

Blogging Medical Information Sources to Users: the Case of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti Medical Library.

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Abstract

The ubiquitous Internet continues to increase sources of information to information seekers in this present age as information are lodged in different web platforms ranging from digital libraries, databases, repositories, and lately social media platforms. More often than not, information seekers are limited in their quest to popular search engines as Google, inadvertently short-changing themselves of the other many sources that search results may not reveal. So, as we were faced with the need to bring our databases and other useful electronic resources together, using a Web 2.0 tool, we deployed the weblog so as to better serve our users and help them gain access to useful information they might have been missing. In this paper, we described how we used weblog to meet the need and create access to medical information sources and resources for easy retrieval.

Keywords

Blog, Web 2.0, Social Media, Health Information, Medical Library, Nigeria



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1.0 Introduction

The Web 2.0 or the interactive Web as it is also called has reshaped the outlook of the ubiquitous quintessential information and communication technologies (ICT) and its applications in diverse areas of human life. In this tech savvy age, one needs not to be necessarily a guru per se to take the optimum benefit of ICT. In fact, self-learning tools and technology abound all over the internet and in most cases if not all, open or free and accessible. In fact, the doctrines of open access allows that source codes of open access technologies be made available for further development by others from any part of the world.

That said, with the promotion of open access to research and scholarly information too, librarians can now be at the top of the game, level of technological skill notwithstanding, to blend open tools and open sourced and subscribed information with users experience. The foresaid is the premise for our attempt at Afe Babalola University Medical library first and the general library at large.

1.1 Objective

To present our experience using social media technology (Weblog) to assemble and provide access to medical information sources.

1.2 Problems Statement

- i. There was the void of a platform to present our electronic resources to faculties and students of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences.
- ii. There was the need to bring e-resources together for access.
- iii. Website development skills were lacking.
- iv. Administrative bottle-necks in using the university's ICT Unit.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Web 2.0 and Social Media

Although, there is no consensus on the definition of Web 2.0, however, the following according to a report by Jonathan Stickland (n.d) on Tim O'Reilly's, founder and CEO of O'Reilly Media, who in September 2005 posted a blog on his Web 2.0 philosophy which according to him included the following ideas:

- Using the Web as an applications platform,
- Democratizing the Web, and
- Employing new methods to distribute information.

But according to Dictionary.com, Web 2.0 is the internet viewed as a medium in which interactive experience, in the form of blogs, wikis, forums, etc plays a more important role than simply accessing information. Web 2.0 has led to the development of large web-based communities that support and facilitate collaboration among its users (Farooq, Kannampallil, Song, Ganoe, Carroll and Giles, 2007). Web 2.0 has given live to the now ubiquitous social networking platforms or the social media. Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate. Examples include Facebook, MySpace, Digg, Twitter and JISC listservs on the academic side (Asur and Huberman, n.d.). Given our experience we have benefited immensely from the above ideas Web 2.0 is said to be about.

2.2 Blog

According to Trivedi (2010) a blog is a user-oriented website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order. "Blog" (2013) has it that "a **blog** (a contraction of the words *web log*) is a discussion or informational site published on the World Wide Web and consisting of

discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order (the most recent post appears first)".

The origin of blog dates back to late 1990s. The term weblog was coined by John Barger in 1997 and the site built by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN was reported to be the first blog (Dhiman& Sharma, 2008, and Trivedi, 2010). Many other blogs have since mushroomed the cyberspace. "The Scripting News" created by Winner in February 1996 has been reported to be the longest running blog on the internet. Publishing and communicating to the Web have been greatly enhanced by blogs. Today, blogs have developed from simply online journals to sophisticated content management systems that can be used as a platform for learning (Trivedi, 2010).

2.2.1 Why blog?

Blogs continue to gain popularity among internet users around the world. From about twenty three known blogs in 1999 (Blood, 2000), about 300 as of October, 2000 (Garrett 2002), 1.4 million active blogs reported by Perseus (Henning, 2003), blogs have grown exponentially to excess of 7,012,022 as at mid February 2005 (Bar-Ilan, 2007). Further still, in 2011 it was estimated that there are more than 158 million identified blogs, with more than 1 million new posts being produced by the blogosphere each day (Blogpulse, 2011).

2.2.2 Libraries, Librarians and Blogs

Trivedi (2010) reports that, there are many librarians who publish blogs on a number of LIS topics; one of the best-known is "The Shifted Librarian," by Jenny Levine of the Suburban Library System in Illinois. Jackson-Brown (2013) reports that librarian weblogs are gaining in popularity within the profession of librarianship.

In librarianship, there seem to be a convergence of thought on the benefit of weblogs. Trivedi (2010) has reported that "library and information professionals may enjoy the benefits of blogs for a variety of purposes. Those include publication records, annual progress report of the library, messages to the new

college and university students, and many other messages, purposes, and audience.” Blogs are perfect for dissemination of information as the system of dated entries makes it easy for viewers to identify new content Dhiman& Sharma (2008). Schwartz (2005) emphasized that libraries can utilize weblogs to provide up-to-date information on local events, to provide library news and to announce new books and other materials in the library collection. In addition, Bar-Ilan (2007) opines that blogs are being used to provide local information; such as changes in opening hours, special lectures and new acquisitions. Also, describing blog as a tool, Alcock (2003) reports that blog can be used to inform clients of changes, additions and news. Commenting on library services is a feature of weblogs reported by Dhiman& Sharma (2008).

3.0 AfeBabalola University, Ado-Ekiti Experience

Having realized the aforementioned problems, we faced the challenges head on taking the following steps:

- i. We created a blog, named **“ABUAD E-RESOURCES”** on blogger.com available at www.abaudelibrary.blogspot.com
- ii. We collated links to databases we are registered on and other electronic resources and open databases that can be of benefit to our users.
- iii. We then added a Gadget, named **“Link Electronic Resources here”** to the blog to list and hyper link the databases and e-resources.
- iv. Apart from this, the blog also serve as platform for announcing important programmes and communicate useful information to users.
- v. We make the blog the homepage of browsers on the over eighty (80) desktop computers in the E-Library of the university as well as the internet enabled computers in the medical library.
- vi. We published the blog link on the university’s weekly news bulletin for publicity to the university community.

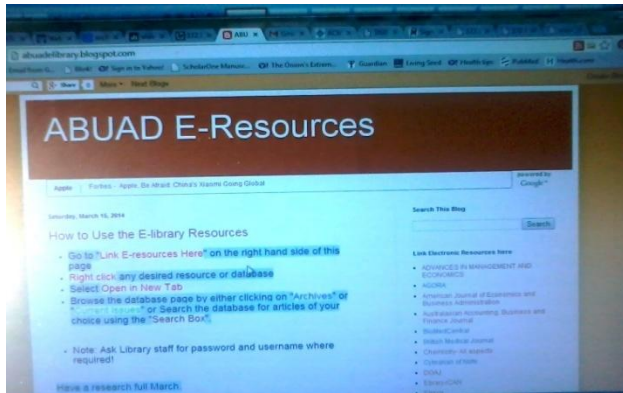


Figure 3.1. The blog “ABUAD E-RESOURCES”

Given the success of the “ABUAD E-RESOURCES” at www.abuadelibrary.blogspot.com, following the action steps above, we successfully created another blog named “**Medical Library**” on Blogger.com at www.abuadmedicallibrary.blogspot.com with a gadget “**Medical E-Resources**” to cater specifically for the College of Medicine and Health Sciences focusing more on contents relating to Health Sciences. See Fig.3.2, Fig. 3.3, and Fig. 3.4 below.

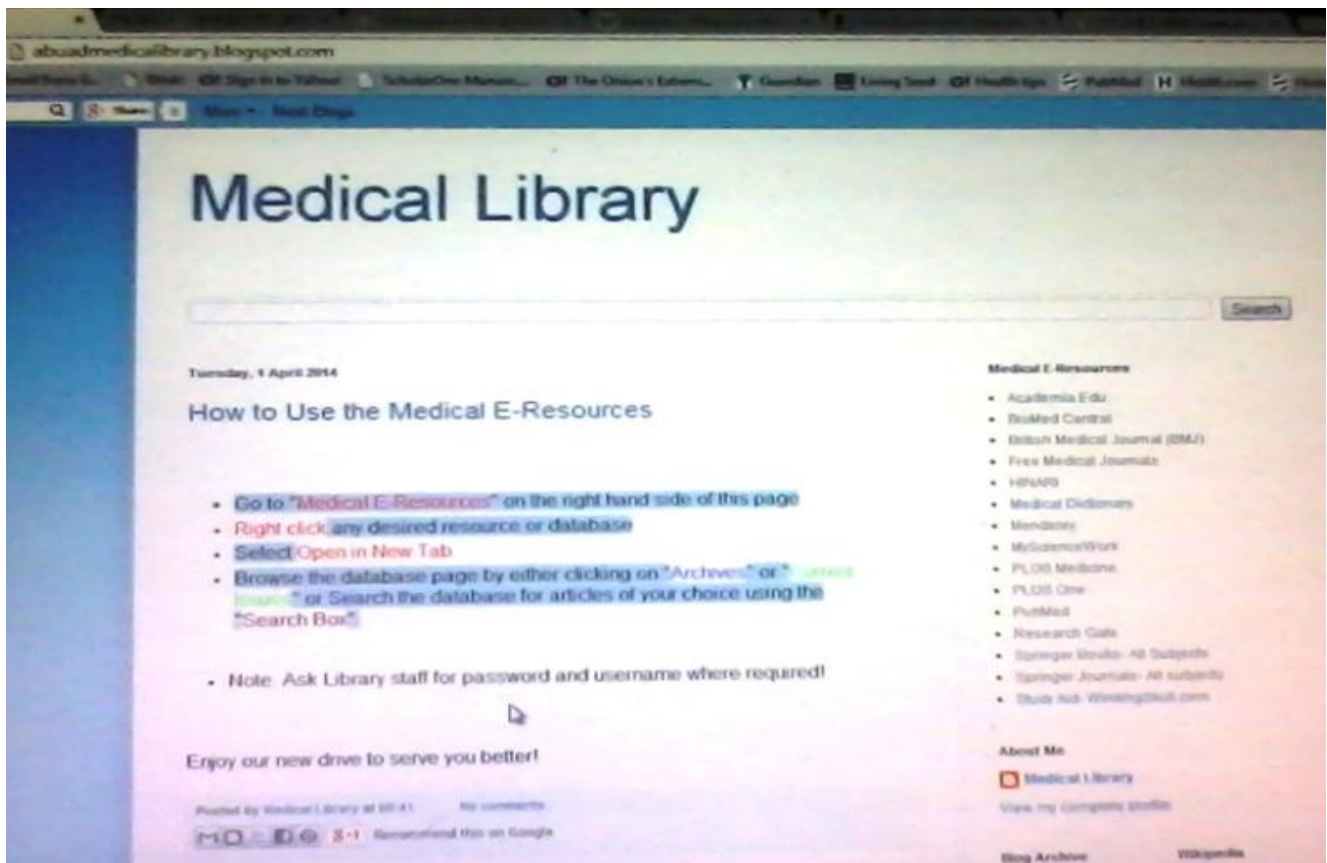


Figure 3.2 The blog “Medical Library”

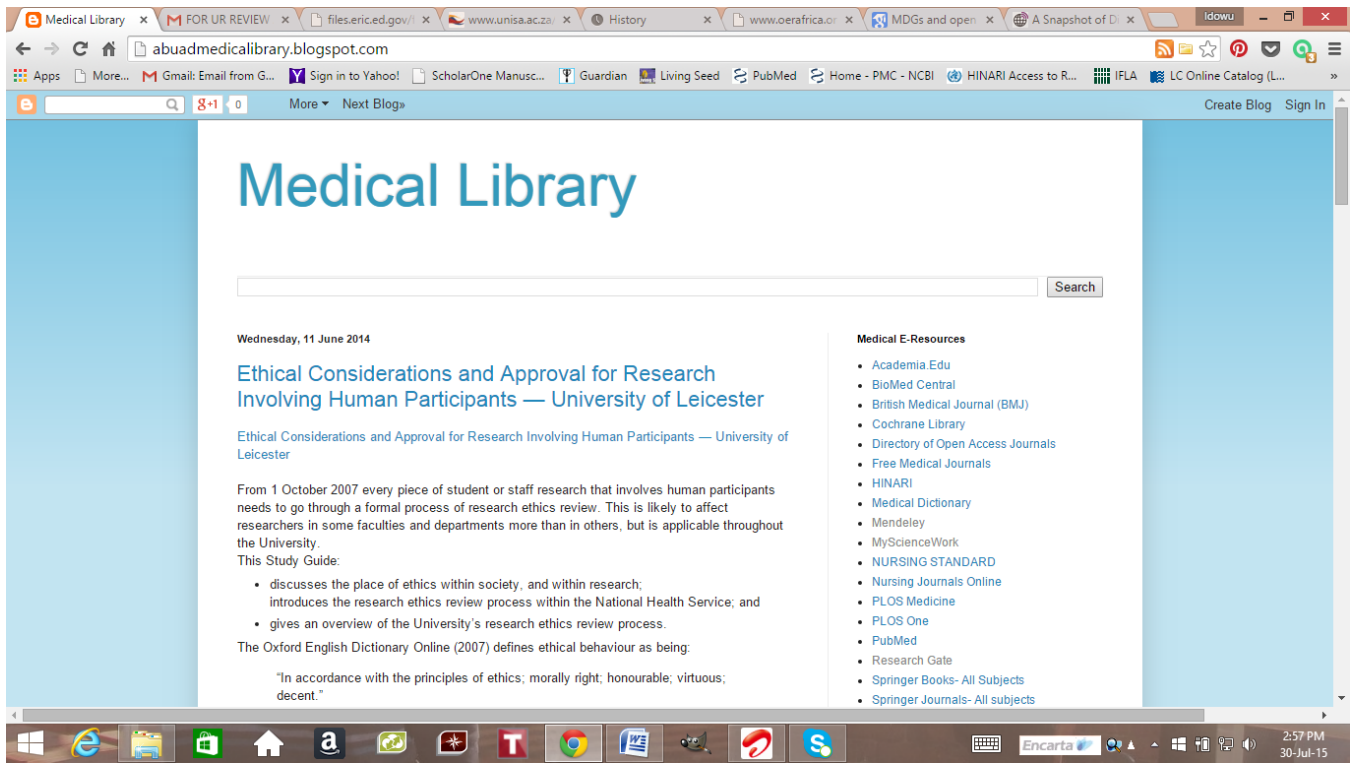


Figure 3.3 A page on the Medical Library blog

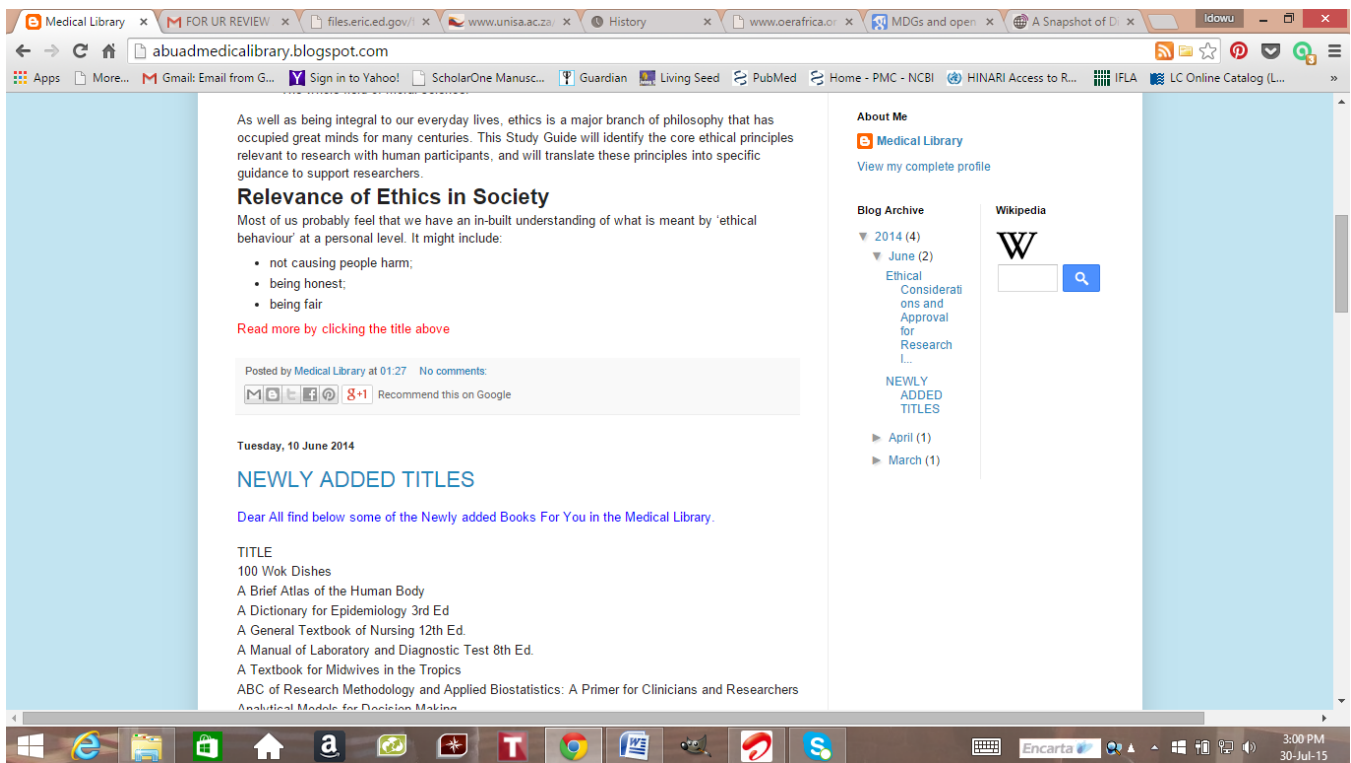


Figure 3.4. Another page from the Medical Library blog passing information to users.

This way we achieved our objectives and our immediate challenges overcome.

Note: A recent development has seen the general library blog moved to <http://abuaderesources.blogspot.com/>

4.0 Future plans

To create mainstream social media accounts for the library on Google Plus, Facebook, Twitter, etc. and connect them with the blog for wider outreach and for current awareness services. Also, we hope to put the blog on the university's website for permanent access.

5.0 Conclusion

Whereas we desire an increased capacity in technological skills in order to better deploy ICT to our work but as it stands for now, our immediate needs of creating access to medical information for easy retrieval have been met using social media.

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