

# Social Networks in Developing the Internet Strategy for Libraries in Ukraine

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**Abstract.** The authors substantiates the growing role of forming the on-line strategy for libraries in Ukraine. Its components are identified and the role of social networks as one of the leading channels of communication of libraries in the digital environment is highlighted. The emphasis is on the need to use social networks to form a library brand, to establish a system of communication with consumers and marketing activities.

**Keywords:** social networks, libraries of Ukraine, on-line strategies for libraries.

## 1 Introduction

The formation of a modern digital media space defines a strategic path for the development of libraries, focusing on a global Internet environment, which puts forward some significant problems to the library social institute and needs to find the ways to solve them. The leading role is taken by the issues of the correspondence of the current state of libraries and their areas of their strategic development to the requirements that the global civilization process of the formation of the information society and the knowledge society raises. The purpose of the article is to define the components of the Internet strategies for libraries and analyze the role of social networks in their implementation.

## 2 Related Works

This issue has recently become the focus of librarians, among whom are O. Voskoboinikova-Huzieva, V. Ilhanaieva, I. Davydova, T. Hrachak, K. Lobuzina, O. Marina, N. Nikolaienko, O. Brui. The attention of researchers focuses mainly on the issues of strategic management as a leading approach in the sustainable development of libraries in the information society.

The researchers focus on a holistic system of strategic library management at the stage of transformational change [6], the development strategies for the library industry as a socio-communication institution of the society [15], strategic growth priorities of library management technologies [11], a balanced system of indicators in the strategic management of the library [2].

Most authors closely associate the development strategies for libraries in the information society with the development of strategic management that covers the key areas of library activities: the development and adaptation of the library to the external environment, the implementation of innovative changes, adjusting personnel policy. The traditional comprehension of strategy is based on the idea as one of the management processes that consists of many solutions, including the formation of a common goal and options for its possible implementation.

The strategic development of libraries is based on a high level of technology, so libraries enhance the level of information service on the Internet by mastering technologies 2.0 and 3.0 in the networked information space. K. Lobuzina [9] and O. Marina [10] carry out research in this area.

In recent years, the works of librarians have been added to the findings on the development strategies for libraries, which describe the first experience of libraries in social services. In particular, T. Hrachak, N. Choi and S. Soohyung Joo, A. Noorhidawati, V. Strunhar, G. Wan and others deal with these issues.

Thus, the analysis of the results of theoretical and practical studies of development strategies for libraries suggests a wide range of prospects for the functioning of the library in the information society, mainly related to the strategic planning aimed at the introduction of new information technologies, an access to information systems and networks, as well as working with electronic network resources.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that despite the wide interest of the scientific community in the issues of strategic development of libraries of Ukraine in the networked Internet space, the role of social networks in online library strategies is insufficiently researched.

### **3 Methodology**

The Library Internet Strategy is understood by the author as an internally non-contradictory system of actions, designed for a perspective that involves shaping a system of on-line communications of the library, directing its activity to achieve sustainable development, taking into account internal capabilities and the influence of the external environment. It is a long-term model for developing a library that serves its goals and takes into account current trends in the electronic communications system.

Shaping the Internet strategy for libraries is aimed at preserving its positions in the age of the digital era and involves an access to digital arrays, first of all by means of providing the readers with the possibility of using Internet resources, hosting their own information resources in an online environment and setting up a communications system and a service of information consumers.

An important component of the Internet strategy for libraries in Ukraine is the formation of a productive on-line environment; the establishment of an effective system of Internet communications and the purposeful use of Internet marketing technologies, which provides the libraries with qualitatively new service capabilities and creates a base for expanding the range of information products and services [3].

Modern Internet strategies for libraries are aimed at creating an on-line library environment that changes the existing communication channels of the institution, “to show them as they look in the eyes of the consumer – as a flow of information from a single source” [1].

Thus, communication is a process aimed at achieving an unambiguous perception of the communication message by the agents that send and receive it. In a socio-communication context, communication is socially predetermined by the process of information transfer and information perception under the conditions of interpersonal and mass communication in nonintegrated network with the help of any communicative devices.

The library activities online cover various channels of interaction between the institution and the target audience and personify all the communication necessary to promote the information product or service [7]. It shapes a communications system based on the need to assess the strategic role of certain areas of activities:

- advertising,
- sales promotion,
- public relations and their optimal balance to ensure the clarity and consistency of the impact of communication programs through the content-neutral integration of all individual accesses [8].

Thus, the development of an Internet strategy for libraries in Ukraine is not only a new technology for managing the information environment, but also a powerful means of promoting information products and services, the philosophy of library activities, which brings together all components of the communication process and enhances the efficiency of the entire customer service system.

Internet communication involves constant movement, information exchange. It should become a permanent activity, a universal characteristic feature of the library as the leading socio-communication institution of the society.

## **4 Our approach**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by significant changes in the development of Internet strategies for libraries. These changes are associated with the fact that the external and internal environment of libraries in a certain way differs from that which was a few years ago: the structure of consumption changes – the main difference of the library and information service in the digital environment is its personalization.

The whole system of service should be based on the maximum full consideration of the individual needs of each subscriber [12]. By way of mastering the network tech-

nologies, the customer service, in particular remote one, extends the communication environment of libraries, which promotes new marketing and advertising trends.

The first is the deep segmentation of consumer groups, the second is the expansion of the spectrum of marketing communications, the emergence of electronic communication channels, through which the consumer receives information about information products and services. In this context, the online strategy is considered not only as a special management function, but in the broadest sense as a modern orientation of the functioning of the library in a turbulent and complex external environment, and as a developed form of market communication.

The transformation of modern libraries into centres of information electronic resources, which operate on a fundamentally new modern technical and technological basis, is a prerequisite for the consumer to become more accessible at an individual level. From now on she is perceived as a personality, and not an impersonal unit of a particular segment of the information market.

Modern online technologies in library and information services should lead to the withdrawal from the information service aimed at the mass market to the concept of personal relationship management.

The effective implementation of Internet strategies for libraries occurs when many tools are used, among which are:

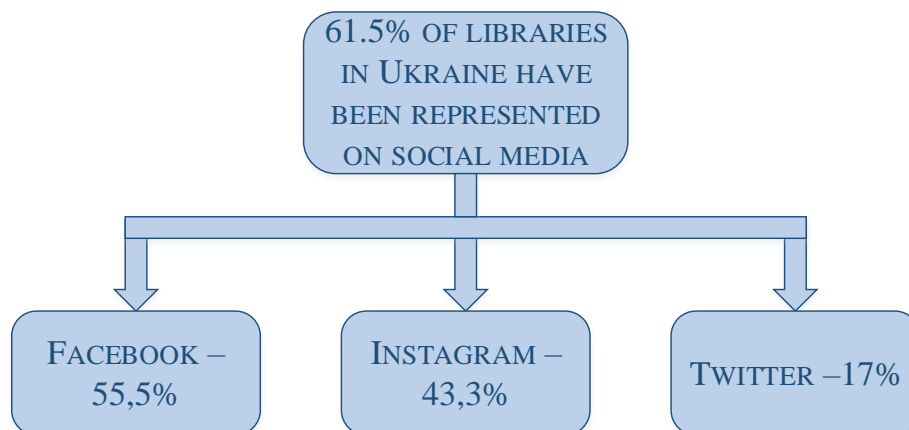
- the leading websites,
- e-mail,
- instant messenger (IM – Instant Messenger), the most famous of which are chats, Skype, MSN, etc. blogs; forums;
- photo and video hosts,
- podcasts,
- webcasts,
- personal profiles and interactive discussion groups,
- social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram),
- virtual professional communities on social networks.

All these components can be considered as individual segments of on-line strategies for libraries, as their complex use, creating a synergetic effect, enables an efficient communication process with its own audience and the promotion of information products and services. At the same time, the quality of this effect is to some extent caused by the efficiency of the use of each of the sectors.

Let us consider this statement as in the case of one of the leading communication channels of the Internet strategy for libraries – social networks that are actively evolved and adapted in the minds of social actors as a comfortable communication media platform, attractive both for the society and for the library community.

By 2019 61.5% of libraries in Ukraine have been represented on social media. The most popular social networks in Ukraine are Facebook, where 55.5% of libraries have Personal User accounts, and Instagram – 43,3%. A shade less of libraries use Twitter – 17%. At the same time, there is a greater focus of research on the social network Facebook, which can be explained by more relevant target audience for the libraries that uses it. This indicates not only the growth of the number of libraries on social

networks by 18.1% over the last five years, but also certain stages of the development of this sector of library activities.



**Fig. 1.** The most popular social networks in Ukraine libraries

The first stage in the deployment of communication activity on social networks by libraries in Ukraine (2008-2012) has shown that the vast majority of domestic libraries are passive users of the World Wide Web, including social online platforms.

Libraries began their activities with the creation of less informative projects (sites, blogs, advertising cards, etc.). Their presence on social networks was characterized by a poorly timed updating of information, poorly conscientious attitude to the choice of technological solutions for the building of information and communication interaction in the media environment, a random choice of online services, and poor interaction of their own Internet projects with each other.

Libraries have partly used the “quality” of communication that enables the media environment: the mass of the audience, the commitment and interest of users, the possibility of dialogue, getting instant feedback [10].

One of the problems highlighted by the researchers is the reluctance of the leadership of some libraries to accept social networks as a full-fledged marketing and communication online tool.

As a result, quite often there is only a formal creation of a user account with the provision of a minimum amount of information that does not correspond to the idea of social networks as communication channels, marketing tools and data-acquisition configuration about users. At this stage, the use of powerful communication channels contributed to the creation of an on-line environment that is closest to the users of the library.

The next stage (2012-2015) is characterized by significant activation of the library activities online. The availability of user accounts on the most popular social networks is implemented by:

- all national libraries,
- regional universal libraries,

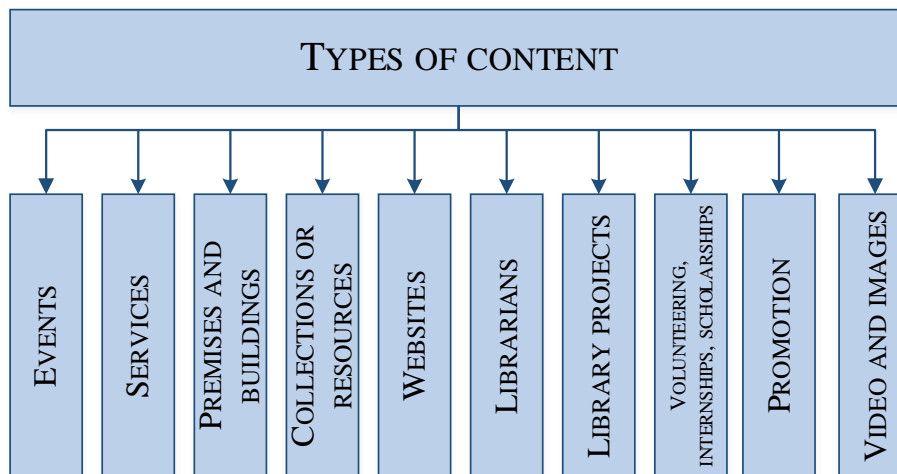
- libraries of higher education institutions,
- a large number of mass libraries.

At the same time, it should be noted that the activity among the audience in library profiles remains at a rather low level – only 15.5% of the active profiles are observed on Facebook and 7.7% on Twitter. Furthermore, the profiles with more than 500 subscribers are 25.5% on Facebook and 20% on Twitter. The use of Youtube video hosting by libraries has increased significantly – 37.7%, which is 17.5% more than at the first stage, so it can be concluded that library specialists are aware of the importance of implementing video presentations of library and information institutions.

Library workers actively study the activities of foreign libraries on social media and analyze the possibilities of using foreign experience in their own on-line activities. The most popular social networks abroad are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

In a study conducted by American librarians, it is noted that 104 of the 115 analyzed libraries (90.4%) have at least one Facebook page. At the same time, there is a rather low involvement of users – more than 60% of online communities of the libraries have fewer than 200 subscribers, and only 4 – more than 1000 [16].

One of the most important factors influencing the popularity of a library profile on a social network is content. The analysis of the profiles of foreign libraries made it possible to distinguish the following types of content:



**Fig. 2.** Types of content based on the analysis of the profiles of foreign libraries

- events:
  - seminars,
  - speeches,
  - lectures,
  - competitions,
  - etc.;

- services:
  - updating library services,
  - such as new reference services,
  - delivery of documents;
- premises and buildings:
  - updates,
  - changes;
- collections or resources:
  - messages related to library collections, such as updating and promoting electronic or printed collections,
  - access to databases,
  - other research resources;
- websites:
  - updating sites,
  - blogs,
  - repositories;
- librarians:
  - presentation of new library staff,
  - news about librarians,
  - vacancy announcements;
- library projects:
  - new and existing ones;
- volunteering, internships, scholarships:
  - proposals for internships,
  - fellowship programs;
- promotion:
  - messages related to the presence of libraries on the social network, the attraction of new users;
- video and images:
  - posting the video materials and images in the news feed.

A meaningful analysis of the presence of Ukrainian libraries on social networks has shown that, unlike the first stage, most libraries are constantly updating content on social networking pages, but predominantly announcements of upcoming events are

being made, photo and video reports are posted on the events held, new acquisitions are shown, etc.

An important indicator of the effectiveness of the library online is the characterization of the activity of the library site readers on social networks. During this period, researchers point out that only a quarter of analyzed user accounts of libraries in Ukraine can be considered highly active [14].

At the same time, experts in the document and information sphere are constantly searching for ways to improve the functioning of libraries on social networks.

The activities of Ukrainian libraries on social networks at the third stage of development (2016-2019), which is now being continued, is characterized by a systematic approach and active work on the development of its own on-line strategy:

- the orientation of media activity in creating the content for the study of user information needs is changing;
- libraries present themselves as reliable and secure channels of information, using for this purpose all information products and services that can offer audiences a deeper and more interesting concept of self-realization;
- an image is created and constantly supported that distinguishes libraries from other online community members;
- the input of users (comments, constructive criticism) into the activities of library web-projects is encouraged;
- the technologies of social media marketing, integrate forms of cooperation, exchange and self-organization are used [10].

## **5 Conclusions and Future Works**

The libraries of Ukraine are expanding their presence on the Internet space, considering not only the number of applied and complementary communication channels, but also the quality of interaction with users in them.

Modern users are already accustomed to high-quality Internet products and services; therefore, the task of libraries is not only to provide a wide range of services online, but also to create conditions for a comfortable service and effective presentation of their information resources. Social networks are both an individual promotion channel and a component of search engine optimization.

The marketing activities of libraries in social networks are expanding. Although libraries are more likely to use the opportunities of advertising and the formation of their own image in the networked environment rather spontaneously than systematically, one might as well say about the revision of approaches to the creation of marketing tools, the application of the system of integrated marketing communications in libraries.

SMM (Social Media Marketing) is one of the methods for promoting the library products and services through social networks. The main purpose of SMM-promotion is to increase the recognition of the brand, increasing interest in the provided products and services, constant communication with potential and existing users.



Social networks provide an opportunity to be involved with the library brand, and working with the target audience can improve the library service, while increasing the level of trust of users. At the same time, working with an audience on social media, librarians can track feedback or complaints from visitors and react swiftly to them. It is possible to measure the effectiveness of actions conducted by a library and track the users' responses to events.

Further use of social networks should take place in accordance with the general strategy of online library activities, and the viability of using one or another channel of promotion should be confirmed by the results of segmentation and identification of the target audience on social networks. Librarians should work on the availability of useful and interesting information that can be offered to users on social networks, considering that SMM-promotion is based on three main components:

- high-quality content;
- permanent presence in an online environment;
- working with a negative.

During this period the technology of marketing activities of libraries on social networks is being formed. It involves a number of stages. Before starting to work with social networking websites, it is important to find out how the library will be presented through them. For example, a representative of a library can communicate on his/her own behalf, representing the interests of the library and evoking certain associations from the users. Another option might be to create a library page that is supported by one of the employees to enhance the recognition of a particular brand.

It is advisable to create both a library page and a profile of its employee who will officially represent the institution. This option of representing the library on social networks will create a more trusting relationship with the target audience. At the same time, it is necessary to monitor the online activities of employees who noted in their user accounts the library as a place of work, as they are a direct reflection of the organization and create a certain reputation.

Promotion through social networking websites refers to all activities that may be of interest to users. These include, firstly, various competitions (engagement, call to action), drawings (expanding audience coverage).

Secondly, there are unique specialized projects with high interest and good returns. Thirdly, there are useful articles, interesting essays, videos, tips, master classes, etc. When selecting social networks for promotion, it is advisable to focus on those that are preferred by the target audience of the library. Usually the most popular social portals are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube.

However, it should be understood that there are plenty of sites that also have a high percentage of target audience one can work with.

The results of the study suggest that social networks are involved at different levels of development of Internet strategy for libraries in Ukraine: from the presence of libraries on social media to the realization of PR-tasks and the building up of an advanced strategy of brand representations.

The development of on-line strategies in libraries in Ukraine should contribute to the systematic application of the whole range of possibilities of network communication

tools and channels, the potential of which is highly appreciated by the foreign library community that provides libraries of Ukraine with a powerful strategic vector of development in the digital media space.

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