ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION IN INDIA

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Crossref DOI - https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23362565

Abstract :

Social media has become an important channel for communication, information sharing and knowledge exchange in academic and research environments. Researchers, teachers and students use social media to share research outputs, exchange ideas, identify relevant information, develop professional networks and communicate with wider academic communities. Platforms such as ResearchGate, LinkedIn, X, YouTube, Academia.edu and Google Scholar provide different opportunities for research communication and scholarly networking. Scholarly communication includes activities such as research, writing, evaluation, publication, dissemination, discovery and preservation. Social media can complement these activities by supporting rapid communication and wider dissemination. This paper presents a theoretical review of the role of social media in scholarly communication in India. It discusses the changing scholarly communication environment, major academic platforms, uses, benefits, challenges and the role of libraries and library professionals. The paper concludes that responsible use of social media can strengthen research communication, visibility, networking and knowledge sharing, while traditional peer-reviewed publishing remains essential for scholarly validation.

Keywords : Social Media; Scholarly Communication; Research Communication; Academic Networking; Knowledge Sharing; Information Dissemination; Research Visibility; Digital Literacy.

Introduction :

Scholarly communication is central to the development of academic knowledge because research becomes useful when its findings are communicated, evaluated, published and made available to others. Traditionally, researchers relied on journals, books, conference proceedings, research reports and other formal channels. Developments in information and communication technologies have gradually changed this system by increasing the speed, accessibility and reach of scholarly information.

Social media has added an interactive dimension to this changing environment. It enables users to create, share and discuss information through networked digital platforms. In

academic settings, researchers increasingly use such platforms to disseminate publications, exchange research ideas, identify scholars with similar interests, follow developments in their fields and build professional networks.

The present paper examines social media as a complementary component of scholarly communication, with particular attention to the Indian academic and research environment. The discussion is theoretical and focuses on the relationship between social media and the major activities involved in scholarly communication.

Review of Literature :

Research on internet use, open access and social networking provides the foundation for understanding the changing scholarly communication environment. Patil (2005) examined internet use among university students, including information awareness, searching, downloading and problems faced by users. The study indicates the growing importance of internet-based information access in academic activities.

Khare and Thapa et al. (2007) examined internet use among PhD scholars, focusing on awareness of internet services, search engines, information use and satisfaction. Their work indicates that internet services had become important sources of research-related information.

Husain and Nazim (2013) examined open-access scholarly journals in media and communication and highlighted the importance of online access to scholarly literature. This work reflects the wider movement from restricted print-based access towards digitally available scholarly resources.

Ashraf and Haneefa (2016) studied scholarly use of social media among doctoral students at the University of Calicut. The study considered awareness, reasons for use, research activities and the usefulness of social media at different stages of research. The findings indicate that social media can support research communication and interaction among scholars.

The literature on academic social networking further shows that such platforms are used for research discovery, information sharing, professional visibility, networking and collaboration. At the same time, studies have identified concerns related to information quality, privacy, time use and the need for appropriate digital skills.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that social media has become relevant to several aspects of scholarly communication. However, its role should be understood as complementary to established scholarly publishing rather than as a replacement for peer review and formal publication.

Concept of Social Media :

Social media refers to internet-based platforms that allow users to create, share and discuss information and digital content. Its interactive nature distinguishes it from traditional one-way communication systems. In academic environments, social media can support

communication among researchers and between researchers and wider audiences.

The major functions relevant to scholarly communication are:

- Content creation and sharing.
- Interaction and academic discussion.
- Professional networking.
- Research collaboration.
- Multimedia communication.
- Rapid dissemination of information.
- Formation of academic and professional communities.

These functions reduce geographical and communication barriers and allow researchers to remain connected with colleagues, institutions and scholarly communities.

Concept of Scholarly Communication :

Scholarly communication is the process through which research knowledge is created, evaluated, communicated, published, discovered, used and preserved. It involves researchers, students, teachers, publishers, academic institutions, libraries, professional organisations and information users.

The traditional system is strongly connected with formal publication and peer review. Digital technologies and social media have expanded this system by providing additional channels for discovery, communication, dissemination and interaction. The formal and informal components can therefore operate together within the wider scholarly communication environment.

Evolution of Scholarly Communication :

Scholarly communication has developed from print-based communication to an increasingly digital and interactive environment:

In the print environment, scholarly communication depended mainly on journals, books and conferences. Electronic publishing and digital libraries increased the speed and accessibility of research information. Open access further improved availability, while Web 2.0 introduced interactive participation. Social media has extended this development by allowing researchers to communicate and disseminate information in real time.

Scholarly Communication Process :

The scholarly communication process can be understood as a connected sequence of activities:

1. Research Idea and Literature Search : Research begins with the identification of a problem or question and a review of existing literature. Researchers use journals, books,

databases, repositories and other information sources to establish the background of a study.

2. Data Collection and Analysis : Researchers collect relevant data and analyse it to identify findings and develop knowledge. Access to current scholarly information can support interpretation and comparison of results.

3. Scholarly Writing and Presentation : Findings are organized into research papers, articles, theses, reports and conference presentations.

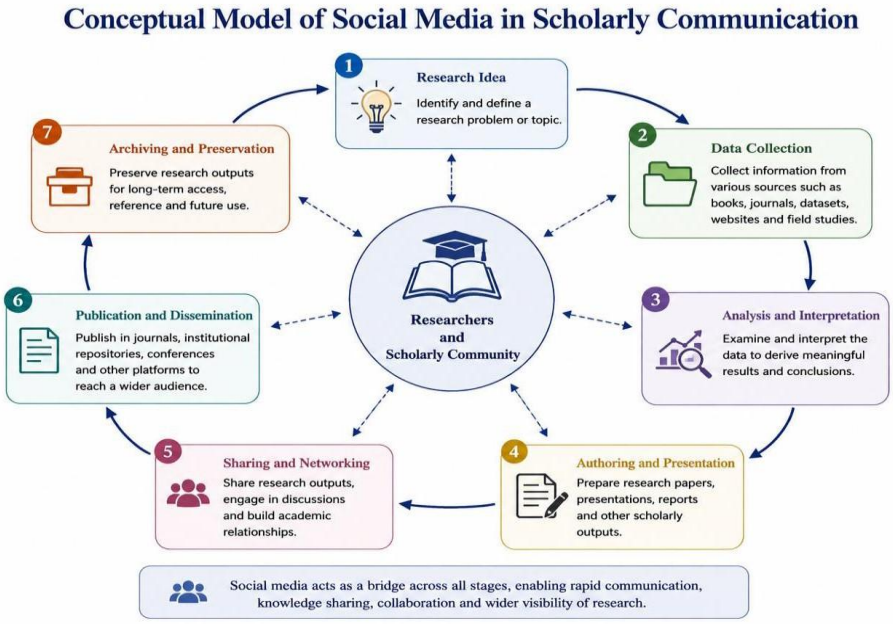
4. Peer Review and Publication : Research intended for formal scholarly communication is commonly evaluated through peer review and then published through journals, books, conference proceedings or other scholarly outlets.

5. Dissemination and Discovery : After publication, research can be disseminated through repositories, academic networks, social media and other channels. These channels help potential readers discover relevant work.

6. Use, Feedback and Preservation : Published research is read, cited, discussed and used in further work. Digital repositories and preservation systems support continued access to scholarly outputs.

Model of Scholarly Communication :

The scholarly communication system can be represented as a continuous cycle :



Social media can operate as a complementary communication layer across this cycle, particularly in networking, information sharing, dissemination, discovery, discussion and feedback. The model therefore places social media alongside, rather than instead of, formal scholarly communication.

Social Media and Scholarly Communication :

Social media has changed scholarly communication by making it more interactive and

continuous. The traditional scholarly communication process involves several stages, including research, writing, peer review, publication and reading. Social media supports this process by providing opportunities for researchers to share their work, discuss ideas, build professional networks, receive feedback and continue research discussions with other scholars. Researchers may use social media to:

- Share newly published research.
- Discuss research ideas and findings.
- Find researchers with related interests.
- Identify potential collaborators.
- Follow journals, experts and institutions.
- Promote conferences and academic events.
- Share educational and research presentations.
- Discover current research.
- Develop a professional academic profile.
- Increase the visibility of research work.

Academic Social Media Platforms :

1. Research Gate : ResearchGate is an academic networking platform that supports communication among researchers and sharing of research-related information. Its functions include publication sharing, research discussion, networking, collaboration and research discovery.

2. LinkedIn : LinkedIn is a professional networking platform that can be used by academics to present qualifications, publications, professional activities and research interests.

3. X : X, formerly known as Twitter, provides short-form communication and networking. Researchers can use it to share publications, research news, conferences, events and academic discussions.

4. YouTube : YouTube supports academic communication through video. Researchers and teachers can share lectures, presentations, demonstrations and explanations of research topics.

5. Academia.edu : Academia.edu provides a platform for researchers to share scholarly work and develop academic connections.

6. Google Scholar : Google Scholar is a scholarly discovery service used to locate academic literature and related research information. It is particularly useful for literature searching and identifying scholarly publications.

Role of Social Media in Scholarly Communication :

1. Research Dissemination : Social media allows researchers to share information about

publications, conferences and research findings with a wider audience.

2. Research Visibility : Online sharing can increase awareness of researchers and their publications beyond the immediate readership of a journal.

3. Academic Networking : Researchers can connect with scholars from different institutions and disciplines and identify people with similar research interests.

4. Research Collaboration : Online interaction can support the exchange of ideas and expertise and may lead to collaborative research.

5. Knowledge Sharing : Researchers can share text, presentations, images, videos and links to relevant scholarly resources.

6. Current Awareness : Following journals**,** publishers, institutions and experts can help researchers remain informed about developments in their fields.

7. Academic Discussion : Commenting and discussion can provide opportunities for scholarly exchange and feedback.

8. Communication during Disruptions : Digital platforms can provide alternative channels for academic communication when conventional communication is interrupted.

Benefits of Social Media in Scholarly Communication :

- Rapid dissemination of research information.
- Wider academic reach.
- Easy professional networking.
- Opportunities for research collaboration.
- Improved research visibility.
- Access to current academic information.
- Interactive discussion and feedback.
- Sharing of text, audio, video and other digital content.

Challenges of Social Media in Scholarly Communication :

1. Information Quality : Information shared online may not always be accurate or reliable, so researchers need to evaluate sources critically.

2. Misinformation : Incorrect or misleading information can spread rapidly through social platforms.

3. Copyright : Scholarly materials should be shared according to copyright and licensing conditions.

4. Plagiarism : Easy access to digital information can increase the risk of inappropriate

copying.

5. Privacy and Security : Researchers need to protect personal, institutional and research-related information.

6. Academic Credibility : Social-media content does not necessarily undergo the same peer-review process as formal scholarly publications.

7. Digital Literacy : Effective academic use requires skills in information evaluation, digital communication and responsible online behaviour.

8. Information Overload : The large volume of information can make it difficult to identify the most relevant and authoritative resources.

Role of Libraries and Library Professionals :

Academic libraries support scholarly communication by providing access to scholarly literature, information services and preservation facilities. In the social-media environment, library professionals can extend these functions through digital communication and training.

Main activities include :

- Promoting scholarly databases and electronic resources.
- Providing current-awareness services.
- Promoting institutional repositories and open-access resources.
- Training researchers in information and digital literacy.
- Providing guidance on responsible academic use of social media.
- Promoting institutional research outputs.
- Helping users evaluate the credibility of online information.
- Creating awareness about plagiarism, copyright and research ethics.

The library professional therefore acts not only as a provider of information resources but also as a facilitator of digital scholarly communication.

Social Media and Open Scholarly Communication :

Open access has increased the availability of scholarly literature through digital channels. Social media can complement open scholarly communication by directing researchers towards openly available articles, repositories, journals and institutional publications.

However, social media should not replace peer-reviewed scholarly publishing. Its primary contribution is to support discovery, promotion, networking, communication and discussion around scholarly work.

Theoretical Findings :

The theoretical discussion leads to the following findings:

- Social media provides additional channels for scholarly communication.
- Academic social-media platforms can improve research visibility and dissemination.
- Social media can support academic networking and collaboration.
- Social media can assist current awareness and discovery of scholarly information.
- Effective academic use requires information and digital literacy.
- Social media complements rather than replaces formal scholarly communication.
- Libraries and library professionals can support responsible and effective academic use of social media.

Suggestions :

- Academic institutions should encourage responsible use of social media for research communication.
- Researchers should maintain accurate and professional academic profiles.
- Libraries should provide training on academic social-media platforms and information evaluation.
- Researchers should follow copyright, research-integrity and ethical requirements when sharing publications.
- Institutions should develop clear guidance for responsible academic use of social media.
- Libraries should promote credible open-access resources and institutional repositories.
- Researchers should distinguish peer-reviewed scholarly information from unverified online content.
- Further studies should examine social-media use and research communication in different Indian academic disciplines.

Conclusion :

Social media has become a significant complementary channel for scholarly communication. It enables researchers, teachers, students and academic institutions to share information, communicate with peers, build professional networks and disseminate research to wider audiences.

Academic platforms such as ResearchGate, LinkedIn, X, YouTube, Academia.edu and Google Scholar provide different opportunities for networking, discovery and dissemination. The theoretical discussion indicates that social media can contribute to research visibility, knowledge sharing, current awareness, academic discussion and collaboration.

At the same time, responsible use is essential because issues of information quality, copyright, plagiarism, privacy, misinformation and academic credibility can affect scholarly communication. Libraries and library professionals can support researchers through

information-literacy training, resource promotion and guidance on ethical and critical use of online information.

Overall, social media should be viewed as a complementary part of the scholarly communication ecosystem. Its value is greatest when it is integrated with established processes of peer review, formal publication, preservation and scholarly evaluation.

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