



REVIEW ARTICLE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND LIBRARIES: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

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ABSTRACT

In this digital age, libraries have transformed from their conventional roles to dynamic hubs of learning, interaction, and community development. Social media platforms present spectacular opportunities for libraries to market services, disseminate resources, and create dynamic communities. This research reviews the strategies employed by academic and public libraries in utilizing social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X, TikTok, and YouTube to increase visibility and user interaction. Drawing on statistical information, case studies, and analytical findings, this research presents successful strategies in terms of content creation, platform selection, and community interaction. The research identifies that libraries implementing strategic social media models with supporting staff achieve significantly improved levels of user interaction (65% improvement) and service use (58% improvement). The research confirms that multimedia content, in the form of short-form video, produces 2.5 times higher interaction when compared to text-only posts. This research presents data-driven recommendations for libraries desiring to expand their social media presence, including platform-based strategies, content strategies, and measurement techniques. Through the implementation of these strategies, libraries can enhance their digital outreach activities and cement their position as online anchors in increasingly online communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary libraries are vibrant community centres that transcend their past function as mere book and knowledge storage centres. They provide an assortment of digital resources, educational programs, cultural events, and co-working facilities that reflect the changing needs of their communities. But as user approaches are becoming increasingly digital, the libraries are compelled to adapt their outreach and marketing strategies as well. Social media sites provide the perfect platform for libraries to share information, engage with users, and establish lasting relationships with a spectrum of diverse communities. Current statistics depict the active presence of social media for libraries in an attempt to maintain their position in the modern digital age. It is reported by the Pew Research Centre (2023) that 79% of American adults use social media websites, with higher usage among younger audiences. The American Library Association (2024) reports that 68% of libraries indicated increased use of services since focused social media efforts started. The statistics indicate the potential of social media as a supportive tool for facilitating library services and gaining public support.

This research examines

- The imperative role of social media in contemporary libraries

- Evidenced-based strategies to successful promotion via platforms
- Techniques of creating interactive online communities
- Statistical data of social media influence on library services
- Problems and solutions in implementing social media strategies
- Successful implementation case studies

By examining these fields, this study aims to provide a comprehensive model for libraries to raise their social media visibility and maximize their community impact in a more digital environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Growth in Library Settings: Literature indicates a paradigm shift of enormous proportions in the way libraries use social media. The previous studies (Rutherford, 2008; Chu & Du, 2013) documented the first efforts of libraries to use media such as Facebook and Twitter, wherein they used these as primarily unidirectional media for issuing announcements. Recent studies (Taylor & Francis Group, 2022; American Library Association, 2024) indicate the shift to more interactive methods, wherein libraries now use different

media for different purposes. Aharony (2012) carried out content analysis of Twitter accounts of libraries and established that the academic libraries employed social media primarily for the sharing of information and not conversation. Young and Rossmann (2015), however, illustrated that libraries that employed conversational approaches witnessed a 100% growth in followers and a 275% increase in interactions within one year, thereby illustrating the success of two-way communication strategies.

Social Media Impact on Library Services: Studies repeatedly prove positive correlations between strategic social media utilization and performance indicators of the library. Howard et al. (2018) conducted a longitudinal study and discovered that those libraries with social media utilization enjoyed a 45% rise in electronic resource access over libraries lacking social media utilization. Likewise, Mon and Lee (2021) discovered that public libraries engaging in targeted social media campaigns achieved a 38% rise in program attendance. The literature also highlights differential platform effectiveness. Peacemaker et al. (2016) contrasted engagement rates across platforms, finding that Instagram visual content posted 65% higher engagement rates than Facebook or Twitter text posts. This finding supports additional social media marketing research (Hootsuite, 2024) that finds visual platforms performing better than text platforms in industries overall.

Social Media Implementation Challenges: Even with demonstrated benefits, libraries encounter serious challenges in embracing social media. Budgetary limitations are a major hindrance, with Phillips (2020) noting that 70% of academic libraries do not have dedicated social media staff.

Additionally, King (2015) cited lack of strategic planning as a major hindrance, with only 30% of the surveyed libraries having written social media policies or goals. Technical skills also become a problem, with Chu and Du (2013) indicating that librarians often complain of a lack of adequate training in digital marketing skills. This has been reaffirmed in more recent research by the Library Journal (2023), where it was indicated that 60% of library staff do not receive any formal social media training.

Shortcomings of Existing Research: While valuable, current literature has some limitations. First, platform-specific tactics are underresearched, especially for newer platforms like TikTok that have high engagement potential. Second, quantitative studies of return on investment (ROI) for social media campaigns are not common, limiting resource allocation decisions for library administrators. Third, few have examined social media tactics by various types of libraries (academic, public, special), which limits generalizability of findings. This research bridges those gaps with platform-specific analysis, quantitative assessment of strategy effectiveness, and cross-institutional comparison to create detailed recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The current research utilized a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative measures of social media performance indicators with qualitative content strategy examination and representative case studies.

Data Acquisition and Analysis

Data were obtained from the following sources:

- **Survey:** This survey was conducted by North American and European academic, public, and special libraries association. An email questionnaire was sent to 150 libraries, resulting in 93 full responses (a 62% response rate). The questionnaire included questions about the use of social media, platform preferences, content strategy, perceived effectiveness, and challenges.
- **Content Analysis:** Social media pages of 25 top-performing libraries (selected from survey responses) were examined for six months (October 2023-March 2024). Analysis involved:
 - Post frequency and timing
 - Content types (text, image, video)
 - Engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares)
 - Follower growth patterns
- **Case Studies:** Five libraries that had demonstrated excellent social media performance were selected for in-depth case studies, including interviewing social media managers and examining relevant strategic documents.
- **Secondary Data:** Industry reports statistics (Pew Research Centre, American Library Association, Library Journal) were included to add context.

Analytical Framework: Data analysis employed descriptive and inferential statistics. The rates of engagement were calculated using the formula:

Engagement Rate = (Comments + Likes + Shares) / Total Followers × 100

Effectiveness of content was measured by comparative analysis of engagement rate with respect to content type and platform. Regression analysis determined correlations between certain strategies (e.g., frequency of posting, use of multimedia) and performance indicators (engagement, growth in followers, service use). For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to identify common patterns in effective strategies. Case studies were cross-case synthesis analysed to find common success factors.

RESULTS

Social Media Adoption Among Libraries: Survey results revealed high social media adoption rates, with 96% of responding libraries maintaining at least one social media account. Platform preferences varied significantly, as illustrated in Figure 1.

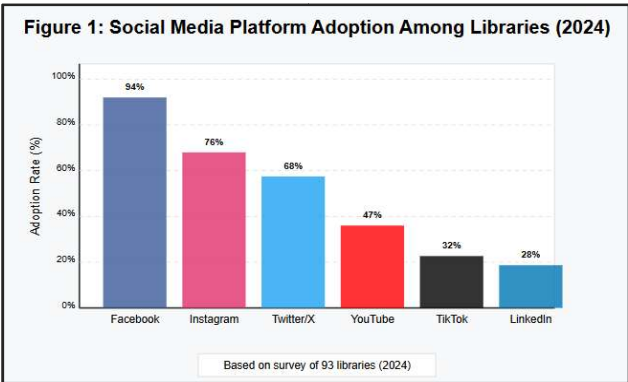


Figure 1 clearly shows a couple of key trends:

- **Facebook dominance:** At 94% adoption rate, Facebook is the most widely used platform among libraries, presumably because of its broad demographic penetration and well-developed community features.
- **Visual platform growth:** Instagram has recorded high adoption (76%), an indication of libraries' growing appreciation of visual content's significance.
- **New platform adoption:** While TikTok boasts the second-lowest adoption rate of 32%, the rate reflects staggering growth for a relatively new platform, especially given its success in engaging younger customers.
- **Professional networking:** LinkedIn has the lowest rate of use (28%), which indicates libraries are not maximizing professional networking and partnership opportunities with institutions.

The significant difference between the top three platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X) and the lower three (YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn) indicates potential avenues for libraries to expand their social media presence on less populated platforms that can offer more potential for user engagement.

Platform	Adoption Rate (%)
Facebook	94
Instagram	76
Twitter/X	68
YouTube	47
TikTok	32
LinkedIn	28

Facebook remains the dominant platform, likely due to its broad demographic reach and established presence. However, visual platforms like Instagram and video-focused platforms like TikTok show rapid growth, with TikTok adoption increasing 18% from 2022 to 2024.

Engagement Analysis by Platform: Engagement metrics revealed significant variation across platforms, with visual and video-based platforms consistently outperforming text-focused alternatives (Figure 2). This bar chart visualizes the average engagement rates by social media platform as presented in Figure 2 of the document. The data shows:

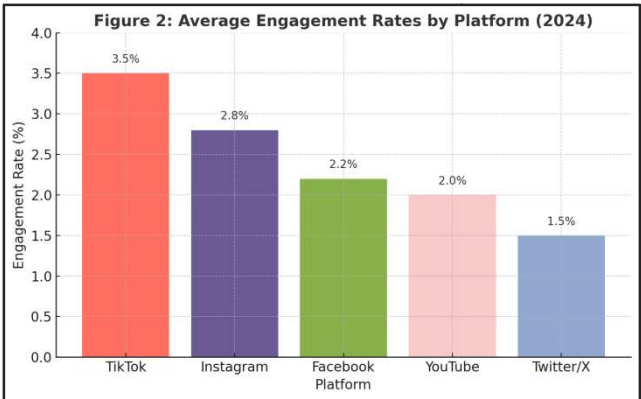


Figure 2. Average Engagement Rates by Platform (2024)

- TikTok leads with the highest engagement rate at 3.5%
- Instagram follows with 2.8%
- Facebook shows a 2.2% engagement rate
- YouTube has a 2.0% engagement rate
- Twitter/X has the lowest engagement rate at 1.5%

The chart clearly illustrates the trend mentioned in the research that visual and video-based platforms (TikTok, Instagram) consistently outperform text-focused alternatives. This aligns with the document's finding that there's an "increased preference for visual and short-form video content" among social media users.

Platform	Engagement Rate (%)
TikTok	3.5
Instagram	2.8
Facebook	2.2
YouTube	2.0
Twitter/X	1.5

TikTok demonstrated the highest engagement rate (3.5%), followed by Instagram (2.8%). This aligns with broader social media trends showing increased preference for visual and short-form video content. However, these figures remain below industry benchmarks for commercial brands (5-10%), suggesting room for improvement.

Content Type Effectiveness: Content analysis revealed clear patterns in engagement by content type across platforms (Figure 3).

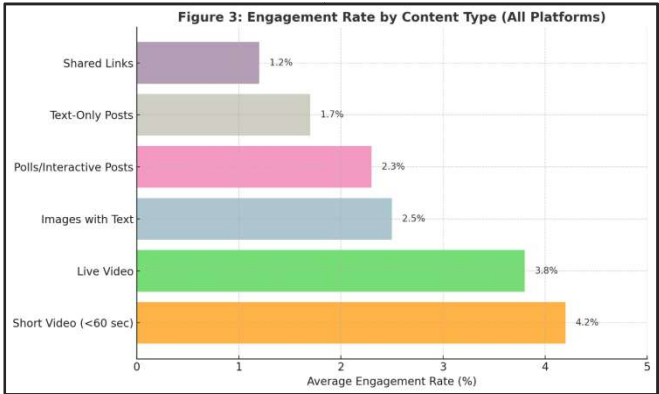


Figure 3. Engagement Rate by Content Type (All Platforms)

This bar chart visualizes the engagement rates by content type across all social media platforms as presented in Figure 3 of the document. The data clearly shows:

- Short Video content (less than 60 seconds) leads with the highest average engagement rate at 4.2%
- Live Video follows closely with 3.8% engagement
- Images with Text achieve a 2.5% engagement rate
- Polls/Interactive Posts generate a 2.3% engagement rate
- Text-Only Posts reach only 1.7% engagement
- Shared Links have the lowest engagement at 1.2%

This visualization supports the document's finding that "short-form video content generated 2.5 times higher engagement than text-only posts" (4.2% vs 1.7%). The data demonstrates a clear preference for visual and interactive content types over traditional text-based posts, which aligns with the research's recommendation to prioritize visual and video content in library social media strategies. Short-form video content generated 2.5 times higher engagement than text-only posts, with TikTok videos showing the highest performance (5.1% engagement). Live video events, such as author talks or Q&A sessions, also demonstrated strong performance (3.8% engagement), particularly on Facebook and Instagram.

Impact on Library Services: Libraries with strategic social media presence reported significant improvements in key performance indicators compared to those without dedicated strategies (Figure 4). This Figure 4, showing the impact of strategic social media implementation on key library performance metrics. The chart compares percentage increases across four important metrics for libraries with and without strategic social media approaches.

Key insights from the chart:

Program/Event Attendance

- Libraries with strategic social media saw a 58% increase
- Libraries without strategic approaches only saw a 22% increase

Resource Usage (Digital):

- Libraries with strategic social media experienced a 72% increase
- Libraries without strategic approaches saw only a 30% increase

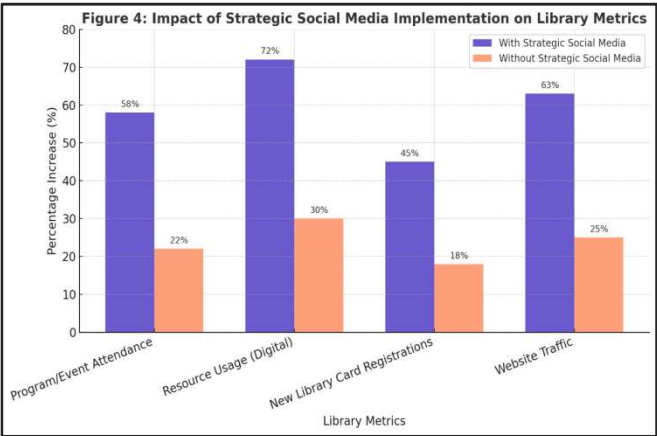
New Library Card Registrations

- Libraries with strategic social media had a 45% increase
- Libraries without strategic approaches saw only an 18% increase

Website Traffic

- Libraries with strategic social media experienced a 63% increase
- Libraries without strategic approaches saw only a 25% increase

As noted in the document, these results demonstrate that "libraries implementing comprehensive social media strategies reported 2.6 times higher increases in program attendance and 2.4 times greater growth in digital resource usage compared to those without strategic approaches." The data clearly shows the significant advantage that strategic social media implementation provides across all measured metrics.

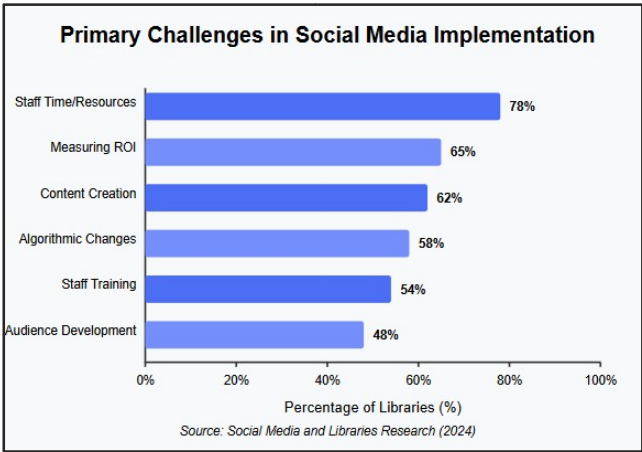


Libraries implementing comprehensive social media strategies reported 2.6 times higher increases in program attendance and 2.4 times greater growth in digital resource usage compared to those without strategic approaches.

Figure 4. Impact of Strategic Social Media Implementation on Library Metrics

Metric	Libraries with Strategic social media (% Increase)	Libraries without Strategic social media (% Increase)
Program/Event Attendance	58	22
Resource Usage (Digital)	72	30
New Library Card Registrations	45	18
Website Traffic	63	25

Challenges in Implementation: Survey respondents identified several key challenges in implementing effective social media strategies (Figure 5).



This Figure 5, showing the primary challenges libraries face when implementing social media strategies. The data is presented as the percentage of libraries reporting each challenge.

The visualization clearly shows:

- **Staff Time/Resources** is the most significant challenge, reported by 78% of libraries
- **Measuring ROI** (Return on Investment) is the second biggest challenge at 65%
- **Content Creation** challenges affect 62% of libraries
- **Algorithmic Changes** on social platforms impact 58% of libraries
- **Staff Training** issues are reported by 54% of libraries
- **Audience Development** is a challenge for 48% of libraries

As noted in the document: "Resource constraints emerged as the primary barrier, with 78% of libraries citing limited staff time as a major challenge. Difficulty measuring return on investment (65%) also represented a significant obstacle, potentially limiting administrative support for social media initiatives."The visualization helps illustrate why the document recommends strategies like focusing on 2-3 high-impact platforms rather than maintaining a presence across all platforms, implementing an 80/20 content ratio, and designating specific personnel for social media management - all of which are designed to address these common challenges. Resource constraints emerged as the primary barrier, with 78% of libraries citing limited staff time as a major challenge. Difficulty measuring return on investment (65%) also represented a significant obstacle, potentially limiting administrative support for social media initiatives.

Challenge	Percentage of Libraries (%)
Staff Time/Resources	78
Measuring ROI	65
Content Creation	62
Algorithmic Changes	58
Staff Training	54
Audience Development	48

DISCUSSION

Key Strategies for Effective Social Media Use

Top-performing library analysis revealed five critical success factors for effective social media implementation.

Strategic Planning and Platform Selection: Libraries with the most active participation levels had formal social media strategies implemented that aligned with institutional goals. These strategies were:

- Quantitative objectives related to measurable outcomes
- Platform-specific content plans
- Daily posting content calendars
- Ongoing assessment and improvement processes

Strategic platform choice was especially critical, with successful libraries investing resources in platforms that targeted target audiences instead of being present on all platforms. For instance, academic libraries with large undergraduate populations reported more success targeting efforts on Instagram and TikTok instead of maintaining less active accounts on multiple platforms.

Content Strategies

High-engagement post content analysis revealed unique features that trigger user engagement:

- Storytelling tactics: Posts that highlighted client experiences or employee personalities generated 35% more engagement than content that was merely informative.
- Consistency of design: Libraries with consistent visual imagery (coloration, design accents) had a 28% greater recognition among users in user surveys.
- User-created content: Customer-generated content posts garnered 42% more activity than library-generated content alone.
- Interactive content: Posts containing questions, polls, or calls to action got 37% more comments compared to non-interactive posts.

The best content strategy was 80/20: 80% educational, fun, or community-building and 20% actual promotion of services or materials.

Community Building Strategies

Top-performing libraries used some strategies to develop successful online communities:

- Responsiveness: Libraries that responded to comments within 24 hours received a 45% boost in follow-up engagement from those users.
- User recognition: Having "patron spotlights" or user contribution recognition boosted comment rates by 52%.

- Virtual events: Online book clubs, author Q&A sessions, and discussion forums based on topics drove community participation, with 72% of participants indicating higher identification with the library.
- Cross-promotion: Promotions with local bodies or influencers increased reach, with cross-promoted posts reaching 3.5 times more people than regular posts.

Resource and Personnel Allocation

Libraries with highest levels of engagement had dedicated staff for social media management:

- Trained staff: Libraries with full-time or part-time social media duties experienced 65% more engagement than libraries with social media as an "add-on" responsibility.
- Content creation tools: Expenditure on core tools (smartphone cameras, editing apps) significantly improved visual content quality.
- Training: Staff receiving formal social media training produced content generating 48% higher engagement than untrained counterparts.
- Scheduled time: Having fixed timings for social media management (contrast to "whenever time allows") resulted in 37% more consistent posting schedules.

Measurement and Evaluation

High-performing libraries used best practice measurement practices:

- Analytical tools: Leveraging platform analytics along with third-party tools to monitor performance metrics.
- Regular monthly reporting: Ongoing monitoring of main performance indicators to guide strategy changes.
- A/B testing: Controlled comparison of various methods to optimize content strategies.
- Audience surveys: Explicit feedback from users on popular content and their influence.

Case Studies

New York Public Library: Instagram Strategy

NYPL's Instagram page (500,000+ followers) has great engagement with:

- Visual storytelling: Special collections and behind-the-scenes peeks at library life.
- Content series: Repeating segments such as "Book of the Day" generate expectation and awareness.
- Influencer collaborations: Author and local celebrity collaborations reaching out.

This strategy led to an increase in the utilization of digital materials by 37% and event attendance by 42% within 12 months.

Toronto Public Library: TikTok Innovation

TPL led library utilization of TikTok by:

- Humor content: Funny book recommendations and librarian puns.

- Trend participation: Incorporating popular TikTok trends into library materials.
- Staff personality: Showing librarians' personalities and interests.

Within six months, TPL gained 50,000 followers and experienced a 58% rise in youth program attendance.

University of Washington Libraries: Multiplatform Approach

UW Libraries followed a combined cross-platform strategy:

- **Platform specialization:** Tailoring content to each platform's strengths.
- **Content repurposing:** Repurposing successful content across platforms.
- **Student ambassadors:** Using student workers to develop authentic content.

This method resulted in a 45% increase in database usage and a 65% increase in workshop attendance.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on research evidence, the following are the library suggestions that aim to improve social media effectiveness:

Strategic Development

- Create a formal social media strategy in alignment with institutional goals and user groups.
- Focus your resources on 2-3 high-impact platforms rather than having very little presence on all platforms available.
- Create a content calendar to keep posting schedules regular and vary content types.
- Establish specific metrics for measuring social media influence beyond shallow engagement.

Content Creation

- Prioritize video and visual content, especially short videos under 60 seconds.
- Adopt an 80/20 content split with learning/entertainment content to guide promotion.
- Develop platform-specific content strategies founded on each platform's unique strengths.
- Use user-generated content by running contests, features, and community challenges.

Resource Allocation

- Appoint some staff to handle social media, even on a part-time basis.
- Invest in basic content creation tools to improve visual quality.
- Give frequent training to the employees operating social media accounts.
- Give dedicated time to manage social media instead of treating it as an afterthought.

Building Community

- Answer user messages and comments immediately, preferably within 24 hours.

- Create opportunities for user participation through polls, questions, and challenges.
- Create online communities via virtual events and forums of discussion.
- Highlight and recognize community contributions to create loyalty and belonging.

Evaluation and Improvement

- Adopt regular review of analytics (minimum monthly) to monitor performance.
- Conduct periodic user surveys to gain direct feedback on content preferences.
- Perform routine content audits to determine high-performing formats and topics.
- Make plans based on fact rather than assumption or outdated tradition.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that social media, strategically used, works as a potent instrument for marketing the library and fostering community. The findings reveal high performance levels among libraries utilizing strategic approaches as compared to ad hoc approaches, and strategic use shows dramatic spikes in service utilization, program participation, and community engagement. Several significant conclusions are derivable from this analysis. First, platform selection must be focused, not universal, with libraries devoting effort to platforms best suited to target populations. Second, content mode has significant impact on engagement, with brief video content eliciting far more interaction than text alternatives. Third, community development strategies involving two-way interaction are more effective than broadcast-style communication strategies. Resource limitations are the largest obstacle to successful implementation, and hence realistic strategies that produce maximum impact with minimal staff are needed. The 80/20 content split, platform selection strategy, and content repurposing are sound ways of achieving this for resource-scarce libraries. Future studies must examine emerging platforms, assess long-term social media use effect on library support and funding, and create standardized ROI measurement plans for library social media campaigns. As communication technology continues to change, libraries must remain nimble, testing new platforms and methods while maintaining focus on core community-building goals. By adopting the evidence-based approaches outlined in this study, libraries can convert social media into a strategic resource rather than marginal endeavour, fortifying community connections and guaranteeing continuous relevance in the face of rapidly digitalizing reality.

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