

A university library's use of social media during a time of crisis

Sabelo Chizwina, Benford Rabatseta, Siviwe Bangani and
Mathew Moyo
Library Services, North West University, Mafikeng, South Africa

Received 13 December 2016
Revised 28 February 2017
Accepted 28 February 2017

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to highlight how North Western University (NWU) Library used Facebook and Twitter to inform, educate and communicate with library users during the students' protests #FeesMustFall Campaign.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper follows a case study approach to examine how Facebook and Twitter were used to inform, educate and communicate with library users during the #FeesMustFall Campaign. Data was obtained from the NWU Library's Facebook Insights, the Facebook page itself and Twitter account, after which content was analysed.

Findings – The paper provides insights that the teaching and learning (educational) aspect still lags behind on social media usage in libraries. Given the period in question, the expectation would have been a higher percentage of posts that could be categorized as educational.

Research limitations/implications – The study is confined to one campus library of the NWU Libraries and the results cannot be generalised to the NWU.

Practical implications – Social media use policies should be developed and awareness created on their availability and meaning/implications to users.

Originality/value – This paper fulfils an identified need to study how social media can be used by academic libraries. The literature currently focuses on how Twitter has been used in library campaigns. This paper shows how Facebook can be used in a university setting during crises time.

Keywords Academic libraries, Facebook, South Africa, Twitter, Social media, Social networks

Paper type Research paper

Introduction and background

The introduction of Web 2.0 in 2004 has given rise to different types applications such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, social networking sites and wikis. These applications have become so popular that institutions have seen the need to be part of this “social movement”. Libraries' communication strategies have had to incorporate some of the Web 2.0 applications to be relevant to their networked users. The popular applications have been Facebook and Twitter. Despite their widespread popularity and use, Facebook and Twitter, still have not been accepted by some researchers.

Concerns have been raised about the use of social media, in particular, Facebook in higher education (Manca and Ranieri, 2016). Social media is preferred for sharing and not for teaching. Other concerns are that it promotes overspending of time on non-academic activities and encourages negative attitudes. These concerns are relevant but as Schroeder and Greenhowe (2009, p. 2) found, social media offers a “dynamic and unthreatening environment for students to communicate [. . .]”.

The communication and interactive nature of Facebook and Twitter, thus, cannot be ignored. In support of the library theme to: inform, educate and communicate, the North West University (NWU) Library – Mafikeng Campus adopted two platforms of social media



Facebook and Twitter. However, events of October 2015 saw Facebook and Twitter's role redefined (The events were that during the students' protests, the University Administration Building, Science Centre and Residence Managers Office were burnt down and clashes were reported between the Police and students. The University Management for the safety of the students and property closed the university indefinitely and all students had to vacate the campus.). The library's social media platforms assumed a new role driven by the students' need for up-to-date information, which was in many instances not related to the library services.

Objectives of the paper

The objectives of this paper are:

- to highlight the ways in which the NWU Library – Mafikeng Campus used social media during the #FeesMustFall Campaign;
- outline the challenges faced by NWU Library – Mafikeng Campus during the #FeesMustFall Campaign; and
- articulate the advantages and disadvantages of using social media in the midst of crises.

Literature review

Social media as used in political, social and crisis campaigns

Social media has been used in the political campaigns in various regions worldwide (Gunitsky, 2015; Klausen, 2015). Klausen (2015) reported on the use of Twitter by jihadist in Syria and Iraq, and beyond, mainly for the purposes of recruitment and indoctrination to build a transnational community of violent extremism and for psychological warfare. In addition, Vaccari *et al.* (2015) found that social media allows users to acquire political information and express themselves politically on these platforms. In Tunisia, social media was used for protest mobilisation during anti-government protests (Breuer *et al.*, 2015). However, criticism of social media's role in political campaigns has increased.

Criticism has been made about the effect of social media platforms in political campaigns. Penney (2015) added that the effects of political campaigns through the use social media are far from being fully understood. Reuter and Szakonyi (2015, p. 29) also indicate that the political scientists tend to treat the new media platforms' effects in political campaigns as a "black box". In addition to political campaigns, social media has been used in social campaigns.

In a social campaign, the use of social media includes disseminating a message, to raise global awareness of a problem and attempts to expose wrong doing (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015). Social media overcomes a national media blackout through brokering information, can be used for large mobilisation, reporting event magnitudes and informing communities (Breuer *et al.*, 2015). However, the effects of social media on behavioral – intent and information -seeking outcomes are relatively an area that was not yet fully understood (Fraustino and Ma, 2015). Social media, though dismissed as a poor substitute for real activism, has been noted to provide a digital voice (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015).

Furthermore, the use of social media during times of crises has been evident. Simon *et al.* (2015) examined the use of social media in emergency situations. Graham *et al.* (2015) explored the adoption and use of social media tools for crisis communication. Lachlan *et al.* (2016) analysed the use of Twitter during a winter storm. Omilion-Hodges and McClain (2016) examined a university's use of social media during a time of a campus shooting crisis.

In times of crises, social media was found to offer an interactive, collaborative, conversational and community-based platform for crises communication (Al-Saggaf and Simmons, 2015; Spence *et al.*, 2015; Spence, Lachlan and Rainear, 2016; Yates and Partridge, 2015). An analysis of the social media used during times of crises indicates that Twitter is the most widely used. Simon *et al.* (2015) were of the opinion that Twitter is widely used in social media research due to technical ability to be able to extract information.

Use of social media by academic libraries

Various studies have examined the use of social media in higher education. Most of the research focused on whether or not to use social media in higher education (Sobaih *et al.*, 2016); understanding students' perceptions on the benefits of using social media in teaching and learning (Hamid *et al.*, 2015) and using social media as a tool to improve academic performance (Al-Rahmi *et al.*, 2015).

Much of the reviewed literature on the use of social media has been focused on identifying the different tools that are being used by the different academic libraries and studying perception and influences to adopt social media. Ali and Parveen (2015) examined the use of Web 2.0 tools by Engineering libraries which included the different social media networks. Chu and Du (2013) explored the use of social networking tools in academic libraries, specifically examining extent, perceptions and factors influencing adoption. Furthermore, Mukherjee and Chandra (2014) also focused on Web 2.0 tools to determine how they can be used in library services in India. Similarly, Gulati (2016) focused on the use of Web 2.0 tools in selected universities in India. Finally, Boateng and Liu (2014) analysed the use of Web 2.0 in 100 academic libraries in the USA, with Facebook and Twitter being used by all 100 libraries. Facebook and Twitter were mainly used as outreach tools to promote services to the communities and beyond, alternative channels of communication, for user and reference service and a social utility to form personalized connections with users (Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah, 2016; Boateng and Liu, 2014; Gulati, 2016).

Emerging research on the use of social media has focused on altmetrics and analysing the activity of a university's social media platform. One of the roles that libraries are expected to play to assist faculty is in the emerging area of altmetrics. Lapinski *et al.* (2013) reported that librarians should assist faculty with using the information that is available on social media for research purposes which would enhance standard bibliographic instruction. Palmer (2014) analysed the forms of Twitter and Facebook activity that engage library stakeholders in social media conversations in the Australian context. Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah (2016) investigated the preparedness of academic libraries in Ghana for the use of social media in reference and user services.

#FeesMustFall

The #FeesMustFall Movement started at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. This was in response to the intention of the University to hike the tuition fees by 10 per cent (De Jager, 2016; Kekana *et al.*, 2015; Quintal, 2015; Sello, 2015). Messages began circulating on social networking sites, threatening a total shutdown of public universities (De Jager, 2016). The student protests quickly affected all public universities.

According to Luescher and Klemenčić (2016), the truly innovative dimension of the 2015 #MustFall Movements is the extent to which student activists and sympathizers took to social media and the internet. The #MustFall movements signalled the arrival of a new way of organizing student power simultaneously in the cyberspace and public spaces. Students used social media and internet-based platforms prolifically as means to mobilize others, coordinate activism, share pamphlets, readings, pictures and video-clips.

Methodology

This paper is a case study that elaborates on how Facebook and Twitter were used during the #FeesMustFall Campaign. A table was created to visualise the frequency of posts and tweets according to the theme of inform, educate and communicate. Data was obtained from the North West University Library's Facebook Insights, the Facebook page itself and Twitter account and was then tabulated.

Discussion, findings and results

For purposes of this paper, the social media posts sent by the NWU Library were divided into Informational, Educational and Communicative posts. It must be stated, however, that many of those posts serve two or all of those roles. For such posts, we decided to categorise them based on the area where they lean more towards. For example, a post announcing information literacy training. Even though this post can be regarded as informational, the final product will be the development of the students' information literacy skills – an educational role.

Table I shows a more comprehensive breakdown of our Facebook posts and tweets during the #FeesMustFall protests.

The number of posts and the tweets are similar as a result of the customization of the accounts. Facebook was the dominant social media platform used by the library users. A very low number of users participated on Twitter, as evidenced by the number of tweets and replies received. This confirms the observation made by various authors that Facebook remains the most popular social media network in academic libraries (Ndlangamandla and Chisenga, 2016, p. 509; Rogers, 2011; Ojo, 2015). There were 53 posts sent by the library. After we classified those posts according to the IEC, 23 were informational, 9 were educational and 21 were communicative. Posts received a low 0.6 per cent comments on average from the users. A total reach of 885 was achieved per post with the post with the most reach, (likes, comments, shares and clicks) being the post announcing the opening of the library for 24 hours, which was one of the demands of the #FeesMustFall Campaign.

Informational role of social media during the #FeesMustFall

Wendling *et al.* (2013) points out that social media plays a critical role in information provision during times of crises. Bishop (2013, p. 152) concurs that the provision of information during times of crises is very critical. In the case of libraries, the information provision role is an inherent attribute of a library as all libraries are established to collect,

Posts and tweets made by the library	Informative	Educational	Communicative	Total
Number of posts (made by the library)	23	9	21	53
Total reach	10,926	13,494	19,013	43,433
^a Likes	189	77	156	422
Comments	8	10	15	33
Shares	10	143	65	218
Clicks	528	624	1,667	2,819
Number of tweets (made by the Library)	23	9	21	53
Retweets	3	23	1	27
Replies	0	1	1	2
Total	11,687	14,381	20,939	47,007

Table I.
A more
comprehensive
breakdown of our
Facebook posts and
tweets during the
#FeesMustFall
protests

Notes: ^aThere were four Twitter likes. One from an informational tweet and three from an educational tweet

preserve and share information in one way or the other (Okiy, 2005; Mostert, 1999). Social media, therefore, serves to enhance the traditional role expected of any library. The role of NWU library's social media during this period, especially when the campus was closed, was to keep the users abreast of developments on campus and the library such as sending reminders about the renewal of books to avoid fines.

Most posts that could be categorised as playing the information provision role were about new developments at the university and the library. These were mostly in relation to the effects of the campaign. The other category of posts was information about new resources, services and events.

Some of the informational posts that generated a lot of interest from the page during this time were the following:

- Post about the opening of the library for 24 h during October and November 2015. To compensate students for lost time during the campaign period, the library staff were in agreement with the need to open the library for 24 h. This post had a total reach of 3,872.
- A post about the progress of a NWU student in the SABC1 Top Six One Day Leader competition had a total reach of 2,434.
- 2016 registration schedule had total reach of 1,526.
- The post about the disbandment of the Campus Student Representatives Council (CSRC) and the constitution of the new CSRC had a total reach 1,524.

Educational role of social media during the #FeesMustFall

Despite Ezeani and Igwesi's (2012) call for librarians to use social media networks for educational purposes, our findings are in line with the observations made in the Taylor and Francis (2014, p. 2) White Paper that the educational aspect still lags behind on social media usage in libraries. Given the period in question, the expectation would have been a higher percentage of posts that could be categorized as educational. This, however, is not the case, as shown by the tabulation of posts. Further, the semester did not cease during the #FeesMustFall protests for postgraduate students. Students were not allowed on campus during this period, but some of them still used social media to contact the library and request for resources.

Communication role of social media during the #FeesMustFall

Fortner (2007, p. 18) defines communication as a dynamic, symbolic process by which people in dialogue construct the meanings and share the emotions through which they understand, value and live in society, and by which they both behave and justify their behaviour. It differs from information in that communication is a two-way process that involves an exchange between two or more parties (Fortner, 2007; Ezeani and Igwesi, 2012, p. 2; Simon *et al.*, 2014, p. 7; Taylor and Francis, 2014, p. 2).

During the #FeesMustFall period, a notice was sent to students so that they could renew books online through social media. However, the number of students who renewed books online was very low. As an intervention, the library sent a notice through Facebook and Twitter to inform the students about the two-week amnesty for all students who were required to return overdue books during the Campaign. The result of the notice through social media was evident by the number of book returns when the campus library re-opened.

In addition, social media served not only as a student–library communication platform, but also as a student–student communication tool. Students could communicate with each

other through the social media pages. This is in line with Bishop's (2013) findings in the Gaza Crisis that social media was, among other things, used for peer-to-peer communication. One positive message was that of a student who was offering to lend any student who was set to graduate, his or her academic attire free of charge. The use of social media was not always positive as discussed below.

Challenges of using social media during the #FeesMustFall Campaign

The social media policy of North-West University (2016) regulates against the use of social media to attempt to harm the image and reputation of the university. Despite this policy, the #FeesMustFall crisis showed that using social media during times of crises is not without risks and challenges. Besides the normal challenges of using social media in academic libraries, there were some unique challenges experienced during this period. Negative commentary was the biggest risk. The negative commentary experienced during this period included: use of the social media platforms for propaganda, incitement of students against the university, use of rude and condescending language and hijacking of the platforms by former students and strangers. The negative commentary can be divided into three broad categories:

Propaganda and incitement of students

During times of crises, it becomes very difficult to differentiate truth from fiction. As a result, a lot of information gets peddled for propaganda and incitement purposes (Wendling *et al.*, 2013). Bishop (2013, p. 153) posits that some people may intentionally send information that is meant to mislead and cause confusion. In the case of the Kenyan Westgate Mall Terror Attack, Simon *et al.* (2014) found that the population struggled to differentiate between misinformation and reliable information. This was so much that the government had to issue a warning to the public against unverified social media accounts.

At North-West University, some students used the social media pages to incite violence against University Management, passive students or other student political organisations. An example is that of a message that was sent by the library being open for 24 hours from Monday to Friday in November 2015. It is in this message that all students' organisations claimed "victory" against University management. Each of the students' organisations claimed responsibility for ensuring that the library operated for "24-hours".

Another example was when the library posted a message indicating that it was reverting to "vacation hours", students threatened a sit-in in the library. Students were told on our social media platforms to do whatever it took to ensure that the library operated for 24 h. When a message by University Management regarding the suspension of the CSRC president was posted on the Facebook page on 21 January 2016, students threatened even more violence, which was evident in the posts on Facebook.

Wendling *et al.* (2013) advises that to counter propaganda and incitement, all official social media communication should be clearly labelled to allow the public to decide on the validity and reliability of information.

Trolling

Trolling can be understood as repetitive, harmful actions which violate a websites' terms of use (Shachaf and Hara, 2010). At the height of the protests, the trolling behaviour was pervasive on social media as students sought to influence other students. It did not matter what was posted on social media, students found a way to manipulate the message in line with their agenda. There was an attempt to use the university social media space to mobilize

others to the #FeesMustFall cause. Figure 1 shows one of the instances where campus management was attacked by a student using a post that is not related to the subject.

The use of official social media spaces for trolling during times of crises is not unique to NWU. The Japanese experience in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and tsunamis shows a similar experience. Wendling *et al.* (2013) points out that the official Japanese Facebook and Twitter pages were used to attack the Japanese Government on unrelated issues like whaling and the use of nuclear technology.

Spamming and hoax messages

Spam is flooding the internet with many copies of the same message, in an attempt to force the message on people who would not otherwise choose to receive it. Most spam is commercial advertising, often for dubious products, get-rich-quick schemes or quasi-legal services. During this period, at least 13 messages that can be considered as spam on NWU Library social media pages were received. Three of those messages advertised illegal abortion clinics. The second trend was that of people or students advertising illegally. Six messages either advertised accommodation, book sales, student seminars, music shows or CCTV cameras. A notable example was one Mr Cheaf Adams – a fortune teller and traditional healer – who tried selling his services through the library on social media at least four times.

There were also examples of hoax messages. An example was when a post was sent through the Facebook page to the effect that students were going to stage another sit-in in the library and demand the continuation of 24 hour library services. As a result, the library

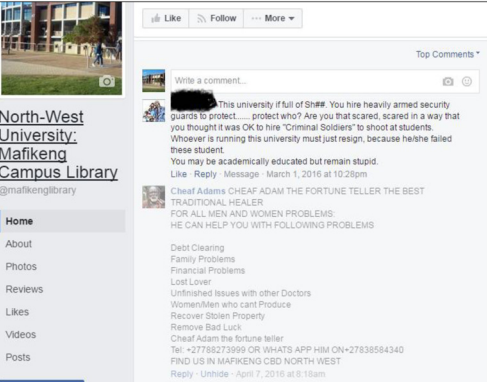
Post	Date	Trolling behavior
Library to open till 00h00 during exams	16 Nov. 2015	<p>"Who's fooling who"</p> <p>"University Management must apologise to students"</p> <p>"Everyone to (sic) will write exams no matter what you say"</p> <p>"Free education now"</p> <p>"No to fee increments (sic)"</p>
Vaal and Potchefstroom Campuses won't accommodate students from Mafikeng Campus	29 Feb. 2016	 <p>North-West University: Mafikeng Campus Library @mafikenglibrary</p> <p>Home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About Photos Reviews Likes Videos Posts <p>Like Follow More</p> <p>Write a comment...</p> <p>This university if full of Sh#. You hire heavily armed security guards to protect.... protect who? Are you that scared, scared in a way that you thought it was OK to hire "Criminal Soldiers" to shoot at students. Whoever is running this university must just resign, because he/she failed these student. You may be academically educated but remain stupid.</p> <p>Like · Reply · Message · March 1, 2016 at 10:28pm</p> <p>Cheaf Adams CHEAF ADAM THE FORTUNE TELLER THE BEST TRADITIONAL HEALER FOR ALL MEN AND WOMEN PROBLEMS HE CAN HELP YOU WITH FOLLOWING PROBLEMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt Clearing Family Problems Financial Problems Lost Lover Unfinished issues with other Doctors Women/Men who can't Produce Recover Stolen Property Remove Bad Luck Cheaf Adams the fortune teller <p>Tel: +27788273999 OR WHATS APP HIM ON +27838584340 FIND US IN MAFIKENG CBD NORTH WEST</p> <p>Reply · Unhide · April 7, 2016 at 9:18am</p>

Figure 1. An example of trolling and spamming in one post

Figure 1. Examples of trolling behaviour

evacuated students before normal closing time in anticipation of the sit-in which turned out to have been a hoax message.

The challenges above show that despite many advantages as an information, communication and education tool during crises, social media has inherent disadvantages that require proper measures to deal with. It is in this context that the campus had to respond to these challenges.

Response of the campus to the negative commentary

The library itself did not respond to the negative commentary. The matter was handled by the University Management. At first, the University Management appeared indifferent to the negativity. It was only after three months that University Management responded by issuing out a statement on 7 March 2016, warning students and staff against the use of the university social media platforms to incite others, and reminding the students of the university code and the social media policy. As compared with the Kenyan government, which issued a statement against abuse of social media within three days of the Kenyan Westgate Mall Terror Attack, the university delayed in issuing a statement. The delay could be attributed to the instinct of higher education institutions to avoid the temptation to stifle debates and suppress different opinions. This is to ensure that academic freedom is not violated in the process of dealing with social media abuse (Pomerantz *et al.*, 2015, pp. 14-15). Ironically, once a statement from the university management was posted on the library Facebook page, it elicited even more negative commentary.

Conclusion and recommendations

The usefulness of social media in informing, educating and communicating with library users cannot be overemphasized. The popularity of the social media among students suggested that they preferred to use these platforms than any other channels of communication. The study concludes that while informational and communicative posts were more popular with library users and librarians, the same cannot be said about educational posts. With regard to challenges of using social media to inform, educate and communicate with library users, the study concludes that opportunists may take advantage of the available platforms to dilute and change the intended meaning of messages. Students also used Facebook to convey propaganda and hoax messages.

On the basis of both the importance and, of course, challenges encountered when using social media during the #FeesMustFall Campaign period, we propose the following recommendations:

- Social media use policies should be developed and awareness raised on their availability and meaning/implications to users. Public computers in laboratories should bear extracts of the social media policy, which the user has to accept before using the computer.
- That the availability of educational information through e-guides should be publicized via social media, with active links to its full content. This will stimulate the use of social media for educational purposes.
- It is further recommended that users should be “blocked” as part of the enforcement of the social media policy from spamming or trolling on official social media platforms.
- Collaboration with other university social media librarians should be encouraged with a view to compare practices and user behaviour particularly during times of crises.

For further studies, a comprehensive study on the awareness of students about the consequences of the abuse of social media at the university level is recommended. In addition, a study of the students' online culture may help policy makers to craft policies which take cognizance of students' social behaviour.

References

- Ahenkorah-Marfo, M. and Akussah, H. (2016), "Being where the users are: readiness of academic librarians to satisfy information needs of users through social media", *Library Review*, Vol. 65 Nos 8/9, pp. 549-563.
- Ali, R. and Parveen, H. (2015), "Web 2.0 technology: a boon for engineering college libraries", *MIT International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 50-54.
- Al-rahmi, W.M., Othman, M.S., Yusof, L.M. and Musa, M.A. (2015), "Using social media as a tool for improving academic performance through collaborative learning in Malaysian higher education", *Review of European Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 265-275.
- Al-Saggaf, Y. and Simmons, P. (2015), "Social media in Saudi Arabia: exploring its use during two natural disasters", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 95, pp. 3-15.
- Bishop, J. (2013), *Examining the Concepts, Issues, and Implications of Internet Trolling*, IGI Global Disseminator of Information, Hershey, PA.
- Boateng, F. and Liu, Y.Q. (2014), "Web 2.0 applications' usage and trends in top US academic libraries", *Library Hi Tech*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 120-138, doi: [10.1108/LHT-07-2013-0093](https://doi.org/10.1108/LHT-07-2013-0093).
- Bonilla, Y. and Rosa, J. (2015), "#Ferguson: digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 42 No. 1, pp. 4-17.
- Breuer, A., Landman, T. and Farquhar, D. (2015), "Social media and protest mobilization: evidence from the Tunisian revolution", *Democratization*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 764-792, doi: [10.1080/13510347.2014.885505](https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2014.885505).
- Chu, S.K.W. and Du, H.S. (2013), "Social networking tools for academic libraries", *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, Vol. 45 No. 1, pp. 64-75., doi: [10.1177/0961000611434361](https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000611434361).
- De Jager, T. (2016), "Traditional news platforms and citizens reporting the news: the use of social media during the '#feesmustfall' campaign in South Africa", *Innovation: Journal of Appropriate Librarianship and Information Work in Southern Africa*, Vol. 2016 No. 52, pp. 36-50, available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC194632> (accessed 22 February 2017).
- Ezeani, C.N. and Igwesi, U. (2012), "Using social media for dynamic library service delivery: the Nigeria experience", *Library Philosophy and Practice*, available at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2011&context=libphilprac> (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Fortner, R.S. (2007), *Communication, Media, and Identity: A Christian Theory of Communication*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham.
- Fraustino, J.D. and Ma, L. (2015), "CDC's use of social media and humor in a risk campaign—"preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 222-241.
- Graham, M.W., Avery, E.J. and Park, S. (2015), "The role of social media in local government crisis communications", *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 41 No. 3, pp. 386-394.
- Gulati, A. (2016), "Utilization of Web 2.0 tools in select Indian libraries: a study", *Information Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 45-56.
- Gunitsky, S. (2015), "Corrupting the cyber-commons: social media as a tool of autocratic stability", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 42-54.
- Hamid, S., Waycott, J., Kurnia, S. and Chang, S. (2015), "Understanding students' perceptions of the benefits of online social networking use for teaching and learning", *The Internet and Higher Education*, Vol. 26, pp. 1-9, doi: [10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.02.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.02.004).

- Kekana, M., Isaacs, L. and Corke, E. (2015), "Tuition fee protests shut down 2 of SA's biggest universities", *Eyewitness News*, 19 October, available at: <http://ewn.co.za/2015/10/19/Fee-protests-shuts-down-3-of-SAs-biggest-universities> (accessed 22 February 2017).
- Klausen, J. (2015), "Tweeting the Jihad: social media networks of Western foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 1-22.
- Lachlan, K.A., Spence, P.R., Lin, X., Najarian, K. and Del Greco, M. (2016), "Full length article: social media and crisis management: CERC, search strategies, and Twitter content", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 54, pp. 647-652, doi: [10.1016/j.chb.2015.05.027](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.05.027).
- Lapinski, S., Piwowar, H. and Priem, J. (2013), "Riding the crest of the altmetrics wave", *College & Research Libraries News*, Vol. 74 No. 6, pp. 292-300.
- Luescher, T.M. and Klemenčič, M. (2016), "Student power in twenty-first century Africa: the character and role of student organising", available at: http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/manja_klemencic/files/2016_luescher_-_klemencic_-_chapter_for_r_brooks_final_0.pdf?m=1452720558 (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Manca, S. and Ranieri, M. (2016), "Yes for sharing, no for teaching! Social media in academic practices", *The Internet and Higher Education*, Vol. 29, pp. 63-74.
- Mostert, B.J. (1999), "Information provision services in South Africa: a comparative study", *Library Management*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 19-26.
- Mukherjee, J. and Chandra, J. (2014), "Use of Web 2.0 to cater information services in higher academic libraries in India: scope and reality", *Proceedings of International Seminar on Application of Information Technology in Library, 28-30 January 2014, Allied, Kolkata*, pp. 99-102.
- Ndlangamandla, K. and Chisenga, J. (2016), "Social media in university libraries in the SADC region", *Proceedings of the 22nd Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa Library and Information Associations (SCECSAL), 25-29 April, SCECSAL, eZulwini*.
- North-West University (2016), *Social Media Policy*, North-West University, Potchefstroom.
- Ojo, R.R. (2015), "The role of social media in libraries", in Tella, A. (Ed.), *Social Media Strategies for Dynamic Library Service Development*, IGI Global Disseminator of Information, Hershey, PA, pp. 71-84, available at: doi:[10.4018/978-1-4666-7415-8.ch004](https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-7415-8.ch004) (accessed 20 February 2016).
- Okiy, R.B. (2005), "Strengthening information provision in Nigerian university libraries through information communication technologies", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 311-318.
- Omilion-Hodges, L.M. and McClain, K.L. (2016), "University use of social media and the crisis lifecycle: organizational messages, first information responders' reactions, reframed messages and dissemination patterns", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 54, pp. 630-638, doi: [10.1016/j.chb.2015.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.06.002).
- Palmer, S. (2014), "Characterizing university library use of social media: a case study of twitter and facebook from Australia", *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Vol. 40 No. 6, pp. 611-619.
- Penney, J. (2015), "Social media and symbolic action: exploring participation in the Facebook red equal sign profile picture campaign", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 52-66.
- Pomerantz, J., Hank, C. and Sugimoto, C.R. (2015), "The State of social media policies in higher education", *PLoS One*, Vol. 10 No. 5, p. e0127485, available at: doi:[10.1371/journal.pone.0127485](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0127485) (accessed 21 February 2017).
- Reuter, O.J. and Szakonyi, D. (2015), "Online social media and political awareness in authoritarian regimes", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 45 No. 1, pp. 29-51.
- Rogers, C.R. (2011), *Social Media, Libraries, and Web 2.0: How American Libraries Are Using New Tools for Public Relations and to Attract New Users -Fourth Annual Survey*, South Carolina State Library, Columbia, SC, available at: http://dc.statelibrary.sc.gov/bitstream/handle/10827/7271/SCSL_Social_Media_Libraries_2011.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 13 September 2016).

- Schroeder, J. and Greenhowe, T. (2009), "The chemistry of Facebook: using social networking to create an online community for the organic chemistry laboratory", *Innovate*, Vol. 5 No. 4, available at: www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=625 (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Sello, L. (2015), "Wits fee increase suspended", *eNCA*, 17 October, available at: www.enca.com/south-africa/wits-fee-increase-suspended (accessed 22 February 2017).
- Shachaf, P. and Hara, N. (2010), "Beyond vandalism: Wikipedia trolls", *Journal of Information Science*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 357-370.
- Simon, T., Goldberg, A., Aharonson-Daniel, L., Leykin, D. and Adimi, B. (2014), "Twitter in the cross fire: the use of social media in the Westgate Mall Terror Attack in Kenya", *Plos One*, Vol. 9 No. 8, p. e104136, available at: [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0104136](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0104136) (accessed 21 February 2017).
- Simon, T., Goldberg, A. and Adini, B. (2015), "Socializing in emergencies: a review of the use of social media in emergency situations", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 35 No. 5, pp. 609-619, doi: [10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.07.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.07.001).
- Sobaih, A.E., Moustafa, M.A., Ghandforoush, P. and Khan, M. (2016), "To use or not to use? Social media in higher education in developing countries", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 58, pp. 296-305, doi: [10.1016/j.chb.2016.01.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.01.002).
- Spence, P.R., Lachlan, K.A. and Rainear, A.M. (2016), "Social media and crisis research: Data collection and directions", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 54, pp. 667-672, doi: [10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.045](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.045).
- Spence, P.R., Lachlan, K.A., Lin, X. and del Greco, M. (2015), "Variability in Twitter content across the stages of a natural disaster: implications for crisis communication", *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 63 No. 2, pp. 171-186, doi: [10.1080/01463373.2015.1012219](https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2015.1012219).
- Taylor and Francis (2014), *Use of Social Media by the Library: Current Practices and Future Opportunities*, Taylor and Francis, Abingdon, available at: www.tandf.co.uk/journals/access/white-paper-social-media.pdf (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Vaccari, C., Valeriani, A., Barberá, P., Bonneau, R., Jost, J.T., Nagler, J. and Tucker, J.A. (2015), "Political expression and action on social media: exploring the relationship between lower-and higher-threshold political activities among Twitter users in Italy", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 221-239.
- Wendling, C., Radisch, J. and Jacobzone, S. (2013), "The use of social media in risk and crisis communication", OECD Working Papers on Public Governance No 24, OECD Publishing, Paris, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k3v01fskp9s-en> (accessed 20 February 2017).
- Yates, C. and Partridge, H. (2015), "Citizens and social media in times of natural disaster: exploring information experience", *Information Research*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 298-314.

Further reading

- Aharony, N. (2012), "Facebook use in libraries: an exploratory analysis", *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 64 No. 4, pp. 358-372, available at: www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/101108/00012531211244725 (accessed 12 November 2016).
- American Library Association (2012), "The 2012 State of America's Libraries", available at: www.ala.org/news/mediapresscenter/americaslibraries/soal (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Andrea, D. and Robert, P.H. (2010), "Social networking in academic libraries: the possibilities and the concerns", *New Library World*, Vol. 111 Nos 11/12, pp. 468-479, available at: www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/03074801011094840 (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Bonny, C. (2016), *SASCO and EFF Julius Malema NWU Mafikeng Campus Fees Must Fall 2016*, Youtube, available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xjpk6zXyCJI (accessed 22 February 2017).
- Gunelius, S. (2014), "Overview of blog archives about technology", available at: <http://weblogs.about.com/od/partsofblog/qt/Overview-Of-Blog-Archives.htm> (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Jacobs, L. (2016), "Responsible use of social media", NWU Institutional Advancement, 7 March 2016.

-
- Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M. (2010), "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 53 No. 1, pp. 59-68.
- Liu, B.F., Fraustino, J.D. and Jin, Y. (2016), "Social media use during disasters: how information form and source influence intended behavioral responses", *Communication Research*, Vol. 43 No. 5, pp. 626-646, doi: [10.1177/0093650214565917](https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214565917).
- Lucas, P. (2016), "Protesters blockade entrances to UCT upper campus", UCT Communication and Marketing Department, available at: www.uct.ac.za/usr/press/2016/2016-10-03_Traffic_PL.pdf (accessed 22 February 2017).
- Makori, E.O. (2010), "Making University Libraries in Kenya the destination for user population", *Library Review*, Vol. 59 No. 72010, pp. 548-557.
- Mansour, E. (2012), "The role of social networking sites (SNSs) in the January 25th revolution in Egypt", *Library Review*, Vol. 61 No. 2, pp. 128-159, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00242531211220753> (accessed 21 February 2017).
- North-West University (2015), "Suspension of activities on campus", NWU by email, 21 October 2016.
- Nzimande, B. (2016), "Blade Nzimande and universities aim for 6% increase in student fees", *Today's News*, 21 October, available at: www.uct.ac.za/dailynews/?id=9412 (accessed 13 September 2016).
- Ofilu, D.N. and Emwanta, M. (2014), "Facebook as an information service delivery tool: perspectives of library staff at the University of Benin, Nigeria", *African Journal of Library: Archives and Information Science*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 195-202.
- Stephens, M. (2007), "Web 2.0, Library 2.0 and the hyperlinked library", *Electronic Journal Forum*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 253-256.
- Wakefield, A. (2015), "NWU Mahikeng campus closed, 'under siege'", *News24*, 28 October, available at: www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/NWU-Mahikeng-campus-closed-under-siege-20151028 (accessed 22 February 2017).
- Wouters, P. and Costas, R. (2012), *Users, Narcissism and Control: Tracking the Impact of Scholarly Publications in the 21st Century*, SURF Foundation, Utrecht.
- Yadav, M. and Rahman, Z. (2016), "The social role of social media: the case of Chennai rains-2015", *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 100-110.

Corresponding author

Sabelo Chizwina can be contacted at: sabeloc@yahoo.com

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com