry what my friends would think of me for following or liking the library." Despite this, responses indicate that students value the library service, with the most cited benefits of following the library on SM being that users can find out about library services, resources and events with greater ease and speed. The strong response rate to this survey may also indicate a desire to engage with the library and help develop services that benefit the respondents, but it may be the case that SM isn't the appropriate mode for this. One student commented that there would be "less interaction with library staff; so if your question is answered by library page on social networking site, then you may not contact the library staff, who have a lot more knowledge to offer." There is recognition of what help and support the library can offer, but perhaps these services should be promoted in a different way and consider that the more traditional methods that students are familiar with should not be abandoned.

Conclusions and recommendations

SM is a new and highly disruptive technology which has become a key tool for marketing, promotion and communication between organisations and their target customers, an opportunity that many libraries, which are struggling to find their place in the modern information world, are seeking to exploit (McCallum 2015). This work investigated whether SM is an effective tool for promoting and marketing libraries in the further education environment, a large and notably understudied part of the libraries sector. Existing literature showed that, while significant research had been conducted, there was little that considered the needs and opinions of the intended audience of college students. The majority of the work discusses the potential these tools hold for library promotion but do not provide much substantive evidence for how successful its introduction has been and why (Vanwynsberghe et al. 2015).

To learn more about how FE libraries are making use of this technology, and how staff and students perceive these

efforts, we conducted three main studies. We first monitored the Twitter feeds of 20 FE libraries for two weeks and analysed the posts and how users responded to and interacted with them. We then surveyed a large proportion (29%) of UK FE libraries to find out how they were using SM, what their perceptions were and how effective they believe them to be. Finally we sent questionnaires to a large group of FE students (N=498) to investigate their use of SM, their willingness to connect with the library through SM, their perceptions of libraries using such tools to engage with them and their preferred methods of being contacted by the library.

Analysis these data revealed several issues with how SM is being used to market libraries. Based on these findings the following recommendations can be made about the use of SM as a marketing tool for FE libraries:

- There is a clear divide between what librarians think about students' use of SM and what students want from the library's SM presence. As such, a user-needs survey should be an important part of any marketing strategy involving SM.
- Training is an essential part of launching a SM presence, to ensure staff are fully aware of the protocols and potential of the tool and are comfortable using it.
- SM should not be the library's sole marketing tool. Students prefer other methods of communication and so SM should form only part of a varied marketing strategy.
- SM has advantages over other types of marketing. It should be these that are exploited rather than trying to do something which other forms already do, possibly better.
- As students prefer to engage with the library via college systems, it may be better to exploit existing communication tools like the college VLE.
- As with any form of marketing, collaboration with other departments in college is an important part of SM use, particularly as students expressed a greater willingness to connect with the main college and departmental feeds than the library. Just because a message originates from the library doesn't mean it has to be communicated through library channels only.
- If students express that SM is not something they are interested in, then respect this; their needs should be central to the marketing strategy and it is pointless to spend time on something they are not invested in.

Limitations and future work

That the survey was conducted by students of only one college has some bearing on the findings and their general application. The library's SM service was still in the first year of use at the time; would the results have been different had the tools been in place for longer and had become more established amongst the student body? It may be beneficial to conduct the same survey again at timely intervals to see if attitudes change as the service becomes more established. Expanding the survey to other colleges could determine whether the opinions expressed here are representative of students elsewhere and including university-level students and librarians would allow for comparison with the situation

in HE institutions. It would be instructive in this case to record data on respondents' ages and see how much of a factor this is in their willingness to engage with the library. College is likely to be the first time students are exposed to the idea of institutions they are members of attempting to market to them directly, with contact from schools being primarily aimed at parents. Having been exposed to this at college and with university marketing even more focused on the students, would this alter their attitudes to connecting via SM?

An additional expansion that would be interesting to include in further research would be in addition to asking students what SM tools they use with a personal account, to ask them to rate their level of engagement with these tools. Having a profile on Facebook or Twitter doesn't necessarily mean they are using it to engage with others. In this regard users could be asked to associate their use of SM with something akin to Bradley's four types of Twitter user: broadcaster, lurker, engager or searcher (2015, p88). This may have a significant impact on findings if most students were to associate themselves with the first two types, evidence of which would be unlikely to be measurable in terms of their use of the library feed.

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