NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ADOPTION AND USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR LIBRARY SERVICES AT AFRICA UNIVERSITY

BY

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of online resources and new technologies, academic libraries interested in enhancing user services and providing unmediated and independent access to library services and collections need to begin looking at ways of creating online communities. New web technologies such as social networks allow academic libraries to provide better services to users by offering simple access to what they want, when they want it and how they want it. Literature revealed that most libraries in Europe and the United States have embraced social networks in providing a variety of library services. However, librarians in Zimbabwe in general and at Africa University in particular seem sceptical in adopting social networks for library services. The study therefore sought to investigate the perceptions of librarians and students at Africa University on the utilisation of social networks in library services. A descriptive survey was employed as the research design. Findings revealed that librarians and students were very much aware of the utilisation of social networks in library services. They noted Google+, Wikis, Facebook, Blogs, Skype, Librarything and Twitter as the most applicable social network tools for library services. Librarians and students had a positive perception on the use of social networks in library services. However, some of the students were worried about the library invading their privacy and indicated that social networks were social and not for library use. Librarians who had a negative outlook on social networks use in library services noted that the librarians were likely to lose control of the content generated on social network sites. The study also found out that librarians and students used a limited number of social networks. Challenges noted hindering the adoption and use of social networks for library services at Africa University includes, low bandwidth, invasion of privacy concerns, library security concerns, insufficient resources, negative attitudes by both students and librarians and lack of skills in fully utilising social networks applications The Chief Librarian also noted that the library might face resistance from the Information Communication Technology (ICT) department and the University top management. The researcher recommended that, Africa University library should come up with a comprehensive policy before implementing social networks in library services. Both library staff and students should undergo intensive training in using a variety of social networks for them to utilise them efficiently and effectively.