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Social Media as a Tool for Academic Library Interaction with Users

Objective. The article aims to analyse the possibilities and practices of using social media as a tool for effective communication between academic libraries and participants in the educational process, and to identify the ways to increase student engagement with library resources and services through social networks. **Methods.** The authors used a comprehensive approach, combining theoretical and empirical research methods, in particular, analysis of professional literature, content analysis of library pages on social networks, questionnaires and informal surveys of students. This made it possible to identify trends in the information preferences of young people and the characteristics of their interaction with the library. **Results.** The analysis showed that students are open to communicating with the library through social media, provided that the content is relevant and adapted to their information needs and the format of modern digital communication. **Conclusions.** Analysis of the data obtained indicates that successful library practice should be based on a combination of informational, educational and visual components, as well as a flexible communication strategy that takes into account analytical data and feedback from users.

Keywords: academic libraries; users; communication; social networks; library resources

Introduction

In today's information society, social media plays a key role in the dissemination of knowledge and communication. Therefore, for libraries seeking to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world, the use of social networks has become not only an additional tool for interacting with their audience, but also a necessary condition for effective functioning and development. Today, academic libraries are no longer perceived solely as repositories of printed sources — they are active participants in the educational process. In fulfilling their educational mission, libraries are increasingly becoming open information hubs that provide access to knowledge and promote the development of information literacy, critical thinking skills, and a culture of academic integrity among students. That is why the issue of effective interaction between libraries and the student audience through social media — a familiar environment for young people — is gaining particular attention. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important digital platforms are for ensuring uninterrupted access to information. Libraries that already had an established presence on social networks proved to be more resilient in the context of distance learning (Aivazian, 2023). In this context, researching the role of social media as a tool for academic libraries to interact with students is an important step towards improving communication strategies and adapting library services to the modern needs of all participants in the educational process.

The objective of this article is to explore the potential and practical approaches to using social media for effective interaction between academic libraries and participants in the educational process, and to identify ways to increase user engagement with library resources and services through social networks.

The topic of the role of social media in librarianship is becoming increasingly relevant in the research of both Ukrainian and foreign scholars. In Ukraine, in particular, the issues of using social networks as effective tools for communication between libraries and users have been

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addressed by T. Byrkovich (2024), G. Bulakhova (2020), G. Koloskova (2024), A. Kukhtina (2019), O. Natarov (2023), N. Tarasenko (2020) and others. Ukrainian researchers emphasise the need to develop communication strategies to strengthen the interaction of academic libraries with target audiences, in particular students and researchers.

Foreign researchers Abd Rahim, M. K. Abdullah Sani, S. Shuhidan (2024), C. Humphries (2025), and M. Marwiyah, L. Zain (2023) have studied the ways in which academic libraries interact with student users through social media. The issue of the use of social networks by young students to express their civic activity was examined by J. M. Yap, R. Nemeth, A. Hajdu Barat (2022), while O. Zagovora, T. Schwal, K. Weller (2024) studied the interaction between YouTube engagement metrics and the academic impact of publications cited in video descriptions.

According to research, social networks are now widely used by libraries of higher education institutions not only to promote resources, inform about events and create a positive image, but also to establish communication and create user communities. At the same time, due to the constant transformation of the digital environment, there is a need for further study of the interaction of libraries with users through social media and the search for effective models.

Methods

The study used theoretical and empirical methods. In particular, analysis of scientific sources and professional publications allowed us to study contemporary approaches to the use of social media in the activities of academic libraries and to identify the main trends and problematic aspects. Content analysis of official library pages on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) helped to identify characteristic forms of communication, types of content, and the level of interaction with the audience. Questionnaires and informal surveys of students at Khmelnytskyi National University made it possible to identify the current information preferences of young people and their level of interest in interacting with the library through social media. A comparative analysis of the popularity of various social platforms among the student audience revealed the dynamics of changes in the choice of communication channels and outlined the prospects for the development of the library's presence in the digital space.

Results and Discussion

Positioning themselves as multifunctional information centres, libraries actively use modern technologies and communication tools – Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok – to attract students. The main tasks of libraries on social media are to promote their services, provide information about new arrivals and events, and establish two-way communication with their target audience. Such communication is designed not only to maintain the image of the library as an open, modern space, but also to encourage students to make more active use of library resources for study and research.

At the beginning of the digital transformation of libraries, Facebook became one of the most popular communication channels, opening up new opportunities for rapid information dissemination, promotion of library services, and interaction with users in the online environment. However, today Facebook's popularity among young people has declined significantly. The main reason for this is a change in student preferences, with young people increasingly favouring Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and other more dynamic platforms. Facebook is perceived as a “network for older people” and is losing its appeal to young audiences. Among the reasons for the loss of popularity, we should also mention information overload (the Facebook feed is saturated

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with commercial content, advertising and a large number of posts, which reduces the chance of a library message reaching its target audience); passive consumption of content (young people interact passively with library posts, which complicates the analysis of content effectiveness and creates the impression of a lack of interest, although a certain proportion of students read such messages “silently”); perception of libraries as conservative structures (even if a library maintains a dynamic and creative Facebook page, the stereotype of a library as a traditional, “boring” institution can hinder audience engagement).

In 2023, the scientific library of Khmelnytskyi National University (hereinafter referred to as the KNU Scientific Library) initiated a study on the topic “Positioning the library in the information space as a means of effective communication between the library and users” with the aim of studying the effectiveness of the library's communication with users on the social network Facebook. The main focus was on analysing the level of interaction with the audience, in particular with students, as well as finding the reasons for the lower activity of students compared to other categories of subscribers. Based on the results of the study, recommendations were formulated to improve the effectiveness of work with target groups and to activate regular feedback with them.

During this period, the largest percentage of subscribers to the KNU Library Facebook page was not students, but the 35–44 age group. This fact required measures to be taken and new ways to be found to engage students in communication with the library. This was especially important during the transition to distance learning due to the introduction of quarantine as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and the war in Ukraine. Figure 1 shows the age distribution of subscribers.

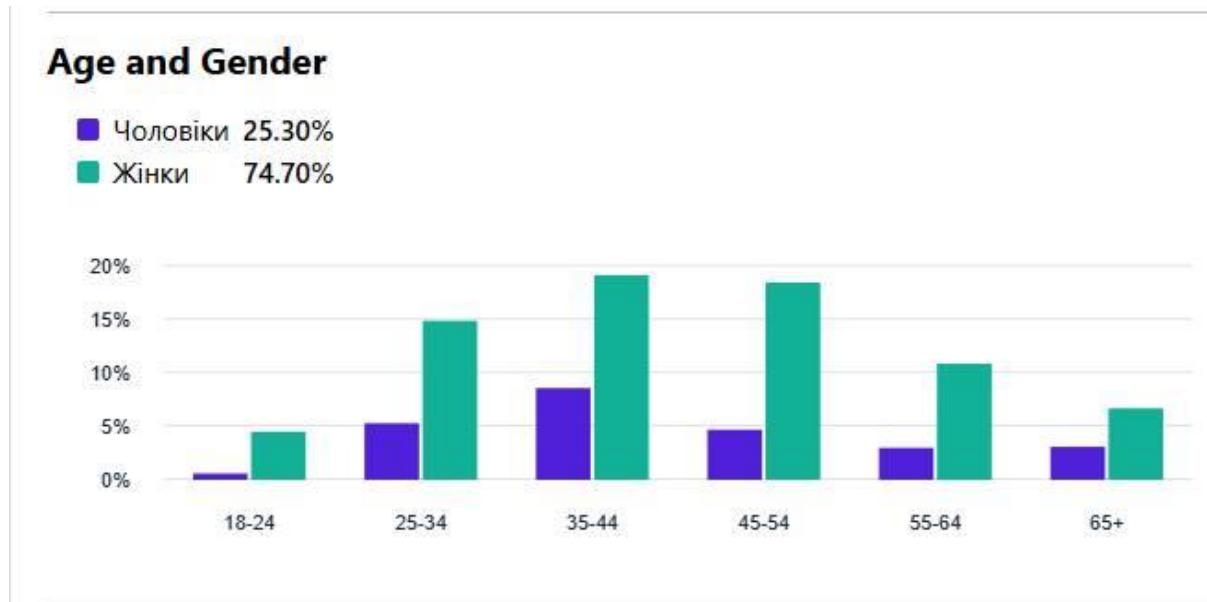


Fig. 1.

The audience of the KNU Scientific Library page included followers not only from Ukraine, but also from other countries, in particular: Germany (2.3%), Poland (2%), Italy (1.2%), Russia (0.9%), the United States (0.8%), Canada (0.5%), Bulgaria (0.3%), Great Britain (0.3%) and Turkey (0.3%). However, as mentioned above, the majority were representatives of the older age group, which indicated that young people prefer other social networks, such as Instagram and

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TikTok. This is also confirmed by data from social network ratings in Ukraine and worldwide (Somova, 2022).

The research conducted by the KNU Scientific Library determined which categories of subscribers to the library's Facebook page are the most active; identified the topics of posts with the highest number of views and feedback; and the ways and means of improving the promotion of library resources, services and opportunities on social media and increasing student interest in library services.

The results of the study called for measures to be taken to engage more students in communication with the library, which is particularly important in today's context. In particular, given that posts with videos and photos showing university and library events received the most views, it was recommended to make greater use of video and photo reports of events involving students. It was also necessary to focus on creating personalised content (individualising content for specific consumers based on demographic and behavioural characteristics), i.e., positioning one's own resources to suit the individual information needs of users in order to attract their attention.

Given the information overload on Facebook with commercial content, advertising, etc., the library began to use the university's corporate style to raise awareness and promote the university and the university library in the information space. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate examples of the use of this style.



Fig. 2.

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Fig. 3.

In order to obtain feedback from users, page moderators regularly analysed both posts with the most reactions from subscribers and those without any reactions in order to create content that was relevant to followers. Each week, the working group (responsible for posting information on Facebook together with the moderators) compiled a list of important topics for creating relevant content, focusing on the target audience. It was also important to take into account the segmentation of the audience, as Facebook remains a convenient platform for teachers, postgraduates and university staff. Appropriate content was developed for each group, without trying to cover everyone at once.

It should be noted that subscribers to the KNU Scientific Library page include not only the users who have a library ticket (students, graduates, postgraduates, teachers, staff), but also scientists who follow the information published on the library page. Therefore, through its Facebook page, the library promotes the development of scientific communication not only within the university, but also beyond its walls, helping to establish communication between Ukrainian scientists, and it is this segment (scientists) that actively responds to the posts. In particular, the library actively provided information about information resources and services; access to authoritative scientometric databases, abstract journals, bibliographies of research articles from

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prestigious periodicals, books and materials from scientific conferences, etc. As part of the support for Ukrainian scientists during the quarantine and the war in the country the global community distributed posts on providing remote access to Scopus, Web of Science and other databases; a series of webinars "Clarivate for Scientists"; free access to electronic resources of leading international publishers, in particular the Research4Life platform, and global library resources on an interlibrary subscription basis. At the same time, in order to accumulate and consolidate electronic resources and create corporate projects, communication links with the library community of the city and region were strengthened (Aivazian, 2023). Figure 4 illustrates this process.

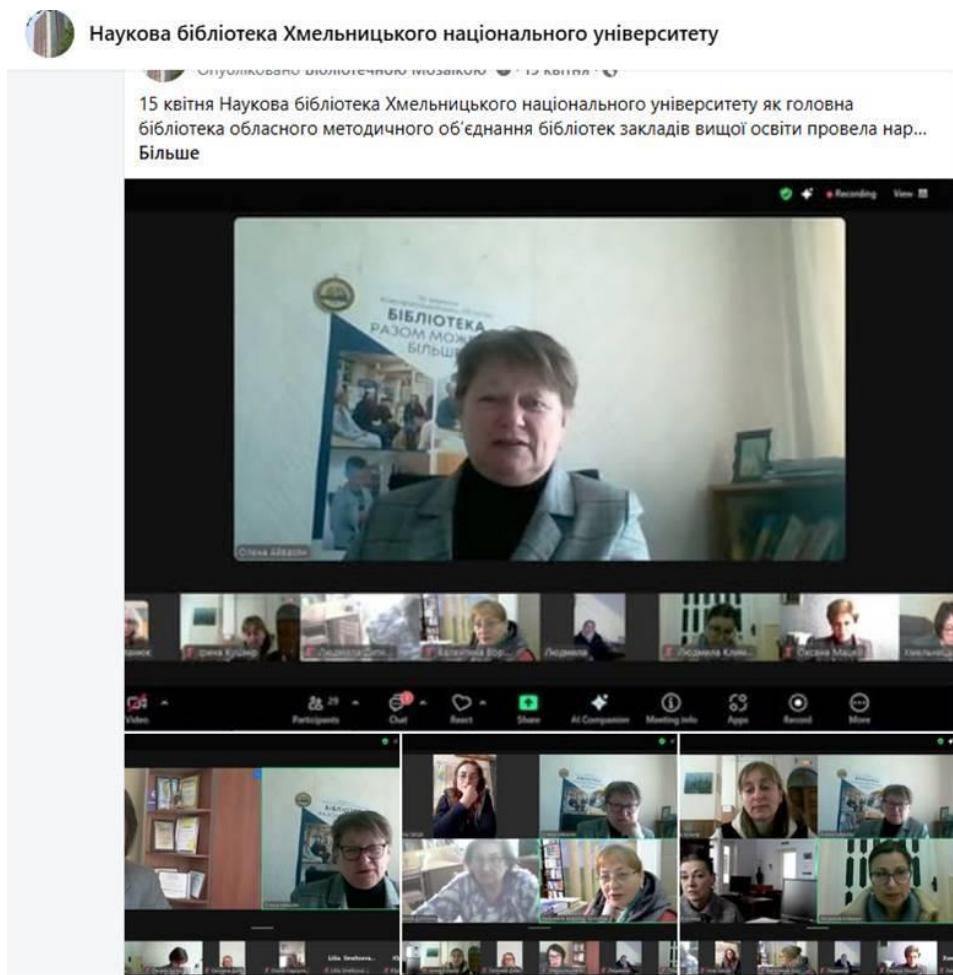


Fig. 4.

With regard to the student audience, the KNU Scientific Library sought to promote information resources (traditional and electronic), services, educational events, etc., in line with current trends, using video and audio content featuring students. For example, during 2024, video presentations were shown on social media; posts with relevant information were published; flash mobs were held; participation in campaigns was covered; announcements about events, videos and photo reports were provided; reading was promoted, etc. In particular, the KNU Scientific Library reported on the following events and activities: an introductory tour of the library for first-year students of the Faculty of Health, Psychology, Physical Culture and Sports; National Reading

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Week, which was held under the slogan “DIM” and aimed to draw attention to poetry during the war; a literary and artistic event entitled “In the midst of war, I draw strength from words”; a presentation of the book “I believe that the day will come” by Mykola Lukianuk, a lecturer at the Department of Industrial Engineering and Agricultural Engineering at KNU, and others. Most of the events were attended by university students. To better engage students in attending the library's socio-cultural events, the posts contained active links to a current list of all topics and an email address for communication between academic group curators and the library. Figure 5 illustrates an example of such information.

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ЧИТАЧАМ ЕЛЕКТРОННІ РЕСУРСИ СЕРВІСИ НАУКОВЦІЯМ ПРО УНІВЕРСИТЕТ ПРО БІБЛІОТЕКУ

Перелік тем, які можна замовити на заходи (prosvit_libkhnu@ukr.net)

- Хмельницький національний університет: шлях до візантії
- Монументальна творчість родини Мазурів
- Квітка Ієсик “Я мріяла, що в Україні мене почують”
- Герої Небесної Сотні Хмельниччини
- Тої славні козацькі повії не забудем...
- Вітчизну прославили мужністю (До Дня захисників і захисниць України та Дня українського козацтва)
- Нема любові понад ту, що окропила кров'ю Круті
- Григорій Сковорода – символ мудрості української землі
- Національні символи України
- Творці нової української держави – Михайло Грушевський
- Хмельницький – подорож у минуле
- Вишиванка – душа українського народу
- Пересопницьке Євангеліє – визначна пам'ятка староукраїнської мови та мистецтва.
- Пантелеймон Куліш – письменник, перекладач, видавець, редактор
- Василь Стус: За мною стояла Україна...
- Родинні традиції українського народу

Fig. 5.

In 2024, 160 posts were made on the library's Facebook page. The total number of interactions with the content, including reactions, comments, and shares, was 3,425. The posts were shared 188 times by users, including students. Statistics on posts and interactions are shown in Figure 6.

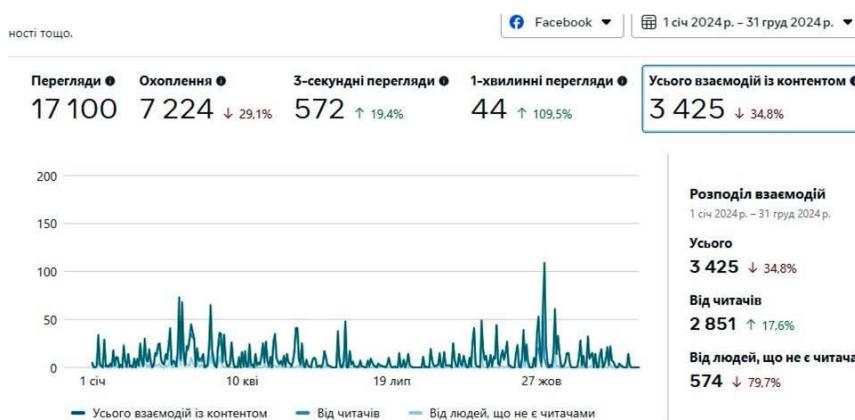


Fig. 6.

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At the beginning of 2024, the KNU Scientific Library page left groups that were not interested in its content and did not belong to the target audience, so there was a slight decrease in quantitative statistics (organic reach) compared to 2023. However, despite the decrease in reach, leaving non-target groups did not affect the number of visits, so the target audience continued to be actively interested in the page content.

The KNU Scientific Library has created a separate electronic archive of posts, which helps to avoid repetition in the presentation of information and ensures regular updates. The content of the library's social media page has a diverse format, it is informative and promotional and aimed at showcasing the library's collections. To encourage user activity, the library tries to fill the page with useful and verified information, including links to library resources and scientific platforms, videos and photos, and discussion questions that promote dialogue between regular users, librarians, and casual visitors, motivating them to leave comments and express their own opinions (Molchanova, 2022).

The increase in views and comments indicates an improvement in the library's communication effectiveness. As of 1 July 2025, the resource has 769 subscribers, which is 122 more than at the beginning of 2024, so there are positive results from interaction with users, in particular with its main target group – young students.

Despite these positive changes, as an alternative to the social network Facebook, the KNU Scientific Library has begun to actively use YouTube, one of the most powerful and popular platforms for posting, viewing and distributing video content. This platform has a number of advantages: academic libraries can use it to show the library's activities live – broadcast events, master classes, discussions, excursions, and shape the image of a modern library through non-standard formats (e.g., humorous videos, interviews with students, reactions to new books, etc.), while reaching a wide audience. This format is especially attractive to young people because it is easy to watch. In addition, YouTube videos can be easily embedded into websites, Moodle platforms, and other educational resources. Thus, YouTube remains one of the most popular platforms among young people, and library content has the potential to reach a wider audience even beyond higher education institutions.

For the Khmelnytskyi National University Scientific Library, YouTube has become a powerful tool, helping to attract new audiences, provide useful information, and promote reading. The scientific library created its own channel on the most popular video hosting site in January 2021. The channel is called "Library of Khmelnytskyi National University" and features the library's logo. There is a button on the library's homepage that links to the channel (Scientific Library of Khmelnytskyi National University, 2021).

Thanks to the dissemination of various videos on social networks, in particular on Facebook and Instagram, the library has received positive feedback, increased its audience reach and strengthened its presence in the information field of the university and beyond. This approach has helped to create a positive image of the library as a modern, open and innovative institution.

With the aim of fostering patriotism, introducing students to the best examples of contemporary Ukrainian poetry, and improving communication between the library and its users, videos were created in collaboration with students and teachers. For example, for the Day of Defenders of Ukraine, students of the Faculty of International Relations and Law, together with the scientific library, created a video entitled "Thank you, soldier!"; for the 10th anniversary of the events on the Maidan, students and teachers of the Faculty of Humanities and Pedagogy joined in the creation of a video; for the Kruty Heroes Remembrance Day, poems were read on video by students in their second to fourth years of the "Secondary Education (Language and Literature (English))" programme; students from the Faculty of International Relations and Law took part in

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the poetry flash mob “Reading the lines of Kobzar”; for the Day of Honouring the Defenders of Donetsk Airport, a video was created together with students from the Faculty of International Relations and Law, in which students read Galina Onatska's poem “Kiborg”. During National Reading Week, poems by Podillia poets were recited by Yevheniia Zaverach, winner of the honorary diploma in the “Most Active Reader” category at the All-Ukrainian Festival “Reader of the Year 2018”, and students of the Faculty of Technology and Design Margarita Sas and Anna Prysiazhna.

During the 2024–2025 academic year, videos were created and posted dedicated to the anniversary of Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor, Honoured Inventor of Ukraine, Professor of the Department of Mechanical Engineering Technologies at Khmelnytskyi National University Anatoliy Ivanovich Gordev; the anniversary of Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor Oleksandr Volodymyrovych Dykha; Vyshyvanka Day; as well as the presentation of Lilia Ivanivich's monograph “Traditional Clothing of Ukrainians in Podillia”; a master class on making motanka dolls, which aroused keen interest among users. In particular, a video created by the KNU Scientific Library about a master class on making amulets for Ukrainian soldiers, organised in the library, demonstrated not only the professional competence of the library's specialists, but also their openness to informal communication and modern formats of interaction with students. The video aimed to interest young people and show that the library is a space where you can not only read books, but also learn new things, interact, and develop skills.

In today's environment, the KNU Scientific Library actively seeks new approaches to interacting with its target audience through social media. An effective library presence on social networks requires, first and foremost, the development of a comprehensive content strategy that includes research, visual identity, collaboration, and active communication with the audience. Such a comprehensive approach will help the library remain relevant, retain its own “audience” and acquire the functions of a modern educational hub, where every student will feel heard, involved and motivated to learn.

Many libraries, including the KNU Scientific Library, are now turning their attention to communication platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where young people spend most of their time and are ready to interact with the library through videos, short posts and interactive stories.

For example, Instagram allows you to conduct live visual communication through photos, short videos and interactive stories with flexible survey tools. For libraries, this is not just another communication channel, but an opportunity to build an emotional connection with students through high-quality visual content and live communication. The main thing is to understand what a specific audience is interested in (what topics, formats, and styles they like) and adapt the content strategy accordingly: regularity, variety of formats (Stories, Reels, IGTV, live), interactivity, and involvement of the students themselves in the process of creating materials. This approach not only increases the library's visibility, but also builds trust and loyalty to it, making the educational space more lively and modern. Research into the content of many libraries on Instagram has shown that the highest interaction is achieved by posts with high-quality visual materials (photos of the interior, new arrivals, behind-the-scenes shots), as well as those containing interactive elements – polls in Stories, short video reviews in Reels format, and live broadcasts. At the same time, long text messages without illustrations and event announcements without accompanying photos or videos generate the least activity. This distribution indicates that today's library audience values a quick and visual format for presenting information more than traditional text announcements. For example, a photo review of a publication with a short description, quote, or recommendation; behind-the-scenes looks at the library or library life hacks, such as how to quickly find an article in a scientific database or use an interlibrary subscription; historical photos of the library (archival

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photos) alongside contemporary shots, etc. generate much more interest than long posts on Facebook, because the student audience is more responsive to high-quality photos and short videos than to long text messages. Therefore, libraries can effectively use Instagram by combining visually appealing content with the ability to receive feedback from students in real time. It is this combination – high-quality photos/videos, interactive tools, and collaboration with students – that allows libraries to maintain the interest of their young audience and turn their accounts into active platforms for the exchange of knowledge and ideas. The key to success is understanding trends, taking a creative approach, and constantly adapting your communication strategy based on analytics data. In this way, the library can become a vibrant creative space that students visit not only for access to library resources, but also for emotional interaction, inspiration, and support in their studies.

Conclusion

Social media is an important and promising tool for academic libraries to communicate with all participants in the educational process. Effective use of social networks allows not only to inform students, teachers and other users, but also to build a dialogue with them, contribute to the formation of a cohesive academic community united by an interest in knowledge, science and cultural development, and enhance the prestige of the library and the university. Although Facebook remains an important communication channel, it can no longer be the only and main way to engage the student audience. For academic libraries, this means the need to find new platforms where students will spend more time and where they can be engaged in educational initiatives. Only through flexibility, creativity and a focus on the needs of young people will libraries be able to maintain their relevance and significance in the virtual environment.

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Соціальні медіа як інструмент взаємодії академічної бібліотеки з користувачами

Мета – проаналізувати можливості та практики використання соціальних медіа як інструменту ефективної комунікації академічної бібліотеки з учасниками освітнього процесу, а також окреслити шляхи підвищення зацікавленості студентів до бібліотечних ресурсів і сервісів через соціальні мережі. **Методика.** Використано комплексний підхід, що поєднує теоретичні та емпіричні методи дослідження, зокрема аналіз фахової літератури, контент-аналіз сторінок бібліотек у соцмережах, анкетування та неформальне опитування студентів. Це дало змогу виявити тенденції в інформаційних уподобаннях молоді та особливості її взаємодії з бібліотекою. **Результати** показали, що студенти відкриті до комунікації з бібліотекою через соціальні медіа за умови, що контент буде актуальним і адаптованим до їхніх інформаційних потреб та формату сучасного цифрового спілкування. **Висновки.** Аналіз отриманих даних свідчить про те, що успішна бібліотечна практика має ґрунтуватися на поєднанні інформаційної, освітньої та візуальної складових, а також на гнучкій комунікативній стратегії, що враховує аналітичні дані та зворотний зв'язок від користувачів.

Ключові слова: академічні бібліотеки; користувачі; комунікація; соціальні мережі; бібліотечні ресурси

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