

**Exploring the use of social media tools in the University of South Africa Library**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Sinah Molokisi, declare that exploring the use of social media tools in the University of South Africa Library is my own work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at any university. I cited all the sources that were used for the research with proper referencing.

Researcher's signature

.....  .....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour, for giving me the health, strength and direction throughout this journey.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Social media have taken a lead in academic libraries; however, there are still questions on how libraries are using social media tools to enhance their service delivery. The aim of this exploratory study was to investigate the use of social media tools by library staff working in the University of South Africa's (Unisa) main library on the Muckleneuk Campus. Since it was realised that not all staff members use social media tools in the execution of their daily tasks, the first objective was to establish which staff members do use social media tools and for which purpose the tools are being used. A further objective was to learn about the potential advantages of social media tools to improve service delivery. The study also endeavoured to acquire an understanding of the challenges that social media tools present to its users. Based on the literature review, it could be established that libraries, and specifically academic libraries, utilise social media for marketing, dissemination of information, reference services, and communication with users and to answer student queries. The reported findings of this study concur with the findings reported in the literature review. The empirical data, which were collected through a qualitative survey questionnaire and interviews with library staff who use social media tools, revealed that only staff who communicate with library patrons, namely information processors and marketing staff, use social media tools. The findings also showed that the Unisa Library has specific guidelines and policies that guide the use of social media tools to interact with users, market the library and communicate events and service delivery changes.

## **KEY TERMS**

Academic libraries; investigation; library; library staff; library users; Pretoria; social media tools; South Africa; Unisa; Web 2.0

## INGQIKITHI YOCWANINGO

Izinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi sezihamba phambili emitapweni yolwazi yasemanyuvesi, kodwa kusanemibuzo eminingi maqondana nokuthi imitapo yolwazi iwasebenzisa kanjani amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi ukuthuthukisa ukuhlinzekwa kwezidingo. Inhloso yalolu cwaningo oluhlola kabanzi kwakungukubheka ukuthi abasebenzi basemtapweni wolwazi omkhulu waseNyuvesi YaseNingizimu Afrika (i-Unisa) ekamu laseMuckleneuk bawasebenzisa kanjani amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi. Njengoba sekwabonakala ukuthi akuwona wonke amalungu angabasebenzi asebenzisa amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi ekuqhutshweni kwemisebenzi yawo yansuku zonke, injongo yokuqala kwakungukubheka ukuthi yimaphi amalungu omphakathi asebenzisa amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi futhi awasebenzisela ukwenzani. Enye injongo kwakungukufunda mayelana nokuhle okungadalwa ngamathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi ukuthuthukisa ukuhlinzekwa kwezidingo. Lolu cwaningo lwaluqonde nokuqonda izingqinamba abantu abasebenzisa amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi ababhekana nazo. Kuncike ekuhlaziyweni kwemibhalo ekhona, kwatholakala ukuthi imitapo yolwazi, ikakhulukazi leyo yasemanyuvesi, isebenzisa izinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi ukukhangisa, ukusabalalisa imininingwane, ukubheka imithombo, ukuxhumana nabayisebenzisayo kanye nokuphendula imibuzo yezitshudeni. Okwatholakala okubikiwe mayelana nalolu cwaningo kuyahambisana nokubikiwe okwatholakala ngokuhlaziya imibhalo. Imininingwane eyatholakala ngokubheka okwenzekayo, eyaqoqwa ngokusebenzisa iphephamibuzo lenhlobo loko eyaqoqwa imininingwane yamaqiniso kanye nezingxoxo ezabanjwa nabasebenzi bomtapo wolwazi abasebenzisa amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi yaveza ukuthi abasebenzi abaxhumana nabasebenzisi bomtapo wolwazi, abaziwa ngokuthi ngama-*information processors* kanye nabasebenzi abakhangisayo yibona kuphela abasebenzisa amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi. Okutholakele kuphinde kwaveza ukuthi uMtapo Wolwazi Wase-Unisa unemihlahlandlela kanye nezinqubomgomo okulandelwayo ukuze kusetshenziswe kahle amathuluzi ezinkundla zokuxhumana komphakathi, ukuxhumana nabasebenzisi bawo,

ukukhangisa ngomtapo wolwazi nokwazisa ngemicimbi ekhona kanye noshintsho ekuhlinzekweni kwezidingo.

## KHUTSOFATŠO

Marangrang a leago a thomile go šomišwa kudu ka makgobapukung a thuto, efela go sa na le dipotšišo ka ga ka fao makgobapuku a šomišago dithulusi tša marangrang a leago go kaonafatša kabo ya ona ya ditirelo. Maikemišetšo a nyakišišo ye ya phetleko e be e le go nyakišiša tšhomišo ya dithulusi tša marangrang a leago ka bašomi ba go šoma ka bokgobapukung bjo bogolo bja Yunibesithi ya Afrika Borwa (Unisa), Khamphaseng ya Muckleneuk. Ka ge go lemogilwe gore ga se bašomi ka moka ba go šomiša dithulusi tša marangrang a leago tirong ya mešongwana ya bona ya letšatši le letšatši, nepo ya mathomo e be e le go hwetša gore ke bašomi bafe bao ba šomišago dithulusi tša marangrang a leago le gore dithulusi di šomišetšwa morero ofe. Nepo ye nngwe e be e le go ithuta ka ga mehola ye dithulusi tša marangrang a leago di kago kgona go ba nayo go kaonafatša kabo ya ditirelo. Nyakišišo gape e lekile go hwetša kwešišo ya ditlhohlo tše dithulusi tša marangrang a leago di di bakelago bašomiši ba tšona. Go ya ka tshekatsheko ya dingwalo, go lemogilwe gore makgobapuku, kudu makgobapuku a thuto, a šomiša marangrang a leago go bapatša, go phatlalatša tshedimošo, go fa ditirelo tša referentshe, go kgokagana le bathekgi le go araba dipotšišo tša baithuti. Dikutullo tše di begilwego tša nyakišišo ye di dumelelana le dikutullo tša tshekatsheko ya dingwalo tše di hweditšwego. Datha ya go lemogwa (emperikale) yeo e kgobokeditšwego ka lenaneopotšišo la nyakišišo ya khwalithethifi le dipoledišano tša bašomi ba bokgobapuku bao ba šomišago dithulusi tša marangrang a leago, di utulotše gore ke fela bašomi bao ba boledišanago le bathekgi ba bokgobapuku, e lego basepetši ba tshedimošo le bašomi ba go bapatša bao ba šomišago dithulusi tša marangrang a leago. Dikutullo gape di laeditše gore bokgobapuku bja Unisa bo na le dipholisi le melawana ye itšeng ya go hlahla tšhomišo ya dithulusi tša mekgwa ya leago go kgokagana le bašomiši, go bapatša bokgobapuku le go tsebiša ditiragalo le diphetogo tša kabo ya ditirelo.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

The following abbreviations and acronyms are used in this study:

ICT	Information communication technology
IRD	Information Resource Distribution
Unisa	University of South Africa
HR	Human Resources



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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has become an integral part of people's everyday lives; this involves the use of technologies (Akeriwa, Penzhorn & Holmner 2015:284). The Joint Information System Committee (JISC) (2010) defines social media or Web 2.0 technologies as "innovative online tools designed to enhance communication". From this definition by the JISC, it is clear that social media includes Web 2.0 technologies.

The social media that were identified by Wasike (2013:8) include Facebook, blogs, wikis, Myspace, social bookmarks, podcasting and YouTube. In addition to these social media, Brook (2012:121) also identified Twitter as a popular social media tool used in academic libraries. He is of the opinion that Facebook and Twitter are the archetypes of social media and that they provide a good point of reference for a discussion on social media and the academic library.

It is often difficult in academic libraries to spread the word about different services or events that are being offered by the library. Since social media is a powerful new form of communication and is everywhere, "academic libraries can leverage these communication tools to interact with faculty, staff and students in new ways" (Mingle, Lampthey & Hassan 2014:184).

Burkhardt (2010:10) also reports that "many libraries are already experimenting with different social media services like Twitter or Facebook to interact and connect with their patrons". He believes that the simple act of creating relationships and having a conversation with patrons is immensely useful. He also believes that library staff can gain insights through these conversations into what their users want and need, and ultimately understand their users better. Burkhardt (2010:10) further believes that social media provide libraries with new ways to engage in outreach and educational practices.

According to Matsheka (2010:1), the University of South Africa (Unisa) Library is also working towards aligning itself with the technology of the day and taking advantage of the new platforms that have become available. This library caters for Unisa students, academics and other members of staff, as well as some special members. The special members are members who are not registered with Unisa but who are registered with other institutions.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of social media in the University of South Africa Library. The purpose is also to determine which social media are being used by the Unisa Library staff and whether the use of social media enhances library services.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

“The University of South Africa (Unisa) is the largest open distance learning institution in Africa and the longest standing dedicated distance education university in the world” (Matsheka 2010:1). There are currently over 400 000 students registered at Unisa and the Unisa Library enrolls nearly one third of all these students. This makes the Unisa Library one of the largest academic libraries in Africa. The Library has over 300 professional and nonprofessional staff members, as well as contract workers and part-time staff. The Unisa Library consists of the following divisions: Client Services, (including branches), Document Delivery, Management Services and Technical Services. The services that are offered by the Unisa Library include the following: lending services, literature research, research support and technical support. In addition to these services, the library also offers information literacy training. The different training programmes include: training on the use of the library’s catalogue, e-resources, reference sources and training in research skills. The library also has special facilities to assist disabled users, especially visually impaired students and students who are confined to wheelchairs. The library and its fourteen functional branches actively support the teaching and research-related community service programme of the University.

As a distance education institution, the library provides decentralised services on the campuses in Durban, East London, Ekurhuleni, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Florida,

Johannesburg, Nelspruit, Parow (Cape town), Pietermaritzburg, Polokwane, Pretoria (Main campus), Rustenburg and Sunnyside. Each of these branch libraries endeavours to provide for its users' information needs. In order to serve their users, branch librarians need to be able to interview users, identify user competence and update their own technological skills.

The Unisa Library endeavours to keep up with the latest developments and technologies that are available, and which could be used to improve its services. Social media seems to be one of the technological developments which have been embraced by some Unisa Library staff since 2008. In fact, it seems as if only a selected number of staff members are tasked with using social media to support and enhance the library's services. The staff members that do use social media seem to be working in some sections in the Unisa Library that have contact with library users, namely the library's technical section, where some of these staff members are administrators from the ICT department.

From this background, there seem to be a few issues requiring investigation:

- To determine who the Unisa Library staff members are who are allowed to use social media to communicate with users.
- To determine the Unisa Library social media guidelines and policies that control the use of social media tools.
- To establish whether staff received any training to use social media tools.
- To determine which social media they are using and for what reason they are using these specific tools.
- To determine whether the use of social media enhances the services offered by the Unisa Library.
- To determine the challenges staff members experience when using social media.



### **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

University libraries are expected to provide timely access to relevant information in order to meet the needs of students, academics and researchers. Staff in the Unisa Library seem to be using social media to enhance their overall service delivery. This explorative study explores the use of social media are being used by Unisa Library staff and to determine how the use of social media enhances the library's services.

With this problem statement in mind, the research question can therefore be formulated as follows:

Which social media tools are being used by Unisa Library staff and how does the use of social media tools enhance the library's services?

#### **1.3.1. Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study include the following:

1. To identify which social media tools are being used by Unisa Library staff and to establish the reasons why specific tools are used.
2. To establish whether the Unisa Library has social media guidelines and policies that could guide staff members who use social media tools in the execution of their tasks.
3. To establish whether library staff received any training on how to use social media.
4. To acquire an understanding of the challenges as well as the benefits that social media participation pose to Unisa Library staff members.
5. To acquire an understanding of how the use of social media tools enhances library services.

#### **1.3.2 Research questions**

The research question can now be subdivided into the following sub-questions:

1. Which social media are being used by Unisa Library staff?

2. Does the Unisa Library have social media guidelines and policies that control the use of social media tools?
3. Which staff members are tasked with the use of social media tools?
4. For which purposes are social media tools being used and how does the use enhance the library's services?
5. What are the challenges and benefits of using social media in the Unisa Library?
6. Have the library staff received training in the use of social media tools?

#### **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The main purpose of the literature review is to acquire an understanding of and insight into the use of social media in academic libraries and on the trends that have emerged. The keywords that were used when conducting searches included social media, academic libraries, Web 2.0 and social networks. The databases used were Emerald, EBSCOhost, JSTOR and Google Scholar.

The literature review indicated that social media tools were being used by libraries to communicate with users and to enhance library services. Some social media tools identified in the literature by Scott (2015:15) were Facebook, Twitter, Instant messaging, wikis, blogs and YouTube.

The literature review further highlighted the purpose of using these tools, such as marketing library services, disseminating of information and communicating with library users.

The reviewed studies have been conducted in different places around the world, and some scholars emphasise the wide range of benefits that social media tools bring to academic libraries. However, it was also found that there were concerns with using social media, like the time and resources that might be required to maintain a social media presence and to render the required services.

The literature review on social media tools is addressed in more detail in chapter two.

## **1.5 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

Since the aim of the study is to determine which social media are being used by Unisa Library staff and how the use of social media enhances the Unisa Library's services, the study will be valuable for the following reasons:

- To support Unisa Library staff who are using social media by coming up with suggestions on the use of social media to improve library services and to ensure client satisfaction.
- To come up with suggestions on how Unisa staff using social media can reach out to library users and market their library services.
- To acquire an understanding of the use of social media and how this too supports library services.
- To make a contribution to research on the use of social media by libraries.

## **1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

According to Mouton (2001:103), "a research design is a plan or blue print of how you intend conducting the research". It therefore involves decisions on the research approach, data collection and data analysis, as well as addressing aspects such as reliability and validity of the research. The researcher followed a qualitative approach to carry out the study. "Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding" (Beck & Manuel 2008:67). The decision to use a qualitative approach is supported by the study conducted by Click and Petit (2010). They used a qualitative research approach to explore the manner in which institutional libraries use Twitter.

Data were collected by means of an online survey questionnaire and interviews. The sample of Unisa Library staff interviewed was taken from the survey questionnaire that was emailed to library staff in order to identify the staff members who were tasked with the use of social media tools. Interviews were conducted with the library staff who used social media tools. This was done so the researcher could get an understanding of their experiences, which was the objective of the research. The study used a purposive sampling technique. A research sample based on the purposive sampling technique

is determined by the researcher's judgement as to who can provide the best information that would support the researcher in achieving the objectives of the study (Kumar 2011:179). The researcher analysed the data according to the questions asked in the interview schedule and survey questionnaire.

The sample represented all the directorates in the Unisa Library, namely Information Resource Distribution, Client Services and Corporate Services.

### **1.6.1 Ethical considerations**

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011:114) define research-related ethics "as a set of widely acceptable moral principles that offer rules for and expectations pertaining to the most correct conduct towards respondents and participants". Ethical principles are important to consider, since they concern interpersonal interactions. Unisa has an ethical policy which requires the submission of an ethical clearance form.

Unisa's policy on research ethics ensures that the rights and interests of human respondents and institutions are protected (University of South Africa 2012). The researcher had to seek permission for access to the library staff at the Unisa Library. Permission was granted, and the data collection could proceed. A survey questionnaire was applied to identify library staff who work with social media tools and the five staff members who were identified, agreed to participate and were interviewed. Data were analysed thematically, and the findings are reported on in Chapter Four.

### **1.6.2 Delimitation of the study**

The researcher did not approach library staff who do not work with social media tools. Students were not included in the study. Other Unisa branches were excluded from the study. The study was conducted only in the main Unisa Library, located in Muckleneuk, Pretoria. Not all the participants who accepted the invitation to be interviewed attended the interviews.

## **1.7 KEY CONCEPTS**

The concepts that were used in this study are as follows:

### **1.7.1 Academic Libraries**

Academic libraries are also known as university or college libraries. The concept refers to “libraries that are attached to academic institutions above the secondary school level, they serve the educational needs of students, support the teaching staff in terms of material needed for teaching role, as well as provide support to academic staff in terms of their research needs” (Feather & Sturges 2003:3-4). Libraries, as they are defined by Levine-Clark and Carter (2013:151), are "a collection of materials in various formats organised to provide physical, bibliographic and intellectual access to a target group, with staff trained to provide services and programs related to the information needs of the target group". An analysis of this definition indicates that libraries are resources of organised information and involve people who are focused on bringing their users and the information they require together.

Libraries are focused on providing access information. Social media encourage users to participate and engage with each other (Wilkinson2014:148). Due to people’s participation and engagement, online communities or networks are built, where users are able to “share ideas, content, thoughts and relationships online” (Scott 2015:56). Academic libraries have increasingly integrated social media into their library services to reach out to users, disseminate information and promote library services (Nfila 2009:55).

### **1.7.2 Social media**

Social media can be understood as online tools that enable interaction and collaboration between or among users (Chan-Olmsted, Cho & Lee 2013:149).

"Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:61). The different types of social media tools used in the library identified by Tripathi and Kumar (2010:196) and Penzhorn (2013:58) include RSS feeds, Blogs, instant messaging, YouTube and wikis. Arif and Manhood’s (2012) study showed that the most used social media tools were instant messaging (IM), Blogs and Wiki adopted by librarians in their personal and professional lives.

According to Banda (2011:12), social media are used in libraries as communication tools where questions are asked and answered at any time. He notes that this trend is being boosted by the utilisation of mobile devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets) that have access to the Internet and are able to log in to social media sites anywhere and at any time. Therefore, social media offer the ability to connect people, to disseminate news and information, share posts and widen access to useful information (Gaha & Hall 2015:52). Academic librarians have embraced social media tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking, RSS feeds and YouTube (Penzhorn 2013:58).

### **1.7.3 Web 2.0 technologies**

Web 2.0 refers to “the on-going development of www technology that has resulted in a set of new technologies and services”. Its applications and services include the use of blogs, video sharing, social networking and podcasting – reflecting a more socially connected Web where people can contribute as much as they can consume (Anderson 2007:15). In this study, the term Web 2.0 is used interchangeably with social media tools. This is because social media tools are Web 2.0 platforms which can be used to reach out to library users.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

The dissertation has five chapters which are organised as outlined below:

### **Chapter One: General introduction**

This chapter discussed an introduction to the study. The layout of the chapter provides parts being conversed in the succeeding chapters. These include:

### **Chapter Two: The use of social media in libraries**

This chapter provides an overview and background of previous studies on the use of social media tools in libraries. The purpose of this chapter is fourfold. It provides the definition of key concepts. This is followed by a discussion of social media, especially in relation to its benefits for academic libraries. Thirdly, the chapter sets the current study within the context of previous research on social media tools, based on the experiences of other libraries. Finally, the chapter explores the utilisation of social media tools such as wikis, blogs and RSS feeds, as well as other social media tools.

**Chapter Three: Research methodology**

This chapter consists of the methodology that was used to conduct the research. The research design, research method, setting, population and sampling procedures, as well as collection methods, procedures and techniques are discussed.

**Chapter Four: Analysis and results of data**

This chapter provides an analysis of the empirical data and discusses the findings obtained through the survey questionnaire and interviews with Unisa Library staff members at the main library in Pretoria.

**Chapter Five: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations**

This is the last chapter of the dissertation. The research questions are answered in this chapter, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations are made, which can be adopted or implemented by libraries.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIBRARIES

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media can be understood as being online tools that enable interaction and collaboration between or among users (Chan-Olmsted et al. 2013:149). These tools also enable the creation and sharing of various types of online content (Chan-Olmsted et al. 2013:149). Therefore, one of the distinctive characteristics of social media is its participatory nature which, in turn, affords users an opportunity to engage or interact (Chan-Olmsted et al. 2013:149).

It can be said that the primary purpose of libraries is to connect users with information. Social media enable users to interact with one another while at the same time providing them with information in a relatively accessible way (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:5). Furthermore, academic libraries are increasingly adopting a variety of social media tools in order to deliver their services effectively (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:5).

The purpose of this chapter is fourfold. Firstly, it provides a definition of key concepts. This is followed by a discussion of social media, especially in relation to its benefits for academic libraries. Thirdly, the chapter sets the current study within the context of previous research on social media tools, based on the experiences of other libraries. Finally, the chapter explores the utilisation of social media tools such as wikis, blogs, and RSS feeds, as well as other social media technologies.

#### 2.2 BACKGROUND

Two concepts are important in this chapter: libraries and social media. Both these concepts involve people and, whereas libraries endeavour to connect people with information, social media involve the building of communities or networks (Wilkinson2014:150). As observed by Scott (2015:15), this is possible as social media provide users with a means by which they are able to "share ideas, content, thoughts and relationships online". Therefore, more and more academic libraries in recent years seem to have adopted social media in their library services to reach out to users,



disseminate information and promote their services. The social media adopted by libraries that are identified by Scott (2015:15; 56) include blogs, wikis and video sharing. Wan (2011:312) reported that by 2011 a large number of libraries had Facebook pages.

According to Banda (2011:12), social media are used in libraries as communication tools where questions are asked and answered at any time. He notes that this trend is being boosted by the utilisation of mobile devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets) that have access to the Internet and are able to log in to social media sites anywhere and at any time. On the same note, Wan (2011:315) states that in modern universities there are many young men and women who have the Internet on their mobile devices in their backpacks. He also notes that librarians frequently use technology in their daily lives. Banda (2011:12) therefore believes that libraries could use social media effectively as it provides an instant and fast communication means which could be used to provide chat reference services.

To acquire an understanding of how libraries could utilise social media, certain concepts should be defined, and different types of social media tools are discussed in this chapter. The advantages and disadvantages of using individual social media tools will also be highlighted.

### **2.3 LIBRARIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Libraries, as they are defined by Levine-Clark and Carter (2013:151), are "a collection of materials in various formats organised to provide physical, bibliographic and intellectual access to a target group, with staff trained to provide services and programs related to the information needs of the target group". An analysis of this definition indicates that libraries are resources of organised information and involve people who are focused on bringing their users and the information they require together.

Social media, on the other hand, are "primarily Internet or cellular phone based applications and tools to share information among people. Social media includes popular networking websites like Facebook and Twitter; as well as bookmarking sites" (e.g. Reddit) (Business Dictionary 2016, sv 'social media'). It involves blogging and

forums as well as any aspect of interactive presence. These technologies enable users “to engage in conversations with one another, often as a discussion over a particular blog post, news article, or event” (Business Dictionary 2016, sv ‘social media’).

An analysis of the definition of social media reveals that an Internet connection is required in order to access the media in question. It is worth noting that a cellular phone-based application could also be used to access social media (Rogers 2003:3). Furthermore, there are various social media tools and all of them involve blogging. Also, they have an interactive presence where users could engage in conversations. These tools include blogs, podcasts, online videos and social networks (Rogers 2003:3). The use of social media tools gives online users a voice by allowing them to express opinions on a number of issues between and among networks (Rogers 2003:3). Therefore, social media have the ability to connect people, to disseminate news and information, share posts and widen access to useful information (Gaha & Hall 2015:52). In addition, Walden (2016:349) found that adults in the United States spend on average twenty-three hours per week communicating with others via social media, phones and emails. He further indicates that personal and work activities are often intermingled when engaging with technology.

From this discussion, it seems as if both libraries and social media involve people (users) and endeavour to connect people with information. Whereas libraries are focused on providing information, social media encourage users to participate and engage with one another (Wilkinson 2014:147). Due to people’s participation and engagement, online communities of networks are built (Wilkinson2014:150), where users are able to “share ideas, content, thoughts and relationships online” (Scott 2015:56). Hence, in recent years, academic libraries have increasingly included social media into their library services to reach out to users, disseminate information and promote library services (Nfila 2009:55).

### **2.3.1 The value of social media**

The social media that were adopted by libraries, which were identified by Scott (2015:56), include among others, blogs, wikis and video sharing.

Wan (2011:315) notes that the majority of libraries have Facebook pages. The reason that Wan (2011:315) offers for the use of Facebook pages is that modern universities comprise mainly young people who are able to access the Internet on their mobile devices. Mabweazara and Zinn (2016:3) observed that, instead of arranging face-to-face orientation programmes, libraries tend to use RSS feed readers, podcasts and recorded videos to deliver audio and video commentary, as well as instructions to remote users.

Social media could be utilised by libraries for different purposes.

### **2.3.1.1 Communication tools for libraries**

Libraries use social media as communication tools when questions are asked and answered at any time (Banda 2011:12). Banda (2011:12) notes that this trend has been boosted by mobile devices (e.g. smart phones and tablets) which enable users to access the Internet and log in to social media sites anywhere and at any time. He reckons that social media could be used effectively in libraries because it provides instant and fast communication, whilst providing chat reference services.

### **2.3.1.2 Easy access to information**

Social media tools like YouTube and other online video social tools are used by libraries to promote and document library services and events to users (Rogers 2009:4). By utilising microblogs, librarians link the online catalogue and other e-learning services for students who do not wish to visit the library, as well as to provide remote access to library resources (Kwanya, Stilwell & Underwood 2012:76). Therefore, setting up a social media account can give users access to information (Kwanya et al. 2012:76). Ezeani and Igwesi (2012:4) view the use of social media as an ideal way to market library services to patrons, as users and librarians are increasingly making use of social media. This, according to Kibugi (2013:15), extends service provision beyond traditional library walls. As such, it provides an avenue through which library users can be reached anywhere and at any time, making them aware of the library's resources and services.

### **2.3.1.3 Instant interaction between librarians and users**

The use of social media allows for instant interaction among partakers in an online environment. According to Mabweazara and Zinn (2016:3), an instant interaction between librarians and users is one of the reasons libraries have chosen to incorporate social media tools in their daily work. For example, blogs are used for making announcements through posting and by receiving comments. In addition, academic libraries could leverage social media technologies and communication tools to interact with both academic and administrative staff, as well as with students, in new ways (Mabweazara & Zinn 2016:3). Instant messaging provides the basis for librarians to intermingle with their users by assisting remote users (Mabweazara & Zinn 2016:3). Librarians can gain insight into what their users want and need just by being able to socially interact and converse with them (Burkhardt 2010:10).

### **2.3.1.4 Use of social media in reference services**

According to Ezeani and Igwesi (2012:4), librarians could identify users and provide the type of information that would normally result from reference services through the use of social media. They further say that students tend to use social media tools, such as Twitter, to make enquiries from librarians. This could therefore enhance the efficiency and helpfulness of a library (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:5). Instant messaging provides the basis for librarians to interact with their users, by providing remote assistance such as virtual reference services and current information to users. Utilisation of instant messaging could enable remote users to have their queries responded to (Mabweazara & Zinn 2016:3). Nfila (2009:54) observes that university libraries worldwide are making significant inroads into the use of social media tools in order to meet the information needs and demands of students in open distance learning (ODL) programmes.

Ezeani and Igwesi (2012:4) conclude that using social media tools for reference services means that reference librarians can serve the user with a variety of authoritative scholarly resources, which could enrich their information-seeking experience. King (2015:8) argues that social media tools could potentially provide libraries with a direct connection to users. He further mentions that libraries can

answer questions through social media tools like Facebook chat and Twitter, or by means of direct messages from library users.

### **2.3.1.5 E-Learning environment utilising social media**

By using a microblog, librarians can create a learning environment for e-learning students who do not wish to come to the library physically (Kwanya et al. 2012:17). Kwanya et al. (2012:17) explain that microblogs can be linked to the online catalogue and other e-learning services for remote access. They also note that librarians can use microblogs to teach information literacy skills.

Librarians are also using social media for literacy programmes. Penzhorn (2013:58) suggests that the use of social media tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking, RSS feeds and YouTube in an information literacy course can enhance teaching in an e-learning environment. Nifila (2010:54) observes that the University of Botswana library uses social media in order to meet students' information needs and demands in open distance learning (ODL) programmes. He also reported on the plans of the University of Botswana Library to record course lectures and tutorials to post them as podcasts on the library blog. The recorded podcasts can then be downloaded and used by students who are registered in e-learning programmes.

### **2.3.1.6 Library marketing tools**

Academic libraries often find it difficult to spread the word about different events and services that are being offered by the library (Burkhardt 2010:10). However, Burkhardt (2010:10) believes that social media could provide different means for the marketing of new library products and initiatives. His view is supported by Harinarayana and Raju's (2010:70) observations. They observe that libraries are increasingly using social media tools in their marketing strategies to promote their information services. Their observations endorse Hosseini and Hashempour (2012:139) and Penzhorn and Pienaar's (2009:69) findings that some libraries produce promotional videos for YouTube to market the library and create an awareness of the library's services. According to Hosseini and Hashempour (2012:139), YouTube videos are inexpensive to make. King (2015:8) also suggests that such videos can be shared to Facebook and Twitter. Other reasons for using social media tools, which were observed by Chu and Meulemans (2008:85), include the promotion of library events and the

dissemination of library news. Additionally, Chu and Meulemans (2008:85) suggest that users could create Facebook events and post them on other social media channels.

### **2.3.1.7 Training and skills in using social media tools**

The effective use of social media can add value to library services provided librarians obtain the relevant skills training to ensure an effective interaction with the target groups. The lack of the necessary skills is widely reported across the literature as a contributing factor for low use of social media tools (Mabweazara & Zinn 2016:3). Ezeani and Igwesi (2012:7) support this observation when they note that most librarians lack the necessary skills to effectively use social media tools in order to enhance the services they render. Hosseini and Hashempour (2012:139) also observe that a lack of knowledge and skills inhibited librarians to use social media tools. They found that the librarians who lacked computer training affected the use of social media tools to render library services. Similarly, Thanuskodi (2012:78) reported that library staff are discouraged from using social media tools due to lack of social media skills and this has prompted library managers to conduct computer and Internet training for their staff. Marfo and Akussah's (2017:92) study revealed that a lack of technical skills to manage profiles was also a challenge. They viewed training is key to the use of social media. Though the majority of librarians were generally knowledgeable in the use of social media, they lacked the knowledge of the array of social media platforms that were available.

Therefore a lack of skills and knowledge in the use of social media is a challenge. Concerns pertaining to the lack of familiarity with social media stresses the need for librarians to be trained in the use of social media tools.

## **2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS USED IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**

Academic librarians have embraced social media tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking, RSS feeds and YouTube (Penzhorn 2013:58). Likewise, Tripathi and Kumar (2010:196) identify social media tools that are favoured and used by librarians. These tools include RSS feeds, blogs and instant messaging. Similarly, Arif and Mahmood (2012:470) found that librarians mostly used instant messaging (IM), blogs and wikis in their personal and professional lives. They also found that Twitter and

Facebook were the most used social media tools in academic libraries (Arif & Mahmood 2012:470).

RSS feeds, blogs, wikis, Facebook, Twitter, instant messaging and podcasts will be discussed individually as follows:

#### **2.4.1 RSS feeds**

Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary (RSS feeds) are ranked as one of the top social media tools for disseminating content (Breeding 2010:28). As defined by Bansode, Dahibhathe and Ingale (2009:3), RSS feeds are "XML applications that allow users to gather content as it is created and as sites are updated". A similar explanation is offered by *What is RSS?* (2017). This web document describes RSS feeds as a "format for delivering regularly changing web content". A feed reader or a news aggregator is used for this purpose. According to Poore (2013:44) and *What is RSS?* (2017), an aggregator is a software application that grabs the RSS feeds from various sites and displays them to the subscriber who can then read and use the information. These tools are used for the dissemination of information through cellular phones, handheld personal digital assistants and databases (Chua & Goh 2010:200).

RSS feeds are compact, focused on content, and contain a lot of clearly delineated information (Calishain 2007:14). Calishain (2007:9-10) also describes how data are broken down by title and summary in an RSS feed. He notes that the additional information included in the RSS feeds includes information such as the origin of the information, the name of the author and the language in which the information is presented. He further describes RSS feeds as a type of text file, an XML file which is used for page and story summaries in a formatted form. This enables the data to be clearly delineated and broken down far more than it would be on a regular HTML page. Instead of visiting several websites to get the latest articles, users can use an RSS reader to provide them with a summary of updates, or a list of updated sites (Calishain 2007:10). Calishain (2007:10) also notes that some RSS feeds give users a list of search engine results, based on the queries that users specify.

#### **2.4.1.1 Utilisation of RSS feeds by libraries**

Users subscribe to RSS feeds in order to be alerted when there are changes to the existing content on the web (Calishain 2007:14). The alerts then come directly to the user in one place (user's computer), without the user having to visit his/her favourite websites to check for updates (Calishain 2007:14). In consideration of how an RSS feed works, Tripathi and Kumar (2010:197) note that an RSS feed enables a reader to scan new stories and information from a wide variety of web-based sources, without having to search the websites. Irrespective of the technology that was used, the information that is published through an RSS feed is supplied all in the same way and presented in an easy-to-read format (Zanin-Yost 2010:3). This is because RSS feeds have the ability to channel through many types of technology.

According to Akeriwa et al. (2015:285), RSS feeds are good tools for the gathering of information from news agencies and content from databases. These authors found that some of the RSS feeds received in academic libraries include the dissemination of library news, library announcements and reference services.

Poluru, Pandya and Patel (2012:279) observed the manner in which RSS feeds are being used in academic libraries. According to them, academic libraries use RSS feeds to aggregate news from selected information on their websites. Bansode et al. (2009:2), Tripathi and Kumar (2010:197.) and Wusteman (2004:405) identify a different use of RSS feeds. They reported an increase in the use of RSS feeds by libraries to promote their services, make announcements like changes to the opening hours of the library, introduce to new facilities, or update users on new book acquisitions. In order to do this, Wusteman (2004:405) explains that the library would create an RSS feed, place it somewhere sensible on the library's website and the feed is updated when the website is updated. The user then needs to use an RSS feed aggregator to check the websites for updates (Wusteman 2004:405).

#### **2.4.1.2 Advantages of RSS feeds**

RSS feeds have a number of advantages. The advantages of RSS feeds that could be identified in the literature include the following:



- RSS feeds can save users time by showing them only new and updated website information (Calishain 2007:13; Zanin-Yost 2010:3).
- RSS feeds are easy to disseminate and update information (Bansode et al. 2009:3).
- It provides for easy sharing and control over the flow of information (Bansode et al. 2009:3).
- The receiver is in charge of the type of information to be accepted (Zanin-Yost 2010:3).
- RSS feeds increase web traffic, thus making it efficient for webmasters (Bansode et al. 2009:3).
- For users, RSS feeds are easy to share, offering an efficient delivery method and control over the flow of information (Bansode et al. 2009:3).
- RSS feeds software is licence-free and could be used with an account login, thus saving money for institutions (Poluru et al. 2012:280).

RSS feeds are beneficial but also have shortcomings.

#### **2.4.1.3 Disadvantages of RSS feeds**

The disadvantages of RSS feeds identified by Bansode et al. (2009:3) can be summarised as follows:

- There may be copyright issues.
- Not all RSS feed content is fully used.
- Some feeds expire after a certain period of time, and
- Not every site has a feed.

In summary, RSS feeds are useful social media tools used in libraries to disseminate information and to ensure that their users remain current. It seems apparent from this section that librarians use RSS feeds primarily as an alerting service.

## **2.4.2 Blogs**

Blogs (also known as weblogs) have been around since before the turn of the century (Bradley 2015:25). They have since become one of the most influential social media tools (Poore 2013:44). Blogs are “online journals or newsletters” (Clyde 2004:43) and are written by individuals (Poore 2013:44). According to Scott (2015:80), blogs are independent, web-based journals containing opinions about anything and everything. Blogs are created and maintained by persons who are passionate about their subject and who want to tell the world about their area of expertise (Scott 2015:80). As observed by Bradley (2015:26), educational blogs are written by experts, include quality content and allow for discussion. Poore (2013:44) explains that blogs consist of blog entries, which are also known as posts, and each post can be on the same topic or on different topics. The most prominent characteristic of blogs is that blog postings are date and time stamped (Clyde 2004:43). Clyde (2004:43) further notes that the postings are published in reverse chronological order and are searchable. She also points out that blog readers can subscribe to the content. Baker, Bormann and Neher (2013:91) note that blogs create new topics, such as mini press reads, which spur public discussion, and blogs provide a centre for conversation through comments or replies.

### **2.4.2.1 The utilisation of blogs**

Blogs are among the most often-employed social media tools in academic libraries. They are used to inform users of new resources, to disseminate library news, inform clients about activities and even for publishing the library newsletter (Alexander 2008:197; Chua & Goh 2010:203). As noted by Clyde (2004:43), blogs are used to post information about special events, database trials, technology alerts and to provide information on exhibits on library web pages. Therefore, blogs are used by academic libraries for marketing and promoting library services (Mahmood & Richardson 2011:369). Blogs facilitate word-of-mouth marketing in several ways (Baker et al. 2013:91). An observation made by Baker et al. (2013:91) is that messages are made portable for linking or sharing information. Blogs are an inexpensive method for marketing (Baker et al. 2013:91).

In his concluding remarks, Rutherford (2008:185) maintains that librarians are acquainted with the use of blogs and actively use them for their work.

Many blogs contain current, scholarly opinions and are becoming a valid source of information, used by lecturers and researchers to get the latest ideas (Alexander 2008:80). For example, they are used to disseminate information about a particular subject or research interest (Alexander 2008:197; Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:9). Alexander (2008:197) therefore suggests that libraries create blogs for specific subjects to keep users updated on their areas of interest and to provide information on new Internet sources. This trend explains Khan and Bhatti's (2012:5) findings that blogs are used to keep the users current with developments in the field of librarianship. The information posted on a library's blog can then also be made available to other libraries and their users (Khan & Bhatti 2012:5).

In addition to remaining current on areas of interest, Ezeani and Igwesi (2012:9) comment that librarians could use blogs to create an awareness of library services. Blogs can therefore be used to promote the library's services among users who were not aware of them. The posting library will use an RSS reader for this purpose (Tripathi & Kumar 2010:200). Regular users of library blogs are then able to read updates, along with updates to all other blogs that are made available to the user in this way, without having to visit the library blog they are monitoring (Tripathi & Kumar 2010:200).

#### **2.4.2.2 Advantages of blogs**

The use of blogs can be advantageous for libraries. According to Penzhorn and Pienaar (2009:66), blogs have the potential to facilitate innovative library services. This, they argue, allows librarians to update users with information that is related to new services, material or service developments. Since blogs can be created without having to use HTML, they can be maintained easily (Bradley 2015:26). Bradley (2015:26) further notes that the ease with which blogs can be maintained allows for easy moderation of posts and can be set to require users to register in order to access posts.

### **2.4.2.3 Disadvantages of blogs**

Despite their advantages, there are also disadvantages associated with the use of blogs. Bradley (2015:26) comments that blog content tends to originate solely from its producers, without peer review; as such the content cannot always be trusted. The information could, therefore, be inaccurate, offensive or unpleasant to readers. (Bradley 2015:25-26). Bradley (2015:26) also notes that writers will always have an opinion on what they choose to write about and this could have a negative impact on the value of blogs as sources of information. He therefore emphasises the importance of checking the authoritativeness or reliability of a blog's content and to use the information posted to a blog with care.

### **2.4.3 Instant messaging**

Instant messaging (IM) is an application that allows for real-time communication to take place (Poore 2013:122). Waithaka (2013:66) defines instant messaging as a “form of mediated communication technology that enables users to communicate with others in real time”. An Internet connection is required to access basic chat systems (Foley 2002:37). In addition to an Internet connection, certain software (e.g. Windows Live, Messenger or Skype) is needed to deliver instant messages. These can either be downloaded onto a computer or can be web-based services (e.g. Google Chat or Facebook's Messenger service) (Poore 2013:123). According to Poore (2013:123) and Foley (2002:37), instant messages use digital text to talk to each other. The instant messengers type their message into a special window and the receivers of the message are then able to respond immediately after the message appears on their screens. This then allows free-flowing conversations as the instant messengers need not wait for an email (Foley 2002:37).

Waithaka (2013:36) found that Yahoo Messenger and Google Chat are the most popular instant messaging tools used by users.

#### **2.4.3.1 The utilisation of instant messaging**

Instant messaging has become a popular communication method, especially among young people, who form a large part of libraries' user population (Foley 2002:36; Xu, Ouyang & Chi 2009:325; Poore 2013:123). Chua and Goh (2010:200) and Xu et al.

(2009:328) put forward that instant messaging allows for interactive communication between librarians and users and the librarians are therefore able to respond instantly to users' queries. Instant messaging's interactive communication abilities, therefore, permit librarians to reshape their reference services (Foley 2002:37). Instant messaging has become the most active social media tool used by librarians (Chua & Goh 2010:163). The participants in Chua and Goh's (2010:163) study reported that they used instant messaging to keep their university librarians up to date on the queries that were received and attended to. In this way, the university librarian was informed immediately of any developments. Foley (2002:37) also notes that instant messaging enables librarians to reach out to their remote users. The literature reports primarily of the use of instant messaging by librarians for the purpose of answering reference queries where as other social media are used for alerting tasks.

#### **2.4.3.2 Advantages of instant messaging**

Instant messaging seems to be advantageous to libraries. Ruppel and Fagan (2002:190) identify the following advantages:

- Instant messaging is convenient;
- Instant messaging provides an anonymous and fast service which enables librarians to provide quick instructions to users to access information resources in the library and
- Instant messages are easy to use.

Instant messaging is very user-friendly and most used among librarians and users.

#### **2.4.3.3 Disadvantages of instant messaging**

Despite the advantages that instant messaging has, Ruppel and Fagan (2002:190) also identify certain disadvantages, which include the following:

- Limited availability in terms of both hours of service and number of users online at the same time;
- Instant messaging does not have the capability to show online resources directly;

- Slow Internet connections and computer access can sometimes be a problem and
- Instant messaging can be complicated, leading to uncontrollable explanations.

Wikis similar to this will be discussed in the following section.

#### **2.4.4 Wikis**

A wiki is defined as “a server program that allows users to collaborate in forming the content of a website” (TechTarget 2006). Each page in a wiki can focus on a specific topic, allowing anyone to contribute to the site by adding reviews, editing and adding information to reviews or comments on reviews (Purcell 2012:82). Bradley (2015:104) offers a similar explanation. According to him, wikis’ web applications allow collaboration to “create web pages, edit, add and delete content whilst using the simplified mark-up language”. Furthermore, wikis have a history function or version control function attached to each page (Poore 2013:621; Waithaka 2013:13). Users can then follow when and where edits were made and by whom (Poore 2013:621).

##### **2.4.4.1 The utilisation of wikis**

Wikis are available for all members or users of specific web communities by providing an online space for collaborative authorship and writing (Waithaka 2013:3). Due to the collaborative nature of wikis, libraries are able to use wikis to create content and promote a collaborative relationship between the library and its community (Khan & Bhatti 2012:3). Wikis are used in academic libraries to develop subject guides and to archive past reference questions or queries on library services (Harinarayana & Raju 2010:70).

In addition to archiving reference questions, Harinarayana and Raju (2010:70) also note that wikis are used for promoting and managing internally produced resources such as committee minutes, procedures, rules and policies.

##### **2.4.4.2 Advantages of wikis**

Raitman, Auguar and Zhou (2005:144) identify some advantages that the use of wikis could have for libraries:

- They are easy to access and very quick;
- Wikis have a one-page layout since each page can be created by a different person. Wikis allow for content ownership and authority;
- Wikis make it easy for users to view the work of other wiki collaborators;
- Wikis are a novel way to communicate with others;
- Wiki pages download fast and
- Low-cost software is used to create wikis and there is no downtime.

Wikis are useful and support knowledge sharing. Wikis are great for putting information together and discussing ideas.

#### **2.4.4.3 Disadvantages of wikis**

Wikis are tools for knowledge creation and they promote writing as a process and knowledge sharing over time (Waithaka 2013:59). Despite the usefulness of wikis, there are disadvantages in using wikis. Raitman et al. (2005:144) identify the following disadvantages of wikis:

- Wikis are less efficient and
- Wikis have limited HTML functions.

In addition to the disadvantages that were identified by Raitman et al. (2005:144), Bradley (2015:105) points out that wikis can be viewed publicly or privately. Wikis can be changed very quickly, they are not necessarily the best place to put information, and wikis are hardly ever updated (Bradley 2015:105).

#### **2.4.5 Facebook**

Facebook was launched in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his college roommates as an in-house Harvard social networking site which would connect students with one another (Potgieter 2014:13). Since its launch, Facebook has become one of the world's most popular social networking services (Poore 2013:87; Purcell 2012:99). Wilkinson (2014:145) define Facebook as “a social network in that it allows individuals

to construct a profile and create a network of their connections and view the connections of their contacts". Individuals who wish to create a network on Facebook need to register on the site and create a profile by adding other individuals as friends, and posting status updates to share information. They can then tag friends or comment on friends' status updates, upload pictures and videos, as well as send messages through inbox (Potgieter 2014:13; Purcell 2012:99). Facebook also allows individuals to create common interest groups, such as school groups or university groups for institutions which were attended by the individual group members (Potgieter 2014:13).

#### **2.4.5.1 The utilisation of Facebook by libraries**

Facebook pages can be created for diverse commitments (Kibugi 2013:115). Since Facebook is useful in determining and strengthening relationships, it is also used to create online communities (Kibugi 2013:115). Therefore, librarians who embrace Facebook have the opportunity to build strong relationships with their users (Wilkinson 2014:145). In turn, this opportunity allows librarians to engage with users on their own terms and in their own social environment (Wilkinson 2014:147). Therefore, Facebook can also support libraries in establishing where library users are and to reach out to them (Wilkinson 2014:147).

Apart from connecting with their users, libraries use Facebook to inform users about major events and recent acquisitions, by posting photos and videos and by providing links to resources available in the library (Khan & Bhatti 2012:4). Librarians could also post information on library hours, reference services and general news (Hendrix, Chiarella, Hasman, Murphy & Zafron 2009:46; Purcell 2012:20). Moreover, Facebook provides communication platforms which could be used for educational purposes (Wilkinson 2014:146).

Wilkinson (2014:145) suggest that Facebook can help cultivate a sense that a library is a place that expands beyond books. They believe users might realise the library is more relevant and approachable than they had previously supposed, and could be a valuable part of their personal networks (Wilkinson 2014:145).



### **2.4.5.2 Marketing the library utilising Facebook**

Marketing is one of the main motives why libraries use Facebook (Hendrix et al. 2009:46; Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:3; Wilkinson 2014:145). Wilkinson (2014:145) note that Facebook is used to promote specific programmes or resources to brand themselves as part of their campus community, or to encourage feedback and comments from users. Facebook is also used to promote events, announcements or post information about library collections and resources ((Wilkinson 2014:146).

Khan and Bhatti (2012:6) suggest that pictures of new books that have arrived in the library can be uploaded to Facebook to introduce them to users. Wilkinson (2014:145) propose that a library Facebook page could have flyers which are used to disseminate information to library users.

### **2.4.5.3 Communication and reference services**

Facebook can be harnessed by librarians to interact with their users for purposes of reference services. This view is confirmed by Aili and Emwanta (2014:195) when they claim that libraries have taken advantage of the new level of communication Facebook has brought about (Ofili & Emwanta 2014:195). Libraries use Facebook to facilitate two-way communication between users and librarians and to connect with other campus communities and the public (Wilkinson 2014:147).

The Facebook chat service, called 'Messenger', is a form of communication where users send one another messages directly and privately (Wilkinson 2014:146.). Ofili and Emwanta (2014:196) remark that libraries create Facebook groups which are used to communicate with specific user groups. They also noted in their research that the users who joined such groups considered the groups to be valuable, because their information needs were met through these Facebook groups. Furthermore, users posted questions on the Facebook group wall and received answers from library staff. The librarians who answered the reference questions on the library's Facebook wall created a public archive of library-related information that any future users could consult for answers to individual questions (Wilkinson 2014:145). The question-and-answer archive also reassures users that they will receive a reply to their queries, which are both quick and of good quality (Wilkinson 2014:144). In addition to the more

traditional service found at the reference desk, many academic libraries have begun to offer real-time chat and text message reference services (Wilkinson 2014:144).

#### **2.4.5.4 Advantages of Facebook**

Facebook enables individuals to remain informed about the latest developments and it supports library staff to interact with users on Facebook pages (Wilkinson 2015:146).

The advantages of using Facebook are as follows:

- Facebook is convenient for making connections with peers and to collaborate, allowing users to build and maintain social capital with others (Wilkinson 2014:147).
- Facebook is influential and has a positive impact on users since it is the most popular social media tool among university students (Escobar-Rodriguez, Carvajal-Trujillo & Monge-Lozano 2014:137).
- Facebook is an influential tool which allows messages to be broadcasted by users to a large audience, using wall posts and status updates, and the number of users increase on a daily basis (Escobar-Rodriguez et al. 2014:137).
- Facebook is a low-cost, attractive tool for interacting with users (Wilkinson 2014:147).

Facebook seems to be most advantageous and has a positive influence in developing connections between librarians and users.

#### **2.4.5.5 Disadvantages of Facebook**

Despite Facebook's advantages, there are also some disadvantages that can be linked to the use of Facebook in libraries.

- Foul language and inappropriate pictures and video uploads can be disturbing (Wilkinson 2014:147).
- Negative posts can damage a company's image (Wilkinson 2014:147).

- When it comes to coverage, access to Facebook is restricted due to network issues (Wilkinson 2014:147).

With the abovementioned disadvantages in mind, librarians and users need to take caution when information is posted on Facebook.

#### **2.4.6 Twitter**

Twitter is defined as “a social networking website, which allows users to publish short messages that are visible to other users” (Dickson & Holley 2010:460). Twitter messages are known as tweets and can only be 160–280 characters or less in length (Dickson & Holley 2010:60). Tweets can include links to other online material, such as websites and photos, accessible to followers who have a Twitter account (Dickson & Holley 2010:460). Supported by Scott’s (2015:271) findings, it appears that Twitter is an excellent way to share blog posts, video links, and other content of users’ interests. Twitter is a communication tool for family, friends and co-workers to stay connected through the exchange of quick frequent messages (Dickson & Holley 2010:60). Messages are posted on a profile where followers can see them and they can also be searched on ‘Twitter search’ (Dickson & Holley 2010:471).

Twitter has become a popular resource for organisations (e.g. libraries) and brands to connect with their customers (Del Bosque, Leif & Skarl 2012:200). Relevant information about the world and the things users are thinking about are shared through Twitter (Del Bosque et al. 2012:200). In the same way, libraries can share information via Twitter with both their internal users, as well as with people outside the institution, who are interested in the library’s topics and collections (Kwanya et al. 2012:11).

##### **2.4.6.1 The utilisation of Twitter in libraries**

Librarians use Twitter to give users first-hand information on the ongoing national elections, also users can send Instant Messages on complaints or ask question on a particular issue and get feedback on the spot using twitter (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:3).

Del Bosque *et al.* (2012:165) discovered that all types of libraries are currently using Twitter. Example public libraries frequently point out highlights on their websites, changes in holiday hours, teen events, and upcoming programs, while university

libraries may “tweet” about service issues, upcoming deadlines, library blog posts, and instruction workshops (Del Bosque *et al.* 2012: 165).

In addition to updating users on library activities, Kwanya *et al.* (2012:11) found that libraries use Twitter to teach information literacy skills by creating e-learning environments for remote users or users who do not wish to be in the library physically. They observed that libraries that use Twitter for this purpose provide a link in Twitter to the library catalogue. The library instructor then interacts with users in this controlled environment to answer specific questions and welcome new members.

#### **2.4.6.2 Alerting services and dissemination of information in the libraries**

Many academic libraries have noticed the popularity of the service and have begun to use Twitter to connect with their users (Del Bosque *et al.* 2012:200). According to Devoe (2009:211), the ability to connect with their users provides libraries with an opportunity to find what their users think about the library and what they do while using it. In a later study, Zhu (2016:616) reported similar observations when he established how information behaviour researchers observe followers’ information-sharing behaviour when they share information disseminated via the library’s Twitter account.

Twitter allows users to communicate and exchange knowledge (Del Bosque *et al.* 2012:201). Librarians are embracing Twitter as it enables them to better connect and communicate with their users via social media (Del Bosque *et al.* 2012:201). Libraries are therefore creating Twitter accounts for their customer services and other external communication (Del Bosque *et al.* 2012:201). Librarians use Twitter to interact with their users (Kibugi 2013:117). For example, users are able to message complaints or ask questions on particular issues and get instant feedback by using Twitter (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:3).

#### **2.4.6.3 Advantages of Twitter**

Twitter is popular and user-friendly. The following advantages of having a library Twitter account could be identified in the literature:

- Twitter is free, removing any cost barriers for use (Del Bosque *et al.* 2012:165).

- Since Twitter relies upon micro-blogging, it does not require a significant amount of staff time to create and maintain a Twitter account (Zhu 2016:616).
- Twitter presents libraries with an effective method to interact with their users (Dickson & Holley 2010:472).

Twitter is useful and popular but can also have its shortfalls.

#### **2.4.6.4 Disadvantages of Twitter**

The disadvantages of Twitter that were identified in the literature include the following:

- Tweets are not always accurate (Bradley 2015:201).
- A library Twitter account is unlikely to get followers if there is a lack of communication (Bradley 2015:201).
- Twitter is not used as much as other social media tools, such as Facebook and instant messaging, for example (Dickson & Holley 2010:474).

With regard to the views of different researchers identified above it seems as if libraries should carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of setting up a Twitter account as it is hardly worth the effort to maintain communication on Twitter if the library's users do not utilise Twitter.

#### **2.4.7 YouTube**

YouTube is a video-sharing website; it was created in 2005 by three former Pay Pal employees (Collins & Quan-Haase 2012:3). Waithaka (2013:42) defines YouTube as "a popular video-sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips". According to Dickson and Holley (2010:472), YouTube allows individuals and organisations (including libraries) to post original videos to YouTube. Also, users are able to insert these videos onto other websites, including Facebook, blogs or library websites. Calishain (2007:183) explains how this works. According to him, the user, when clicking on the name of a video, is transported to the video's page where the page includes more information on the video, such as how many times the video has been viewed and what viewers' ratings of the video are. Calishain (2007:183) observes that YouTube places videos that are frequently viewed and searched on top, so that

users can immediately see whether their search results are useful, although it might not get as many results as on other video-searching engines.

#### **2.4.7.1 Utilisation of YouTube by libraries**

YouTube is one of the best places where users can learn more about new technologies (Purcell 2012:36). Users are constantly posting videos showing systematic instructions for every technology imaginable (Purcell 2012:36). Libraries that embrace this educational opportunity, can create virtual tours to introduce users to the library during orientation sessions for new students entering the institution (Purcell 2012:36). Dickson and Holley (2010:473) observe that academic libraries, in addition to posting library tour videos to YouTube, also post bibliographic instruction videos to support their users. Public libraries use YouTube to promote and document library services and events (Dickson & Holley 2010:473). Waithaka (2013:27) also considered the use of YouTube for assessment purposes. He suggests that students, for assessment purposes, could be allowed to create a short video on a specific topic, as opposed to writing essays. Videos could be used for a similar purpose in libraries. This assessment method then allows librarians to experiment with new media in order to convey information and knowledge.

YouTube allows libraries to attract many users from various parts of the world and provide library instruction on how to use the library and its resources (Ariew 2008:110).

Media-sharing sites can be very useful for library public relations when they are used to communicate with users about library services, available resources and events presented at the library (Purcell 2012:36). Purcell (2012:36) reckons that it could be a good idea to constantly take videos and pictures of users in action, and of unique displays and events happening in the library and then make these images and videos available on social network sites. In this manner, YouTube can be utilised to create a learning community where everyone can contribute, have a voice and where content can be discovered and shared (Purcell 2012:36).

- Many libraries have been using YouTube to promote library services and events (Rogers 2009:4). Events such as important highlights of an inaugural lecture,

conferences and workshops are disseminated through YouTube (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:3).

- Cohen (2011:3) observes that YouTube videos, created by libraries for promotional purposes, can be linked to libraries' websites where they can be viewed.

Indications are that, based on the number of views library YouTube videos receive, YouTube has the potential to successfully reach out to users and thus promote library events and news.

#### **2.4.7.2 Advantages of YouTube**

Informative videos are uploaded to YouTube, which can be useful to users. Some advantages of using YouTube in a library to communicate with users were mentioned in the literature, including the following:

- Many videos are available to inform and educate which, by watching YouTube videos, also improves listening skills (Purcell 2012:36).
- Creating YouTube videos can increase verbal and written communication skills (Purcell 2012:36).
- YouTube videos are inexpensive to make (Hosseini & Hashempour 2012:140).

The listed advantages indicate how YouTube can enrich information services with multimedia experiences.

#### **2.4.7.3 Disadvantages of YouTube**

YouTube may seem like a great social media tool that has many great resources, but there are disadvantages to it.

- It is time-consuming to create the videos (Ariew 2008:110).
- Bandwidth is a problem – having limited bandwidth to support the practice and poor connectivity can frustrate online participation (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:6).

- Users can also be confronted by truly disturbing, inappropriate material which is available on YouTube (Purcell 2012:36).

Considering the viewpoints in the literature regarding the disadvantages of YouTube, it seems that the latter might not always be convenient for searching for information and looking for resources in libraries.

#### **2.4.8 Podcasts**

Podcasts have become highly common among Internet users. This trend can be due to the rising popularity of personal digital media players such as the iPod (Poore 2013:92).

Waithaka (2013:28) defines podcasting as “the process whereby digital audio files are distributed over the Internet either by using feeds or by other distribution media”. Podcasts can be on any topic, from water, politics to ceramic art and gardening, and can be found on podcast directories such as the Podcast Directory (Poore 2013:98). Bradley (2015:85) noted that ‘podcast’ is just a fancy name for a voice recording that has been saved as a digital file, and which has been uploaded somewhere where other people can listen to it. The user can then listen to the podcast online or download the file directly onto their Mp3 players or iPods. Calishain (2007:109) adds audio playing software on computers to the list. He further explains that a podcast can be loaded on various music players, which can be taken along with the listener. Podcasting therefore provides an easy way for people to make their own audio recordings available online (O’Dochartaigh 2012:122).

##### **2.4.8.1 Utilisation of podcasts by libraries**

Listening is a good way to get a feel for the general issues of the day. Podcasts provides a useful way to listen to what users are talking about (King 2015:7). King (2015:7) is of the view that many people use podcasts because podcasts enable them to connect with others. Bradley (2015: 85) comments on the educational value of podcasts. According to him, educational podcasts can be highly effective in promoting collaborative, socially constructivist learning environments, where users build and share knowledge and opinions. Since podcasts provide a platform, libraries can apply



it to communicate with their users and provide library instruction; podcasts could be a useful social media tool which could be utilised to promote library-based activities.

- Podcasts are social media tools which can provide training opportunities and enhance information dissemination (Harinarayana & Raju 2010:71). One of the examples Harinarayana and Raju (2010:71) give is to use podcasts to provide information on library services and to give tutorials on the use of library resources, such as the library catalogue.
- Bradley (2015:85) notes that podcasts produced by libraries covered talks, discussions, interviews and podcasts from science events, and could therefore provide peer learning opportunities.
- Bradley (2015:85) further suggests that podcasts could be used for audio library tours and author interviews.

Since video and screen captures can be integrated into podcasts, podcasting provides exciting multimedia engagement opportunities with library users and advantages and disadvantages of podcasts will be discussed next.

#### **2.4.8.2 Advantages of podcasts**

Podcasts provide enhanced support to users; they are easy to create, and are therefore a convenient way of providing access to data. Some of the advantages of podcasts are as follows:

- Podcasts are effective communication tools and are free to create (Bradley 2015:85).
- Users can download audio files and listen to them at a convenient time (Baker et al. 2013:110).
- Users can access podcasts for free (Baker et al. 2013:110).
- Podcasts have an advantage of both sharing information and putting a human voice or face on a brand (Baker et al. 2013:111).

Podcasts relieve users of the task of going through lengthy text; instead, it enables them to listen to information guiding them to use the library resources, giving research tips and much more (De Sarkar 2012:193).

#### **2.4.8.3 Disadvantages of podcasts**

Podcasting can be a challenge; the disadvantages of podcasts are as follows:

- Podcasts can only be in audio format (Bordeaux 2007:268).
- Due to copyright and rights of permission to podcast music, some podcasts are restricted for use on campus and this could be a potential problem (Bordeaux 2007:268).
- The technological ability of computers in the library of the remote user to receive podcast is also a problem (Bordeaux 2007:268; Baker et al. 2013:111).

Having discussed the advantages, as well as disadvantages, of a variety of specific social media tools, it is worthwhile to present the benefits and challenges of usage of social media in general.

## **2.5 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**

Social media have the ability to connect people as well as disseminating news and data (Gaha & Hall 2015:52). As noted by Gaha and Hall (2015:52), this ability could even influence professional vocations through shared posts and widened access to useful information.

### **2.5.1 Advantages of social media**

Social media have some advantages. Mabweazara (2014:38) reckons librarians should explore the use of popular social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for marketing and promotion purposes. As observed by Mabweazara and Zinn (2016:3), users no longer have to go to the library physically to check notice boards for library communications. Scholars such as Mabweazara (2014:36) and Xu

et al. (2009:350) identified some of the benefits that come with the use of social media tools in academic libraries. These benefits include:

- Social media offer innovative tools for libraries to use (Mabweazara 2014:36).
- Social media enhance interaction between librarian and user (Mabweazara 2014:36).
- Social media allow for quick communication and feedback (Mabweazara 2014:36).
- Social media improve section management in the library through the integration of cataloguing resources for cataloguing departments (Xu et al. 2009:350).
- Social media tools are effective in information management which, in turn, is capable of creating future prospects, opportunities and hope for library users, and library professionals (Mabweazara 2014:36).

A notable benefit of using social media services is that they are designed for broad appeal and they are easy to use, even if the user has little or no technical expertise (Mabweazara 2014:36). Kwanya et al. (2012) found that librarians use social media tools to enhance contact between users and librarians and in the process facilitate seamless communication and feedback.

Xu et al. (2009:302) also conclude that social media tools can enable collaboration. Social media tools offer improved section management through allowing instant communication and also improve the accessibility and integration of cataloguing resources (Xu et al. 2009:302). These tools have also been widely commended for having the power to allow innovative library services (Penzhorn & Pienaar 2009:69).

### **2.5.2 Disadvantages of using social media**

In contrast with the benefits of social media for academic libraries, several concerns have also been raised in the literature about the use of social media tools. Some of these concerns were highlighted in section 2.5.1. Researchers like Cohen (2011), Collins and Quan- Haase (2012:2), and Gaha and Hall (2015:57) provide reasons why some libraries discontinued their use or have not even started to use social media

tools. The reasons given by Gaha and Hall (2015:57) pertain to the time needed to work with numerous platforms, setting up social media accounts and maintaining a professional presence daily, as well as staying current with trends and new technology developments. Gaha and Hall (2015:57) also raise concerns about the need to assign several staff members to daily monitor the library's Internet presence. In other studies, it was found that the use of social media tools is a waste of time and resources (Cohen 2011; Collins & Quan-Haase 2012:2; Chu & Du 2013:65).

It was further observed that librarians require technical skills in order to apply social media tools effectively and it requires time and resources for them to learn these skills (Arif & Mahmood 2012:471; Hosseini & Hashempour 2012:139; Chu & Du 2013:65). Due to work demands, time is limited. It has also been noted that other major disadvantages in the use of social media tools include inadequate ICT infrastructure, such as low bandwidth (Arif & Mahmood 2012:471; Hosseini & Hashempour 2012:139).

In summary, the literature showed that academic libraries are using social media tools for various reasons. Some of the reasons identified are marketing, reference services, dissemination of information and posting library events. According to the discussed literature, libraries harness only those features of social media that can enhance their daily activities and interaction with their users. It seems that using social media are only complementary to their daily tasks. Furthermore, it also became clear that libraries apply social media tools primarily to transfer information and not so much to interact in a two-way manner with their users. They seem to use social media primarily as current awareness and alerting services.

Time and a lack of resources as well as the need for social media policies and guidelines has not been addressed in the literature. The literature review on social media revealed gaps that this study intends to fill, since most of the research was done more than five years ago.

## **2.6 POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS**

“A social media policy is the foundation of any social media governance model. Its purpose is twofold: to guide your employees and to protect your organization and your

customers from risk”, with social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook emerging as the standards (Ansaldo 2012). According to Donston-Miller (2011:6), social media policies give an explanation as to why social media are used in an institution and a social media policy also provides protection. This is because, according to Kroski (2009:45), staff members who post information on a social media tool on behalf of the organisation need clear guidelines on the nature of the information that may be posted. Kroski (2009:45) reckons that a social media policy can help organisations to create clear guidelines. She further said that there also standards letting users know what is acceptable to post on a blog or community page (Kroski 2009:45).

Mabweazara and Zinn (2011:9) found that the absence of social media policies proved to be a major factor in the use of social media tools in the two academic libraries they conducted research. The study conducted by Kooy and Steiner (2010:70) supports this view. They noted in their research that librarians realised there was a need for a social media policy when they observed students’ inappropriate behaviour whilst using social media. Kooy and Steiner (2010:70) reckons this observation shows that situations prompt libraries to create social media policies. On the same note, Johnson and Burclaff’s (2013:404) survey revealed that policies are restrictive by nature, instead of encouraging participation in social media use. These policies are risk-averse, reminding employees of appropriate behaviour and giving rules for creating and monitoring social media accounts in different departments. Some policies only allow librarians to share content with users, so that users are blocked from sharing content (Johnson & Burclaff 2013:404). “The value of social media policy is therefore found in its ability to move with change in technology and staff attitude and its ability to establish boundaries and protect those using it” (National Library of Australia 2010:5). Donston-Miller (2011:6) maintains that experts agree that policies should be developed to provide protection and encourage employees to participate in social media and to educate them about doing so in a safe, appropriate way.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

The objective of the chapter was to establish how social media tools are used in academic libraries. The definition of social media and concepts of social media tools

were discussed. Social media tools like Facebook, YouTube Twitter and Podcasts, to mention a few, are used by libraries to reach out to library users and to enhance library services. Concerns were raised about the use of social media tools.

The reviewed studies have been conducted in different places across the world. Some scholars emphasise that social media tools bring a wide range of benefits to academic libraries, hence there is a need to promote their integration and use in library services. In this regard, the literature indicates that librarians are familiar with and aware of specific social media, which are being utilised by academic libraries in different environments. Factors inhibiting academic libraries from using social media and debate surrounding the use of social media have also been highlighted. Chapter Three will discuss the research methods that were applied in the empirical component of this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology that was employed for this study will be discussed in this chapter. It will discuss the research design and methods that were employed to gather data, as well as the sampling strategy. The data collection methods and instruments, which included interviews and questionnaires, will be discussed, pointing out their advantages and disadvantages. The chapter will also cover the data analysis process.

#### 3.2 BACKGROUND

The purpose of a study shapes the research questions, which in turn inform the methods and the design of the research (Creswell 2007:207). The purpose of this explorative study is to investigate which social media tools are being used by Unisa Library staff and to determine how the use of social media tools enhances the library's services.

The research method and design of the study should aid the researcher in answering questions pertaining to the use of social media tools by certain Unisa Library staff. It therefore involves decisions on the research approach, data collection and data analysis as well as addressing aspects such as credibility of the research.

There are different research paradigms, rooted in philosophical traditions which, in turn, could have different epistemological and ontological assumptions. Certain research approaches are linked to the research paradigm, namely qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approaches. De Vos et al. (2011:40) define a research paradigm as "a model or pattern containing a set of legitimated assumptions and a design for collecting and interpreting data". Rubin and Babbie (2007:38-42) distinguish three research paradigms, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. This study is a qualitative study. According to David and Sutton (2011:486), "qualitative research is often associated with naturalism". Studies following this approach are interested in discovering and getting insight into or to seek

understanding of a phenomenon (David & Sutton 2011:486). They further explain that “qualitative research is often designed more to explore the relationships between the phenomenon under investigation and its entire environment” (David & Sutton 2011:486). The phenomenon under investigation in this study is the use of social media tools within an academic library environment. As Wilkinson (2014:145) observes, both these concepts involve people and, whereas libraries endeavour to connect people with information, social media tools involve the building of communities or networks.

### **3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Qualitative research attempts to understand and explore behaviour or social systems, based on the researcher’s field of interest (Nieuwenhuis 2007:48-49; Creswell 2009:173). A qualitative research approach is followed when the researcher needs to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a human problem (Creswell 2014:4). For the purpose of this study, it is argued that qualitative approach allows the researcher to get a better understanding on the use of social media amongst Unisa Library staff. This approach can also be used to test objective theories by examining the relationship among variables (Creswell 2014:14). According to Beck and Manuel (2008:67), “qualitative research is based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem”. They explain that the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. This then means that qualitative studies give a personal view to the study and that the outcome of the study is an understanding of how people think about processes (Beck & Manuel 2008:67). Qualitative research is concerned with understanding rather than explanation, with naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement, with the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider (De Vos et al. 2011:308). A qualitative approach will allow the researcher to collect data on the library staff’s personal experiences and views on social media in order to gain an understanding of and insight into the use of social media. Qualitative research will enable the researcher to understand the library staffs’ experiences and perceptions of using social media tools.



According to Check and Schutt (2012:188), qualitative researchers typically begin with an exploratory research, asking questions about what people think, and how they act and why, in some educational setting. Qualitative research attempts to understand and explore behaviour or social systems, based on the researcher's field of interest (Nieuwenhuis 2007:48-49; Creswell 2009:173).

The characteristics of qualitative research are natural settings where a researcher collects data in the field, at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study (Marshall & Rossman 2011:29). Researchers are the key instruments, meaning they collect the data themselves through interviews, observations and examining documents (Marshall & Rossman 2011:29).

Characteristics of qualitative research are:

- A humanist bent or orientation
- Curiosity
- Creativity and imagination
- The ability to recognise variation as well as regularity
- A sense of logic
- An acceptance of the self as a research instrument (Corbin & Strauss 2015:5).

### **3.3.1 Advantages of qualitative research**

The advantages of qualitative research are as follows:

- Qualitative research allows the researcher to produce a detailed and exact analysis of a few cases (Flick 2011:14)
- The participants have much more freedom (Flick 2011:14)
- Participants' feelings, opinions and experiences, and interpreting the meanings of their actions, produce a detailed description in qualitative research (Rahman 2017:103)

- It allows the researcher to discover the participant's inner experience (Rahman 2017:103)

### **3.3.2 Disadvantages of qualitative research**

These are the disadvantages of qualitative research:

- Qualitative analysis requires a lot of time and results can only be generalised on the broad mass in a limited way (Flick 2011:14).
- The results from a qualitative research study may be given low credibility by policymakers (Rahman 2017:103).
- Generalisation of research findings to the whole population raises issues when it comes to small sample sizes (Rahman 2017:103).
- Sometimes contextual sensitivities are left out and the focus is more on meaning and experience (Rahman 2017:103).

In consideration of the inherent characteristics of a qualitative research approach, and since the purpose of this study is to acquire an understanding of the use of social media tools to enhance service delivery, a qualitative research approach seemed the best research approach for this study.

Certain research designs and methods are linked to a qualitative research approach (Creswell 2003:191). Some of the qualitative research designs that are identified by Creswell (2014:14) include narrative inquiry, phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnographic and case study research. Mouton (2001:105) also identifies exploratory research as a qualitative research design. This study was an exploratory study.

### **3.4 EXPLORATORY RESEARCH**

“Exploratory research seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meaning they give to their actions, and what issues concern them” (Check & Schutt 2012:11). Mouton (2001:105) describes exploratory research as a basic research goal in which the researcher frequently uses qualitative data. The goal

of exploratory research is to help researchers understand the situation being faced, perhaps even to provide some possible solutions (Clow & James 2014:27). According to Clow and James (2014:27), exploratory research can also provide information that can be used to develop hypotheses. The objective of exploratory research is to provide insights and understanding of the nature of the phenomenon requiring understanding (Malhotra & Birks 2007:87-90).

According to Kumar (2014:170), the purpose of exploratory research is when a study is undertaken with the objective of either exploring an area where little is known or when investigating the possibilities of undertaking research. As shown in chapter 2, the available literature on the use of social media tools considered the nature of the tools and the potential uses libraries could make of social media tools to communicate with their users. This is the first study of this nature in South Africa focusing on the uses of social media tools at a distance learning institution.

Exploratory research involves a primary examination of a problem or situation to identify parameters to be studied further and, in some cases, to even define the problem itself (Clow & James 2014:27). In this study, the focus was on establishing which social media tools are being used in the Unisa library and whether the use of these tools enhances library services. Furthermore, the study also endeavoured to establish the challenges staff members experienced when using social media tools to communicate with their users and to disseminate information.

### **3.4.1 Advantages of exploratory research**

Exploratory research has its advantages, which are listed as follows:

- Exploratory research is often used in the first stage of a more comprehensive research study (Clow & James 2014:27).
- Exploratory research can provide clues as to the variables that should be studied (Clow & James 2014:27).
- It is flexible and adaptable to change (Dudovskiy 2018:80).

- It is effective in laying the groundwork that will lead to future studies (Dudovskiy 2018:80).
- This type of study can potentially save time and other resources by determining the types of research that are worth pursuing at the earlier stages (Dudovskiy 2018:80).

It seems that exploratory research has some disadvantages.

### **3.4.2 Disadvantages of exploratory research**

The disadvantages of exploratory research that are identified by researchers include the following:

- Exploratory research is not definitive (Clow & James 2014:27)
- Exploratory research studies generate qualitative information and interpretation of such type of information is subject to bias (Dudovskiy 2018:80)
- This type of study usually makes use of a sample with a modest number of cases, which may not adequately represent the target population (Dudovskiy 2018:80)

The objective of the research is exploratory. This objective is chosen since exploratory research aims to look at basic information in a new area of interest (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont 2005:106). Exploratory research is conducted to determine the nature of the problem. The nature of the problem in this study was an exploration of the social media tools being used by Unisa library staff. This type of research is not intended to provide conclusive evidence but helps us to have a better understanding of the problem. The researcher made use of exploratory research, since the aim was to gain insight into the use of social media in the library. The researcher wanted to explore how it enhanced the library services and to determine the experience of the library staff using social media. Therefore, exploratory research seemed applicable for this study.

### **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design of any study involves a set number of processes. These include data collection and data analysis.

#### **3.5.1 Data collection**

The way in which a specific method is employed for data collection determines the classification of a study to a large extent (Kumar 2014:170). The data collection stage of a study requires of the researcher to acquire the respondents' consent, do the sampling and apply the chosen method to collect the data (Creswell 2003:20). For the purpose of this study, survey questionnaires and interviews were employed to collect data.

#### **3.5.2 Consent**

In order to conduct research, the researcher has to obtain consent from the institution where the study will be conducted, as well as from the respondents. Atkins and Wallace (2012:44) stress the importance of taking the institutions' requirements into consideration when conducting research.

Kumar (2011:244) also notes that it is unethical to collect data without the respondents' knowledge, their expressed willingness and informed consent. Consent is when respondents are informed and made aware of the type of data to be collected from them, as well as why the data are required, the reason for data collection and how it will affect them (Kumar 2011:244). Harding (2013:25) also maintains that the researcher must take note that taking part in research places the respondents in a position with which they are not familiar. Therefore, the consequences should be explained to the respondents as clearly as possible (Harding 2013:25).

Creswell (2014:96) highlights some elements that need to be included in a consent form. They include the following:

- Identification of the researcher.
- Identification of the sponsoring institution.
- Identification of the purpose of the study.

- Identification of the benefits of participation.
- Identification of the level and type of participant involvement.
- Notation of risks for the participants.
- Guarantee of confidentiality to the participant.
- Assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time, and
- Provision of names of persons to contact if questions arise.

The University of South Africa has a prescribed consent form which must be used by researchers when they collect data. The prescribed consent form includes all the elements, as identified by Creswell (2014:96). A copy of the consent form appears in Appendix A.

In addition to seeking the respondents' consent, the researcher also had to seek permission from both the library's research committee, as well as from the University as an institution, to gain access to the Unisa Library staff. This was done by a written email to the research committee, after which forms were completed by the researcher and then forwarded to the institution's research board for the researcher to get a clearance letter. The researcher then completed a custodian form along with the clearance letter and emailed these to the library's management for their records and to make them aware that a study was being conducted in the library.

The library's executive director gave the researcher details of each directorate's manager, so they would be informed that the staff members were to be interviewed. The researcher sent out an informed consent form, explaining to the respondents about their confidentiality and the rights they had if they did not want to participate in the study. This was done through email for library staff to complete a survey questionnaire (available in Appendix B). In the email, the researcher identified herself, and explained the purpose of the study and the survey. The response to the survey was low. The researcher then again sent out two reminders, requesting the staff members to complete the survey. From the responses, the researcher identified library staff who used social media tools in the library and invited them to participate in the

interviews. The researcher then booked the audio-visual room in the library where the interviews took place. Ten library staff members were invited to attend the interviews and seven agreed to participate, but only five showed up for the interviews.

Respondents remained anonymous; they filled in the consent form and were notified that it was not compulsory to participate and that their names would be kept confidential.

### **3.5.3 Population**

O'Leary (2004:153) states that a study population is the whole group that constitutes the realm of applicability of the research results.

In this study, the target population was the library staff and 150 staff members were sent survey questionnaires to answer. Subsequently, the researcher interviewed five staff members of the Unisa Library, who used social media tools. The setting for both questionnaires and interviews was the main Unisa Library in Pretoria, South Africa. Unisa is known as an open distance learning (ODL) university and serves a majority of remote students.

### **3.5.4 Sampling**

According to Arshad and Ameen (2010:316), sampling is a technical accounting device to rationalise the collection of information, to choose in an appropriate way the restricted set of objects, persons, events and so forth, from which the actual information will be drawn. There are two types of sampling techniques, namely probability and non-probability sampling (Dudovskiy 2018:82). Probability sampling occurs when the people who constitute a sample are chosen because the researcher has some notion of the probability that they will be a representative cross-section of the whole population being studied (Dudovskiy 2018:82). Non-probability sampling is conducted without the knowledge about the sample being representative of the overall population (Dudovskiy 2018:82). It can be said that non-probability sampling is used in qualitative investigations (De Vos et al. 2011:391). Non-probability sampling was used for this study.

Among the non-probability sampling techniques are convenient or accidental sampling, quota sampling, purposive or judgemental sampling and snowballing (Kumar 2014:228). A sample for qualitative investigations tends to be small and an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that sufficiently answers the research question.

Purposive sampling is defined as “selecting a sample based on the researcher’s own knowledge of the population” (Babbie & Mouton 2001:166). As Kumar (2011:179) explains, the inclusion of participants in a purposeful sample is determined by the researcher’s judgement as to who can provide the best information that would support the researcher in achieving the objectives of the study. Purposive sampling looks at situations where sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind (Maree & Pietersen 2007:178). A researcher uses judgement when selecting components for a non-probability sample with purposive sampling, and this is believed to save time and money (Dudovskiy 2018:81).

A purposive sampling method may prove to be effective when only limited numbers of people can serve as primary data sources, due to the nature of the research design and the aims and objectives (Dudovskiy 2018:81). Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which a researcher relies on his or her own judgement when choosing members of a population to participate in the study (Dudovskiy 2018:81). With this in mind, purposive sampling was used to identify the library for the study, based on the researcher’s knowledge of the population and the objectives of the research. Purposive sampling has advantages and disadvantages

#### **3.5.4.1 Advantages of purposive sampling**

The following advantages of purposive sampling are identified by Dudovskiy (2018:80):

- It is effective in exploring situations where the discovery of meaning can benefit from an intuitive approach.
- Purposeful sampling is time and cost effective and



- If there are a limited number of primary data sources who can contribute to the study, it becomes the most appropriate method available.

Apart from the advantages identified by Dudovskiy (2018:80), Sharma (2017:751) states that the advantage of purposeful sampling is to involve multiple phases, with each phase building on the previous one.

### 3.5.4.2 Disadvantages of purposive sampling

The disadvantages of purposive sampling are as follows:

- Very high in bias and not really reliable (Sharma 2017:751)
- Inability to generalise research findings, and
- Vulnerability to errors in judgement by the researcher (Dudovskiy 2018:80).

As explained in section 3.5.2, a survey questionnaire was used to identify library staff members who work with social media tools and who could be approached to participate in the study. Based on the outcomes of the survey, the following individuals could be sampled: those who responded positively to using social media were selected for the interviews. Table 3.1 provides details on the directorates in which the respondents staff members work and the positions they hold.

**Table 3.1 Positions held by Unisa Library staff**

<b>Table 3.1</b>	
<b>Positions held by Unisa Library staff</b>	
Number of respondents from survey questionnaire	Seventeen library staff members
Number of staff interviewed	Five library staff members
Directorates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Resource Distribution</li> <li>• Corporate Services</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client Services</li> </ul>
Positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information processor</li> <li>• Systems librarians</li> <li>• Branch librarian</li> <li>• Search librarians</li> </ul>

One-hundred-and-fifty respondents were selected for the survey questionnaire. This included all the directorates in the library, from which a purposive sample of seven library staff members were selected for interviews. This sample of staff included information processors, systems librarians, branch librarians and search librarians. The researcher was expected to visit the main library to conduct interviews.

### **3.5.5 Survey questionnaires**

A survey is defined as “a group of research methods commonly used to determine the present status of a given phenomenon” (Powell & Connaway 2004:83). According to Kothari (2004:101), a questionnaire is a document that contains instructions, questions and statements which are compiled to obtain answers from respondents. The questions are presented with the same wording and in the same order to all the respondents (Kothari 2004:101). According to Kothari (2004:103), a large amount of data can be collected in a short space of time when a survey questionnaire is used. For example, in the study conducted by Xu (2007), 82 academic libraries of New York State and Long Island in the USA were surveyed, using a survey questionnaire. Mabweazara (2014) also employed a web-based questionnaire in his study to collect data from academic librarians on the use of social media tools at UWC and NUST. Therefore, the researcher used a survey questionnaire in this study to find out which staff members used social media tools in the Unisa library.

#### **3.5.5.1 Advantages of survey questionnaires**

Kumar (2011:148) mentions several advantages of questionnaires. He says questionnaires are less expensive, and offer greater anonymity. Additionally, Powell

and Connaway (2004) explain that online questionnaires facilitate the gathering of data because it is moderately easy to collect and analyse data in a short time.

### **3.5.5.2 Disadvantages of survey questionnaires**

Powell and Connaway (2004) mention disadvantages such as the absence of explanations to uncertain questions, and a degree of non-responsiveness of respondents. They also voice their concerns about questionnaire design as a possible prevention to the effectiveness of questionnaires, due to complicated questions that may be excessively long. On the same note, Kumar (2014:176) adds that the response rate is low, application is limited, there is self-selecting bias and that a response cannot be supplemented with other information.

The survey questionnaire for this particular study consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. Instructions were given on how to answer the questions. The researcher acquired some of the questions of the survey questionnaire from previous studies that had been done on using social media tools in the library. The survey questionnaire was accompanied by an introductory letter in which the researcher introduced herself and explained the purpose of the survey questionnaire. The self-administered survey questionnaire was selected as the first instrument to collect data in the study. The survey questionnaire was considered appropriate because it enabled the library staff to complete them at a convenient time, before the required deadline, and for the researcher to know which library staff members used social media tools in the Unisa Library, so that interviews could be conducted with those respondents. The researcher sent out the survey questionnaire through emails, considering that it was convenient for the researcher and saved travel costs.

The survey questionnaire was subdivided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire focused on personal information. The purpose was to establish the directorate in which the participants' were employed and to establish which directorate uses social media tools. The second part of the questionnaire focused on the use of social media tools. The respondents were asked to indicate which social media tools they were using and what their experiences were of using social media. The intention of the questions in the third part was to establish how long each respondent had been using social media tools for work purposes, and whether they had personal social

media accounts. This section also included a question on whether the respondents were aware of the guidelines and policies of using social media for the institution. The survey questionnaire appears in Appendix B.

The researcher sent out an email to all five the directorates in the library by using a Survey Monkey® website link for the library staff members to complete the questions. Since the library staff had email accounts and Internet access, respondents submitted the responses online via the Survey Monkey® website. The researcher sent regular reminders to the respondents. The researcher also kept track of the responses as email notifications from Survey Monkey® came in every time there was a response.

### **3.5.5.3 Pretesting of the survey questionnaire**

It is important to test all versions of the questionnaire on typical respondents long before data collection begins (Creswell 2003:20). For pretesting the questionnaire, the researcher also used the Survey Monkey® website, which had a free trial, to create a survey questionnaire. It provided options for analysis of the data collected as responses came in.

The survey questionnaire was pretested among a few of the library staff. This was also done to verify whether instructions were clear, questions were easy to understand and how respondents felt about the appearance of the survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was revised accordingly. However, despite these precautions, some of the participants did not fully understand that the purpose of the study was to establish whether the library staff's work benefitted from the use of social media tools. They therefore consistently considered the advantages they thought the use of social media had for users (see section 4.12). With the exception of this one question, pretesting the survey questionnaire did support the researcher in collecting accurate and useful data.

### **3.5.6 Interviews**

In qualitative research, interviews are the most commonly used data collection tool. Kumar (2014:176) defines interviews as a "person-to-person interaction, either face to face or otherwise, between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind". The purpose of interviews, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018:507), is

to understand, evaluate or assess a person, situation or events in some project, to test or develop hypotheses and to sample respondents' opinions. According to Punch and Oancea (2014:182) interviews provide researchers with the means to explore people, views, meaning and actions. The study by Akeriwa et al. (2015:288) found that interviews proved to be effective in collecting data on the use of social media in academic libraries. Interviews were suitable for this exploratory research as they provided detailed information about participants' thoughts and behaviour. The researcher used the interviews so that the identified library staff from the survey questionnaire can give their experiences, the challenges and benefits and perceptions from using social media tools to enhance library services.

#### **3.5.6.1 Advantages of interviews**

Kumar (2011:149-150) states that interviews are preferred for data collection because of the following advantages:

- The interview is more appropriate for complex situations;
- It is useful for collecting in-depth information;
- Information can be supplemented;
- Questions can be explained, and
- Interviewing has a wider application.

When considering the listed advantages of interviews, interviews seem to be a great way to collect data that would support researchers in acquiring an understanding of a phenomenon.

#### **3.5.6.2 Disadvantages of interviews**

However, Kumar (2011:150) mentions the limitations of interviews as a data-collection method as follows:

- Interviewing is time-consuming and expensive;
- The quality of data depends upon the quality of the interaction;

- The quality of data depends upon the quality of the interviewer, and
- The researcher may introduce bias.

There are various types of interviews, namely structured interviews, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

### **3.5.6.3 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews can be located somewhere between the extremes of the completely structured and completely unstructured interviewing structures (Berg 2009:106). This type of interview involves the implementation of several predetermined questions and special topics (Berg 2009:107). These questions are asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but interviewers are allowed freedom to deviate (Berg 2009:107). Taylor (2000:68) explains that, in the semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks open-ended questions, then allows the participants to respond in their own words. The studies conducted by Click and Petit (2010) utilised semi-structured interviews for data collection.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule which included open-ended questions to explore the use of social media. The first part was about personal information. This was to determine in which sections the library staff members worked. The second part was to establish which social media tools were used and for what purpose the social media were used. Lastly, in the third part of the interview schedule, library staff were asked to talk about the benefits and challenges of using social media. Also included was an opportunity for the library staff to make suggestions to improve the use of these social media tools in the library. The survey questionnaire, discussed in section 3.5.5 and the interview schedule were very similar in structure. This was so that the participants in the interviews could mention topics which were not covered in the questions and to make a good contribution, resulting from their own experiences.

The interview schedule appears in Appendix C. Before the interviews, the researcher provided a brief introduction about the research topic and the purpose of the interview, and requested the participants to sign the consent form. The researcher had booked a venue (namely the audio-visual room) in the Unisa Library to conduct the interviews with the participating staff members. A smartphone with a recorder was used to record

the interviews and hand-written notes were also made during interviews. The interviews were mainly conducted in English and the time it took to conduct the interviews were between 15 and 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted during February and March 2018.

#### **3.5.6.4 Pretesting of interviews**

Before collecting the actual data, the interview questions were pretested to disregard any insignificances and eliminate possible mistakes. The reason for this was to clarify and verify the questions. Two of the researcher's colleagues supported the researcher with the pretesting of the questions. An opinion from the supervisor was attained for an expert point of view. Despite these measures, the participating staff members misinterpreted questions pertaining to the advantages the use of social media tools hold for them as staff members, as they reflected on the potential responses they thought the use of these tools old for their users. This was taken into consideration during data analysis.

The researcher transcribed the interviews, using Microsoft Word on a laptop computer.

The researcher used both data collection tools to determine which directorate and staff members used social media tools. The survey questionnaire was to find out which staff members were assigned to use social media tools. As well as determine which social media tools was being used by the library staff. Secondly, the researcher endeavoured to collect more data during the interviews than was possible with the survey as the library staff she interviewed would then be able to freely discuss their experiences of using social media tools, the challenges they experienced, as well as the benefits of using these tools to communicate with users and disseminate information.

#### **3.5.7 Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity are two important aspects that need to be considered when planning a research project.

##### **3.5.7.1 Reliability**

Reliability refers to "the trustworthiness of the data and the analysis of the data. It focuses on testing accuracy of the research, and whether the research is using the

right method to process data” (Mason 2002:20). Creswell (2014:201) notes that ensuring validity in a qualitative study requires the employment of certain procedures to ensure the accuracy of the findings. “If a research tool is consistent, and stable, predictable and accurate, it is said to be reliable” (Kumar 2011:181).

This study also employed triangulation. Triangulation manifests when the researcher uses multiple and different methods of investigation to provide corroborating evidence (Ely et al. in Creswell 2013:251). The use of a survey questionnaire and interviews to collect data in this study is an example of where triangulation was applied to ensure the validity and reliability of data. For this purpose, the empirical data collected through the survey questionnaire and the interviews were compared with the findings reported on in the literature review, as well as with the researcher’s recordings of the interviews.

#### **3.5.7.2 Validity**

Validity refers to “the degree to which a research actually measures what it was intended to measure” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003:246). In qualitative research, validity is one of the strengths and is based on the researcher, the reader or the participants determining the accuracy of findings (Creswell 2014:201). Creswell (2014:201) further notes that credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity address validity.

The researcher completed transcribing the transcripts, by using a computer with Microsoft Word, to analyse the data, which contributed to the validity of data. The researcher transcribed the interviews on her own by using Microsoft Word and read the transcripts repeatedly to ensure nothing was missing from the recordings. Analysis of data was also completed by the researcher on her own to ensure validity.

The researcher established a logical link between questions and objectives in the study, making sure that questions related to the matter under study.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Mouton (2001:108), data analysis involves the breakdown of data into more controllable patterns or themes to understand the data better. Creswell (2003:22) also notes that “data analysis involves preparing the data for analysis”. Data analysis



involves summarising the data and interpreting its meaning in a way that provides clear answers to the questions that initiated the study (Fox, Murray & Warm 2003:178). Data analysis can be done manually or by computer (De Vos et al. 2011:249).

De Vos et al. (2011:249) note that the purpose of analysis is to reduce data to an understandable and interpretable form. They add that this is done so that the relations of the research problems can be studied and tested, and conclusions drawn (De Vos et al. 2011:249).

After collecting data, there must be preparation for data entry. According to De Vos et al. (2011:253), data preparation includes checking and editing the collected data and eventually coding it. Coding means systematically reorganising raw data into a format that is machine-readable. For analysing questionnaires, code sheets are useful, in that they provide both a guide and the record of how responses gathered from the questionnaire are to be coded (De Vos et al. 2011:253).

According to Creswell (2009:186), the researcher uses codes to represent specific themes and ideas identified in the data. "Qualitative data analysis concerns how we move from data to understanding, explaining and interpreting the phenomena in question" (Check & Schutt 2012:643). It includes, among other matters, organising, describing, understanding and explaining data (Check & Schutt 2012:643).

The researcher, after transcribing the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, compared the participants' responses to identify patterns in the use library staff make of social media tools. The different patterns gained from the data were organised and then categorised through coding. Patterns that emerged were highlighted and grouped together under the theme heading. The researcher used Microsoft Word to transcribe the responses.

The collected data from the survey questionnaires were analysed by the Survey Monkey® website. The researcher printed out the survey and organised it according to responses (see Appendix B). Thereafter the researcher categorised the answers according to the emerging patterns. Frequencies and distributions, indicating the number of occurrences of each pattern, were used to reveal the patterns and thus to

facilitate interpretation. The purpose of the survey was to establish who used social media in the Unisa Library.

Since some of the questions that were asked in the survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were the same, the findings pertaining to each question was reported on simultaneously in chapter 4. This was done to avoid an unnecessary repetition of similar information and to support a more comprehensive discussion of the findings.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter described how the research was conducted. The study followed a qualitative research approach, which was considered an appropriate method for this study. Both the survey questionnaire and interviews were used as data collection instruments. The chapter explained how data collection was done, including a discussion on population, sampling and analysis. The following chapter will present and analyse the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS BY UNISA LIBRARY STAFF

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the collected data for this study on the use of social media tools by library staff working in the Unisa main library. The chapter provides a frank discussion of interpreted findings and in the process gives alternative explanations of the findings.

The objective of the study is:

- To identify which social media tools are being used by Unisa Library staff and to establish the reasons why specific tools are used
- To establish whether the Unisa Library has social media guidelines and policies that could guide staff members who use social media tools in the execution of their tasks
- To establish whether library staff received any training on how to use social media
- To acquire an understanding of the challenges, as well as the benefits, that social media participation poses to Unisa Library staff members
- To acquire an understanding of how the use of social media tools enhances library services

Two sets of data were collected by means of a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with the library staff who work with social media in the Unisa Library. The purpose of the interviews was to gather more information on the use of social media tools in the Unisa Library. Personal interviews were conducted with five staff members of the Unisa Library who uses social media tools for work purposes. The interviews were conducted with information resource processors and systems librarians. The search librarians and marketing staff did not

take part in the interviews, despite their prior agreement to do so. They were busy with preparations for library week. This did not really affect the outcome of the investigation as one of the participants mentioned during the interviews that they get messages from the search librarians to post messages on Twitter and Facebook. However, the researcher could have learnt more about their experience of using social media tools to enhance their services and challenges they face if the search librarians had participated in the interview.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule that consisted of eight open-ended questions that staff had to answer. The following discussion presents an analysis of the data collected through both processes.

#### **4.2 JOB POSITIONS OF RESPONDENTS**

The Unisa Library has five directorates, namely Corporate Services, Information Resources Distribution (IRD), Client Services and Information Resource Content Management (IRCM). The positions of the library staff working in different directorates are different. The positions held include branch librarians, systems librarians, information resource processors, collection developers, cataloguers, personal librarians, shelving officers, as well as the marketing team, who are not necessarily librarians. The positions that the library staff hold determine their individual work roles which, in turn, determine whether or not the individual staff members would be using social media to perform their tasks. Therefore, in order to establish the positions of the respondents, the responding library staff were asked to reveal their positions and the directorate in which they worked. This question formed part of the survey questionnaire and was repeated during the interviews. The questions were formulated as follows: What is your job title? In which directorate do you work?

Figure 4.1 graphically illustrates the job positions of the responding library staff.

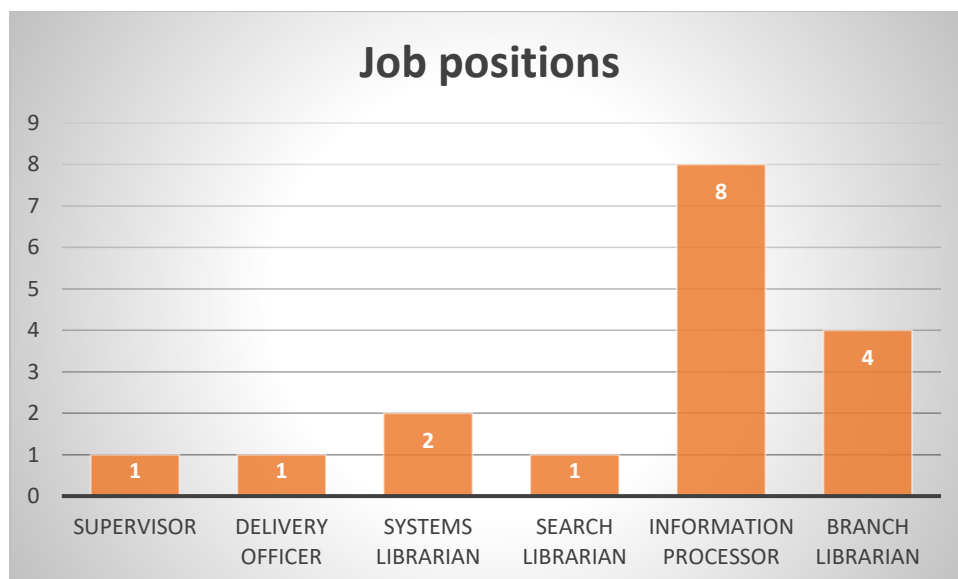


Figure 4.1 Positions of responding library staff

Based on the responding library staff's responses, the positions held by the library staff who use social media tools included branch librarians, information resource processors, search librarians, systems librarians, a supervisor and a delivery officer.

In order to establish which of these staff members work with social media, the survey questionnaire also included the following question: Which social media tools do you use for your work?

#### 4.2.1 Information processors

The information processors are from the Information Resources Distribution directorate. These staff members use Facebook and Twitter to respond to library users' queries. Participant 3 answered as follows: *"I use Twitter. I normally get updates from search librarians to post on Twitter about the library services, for example like current awareness and to reply to student queries."* As reflected in section 2.3, this finding is similar to Banda's (2011:12) observation, indicating that social media are used in libraries as a communication tool to answer users' questions. Furthermore, Ezeani and Igwesi (2012:4) also reported on students' tendency to use social media tools, such as Twitter, to make enquiries of librarians.

#### **4.2.2 Systems librarians**

The systems librarians use Skype and the library's website. Participant 4 said: *"I use Twitter, Facebook and Skype for communication with overseas clients; when we have meetings and conference calls, we use Skype for our clients."* This is similar to Stephens's (2006:10) observation that academic library staff are now able to directly and instantly interact among themselves and with users, by remotely providing assistance such as virtual reference services.

The systems librarians also design the library's website. Participant 5 provided information on the use of the library website by the library staff. She indicated that the systems librarians receive content from other library staff which they need to publish on the library's website. The library website is regarded as the central point of the library's communication. They therefore use the website to communicate with users on behalf of other library staff by sending out notices from the website. Examples of the notices they send out on the library website include notices pertaining to databases which are not accessible, or notices on the closing of the library due to maintenance.

The information processors and the systems librarians who participated in the interviews indicated that they worked in the Information Resources Distribution directorate and the Corporate Services directorate respectively.

#### **4.3 PERSONAL ACCOUNTS**

In order to establish whether the library staff members who are involved in the use of social media tools had personal social media accounts, a closed-ended question was included in the survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire respondents were asked the following question: Do you have any personal social media account?

The findings showed that the majority of the responding Unisa Library staff have personal social media accounts. Only one respondent did not have a social media account.

In a follow-up question during the interview, the participating staff members indicated that they use their accounts to keep abreast with what is happening around the world and to communicate with family and friends. Participant 3 confirmed this during the

interviews by saying: *“I am self-trained and can use social media because I have a Twitter account.”* As shown in section 2.3, personal and work activities are often intermingled when engaging with social media.

#### **4.4 TRAINING RECEIVED IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS**

Although limited references to the training of librarians who use of social media tools could be found in the reviewed literature, which was discussed in Chapter Two, it was deemed necessary to establish the library staff’s competence in using social media tools. The participating library staff were requested during the interviews to indicate whether they had received formal training in the use of social media tools or not. The question asked was formulated as follows: Did you receive any formal training in the use of social media tools?

The majority of the participants indicated that they were self-trained from personal experience. This confirms that the Unisa library staff received no formal training on the use of social media tools. To confirm this, some of the responses were:

- *“No, I taught myself”* (Participant 1).
- *“No, I knew Twitter from my own personal use”* (Participant 3).
- *“I am self-trained, it’s not a requirement for you to have knowledge, you train yourself due to interest”* (Participant 2).
- *“Most of the staff members are using Facebook from personal accounts, it’s just that we must learn the services that are at Unisa and, we have to adhere to ethics of the institution to be able to use such platforms. You are the face of the institution. So how am I supposed to respond and which language we suppose to use. Sentence construction, simple things we supposed to do in term. Training that was done was what kind of behaviour one should use when using an organisational platform”* (Participant 4).

Based on these responses reporting on the library staffs’ experiences of using social media tools, it seems as if the library staff can use social media tools. Participant 4’s comments on the need to adhere to institutional ethics is an

important finding which could prompt further investigation in order to establish how well librarians adhere to this requirement.

#### **4.5 AWARENESS OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE LIBRARY**

An instant interaction between librarians and users is one of the reasons libraries have chosen to integrate social media tools in their daily work (Mabweazara & Zinn 2016:3). Therefore, in order to establish whether the responding staff members thought library users were aware that staff members use social media tools to communicate with them, the following question was asked during the interviews: Are users aware that you use social media?

In response to this question, the majority of the participating library staff indicated that users were aware that the Unisa Library was using Facebook and Twitter. Four of the participating library staff members responded positively; they responded as follows:

- *“I believe so, because we do have trainings, where we do collaborations with client’s services where students are being told where they are able to request their material; especially their prescribed material, they supposed to request them online and which then comes to our section so that we can assist them further”* (Participant 1).
- *“Yes, they do although not that much”* (Participant 2).
- *“Some are aware”* (Participant 3).
- *“Yes, they are aware and most of them receive notification via Twitter, the library one [and the University one”]* (Participant 4).

Participant 5 did not respond to this question. This could have been that the participant ignored the question. The findings indicate that users are aware that the library uses social media. In order to confirm the reported findings, the researcher went on the library’s Facebook and Twitter pages herself. A comparison of the number of registered students with the number of followers on these pages indicated that only a fraction of the registered Unisa students participate on these social media pages. This could mean that not all users are aware of the library’s Facebook and Twitter pages



or that they are not interested in using the library's Facebook and Twitter pages. As shown in section 2.4.5, Facebook could be used to create online communities (Kibugi 2013:115.). Wilkinson (2014:145) reckon that Facebook could help in cultivating a sense that the library is a place that expands beyond books, and users may discover that the library is more relevant and approachable. Embracing Facebook could then support librarians in building strong relationships with their users (Wilkinson 2014:145).

#### **4.6 SOCIAL MEDIA THAT ARE USED BY LIBRARY STAFF**

As shown in section 2.4, various social media tools exist that could be used in a library to enhance service delivery. The social media that were identified in section 2.4 include Facebook, Twitter, RSS feeds, instant messaging, blogs, wikis and YouTube. In order to establish which social media tools were used by the respondents in the Unisa Library, they were provided with the list of social media tools that were identified in Chapter Two. This question formed part of the survey questionnaire and was repeated during the interviews. In the survey questionnaire, the responding library staff were requested to select the tools they used to reach out to library users. The question was formulated as follows: Which social media tools do you use for your work?

Based on the data collected through the survey questionnaires, Table 4.1 provides an analysis of social media tools used by Unisa Library staff.

**Table 4.1 Social media tools used by library staff**

<b>Table 4.1</b>				
<b>Social media tools used by library staff</b>				
<b>Respondent 1</b>	<b>Respondent 2</b>	<b>Respondent 3</b>	<b>Respondent 4</b>	<b>Respondent 5</b>
Twitter, Facebook	Facebook only	Twitter	Twitter, Facebook and Skype	Library website

The majority of the responding library staff indicated that they used Facebook, whereas only three of the responding library staff indicated that they used Twitter.

According to the responses found in the Survey questionnaire, YouTube and instant messaging are also used. Furthermore, the majority of respondents who use Facebook, work in the Information Resource Distribution directorate as information processors. Three of these staff members also use Twitter. Responding staff members working in Client Services reported that they used YouTube and instant messaging, while the staff members working in Corporate Services use Skype and the library web page. The findings of this study is in accordance with Nfila's (2009:55) study which shows that academic libraries have increasingly integrated social media into their library services to reach out to their users, disseminate information and promote library services. He also observes that academic libraries worldwide are making significant inroads into the use of social media tools in order to meet the information needs and demands of students in open distance learning (ODL) programmes. In section 2.4.7, the findings reported by Ezeani and Igwesi (2012:4) indicate that libraries use YouTube to disseminate important highlights from inaugural lectures, conferences and workshops. Dickson and Holley (2010:472) also report that libraries post videos of library tours and bibliographic instruction videos for students.

During the interviews, the participating staff members provided some reasons for their use of specific social media tools. Some of the responses were as follows:

- *"I use Twitter, I normally get updates from search librarians to post on Twitter about the library services e.g. like current awareness and to reply to student queries"* (Participant 3).
- *"Twitter, Facebook and Skype, used for communication with overseas clients, when we have meetings and conference calls, we use Skype for our clients"* (Participant 4).

Rendering a current awareness service and responding to students' queries therefore seem to be the main reasons why the participating librarians use Twitter. The participating library staff also use Twitter, Facebook and Skype to communicate with international clients. They seem to use Skype exclusively for conference calls.

Similar uses were reported on in section 2.3 by Collins and Quan-Haase (2012:2); these researchers found that Canadian librarians use Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

According to Wan (2011:312), a large number of libraries have Facebook pages. Arif and Mahmood (2012:470) report on Asian librarians' use of instant messaging, wikis and blogs. Similar findings are reported by Penzhorn (2013:58). She adds RSS feeds and YouTube to the list, whereas Scott (2015:15) also reports on video sharing. These findings indicate that the responding Unisa Library staff use social media tools similar to those reported on in other studies, but that they do not use all the social media tools that are available. .

#### **4.7 PERIOD OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS USED**

When considering the literature review in Chapter Two, in reference to Potgieter (2014:13) and Bradley (2015:26), libraries have been using social media to enhance their services during past decade. As compared to how long other library systems and processes have been in use, it is suggested that the use of social media tools in libraries is a relatively new phenomenon. In order to establish how long social media tools have been used in the Unisa Library, the respondents were asked the following question: How long have you been using social media tools? The question was from the survey questionnaire and was repeated during the interviews.

The responses are presented in Table 4.2 below:

**Table 4.2 Years using social media tools**

<b>Table 4.2</b>	
<b>Years using social media tools</b>	
<b>Unisa Library staff members</b>	<b>Years using social media tools</b>
Information processors	5–10 years
Branch librarians	3 years
Search librarians	2–8 years
Systems librarians	2 years
Delivery officer	1 year

As shown in Table 4.2, some of the responding library staff had been using social media tools for ten years. In turn, the majority of the respondents indicated they had been using social media tools for between five to ten years, whereas one staff member had only been using social media for a year. Furthermore, the information processors seem to have been using social media tools for the longest period. They are followed by the search librarians. The delivery officer only started using social media a year before. This was most probably because he only had a need for this fairly recently, as opposed to the information processors.

The findings show that social media tools have been applied over different periods by the respective staff sections as responded – a finding which correlates with the earlier suggestion that libraries have been using social media tools for the past decade. If one considers the work roles of the responding library staff, it seems evident that the information processors need to use social media tools. Responses from the interviews were as follows:

Participant 2 noted that he has been using social media tools *“for one-year, other people were doing it before that”*.

*“It’s been roughly three years, I have been assisting and backing them up, but I took the role and responsibility fulltime last year”* (Participant 1).

In turn, Participant 3 indicated that it was roughly three years since she started using social media: *“Although I think now this is the second year I will be doing it fully.”*

The findings from the interviews confirm the data collected from the questionnaire, but the researcher found evidence that the staff members who use social media tools seem to rotate and not all of the staff members in the same section had been working with social media all the time. This observation was based on a comment made by Participant 2, who said, *“... for one year, other people were doing it before that”*.

The data in section 4.8 will corroborate this observation.

#### 4.8 REASONS FOR USING SPECIFIC SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

The literature discussed in section 2.3 indicated that social media are used for various reasons in academic libraries. Some of the reasons that were reported on include marketing, communication and announcements (Kim & Abbas 2010:213; Bradley 2015:71). For example, Chu and Meulemans (2008:85) discovered that social media tools were mainly used to promote library events and disseminate library news.

In order to establish the purpose for which Unisa Library staff use social media tools, the responding library staff were presented with an open-ended question. The question was formulated as follows: Why do you use social media?

The following responses to this question capture the main reasons for the responding library staff's use of social media tools.

- *“The purpose of using social media are to inform staff and students about the progress and completion of a request, current awareness, and marketing and to keep users informed about things they need to know with regards to our services” (Participant 1).*
- *“I develop the library website, design the look and publish content from different directorates in the library, I also make sure the website is updated” (Participant 5).*

In addition to these two responses, Table 4.3 captures the reasons why library staff use social media tools and provides an indication of the specific tool that is used for each purpose.

**Table 4.3 Reasons for using specific social media tools**

<b>Table 4.3</b>		
<b>Reasons for using specific social media tools</b>		
<b>Social media tools</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Quotations</b>
Facebook and Twitter	To get the latest news and information to communicate.	<i>"It is in my job description"</i> (Participant 2).
Facebook and YouTube	For communication with library clients and work.	There was no quote for this as it was from the survey questionnaire.
Facebook	Answering queries of students.	<i>"Unisa is an ODL institution, and it's not a day to day contact class, kind of institution. So, students can be able make contact the library at their own comfort space, at any time"</i> (Participant 1).
Facebook and Twitter	Educational and research purposes.	<i>"Just to post updates and events and inform students what is going on in the library"</i> (Participant 3).
YouTube, Facebook and Twitter	Library awareness and marketing.	<i>"Product updates, and sending out notifications to clients and service providers, maintains of applications posting information, having meetings with the external service providers"</i> (Participant 4).
Facebook, Twitter and instant messaging	To post messages from the directorate, inform students of any disruption, e.g. postal strikes. Power failures, etc. and attending to queries from students.	<i>"Everyone uses smartphones and can be able to access Internet"</i> (Participant 1).
Twitter and Facebook	News updates and updates on conferences and events.	<i>"I get information from search librarians to post on social media"</i> (Participant 3).

Facebook	Sharing of information among colleagues, friends or family.	There was no quote for this as it was from the survey questionnaire.
Facebook and YouTube	Personal and professional.	There was no quote for this as it was from the survey questionnaire.
Facebook, Twitter and RSS feeds	Inform staff and students about the progress and completion of a request. Current awareness, marketing and to keep staff and students informed about things they need to know regarding our services.	<i>"Moving into an e-environment"</i> (Respondent 1).
Facebook, Twitter and YouTube	Personal and work.	Respondents.
WhatsApp	Used to communicate and share important work-related messages like meeting cancellations and reporting absenteeism. This seems to be only among the librarians themselves and not between users and a librarian.	This data was derived from the survey questionnaire.

An analysis of Table 4.3 shows that social media tools are mainly used for:

- Answering students' queries
- Communication with library users and staff members
- Library awareness and marketing
- Sharing information among staff, and
- Current awareness, conferences and events.

The findings show that Unisa library staff use the identified social media tools primarily for information dissemination and apparently only Facebook and Twitter are used to interact with users to answer one-on-one queries. Responses from the questionnaire indicated that some library staff members use social media for personal use. The

findings in this study endorse Chu and Meulemans's (2008:85) findings. They report that librarians use social media tools to promote library events, for dissemination of library news, and to ensure that it can be found easily. In turn, Banda (2011:12) found that social media were used for communication purposes, to answer users' questions and to be updated on the latest news. Penzhorn and Pienaar (2009:69) found that many YouTube videos were uploaded by the library for marketing and for creating awareness. On the same note, Cohen (2011:3) evaluated YouTube videos created by libraries for promotional purposes and found both view counts and views indicate that YouTube has the potential for successfully promoting library events and news.

The research findings indicate that the Processing directorate uses Facebook and Twitter to respond to students' queries. The Corporate Services staff members use social media for work-related discussions and updates, such as conferences and events. In addition to using social media tools for work-related purposes, some of the respondents reported that they also used social media tools for personal reasons, to communicate with friends and family. Although the literature review did not report on the use librarians make of WhatsApp as a social media tool, the survey questionnaire revealed that Unisa librarians used WhatsApp to communicate and share important work-related messages like meeting cancellations and for reporting non-attendance of meetings or absence from work. This seems to be only among the librarians themselves and not to interact with users.

#### **4.9 COMMUNICATION WITH USERS USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS**

Communication seems to be an important reason to use social media tools. To determine which social media tools were used for communication with library users, the respondents were asked an open-ended question in the survey questionnaire. The question was also repeated during the interviews.

The question was formulated as follows: Which social media tools do you use to communicate with library users and why? The responding library staff provided the following answers:

- *"Facebook is cheaper and easily accessible by many"* (Participant 1).



- *“Most students has access to Twitter” (Participant 3).*
- *“Facebook and Twitter because that is how I work” (Participant 2).*
- *“Post updates, events and inform students what is going on in the library. Send out notices if the system is slow or we have a back log and queries” (Participant 3).*
- *“It is on my job description. I use Facebook to answer questions from the distance learning students who cannot register at the library in the main campus” (Participant 1).*
- *“Unisa is an ODL institution and it is not a day-to-day contact class kind of institution, so students can be able to contact the library at their own comfort space at any time” (Participant 2).*

The findings show that Facebook is mostly used by Unisa Library staff to communicate with library users. Twitter was also mentioned and the reason for using Twitter was because it is user-friendly and most students have accounts. YouTube was also mentioned among the social media being used.

The results from the survey indicate that Facebook and Twitter were the most preferred social media tools to post news and event items, as well as to answer student queries. The survey respondents did not mention their use of other social media tools. They reported that Facebook and Twitter were used to answer queries. Two of the survey respondents indicated that they did not use social media tools. The findings from this survey concur with Banda's (2011:12) observation that libraries use social media as a communication tool to respond to users' questions. Libraries can answer questions through social media tools like Facebook chat and Twitter or direct messages from library users (King 2015:8). .

It is clear that social media are used in the Unisa Library to communicate with users. Remote library users' needs are accommodated in this manner as these users are able to communicate with library staff, ask questions and use the library services, irrespective of where they are. As a result, the library goes to the users with no geographical barriers. This finding is an important benefit of social media tools that

enable Unisa as distance learning institution to enhance their interaction with remote users.

#### 4.10 FREQUENCY OF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

The frequency with which the responding library staff use social media tools could vary. Therefore, in order to establish the frequency with which social media tools are used, the following question was asked in the survey questionnaire: How frequently do you use social media tools?

The responding library staff's responses are captured in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 Frequency of using social media tools**

<b>Table 4.4 Frequency of using social media tools</b>	
<b>Name of social media tool</b>	<b>Frequency with which the tool is used by the Unisa Library</b>
Facebook	<i>"Daily"</i> (Respondent 4) <i>"Once a week"</i> (Respondent 6) <i>"Once a month"</i> (Respondent 7)
Twitter	<i>"Daily"</i> (Respondent 3) <i>"Once a month"</i> (Respondent 6)
YouTube	<i>"Every day"</i> (Respondent 8)
Blogs	No response
Wikis	No response
RSS feeds	<i>"Once a month"</i> (Respondent 6)

Instant messaging	"Daily" (Respondent 6)
Podcasts	No response

As shown in Table 4.4, the frequency of use of social media tools by the responding library staff vary from daily to once a month. However, the majority of the staff members reported that they used these tools on a daily basis. Some of the respondents indicated that they would use social media more regularly, should it be necessary. Respondent 6 said: *"I use instant messaging almost daily and Facebook, Twitter and RSS feeds once a month."*

The results show that the social media tools most frequently used were Facebook and Twitter. This finding is similar to the finding of Arif and Mahmood (2012:470), as reported in section 2.4. They found that Facebook and Twitter were the most used social media tools in academic libraries.

#### **4.11 GUIDELINES AND POLICIES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS IN UNISA LIBRARY**

In section 2.6, it was indicated that a social media policy is the foundation of any social media governance model (Ansaldo 2012). Therefore, the suggestion is that libraries using social media tools should have specific guidelines and policies to govern their online activities (Ansaldo 2012). In order to establish whether the Unisa Library has a social media policy, the following question was asked in the survey questionnaire: Does the Unisa Library have guidelines/policies to guide the use of social media communication performed by library services?

The responses of most of the Unisa Library staff indicated that the library does have social media guidelines and policies and that they were aware of the existence of such policies. The following quotations capture their responses:

- *"Yes, to my knowledge ICT have issued a policy on sending text messages and emails to students, and HR has the employee disciplinary code to prevent the abuse of university facilities. The electronic and web communication directorate has guidelines on digital media and social media"* (Participant 4).

- *“We have University guidelines that were developed by corporate communications and we create our own in-house guidelines on how to communicate on social media” (Participant 5).*
- *“You get things like social media policy which tells you the dos and don’ts, web communication policies, library guided to communicate with students, where we put things that we won’t be able to put in the library website. It is guided to specific content and subject linguistics. So, there are guideline and policies” (Participant 1).*
- “No” (Respondent 14).
- “No” (Respondent 15).
- “Not sure” (Respondent 13).

Two staff members did not know of any policies, whereas a third respondent was unsure. Most of the staff members were aware of the social media guideline policies for using social media tools. Furthermore, there are indications that staff members who use social media have to read the guidelines before posting any information on social media, since they are representing the Unisa Library.

This is in line with a comment made by Ansaldo (2012). According to him, social media policies are the foundation of any social media governance model. With social media tools like Twitter and Facebook emerging, policies are to guide employees and to protect the organisation. In turn, Donston-Miller (2011:6) believes a good social media policy not only protects the institution and users, but also provides an explanation as to why the institution uses social media in the first place.

The comment of Participant 4 also provides evidence of how social media policies set the boundaries and parameters for the use of social media tools in the Unisa Library. The findings support Donston-Miller’s (2011:6) view that a social media policy could educate staff members on how to use social media in a safe, appropriate manner.

#### 4.12 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two indicated that the use of social media tools has advantages and disadvantages. In order to establish what the library staff's views were about the advantages and disadvantages of the use of social media, the following question was asked during the interviews: According to your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of using social media in the library?

Although the survey questionnaire was pretested, the participating staff members misinterpreted the question by considering the advantages of the use of social media tools from a user's perspective rather than from the advantages the use of these tools have for them when executing their tasks. Their responses reflecting the advantages of social media tools' use from a user perspective are presented below:

- *"Users can access the library from anywhere and anytime"* (Participant 4).
- *"Even if the student is not registered, they can still be updated with news and events in the library"* (Participant 2).
- *"Getting quick responses than send email"* (Participant 3).
- *"Communication is made simple, it reaches many people and it saves costs. Students share with their friends"* (Participant 5).

The findings show that library staff are of view that their users benefit from the fact that they use social media tools as the use of these tools allow them to quickly respond to users' needs. This is similar to Mabweazara's (2014:36) findings. He found that social media allow for quick communication and feedback. Del Bosque et al. (2012:201) and Zhu (2016:616) also note that Twitter is free and that using Twitter removes any cost barriers. As Zhu (2016:616) notes, Twitter then acts as a free advertising tool for library updates which, in turn, also serves as a data provider, providing links to library catalogues. Foley (2002:37) found that instant messaging is immediate, convenient and accessible, and that physical boundaries do not stand in the way of communication. It is possible to reach remote users across campus and around the world (Foley 2002:37).

The respondents identified the following disadvantages of the use of social media:

- *“Not every student in South Africa has access to Internet and better gadgets, like expensive phones, not expensive but phones with no Internet on it”* (Participant 4).
- *“I receive too many questions that are not library related and I have to answer them, because it’s a platform for all students”* (Participant 3).
- *“Some students will not have access to the Internet, while some don’t have electricity meaning they won’t have electronic devices, [which will not qualify them to buy or have enough data”]* (Participant 4).
- *“Devices used are not compatible with social media tools and the Internet”* (Participant 5).
- *“Others lack understanding of its usage, some still need training on how to communicate and what is available our library example you will find a student requesting a book from social media”* (Participant 4).

As evident from the responses above, although using social media benefits the Unisa Library staff, they relate to previous findings on challenges experienced when using social media tools. These challenges pertain to the connectivity issues users experience and the compatibility of their devices to use the same social media tools than the library staff. These problems make it difficult for the staff members to effectively communicate with all their users using social media tools only. Previous findings by Wilkinson (2014:147), found that the coverage of Facebook is restricted, due to network issues.

It was further observed in the literature that librarians require technical skills in order to apply social media tools effectively and this requires time and resources for them to learn these skills (Arif & Mahmood 2012:471; Hosseini & Hashempour 2012:139; Chu & Du 2013:65). The concerns raised by Gaha and Hall (2015:17) pertain to the time necessary to work with numerous platforms, setting up social media accounts and maintaining professional developments.

As one participating staff member noted, some students request books via social media.

#### **4.13 RESPONDEDNTS' SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE LIBRARY SERVICES BY USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS**

The participants were asked what suggestions they have that could be used to improve library services by using social media tools. The question was asked during the interviews and formulated as follows: What suggestions do you have that could be used to improve the library services through the use of social media? Although the question required the participants to suggest on how they could better use the social media tools to improve library services, the participants responded with ideas on how the types of social media that could be used to improve services.

In this regard the participants mentioned the following:

*"Everything that involves marketing and training, I believe you provide a better service and sustainability also because students need to be able to do things on their own, if you assist them through training, they will be able to do things on their own. We can use Unisa Radio for marketing our Twitter and Facebook pages during library week"* (Participant 1).

*"I think it should be on the tutorial letters because first hand that student receive. This will make them aware that we use social media tools. At the beginning of the year during orientations, we can mention social media tools the library uses, we can be slotted in the programme as client services do the orientations"* (Participant 2).

*"Students are not aware of our Twitter page. Marketing when packing study material, they can also include pamphlets about Twitter"* (Participant 3).

*"Initiatives whereby we encourage the usage of these tools and avail devices in rural areas and low data, improve in terms of availability of these devices. Training required for staff and always be par with new developments being used for social media. We can use Instagram for exhibitions and events. Take pictures post them on Instagram to entice students to watch and participate"* (Participant 4).

*“To those responsible for client services I believe it has, more especially towards publicising and marketing the library” (Participant 5).*

The participants' responses mainly reflected on means to market the service they render using social media by creating an awareness of the social media services and by promoting the services using alternative means to do so, such as through tutorial letters that are sent to student users. The participants also, from a staff members' perspective, viewed the training of staff members as being important in order to ensure a more effective service. It was also suggested that users should be trained on the use of social media tools in order to avoid them using the wrong tool for the wrong purpose.

The participants are of view that they have been able to improve the Unisa library services by using social media tools to communicate with library users who are comfortable in using these tools. Unfortunately, since not all users have devices that are compatible with the tools that are being used and since not all users are comfortable in using all the used social media tools, not all users can be reached in this manner. In order to support such users, the library staff members need to consider alternative means to communicate with them.

The findings indicate that the participants responded with ideas on how the types of social media tools could be used to improve library services. These findings support Banda's (2011:2) suggestion that social media have the potential to improve library services.

Also, these findings concur with the findings of Penzhorn and Pienaar (2009:72), who revealed that Facebook, blogs, YouTube, wikis and Skype increased the quality of service delivery at the University of Pretoria Library. Students tend to use social media tools, such as Twitter, to make enquiries from librarians; this could therefore enhance the efficiency of a library (Ezeani & Igwesi 2012:5).

The findings of this study clearly indicate that, with the library staff's experience, social media tools can enhance the services of the Unisa Library.



Most of the staff members of the Unisa Library made suggestions to improve library services and this indicates that social media can improve the library services.

#### **4.13.1 Discussion of findings**

Based on the findings, it is evident that only certain library staff members need to use social media tools in the Unisa Library to interact with staff and students. Facebook and Twitter are the most popular social media tools being used by the library staff to post events, disseminate information and market their services. Training in using social media is important since these tools and their software are updated frequently, and staff need to be up to date with the latest trends and technology. Facebook and Twitter pages need more marketing among users to fully utilise and to be aware of the social media tools that the library uses..

#### **4.14 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented and analysed the findings from the survey questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews with Unisa Library staff members who use social media. The data collected were in relation to which social media tools the Unisa Library used at the time of the research and how it improved the library services, as well as the advantages and disadvantages the Unisa Library experienced when using social media tools. The analyses were supported by scholarly viewpoints gained from a literature review. The next chapter will discuss the conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the conclusions in relation to the research questions that were formulated in Chapter One. The limitations of the study will follow the conclusions. Thereafter suggestions for further research will be made and the value of the study will be discussed. The final summary and comments will conclude the chapter.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of social media tools by library staff at the Unisa main library. This chapter discusses the study's findings, seeking in particular to answer the research question: Which social media are being used by Unisa Library staff and how does the use of social media enhance the library's services?

In order to answer the research question, the following sub- questions were identified:

- Which social media are being used by Unisa Library staff?
- Does the Unisa Library have social media guidelines and policies that control the use of social media tools?
- Which staff members are tasked with the use of social media tools?
- For which purpose are social media being used?
- What are the challenges and benefits of using social media in the Unisa Library?
- How does the use of social media enhance the library's services?
- Have the library staff members received training in the use of social media tools?

### **5.2.1 Research question 1: Which social media are being used by Unisa Library staff?**

The study established that specific social media tools are being used by Unisa Library staff.

These include Facebook, Twitter, Skype, YouTube, instant messaging, library websites and WhatsApp. The findings revealed that not all the social media tools that were discussed in the reviewed literature are used by Unisa Library staff. The social media tools that are not used by Unisa Library staff include wikis, blogs, podcasts and RSS feeds. Regarding job roles, all library directorates were represented.

### **5.2.2 Research question 2: Does the Unisa Library have social media guidelines and policies that control the use of social media tools?**

The findings of this study showed that the Unisa Library does have a social media policy and guidelines to guide library staff who use social media tools in the execution of their tasks. The institution's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) directorate has issued a policy on the use of text messages and emails to communicate with students. Additionally, the Human Resources department has an employee disciplinary code to prevent the abuse of university facilities. Some of the respondents also mentioned that the Electronic and Web Communication directorate also has guidelines on digital media and social media.

### **5.2.3 Research question 3: Which staff members are tasked with the use of social media tools?**

The outcomes of this research showed that not all the library staff members use social media. Only specific staff members are assigned to use social media tools. Regarding the library staff's positions and work roles, all the directorates were represented. The work roles of the staff members who work in the Directorate Information Resources Distribution are information processors, search librarians, a supervisor and a delivery officer. The work roles of the staff members who work in the Directorate of Client Services are that of branch librarians. Lastly, the responding systems librarians are employed in the Directorate of Corporate Services (Technology Services).

The information processors seem to make the most use of social media tools, as these staff members post messages to Facebook and Twitter on behalf of other staff members, working in other directorates. They also respond to user queries that were posted to the social media platforms. The systems librarians seemed to be the second most active social media users to the processors. These librarians are also tasked with the design and maintenance of the library website.

#### **5.2.4 Research question 4: For which purpose are the social media tools being used?**

It has emerged in this study that the library staff use social media to alert users of their respective services and also they used for work related communication among staff members, namely:

- To communicate with users about current news, events, general information and conference presentations, with photos of speakers
- To communicate with users about library services. This includes messages about service disruptions, information on postal strikes and how the library deals with this issue, and power failures, which affect access to the library and access to online resources
- Answering library users' queries
- Educational and research information
- Library awareness and marketing
- Personal and professional use

Facebook and Twitter seem to be the two most used social media tools. Both of these tools are mainly used to respond to library users' queries and to communicate with library users about service-related issues or library news, such as off-campus access problems to databases.

### **5.2.5 Research question 5: What are the challenges and benefits of using social media in the Unisa Library?**

Previous studies, reported on and discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Four, have shown that, although social media tools are a means to improve library services, using them can be challenging.

The challenges the Unisa Library staff experienced include the following:

- Access to the Internet, as not all students have compatible mobile devices to access social media
- Some users do not have electricity; they do not have Internet-compatible devices, and therefore they cannot qualify to buy or have data bundles to browse through social media. This highlights the difference between poor areas and affluent areas in the country. Users from poor communities will have to visit the library in order to get access to resources
- Staff members noted that they receive too many queries that are not library-related and yet they need to answer these questions, since it is a communication platform for all Unisa users
- Users lack understanding of the use and functions of social media tools. Some users seem to believe they can request books via social media, instead of using the formal library request systems, which are intended for that purpose

However, despite these challenges, the library staff were very positive about the advantages of social media tools as a communication platform. According to them, they are able to respond to user queries much faster than would have been possible if they had to respond via email.

Social media have made library communication much easier and can reach many people. The use of social media tools also saves costs. Therefore, the use of social media tools benefits both the Unisa Library staff as well as remote users who are unable to physically visit the library. Despite the advantages of social media tools, they

can also deprive remote users from easy access to alerting services due to lack of affordability and skills training.

### **5.2.6 Research question 6: How does the use of social media enhance the library's services?**

Although the question required the participants to suggest on how they could better use the social media tools to improve library services, the participants responded with ideas on how the types of social media could be used to improve services.

The participants' responses mainly reflected on means to market the service they render using social media by creating an awareness of the social media services and by promoting the services using alternative means to do so, such as through tutorial letters that are sent to student users. The participants also, from a staff members' perspective, viewed the training of staff members as being important in order to ensure a more effective service. It was also suggested that users should be trained on the use of social media tools in order to avoid them using the wrong tool for the wrong purpose.

The participants are of view that they have been able to improve the Unisa library services by using social media tools to communicate with library users who are comfortable in using these tools. Unfortunately, since not all users have devices that are compatible with the tools that are being used. This is because they are able to reach out to by communicating with them on a social media tool they are comfortable in using. Unfortunately, not all users can be reached in this manner and the staff members need to consider alternative means to communicate with such users.

Based on the findings reported on in Chapter Four, it seems evident that the use of social media by library staff could improve the library's services. This is because social media tools allow for instant communication between staff and users. Unfortunately, the respondents were not all in agreement about social media allowing instant communication between staff and users and the suggestion was that social media tools are best employed for publishing, marketing and alerting purposes. One respondent suggested chat to be introduced which will enhance the library services by

instant communication with library users. Despite these differing views, the respondents made the following suggestions of how the use of social media tools can improve library services: Initiatives can be made whereby library staff encourage the usage of social media tools and avail devices (with internet connection/WiFi) in rural areas and lower data.

#### **5.2.7 Research question 7: Have the library staff members received training in the use of social media tools?**

The study showed that Unisa Library staff did not receive any formal training in using social media tools. Most of the library staff responded that they were self-trained. They were only made aware of the guidelines on how to write and respond to students when responding to library users on social media. The lack of training staff on using social media can hamper the enhancement of library services.

#### **5.2.8 Concluding remarks regarding the research questions**

The researcher achieved the key objectives of the study by establishing that Unisa Library's staff use social media tools to communicate with their users and to enhance the library services. The findings revealed that Unisa Library staff used Facebook, Twitter, Skype, YouTube and instant messaging. This study indicated that the social media tools used most were Facebook and Twitter, to communicate and answer library users' queries. Unisa Library services are enhanced by the use of these social media tools. The study also concluded that social media tools can only be used complementary to conventional communication mechanisms as not all Unisa library users could be reached by means of social media tools.

### **5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The main limitation of the study was that it only focused on the Unisa main library. The other branches were excluded from the study. They could be included, but it would be time consuming and involve financial constraints, as Unisa Library branches are scattered all over the country. The use of social media tools to other communication mechanisms and the conditions in other academic libraries is a further limitation. Another limitation was that not all the respondents who accepted the invitation to be interviewed attended the interviews.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the use of social media tools in Unisa Library. The recommendations below are based on the findings of the study.

### **5.4.1 Training**

Based on these findings, it is suggested that the library offers staff members and students training in the use of social media tools in the library environment. The fact that students try to use social media to request library material shows a need for such training. Comparisons can be made with other libraries' social media pages to see what the latest trends are. Marketing and awareness can be done to attract more library users, as there is a small number of followers on Facebook and Twitter, compared to the other university libraries' social media pages. It should be a mandate to assign a professional to operate and monitor social media tools.

To encourage effective use of social media tools, the library management can present training workshops and appoint a dedicated person, who has knowledge of and a passion for social media, and who can answer the library users' queries. Training should be compulsory for those staff members using social media in order to ensure continued skills development. Self-guided tutorials could also be made available on the library web page.

### **5.4.2 Marketing and awareness**

Marketing of social media should be intensified in the library. Marketing of the Facebook and Twitter pages to all registered students could be done by including pamphlets in their study material. Social media tools can also be marketed during library training and orientation sessions. Library displays illustrating the benefits of using social media can be put up for library users to see. The library staff can use Unisa radio to market the library's Facebook and Twitter pages. For awareness Instagram can be used for exhibitions and events by posting pictures.5.4.3 WhatsApp and Messenger

WhatsApp and Messenger can be introduced in the library. They are the fastest growing and most used social media tools in the country. Most of the staff and students have WhatsApp accounts and use it for communicating on their mobile phones.



Furthermore, some networks offer free data packages to WhatsApp users. WhatsApp should provide the library with an easy and quick platform to reach out to library users. Training videos can also be made and sent to users via WhatsApp.

Lastly, Unisa management could consider encouraging staff and students to use social media in order to remain current in online distance and e-learning.

## **5.5 FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future studies are recommended to explore the following:

This study focused on the main library based in Pretoria and it could not claim to represent all the Unisa branch libraries. Conducting a comprehensive study on the use of social media tools by different South African libraries could provide a more comprehensive view of the value these tools have to enhance library services in South Africa. Future research can compare the use of social media tools to other communication mechanisms and the conditions in other academic libraries.

## **5.6 VALUE OF THIS STUDY**

This study is different from the studies reported on in the literature review, as the researcher established that not all library staff use social media tools and that only certain staff members are assigned to make use of these communication tools.

This study aims to support those Unisa Library staff who are using social media, by making suggestions on the use of social media to improve library services and in ensuring client satisfaction.

The value of this study lies in enhancing the library service and to reach out to all students who reside in remote areas and who are unable to visit any of the Unisa Library branches. The study makes recommendations that could assist library management to reach out to *all* their students, especially those for whom the library is inaccessible.

## **5.7 SUMMARY AND FINAL COMMENTS**

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of social media tools in the Unisa Library. The research questions pertaining to the use of social media tools in the Unisa Library were answered. The main findings indicated that social media tools are being used in the Unisa Library. They have the potential to enhance communication between the Unisa Library staff and library users. This study indicated that social media tools used are Facebook, Twitter, Instant messaging, Skype and YouTube. These social media tools are used for communication and to answer the users' queries in the library. The study also show that the library staff use social media tool for dissemination and alerting their users of the library services. Marketing, training and awareness campaigns were suggested to improve the use of social media tools.

The discussion was supported by scholarly perspectives in the literature review. The findings in this study reflect what had already been found in the literature. The findings, based on responses from the library staff, show that social media tools are used in the Unisa Library, that there are guidelines and policies for using social media, and that only one directorate has staff tasked to use social media. The overall conclusion is that social media tools are not used to the optimum in the Unisa library.

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## APPENDIX A: Consent form

**Title of research project:** The use of social media in University of South Africa Library

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the <insert specific data collection method>.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (Please print)

Participant Signature..... Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname..... (Please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....



## APPENDIX B: Survey Questionnaire

### The use of social media in Unisa library

Dear respondent

I am a Master of Arts in Information Science student at the University of South Africa and am conducting research on “The use of social media tools by Library staff in the University of South Africa.” This research is conducted to comply with the requirements of the degree programme. Any information provided by you will be used purely for academic purpose and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. .

Thank you.

Sinah Molokisi

#### 1. What is your job title /staff position?

#### 2. Which directorate are you working under?

- Information resource Distribution
- Client services
- Information Resource content management
- Library corporate services

#### 3. How long have you been using social media?

#### 4. Which social media tools are you using?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- You Tube
- Podcasts
- Instant messaging
- Blogs
- Wikis
- RSS feeds

#### 6. What purpose are you using social media for?

7. If you use social media to communicate with Unisa Library users, how frequently do you use social media?

7. Do you think using social media to reach students has improved library services?

8. Which social media tools do you use to communicate with library users and why?

8. Do you have any personal social media account?

- Yes  
 No

9. Is there a guideline/policy given for using social media work purposes?

Or Copy and paste questions

DONE

Dear participant,

I am a Master of Arts in Information Science student at the University of South Africa and am conducting research on “The use of social media tools by Library staff in the University of South Africa.” This research is conducted to comply with the requirements of the degree programme. Any information provided by you will be used purely for academic purpose and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. .  
Thank you.

Sinah Molokisi

1. Which section of the library are you working?
2. Are the users aware that you use social media?
3. Which social media tools do you use for your work specifically?
4. Have you received any training to use the social media?
5. Why are you using the social media?
6. What are the disadvantages and advantages of using social media?
7. When did you start using social media to communicate with the Unisa Library users?
8. What suggestions can you make that will improve the library services, using social media?