

Usability, Satisfaction and Future Expectations from LIS Links Social Network

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Abstract

Purpose: To study the usability, satisfaction and future expectation of the Library and Information Science professionals from LIS Links Social Network. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** A survey is conducted through questionnaire which is designed in Google Forms and distributed to 22,259 LIS Links members through LIS Links Broadcast Message. The results are analyzed and tally with statistics like LIS Links members, Google Analytics, Feedburner subscribers, Google Plus, Facebook and Twitter followers and so on to arrive at a conclusion. **Findings:** Gender-wise, male generally use social networking websites more than their female counterparts and they also respond more to any kind of survey. In case of Library and Information Science professionals in India, the users of LIS Links social networking site is higher and even greater than the users of other general purpose social networking site like Facebook and YouTube. **Research Limitations:** The LIS Links usability and satisfaction survey only cover 1.39% of the total population i.e. 310 respondents out of the total 22,259 LIS Links members. **Practical Implications:** The findings of the study will help the administrator of LIS Links in fine tuning some of its services and identify the priority areas for future endeavor. **Originality/Value:** The study will help the associations / organizations in the field of Library and Information Science in identifying core areas of their activities.

Keywords: Blog, Forum, Group, Library 2.0, LIS Links, Social Networking Site, Web 2.0, www.lislinks.com

1. Introduction

Library and Information Science Links (LIS) (<http://www.lislinks.com>) is a social networking site for LIS professionals in India developed by Badan Barman in 2008. It acts as a common platform for sharing of experiences, innovative ideas, news and announcements in LIS. It also acts as a communication channel for about 22,000 LIS professionals in India and is widely used¹. PC Quest Magazine, June 2009 commented: “this initiative has made this portal one of India’s best in LIS and among a very few in the world”². Again, in the PC Quest June 2010 issue, LIS Links was included among 200 Tech success stories³. The LIS Links project was also able to receive “Jury Special Mention” award in the category of “Best Usages of ICT in Education and Learning” in the E-North East Award 2011 held at Kohima, Nagaland (India). It also received “Jury Special Mention” award in the category of Advocacy and Empowerment in the North East Social Impact Award 2015 held at NEDFi House, Guwahati, Assam (India) on 28th August 2015.

As on 3rd June 2017, LIS Links achieved a global traffic rank of 121,423 and the rank in India is 8,404.

According to Google Analytics, the LIS Links website received 22,704,445 pageviews for the period from December 16, 2011 to June 10, 2017. The website receives on an average 12584 pageviews from 1447 people in single day. To further promote the sharing of content by the members, LIS Links instituted LIS Links Grants (Grants for Association / Organization and Grants for Libraries) and LIS LINK Scholars Award and India’s Best Institutional Repository Award.

2. Features of LIS Links

Persons seeking membership LIS Links need to answer a few questions. On approval of membership, the answers to the questions become his/her profile. All the LIS Links members profile can be browsed and searched by using different criteria. The LIS Links interface provides the following facilities:

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2.1 Blog

Blog is a Content Management System where articles posted are automatically arranged in a chronological or reverse chronological fashion. The feature is used to post job vacancy announcements.

2.2 Discussion Forum

The discussion forum in LIS Links is a web application for discussion that manages user-generated contents in a manner that is easy-to-browse and search. The forum consists of a tree like directory structure containing at the lowest end topics (commonly called threads) and inside them posts and replies. The discussion forum is used to open discussion on LIS related issues.

2.2.1 Events

The Events management software of LIS Links is calendar of upcoming seminars / conferences / workshops in LIS arranged according to the date of the event.

2.2.2 Groups

In the LIS Links site, discussion group facility is used to create micro communities.

2.2.3 Photo

Any member of LIS Links can upload the photograph of their libraries or library related events.

2.2.4 Video

The member of the LIS Links can upload the videos over LIS Links which then can be viewed by other members and comment on it.

2.2.5 Chat

This feature on LIS Links website allows people to directly interact through chat or chat with the whole group of online members.

2.2.6 Scrap Message

A scrap message is a brief message that can be posted in the personal profile of a member which is later on sent by the system in the form of E-mail.

2.2.7 E-mail

The LIS Links members can send E-mail to their friends, individuals as well as groups, through LIS Links inbuilt messaging system.

LIS Links interface has a provision to customize searching, browsing and subscription options through Email, SMS, RSS, Google Plus, Twitter, Facebook Page, etc. It also has a Broadcast Message option with provision for sending a direct Email to all the members of the LIS Links website in a single attempt and invitation to the LIS Links (through direct Email, Gmail, Yahoo Mail, Facebook and LinkedIn) to the people who are not members of the website. Besides these, LIS Links hosts all important circulars related to LIS, samples of necessary documents required by librarians, publishes LIS Links Newsletter and display popular members, blog post, forum post, event, photo dynamically. It provides an option to navigate to the website through Mobile phone and reporting issues and providing feedback to the administrator.

3. Purpose of the Study

The changing needs and expectations of professionals needs to be properly studied. The LIS Links has been in existence for over nine years and it is time to examine its utility and value.

4. Methodology

An online questionnaire is designed and developed by using Google Forms and distributed through Email to five Library and Information Science (LIS) experts with experience of working as an administrator / moderator in the LIS Links for testing. Using the comments and feedback from the experts, the questionnaire was modified and the link to the modified questionnaire along with a forwarding letter is distributed to 22,259 LIS Links members through Broadcast Message.

5. Results

Out of the total 22,259 LIS Links members, 310 members (199 male members and 111 female members) responded to the survey.

5.1 Time Spent on Social Networking Sites

Alexa is a tool that provides web analytics data. It provides the website's global Alexa Rank, the rank in the particular country from which the website is accessed, the sites linked to the website, list of similar sites, average load time of the website and such other data. Excluding LISLinks.com as it is subject-specific social networking site and the study is based around it and Chinese social networking sites that have a very low penetration in India, all other

social networking websites that have a Global Alexa rank of 25 or higher, are considered for the survey.

Out of 310 respondents, 294 (95%), 245 (79%) and 224 (72%) people still don't used Reddit.com, Instagram.com and Twitter.com respectively. Among the social networking sites users, 210 (67.74%), 177 (57.10%), 148 (47.74%) people uses the site LISLinks.com, Facebook.com and YouTube.com for 1-30 minutes in a day. This statistic remained same with very little fluctuation for users who used social networking sites for 31-60 minutes and more than 1 hour.

Among the Library and Information Science professionals in India, the user of LISLinks.com social networking site is highest and even it cannot be compared with general social networking site like Facebook.com and YouTube.com. Among the users of social networking sites in the field of LIS, the access to the LISLinks.com is at par with the Facebook.com and YouTube.com (Table 1).

Table 1. Time spent on social networking sites by LIS professionals

| Social Networking Site | Alexa Rank | Not Used | 01-30 Minutes | 31-60 Minutes | More than 1 Hour |
|------------------------|------------|----------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| Facebook.com | 3 | 37 | 177 | 41 | 55 |
| Instagram.com | 18 | 245 | 50 | 10 | 5 |
| LinkedIn.com | 25 | 149 | 135 | 16 | 10 |
| LISLinks.com | 122,815 | 0 | 210 | 53 | 47 |
| Reddit.com | 8 | 294 | 8 | 0 | 6 |
| Twitter.com | 11 | 224 | 71 | 9 | 6 |
| Youtube.com | 2 | 63 | 148 | 53 | 46 |
| Others | | 132 | 96 | 54 | 28 |

5.2 Frequency of Using LISLinks.com

The respondent data shows that 61.3% people used LISLinks.com website regularly. However, Google Analytics data for the LISLinks.com website revealed that out of the 22,259 LISLinks.com website members on an average 1,447 people (6.50%) regularly visit LISLinks.com for some purpose or other and they spend more than 13 minutes on the website (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency of using the LIS links

| Frequency | No. of Respondent |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Rarely | 29 (9.4%) |
| Daily | 190 (61.3%) |
| Weekly | 81 (26.1%) |
| Monthly | 10 (3.2%) |

5.3 Authenticity of Information over LISLinks.com

LISLinks.com is a professional website and mostly professionals contribute content. As was expected the authenticity of information found over LISLinks.com was higher with 119 (38.4%) and 172 (55.5%) opining positively (Table 3).

Table 3. Authenticity of information over LIS links

| Authenticity | Number of Respondents |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Excellent | 119 (38.4%) |
| Good | 172 (55.5%) |
| Average | 15 (4.8%) |
| Poor | 1 (0.3%) |
| No Comment | 3 (1%) |
| Total | 310 |

5.4 Purpose of Using the LISLinks.com Website

LIS Links members used the site to keep abreast of the latest news, events and job vacancies. Some also used it to network and interact with LIS professionals, to post news / discussions and for other purposes (Table 4).

Table 4. Reason of using LIS links social network

| Reason of Using LIS Links | Respondent |
|--|------------|
| To keep abreast of the latest news, events and vacancy | 287 |
| To network and interact with LIS professionals | 157 |
| To post news / discussions | 89 |
| Any Other | 10 |

5.5 Helpfulness of LISLinks.com Website

305 out of 310 respondents found LISLinks.com website helpful (Table 5). When respondents were asked to compare LIS Links with other social networking website, 234 (75.5%) respondents opined that the LIS Links is more useful to them (Table 6).

Table 5. Helpfulness of LISLinks.com social network

| Helpfulness | Response |
|-------------|-------------|
| Yes | 305 (98.4%) |
| No | 1 (0.3%) |
| No Comment | 4 (1.3%) |

Table 6. Comparing LISLinks.com with other social networking website

| Query | Respondent |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| LIS Links is more useful | 234 (75.5%) |
| LIS Links is less useful | 12 (3.9%) |
| LIS Links is at par with other | 45 (14.5%) |
| No Comment | 19 (6.1%) |

5.6 Contribution of the Features of LIS Links towards Professional Life

The ‘job vacancies’ section of the website appeared to be particularly useful and popular among members. However, members did not seem to be aware of certain features such as document delivery service and short message service (Table 7).

5.7 Ways of Receiving Content from LIS Links

The LIS Links website is having 9,391 Email alert subscribers as per the Feedburner statistics and updates are sent to them daily. Convenience seems to be the major factor in many opting to receive updates via E-mail. Surprisingly though 16,047 members of the LIS Links website are on Facebook, only 43 respondents out of 310 respondents used to receive the content through Facebook. Even though there are many new technologies that are emerging, the traditional E-mail has not lost its relevance and is still one of the highly used services. As such, E-mail marketing or providing electronic newsletter through Email is still an effective marketing strategy to reach out to the people (Table 8).

Table 8. Ways of receiving content by the members from LIS links

| Ways of Receiving New Content | Actual Subscribers | Frequency | Respondent |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Email Digest | 9,391 | Daily | 281 (90.6%) |
| Broadcast Message | 22,259 | Monthly | 24 (7.7%) |
| Google+ | 1,011 | Daily | 33 (10.6%) |
| Facebook | 16,047 | Daily | 43 (13.9%) |
| Twitter | 639 | Daily | 4 (1.3%) |
| SMS | 721 | Quarterly | 35 (11.3%) |
| RSS | NA | Daily | 17 (5.5%) |

Note: The respondent may select more than one option, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

5.8 Problem Faced in Using the LISLinks.com Website

Most members did not face any problem while using the LIS Links website, while some did face problems like lack of time (17.4%), too many advertisements over the website (7.7%) and so on (Table 9).

Table 9. Problems faced in using LISLinks.com website

| Types of Problem | Respondent |
|--|-------------|
| No problem | 224 (72.3%) |
| LIS Links is banned in our institute campus. | 7 (2.3%) |
| Lack of time | 54 (17.4%) |
| Lack of technical knowledge | 8 (5.8%) |
| Lack of support from members / administrators of LIS Links | 15 (4.8%) |
| Too many advertisements over the website | 24 (7.7%) |
| Not useful for professional life. | 6 (1.9%) |
| Others | 0 (0%) |

Note: Respondent may select more than one option, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Table 7. Contribution of the features of LIS links towards professionals life

| Features \ Rank | Discussions | Events | Jobs | Groups | Photo | Video | Chat | E-mail |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------|------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|
| Excellent | 75 | 82 | 125 | 41 | 18 | 16 | 31 | 92 |
| Good | 175 | 173 | 142 | 149 | 82 | 70 | 104 | 129 |
| Average | 42 | 44 | 36 | 83 | 137 | 130 | 103 | 49 |
| Poor | 2 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 27 | 39 | 33 | 9 |
| Not Aware of the Feature | 16 | 10 | 4 | 30 | 46 | 55 | 39 | 31 |

5.9 Future Expectation from LISLinks.com Website

The following are some of the important suggestions by members for future development of the website:

- Developing a guide for the UGC NET examination (224 respondents);
- Creating an online encyclopedia in LIS (210 respondents);
- Creating an online quiz series related to LIS (192 respondent); and
- Opening a tab for downloading relevant software.

6. Conclusions

LIS Links social networking website has a large user base and there are many professionals who are not members of popular general purpose social networking websites like Facebook but are a part of the LIS Links community. LIS Links' latest news (forum), events and job vacancies

sections are of prime importance for the members many respondents were not aware of LIS Links DDS and SMS features and as such these need to be marketed. There is scope for adding additional features to the website to make it even more useful to LIS community in India.

7. References

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