

HEALTH INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOURS AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS ACCESSING DIGITAL LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the information-seeking behaviours and health information needs of social media users who engage with digital libraries. The study adopted survey method with 280 active social media users. It was based on Wilson's Information-Seeking Behaviour Model. Structured online surveys were used to collect data, which was then analysed using descriptive statistics. The results show that significant users use digital libraries accessed through social media to access health information. YouTube, Academia.edu, and ResearchGate were found to be the most popular sites, with Facebook as the dominant platform. On the other hand, LinkedIn and Reddit were not very useful for getting to digital libraries. Some of the main problems that have been found are copyright violations, issues about privacy and data security, and problems with access. These things make it much harder for users to use social media to get the most out of digital libraries. The study found that social media increases access to digital libraries for health information, but it also points out the need for better copyright enforcement, data protection and access methods. Based on the findings, it is recommended that libraries and social media sites work together in smart ways to make sure that health information is accurate, easy to find and safe.

Key words: Digital library, Health information, Information needs, Information-seeking behaviour, Library, Social media.C

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet, as a global, affordable network, has caused an increase in the availability of information, leading to a noticeable relationship between social media and digital libraries (Arms, 2001). Digital libraries stem from the interactive nature of information stored in databases. They encompass collections of digital texts, images, slides, audio, videos, and even social media content. The connections between a digital library and social media include (a) interaction with the library through other technology, (b) digitized materials, (c) services provided to patrons of the library, and (d) multiple retrievals of information. A digital library is a curated collection of digital resources accessible online. According to Witten and

Bainbridge (2017), digital content such as e-books, journals, articles, videos, and images make up the content of digital libraries which are accessible through the internet. Libraries enable users to enjoy unhindered access to limitless information on the internet at any time and from anywhere and even provide search and organisational tools that further enhance information retrieval (Witten & Bainbridge, 2017). Digital libraries are more effectively utilized with social media considering the later users' engagement through computers, tablets, or smartphones using online software and applications. According to Chu and Du (2013), social media makes digital libraries useful to users while Dollarhide (2021) explains that social media enables advanced interaction that can foster relationships between libraries and users to promote the sharing of information in the construction of virtual networks and communities.

Social media is mainly grouped into social networking, bookmarking, social news, media sharing, microblogging, and forums (Dollarhide, 2021). Statista (2021) lists the following platforms as the most popular social media sites for networking and educational engagement: (a) Facebook (2.74 billion users), (b) YouTube (2.29 billion users), (c) WhatsApp (2 billion users), (d) Facebook Messenger (1.3 billion users), (e) Instagram (1.22 billion users), (f) Whatsapp (1.21 billion users), (g) TikTok (689 million users), (h) QQ (617 million users), (i) Douyin (600 million users), (j) and Sino Weibo (511 million users). Other academic platforms include LinkedIn, Academia.edu, Altmetric, Amazon Author Central, Authorea and Mendeley. Information needs refer to the patronage of library facilities for information collection and processing. The totality of human behavior as one relates and interacts with the various sources and channels of information is referred to as information behaviour or communicative information behaviour, which includes both active and passive information reception (Bindhu and Balasubramanian, 2019). As posited by Wiche and Ray-Ogbonna (2021), information seeking is made up of a number of constituent parts: the underlying need for the information, the purpose for the search, the sought information, the consulted sources, and the employed methods for retrieval. Therefore, health information can be defined as the communication of health information concerned with the employment of health information.

This definition emphasizes the application of communication techniques to the health decision-making processes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). It helps to define the strategy as having many facets and disciplines that can be employed to appeal to various audiences and communicate health information with the intent to influence and support individuals, communities, health practitioners, special populations, policy makers,

and the general public to advocate, allow, adopt, or maintain a behavior, practice, or policy that will improve health outcomes (Schiavo, 2007). With health and social media, including digital libraries, a category of users access information through online library catalogs referred to as online depositories. Connecting EHR to the digital library is, according to Betsy (2000), a reformulation of the traditional informatics paradigm of integrating automated clinical data and knowledge-based information designed to support decision making with relevant clinical data. The more widespread use of the Internet, the creation of the World Wide Web, and converging format standards for banked electronic health information and digital publications facilitate effective integration.

The relationship between social media and digital libraries is the close association in the processes of digitisation and technological convergence. The backup systems in social media sites are capable of retrieving and holding vast amounts of information akin to the infrastructure of libraries. It has the potential to foster even stronger connections between libraries and their users (Taylor & Francis, 2014). Due to improvements in digitization and mobile technologies, the library world literally merges with social media in the provision of uninterrupted services and resources at any place and at any time (Anwar & Zhiwei, 2020). A digital library allows for the easy and rapid access to catalogs, as well as images of various types that are for public use and commercially exploited. Unlike the traditional libraries that are limited by storage space, digital libraries are able to store much more information (Pomerantz & Marchionini, 2007). The study, therefore, looks into the depth analysis of the health information needs and information retrieving patterns of users in social media pertaining to a digital library.

Statement of the Problem

A notable difficulty within the information-seeking behavior of social media users is their social media gratifications in relative terms to library services. This attitude influences users' terms of library resources and information behaviours. The effective use of social media tools in digital libraries is determined by the ability of social media users to facilitate active and efficient communication between libraries and their users within the actual building and within the virtual sphere of the library's digital services.

The degree of computer literacy inhibits the utilization of a digital library to some extent. Either restricted user authentication for collection access, copyright infringement due to material duplication, and the expensive cost of accessories can limit its use. There are a

number of challenges which come with seeking health information in a digital library and credibility is one of them. Debate still surrounds the credibility of many Internet materials and sources which further complicates the search. Control is minimal with some digital libraries that do not have strict review mechanisms is controlling the information's accuracy and reliability. With the vast amounts of information on health topics contained in digital libraries, information overload becomes an issue. Users may have difficulty sifting through large volumes of data to locate precise and relevant information that adequately fulfills their requirements. Access to health information stored in digital libraries may be hampered by inadequate or troublesome access, technical hitches, and raised concerns regarding confidentiality. The privacy and data security of stored information are potential hindrances. Such challenges stem the search of social medial users who specifically look for health information relevant to a digital library. Some materials in an online library may be placed behind a paywall, requiring payment, or gated with user authentication. These prerequisites limit accessibility and infringe upon a writer's intellectual property rights. More common today is the practice of plagiarism, where individuals on social media use unaccredited library materials.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective aims to assess the health information seeking behaviour of social media users alongside their interaction with digital libraries looking specifically at what social media platforms are predominant and what the challenges impacting social media use for digital library resources. The objectives of the study include:

1. to examine the nature of health information-seeking behaviours of social media users vis-à-vis digital library.
2. to identify dominant social media platforms for digital library materials.
3. to examine the challenges affecting effective social media users' use of digital library.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- a. What is the nature of health information-seeking behaviours of social media users vis-à-vis digital library?
- b. What are dominant social media platforms for digital library materials?
- c. What are challenges affecting effective social media users' use of digital library?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarifications

A library aims at collecting, organizing, and storing knowledge and culture as well as providing access to such information through valuable records which can be passed on to future generations. It encompasses a wide array of reading materials and media collections which include manuscripts, books, newspapers, magazines, art reproductions, films, sound and video recordings, maps, photographs, microfiches, CD-ROMs, computer software, online databases, and other media (Encarta, 2009). A library also refers to a collection of books earmarked for reading or studying and the building or room dedicated to housing such collections (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015). Joshi (2014) states that the library is the hallmark for any modern society. As a service agency, it mobilizes and makes information and knowledge accessible for use by a citizen and a society. It is the aim of library profession to provide right information with positive attitude, to the right user at the right time.

A digital library, or online library, is an example of digital repository for all forms of digital materials such as e-books, photographs, audio, videos, and audiovisual materials which can be accessed by users over the internet. It is a type of library which uses the internet as a means to retrieve information that they can access through computer networks (Witten & Bainbridge, 2009). Digital libraries are categorized into three types: institutional repositories, national collections and digital archives. Institutional repositories are located in the building repositories of an institution's library database and are easily available by library patrons with or without restrictions. It includes the processes of storing, organizing, and retrieving the contents of a library (Castagné, 2013). A national library is mandated by the law to require legal deposits of one or more copies of all published materials in a country to be submitted for preservation in the national library of that country. Digital archives include the digital (and physical) records of corporate bodies and of individuals and families whose papers are preserved in archives (Pitti & Duff, 2001).

Social Media and Digital Library Use

A digital library can be defined as an integration of both software and hardware methods of processing and storing information. The software method provides an application that manages the running of library components while the hardware method includes the physical components such as computers, tablets, smartphones, and other internet-enabled devices. The design and construction as well as the implementation of digital libraries is done in such a way that computer systems and software utilize the information when it is provided in the

form of semantic digital libraries used to interact with various communities from a social networks (Pavlova, Pavlov & Dicho, 2016).

The integration of social media with the digital library marks the point of their shared reliance on digitization. Sumadevi & Mallinath Kumbar (2019) pointed out that social media networks are dependent on digitization which in turn links them to digital libraries, whether in the form of institutional repositories, national library databases, or digital archives. Social media, as claimed by Taylor & Francis (2014), has the capability to enhance interactions between libraries and patrons irrespective of users' locations or the way they prefer to discover and use library services and resources. Libraries accomplish social media marketing and customer interaction in real time, as well as boost user participation and appreciation for the library's services and resources.

As noted in the social media marketing of digital libraries, Sumadevi and Mallinath Kumbar (2019) point out the following objectives of social media:

- a. Advertising library materials and products, and services.
- b. Promote inter-channel web traffic among the library portal and its various social media profiles.
- c. Foster more efficient, proactive, and direct communication with the users as well as with the expanding and demanding community of library users.
- d. Inform users about the library's operational activities, services, events, projects and developments in library and information science related to the most popular services of the library.
- e. Social sites utilized for networking, interest, cause and service sharing.

Health Information Needs and Information-Seeking Behaviour of Social Media

Wilson (1981) discusses information needs as the ways one seeks to gratify oneself because of the exposure to information and the benefits derived from it at the individual and group levels. In terms of social media interaction versus digital libraries, social media offers greater access to information because individuals can share posts, photos, and videos through social media (Case & Given, 2016). Basic information needs may include escape or relaxation as well as news, academic materials, and various other user needs (Case & Given, 2016). Information behavior is defined as the personal, motivational factors to seek information, the information that is being sought, the methods and tools used to obtain the information, and the sources through which the information is procured (Wilson, 1999). Within the user

formulated context of library services, libraries are very important in the facilitation of the information seeking process (Kuhlthau, 1991). The attitude and behavior of users with regard to the services offered by a library is gradually changing due to resource sharing among libraries through electronic consortia.

As stated in the current study, access to networked information resources, rather than a physical access to the library, is the preferred method of use for many users (Bhattacharjee, Sinha & Bhattacharjee, 2014). A social media platform serves as a library since the information is brought and provided for the library users, for ease of accessibility on those platforms. Kumar (2003) argues that connection policy for the electronic health record and the digital library also should resolutely address vital policy concerns such as the privacy of health data, fostering high speed government communications, electronic rights and owned resources, control of information, and the sealing of the borders for health data and digital libraries. These problems, alongside the policies, ought to be a major focus for scholars in the medical informatics discipline. Digital libraries are invaluable in advancing the availability of reliable, current health information, which supports evidence-based practices, facilitates medical research, improves healthcare services and medical education around the world. Suggested benefits of an adopted digital library for health information include:

- a. Access to extensive range of health related materials, including but not limited to, research papers, journals, text books, clinical guidelines, and even materials for patient education.
- b. Access to the most current information in health and medicine since digital libraries are constantly updated with new publications and research findings.
- c. Users can conveniently obtain health information from digital libraries 24/7 as long as they have Internet access.
- d. Healthcare professionals utilize digital libraries for evidence-based practice protocols, systematic reviews, and clinical trials; this enables informed healthcare decisions.

The application of a digital library for health information comes with a myriad of challenges. Utilizing the example of Betsy (2000), connecting the electronic health record to the digital library also requires resolving health data privacy policies, government encouragement of high-speed communications, electronic intellectual property rights, and parameters for the health data and for the digital library itself. Both the research problems and the policy issues need to be set as prioritizes targets in the field of medical informatics. One of the major challenges includes maintaining the standards relating to the information's quality in digital

libraries. Users are required to exercise a significant amount of discretion concerning relevancy of the sources of information they seek. Also, the need for an account or personal information to access certain resources may pose privacy and data security concerns. Libraries have an obligation to ensure that stringent measures for protecting data privacy are put in place. While using these digital libraries, users may come across problems related to accessing them, navigating through them, and even using them, which include: system not working at all, prolonged periods for data to appear on the screen, and the system being incompatible with other resources like phones and other browsers.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the information-seeking behavior model propounded by T. D. Wilson in 1981. This model explains the functions of information seeking and sharing in a library context (Wilson, 1999). According to the model, seeking information is a broad attempt to acquire information in social and technological settings. The model may be understood as a form of communication involving thoughts, feelings, and movements or actions (Kuhlthau, 2006). In his work on Information-seeking behavior of library patrons in some selected academic libraries in Kaduna State, Nigeria, Suleiman, Abdulkadir & Isah (2019) reported that there was an increase in the level of awareness of library resources in both universities as a result of adequate information provided about the services offered, and that respondents were more aware of the books and/or e-books, electronic journal/journals, newspaper and media resources. Such findings support Thanuskodi's (2013) position that there is a need to educate library patrons in order for them to seek and identify information.

Wilson (1999) proposed an adaptation of the model illustrating the information-seeking behavior which incorporates information emerging from a situation. The model also observes that information search behavior is a part of information seeking behavior, while the latter is only one of the many types of behaviors classified under information behavior. Still, there are some limitations attached to the model. The primary limitation identified is its lack of description on how a person who is surrounded by context behaves, and how, in turn, context influences his or her perception of the barriers to information seeking.

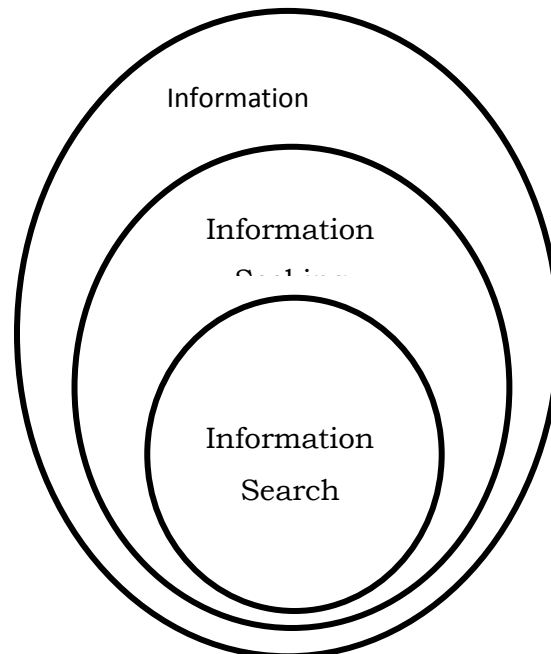


Figure 1: Wilson's 1999 nested model of information behaviour

The information-seeking behaviour model is suitable for the study at hand because it emphasizes the information-seeking activities of the practitioners, particularly the librarians (Kuhlthau & Tama, 2001). This is reinforced by the prevailing notion that ICT-compliant persons have greater ease undertaking activities related to the Internet compared to non-compliant persons. An average user of social media is assumed to possess adequate basic skills in operating the Internet and in accessing the resources available in the digital library.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 280 social media users who utilize digital library resources was targeted through an online survey. Participants were selected via purposive sampling with regard to the active social media presence and willingness to engage for the study. Health information needs, information-seeking behaviours and other relevant data were captured using a structured questionnaire which was sent electronically; the questionnaire contained both closed questions and Likert scale items. Response data were quantitatively analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques of calculating means and standard deviations. The measures provided in the analysis enabled the obtaining of objective insights for defining the ranges of estimation with regard to the research goals alongside the patterns, trends, and significant

changes within the dataset. These findings enabled the drawing of meaningful conclusions that aligned with the study objectives and answers the research questions.

ANALYSIS AND RESULT DISCUSSION

Table 1: Health Information needs of social media users vis-à-vis digital library

	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	St. Dev	Remark
I seek health information to enable me learn nutritional values of some food I take.	96 34%	126 45%	12 4%	26 9%	20 7%	2.1000	1.18109	Rejected
I seek health information for access to information on treatment of mental health	22 8%	31 11%	6 2%	158 56%	63 23%	3.7464	1.15625	Accepted
I seek health information to learn about specific symptoms of unfamiliar health conditions to apply First Aid treatment where necessary.	140 59%	94 34%	2 1%	20 7%	24 9%	1.9071	1.24950	Rejected
I seek health information on herbal products to know its uses and health challenges before taking herbal medicine.	72 26%	155 55%	6 2%	18 6%	29 10%	2.2036	1.19646	Rejected
I seek health information to take informed decisions about my health especially for the treatment of children at home	110 39%	120 43%	2 1%	26 9%	22 8%	2.0357	1.21762	Rejected
I seek health information for academic purposes	14 5%	15 5%	8 3%	99 35%	144 51%	4.2286	1.07659	Accepted

Table 1 shows the analysis concerning the information needs with the type of information that information users search for or access on social media. A mean score of 2.7036 was set as the cut-off point to accept or reject criteria fulfilling the benchmarks on the items, with items exceeding the benchmark indicating that a considerable use of the digital library for fulfilling that specific information need has been registered. The results showed, that the users sought information on the treatment of mental health (Mean = 3.7464; SD = 1.15625) and academic purposes (Mean = 4.2286; SD = 1.07659) as the primary activities, both of which were accepted given they surpassed the mean. In general, social media users seem to strongly utilize digital library resources towards understanding mental health issues and for academic work. On the other hand, the need to look up information pertaining to nutrition (Mean = 2.1000; SD = 1.18109), symptoms of non-familiar health conditions for first aid (Mean = 1.9071; SD = 1.24950), herbal products (Mean = 2.2036; SD = 1.19646), informed decision making in

health especially child health care (Mean = 2.0357; SD = 1.21762), were accepted as underexploited for the digital library suggesting that better resources are available in lower budget formats (free). In summary, the digital libraries are well utilized for particular pertinent health information needs, but there is a clear need to encourage their use towards other vital health information areas which would maximize the offerings and services of the libraries.

Figure 2: Dominant social media platforms for digital library materials

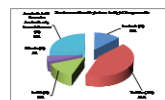


Figure 2 describes how respondents from various groups, segments, and demographics utilized diverse social media platforms as digital libraries, capturing their access for a specified period. From the analysis, it can be noted that YouTube marks the highest platform having a frequency score of 43 percent. This indicates YouTube's versatility, dominance and popularity among users searching for digital library content not only includes academic lectures and tutorials but also demonstration videos that aid creative learning and practical applications. Following closely were the Academic Social Networks, that is, Academia.edu, along with ResearchGate emphasizing the role these Social Media platforms play as focused communities for scholars and researchers to disseminate citeable documents such as peer-reviewed papers, preprints and grey literature. They facilitate scholarly communication and provide important links to institutional and national digital repositories, enhancing their scholarly relevance in the digital library system. Facebook too displays fairly high usage portraying its flexible role in formal academic interaction as well as informal peer group relations concerning the sharing and redistributing of digital library resources. On the

contrary, LinkedIn and Reddit proved to have the lowest frequency scores indicating they're within the least preferred platforms by respondents in regards to interacting with a digital library. Even so, Reddit's possibility as a site for posting and discussing health issues, including mentioning digital library resources, indicates a barely tapped avenue for knowledge dissemination. In general, these results emphasize the diverse dynamics of social media interactions relative to digital libraries and stress the necessity of specific tailored approaches for deeper interaction engagement.

Figure 3: Challenges affecting effective social media users' use of digital library

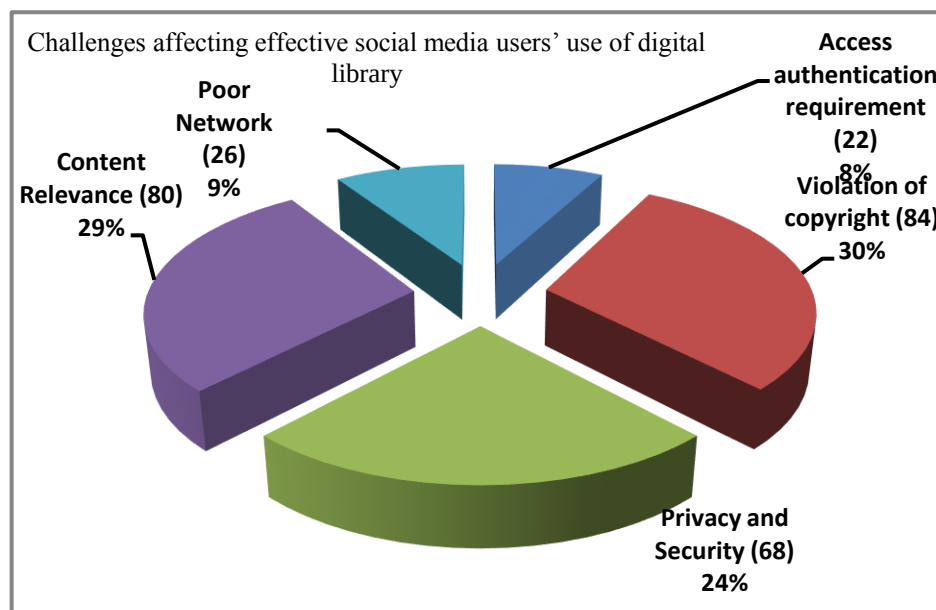


Figure 3 demonstrate that infringement of copyright violation stands as the greatest barrier limiting the effectiveness of social media users in exploiting resources from digital libraries. This limitation stems mainly from the unauthorized reproduction and distribution of digital library materials without proper citation or acknowledgment of authorship, thereby violating intellectual property boundaries and the ethical boundaries of academic content. Also noted as serious obstacles were the relevance of the content as well as privacy and security issues. The inherent lack of security surrounding the Internet worsens these factors as digital spaces become more and more vulnerable to hacking, data theft, and a wide range of cybercrime. These threats damage user confidence and may make them reluctant to use digital library resources. Also, user authentication systems such as passwords, online registration forms, and other credentialing tools enhance security but also create higher user access restrictions that bar most users from easily availing services, especially those without the required

documentation or institutional affiliation. These measures, although important in safeguarding copyrighted materials and sensitive information, unintentionally reduce unrestricted access and increase user friendliness problems for social media users searching for materials from digital libraries. Network issues being the least significant challenge is rather baffling, given the context of this study, as legal and security issues clearly trump infrastructural ones. As a whole, these findings stress the importance of implementing effective copyright strategies, fortified cybersecurity measures, and streamlined access procedures to improve the usage of digital libraries through social media.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was conducted to assess a health information seeking behaviour of social media users which incorporates the use of a digital library. The data was analysed concerning the research objectives/questions and the following conclusions were reached:

- a. The most effective correlation regarding social media and the use of the digital library exists. Social media, as indicated by the analysis, serves as a digital library for information retrieval and storage. This claim is corroborated by Sumadevi & Mallinath Kumbar's (2019) finding that social media networks are based on digitisation which provides linkages with existing digital libraries in forms of institutional repositories, a national library database, and/or digital archives.
- b. YouTube emerged together with Academic Social Networks (like Academic.edu and ResearchGate) as the most dominantly accessed social media for health information purposes. Facebook is also a widely used social network for health information needs.
- c. The results showed that online privacy and internet security pose the greatest threat to user safety. Besides inadequate network connection, which was found to be the least challenging factor affecting the effective use of social media for accessing materials in the digital library, there are other significant challenges such as breach of copyrights and access control.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- a. Because social media greatly improves access to the digital library, trustees of libraries and providers of health information should work together with social media companies to develop and maintain reputable digital archives. This collaboration would enhance the functions of digital libraries in meeting health information requirements while maintaining quality and proper custodianship of relevant materials.

- b. With YouTube, Academic Social Networks, and Facebook recognized as primary hosting services, library managers ought to establish strategic alliances with these hosting services. Credible digital health information and academic networking could be hosted on verified pages, channels, or groups created by the libraries for users to access consistently and reliably.
- c. Due to the issues of privacy, security, copyright, and authentication, strategic digital library system security measures such as encrypted access, multi-factor authentication, and clear copyright management must be instituted. Furthermore, active teaching about safe online practices for users is vital to reduce the risk of exposure to cybercrime and unauthorized access to digital materials.

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