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## **Application of social media in marketing of library and information services: A case study from Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper aims to explore different applications of social media for marketing of library and information resources and services. It investigates the respondent's attitude towards the usefulness of social media in marketing of library. A survey research method was administered by using a peer-reviewed and pilot-tested questionnaire. Data were collected from librarians and LIS school academicians working at Bahauddin Zakariya University of Multan and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Findings showed that respondent's attitude was positive; majority agreed that the use of social media is important to capture the attention of online users and helps in distance learning and knowledge sharing. Respondents recommended the use of Facebook, Wikis, LinkedIn, Blogging, YouTube and online groups for marketing different library services. They indicated that inadequate training opportunities, lack of knowledge, privacy and identity theft, slow speed of internet and electricity failure are the problems for applying social media in libraries of Pakistan for marketing library resources and services. They demanded for trainings for social media usage and suggested that libraries should develop social media page for maximum exploitation of library services. Study recommends that libraries should develop their marketing plan for utilizing social media for news and service alerts and quick updates to online users and fund raising.*

### **Keywords**

*Social media; Library marketing; Online marketing; World Wide Web; Web 2.0*

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### **Introduction**

The shift of paradigm from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 is offering new challenges for libraries that how to capture the attention of remote users who are engaged in social media activities. Different applications of Web 2.0 in form of social media are being used by millions of people in the world. Social media is an instrument on communication. It is a broad term and covers a large range of web sites which enable people to interact with other visitors. These media are Social news (Dig, Propeller), Social Bookmarking (Del.icio.us, Simpy, Blinklist), Social Networking (Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn), Social Photo and Video Sharing (YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr) and Wikis ([Wikipedia](#), 2011). According to the statistics of July 2011, it has been reported that there are 750 million users of Facebook around the world. Twitter is being used by 250 million users worldwide., 115 million people use LinkedIn, MySpace is being used by 50 million users and the users of Google Plus are 25 million ([Googlefan](#), 2011).

Social media provides more opportunity to reach your community, target specific audiences, and give them a chance to interact with your library. Statistics of Social media usage shows that there are nearly 700 million active Facebook users, over 100 million LinkedIn members, 5 billion+

images on Flickr, 24 million pages on Wikipedia, 300 million Twitter users posting over 7,000 tweets per second, over 2.9 billion hours of YouTube watching per month ([Tortorella](#), 2012). The whole business of libraries is about connecting people with information and this is what social media is really all about. Social media helps in reaching out to our communities and providing them information that they need in a very accessible way. There are number of libraries that used Wikis, Flickr, or Blogs for publishing historical photos and ask people to identify people, places, or events pictured. Different libraries use Wikis for content creation and to create a collaborative relation between library and the community. Hence IM (Instant Messaging), SMS, Twitter and email are being for answering questions ([Convertive](#), 2011).

Social media marketing of libraries is the way of advertising library, its brand product and services via web 2.0 technologies. By using social media libraries can engage with their clientele and enable them to participate in the production of library products. Social media includes networking web sites like Facebook, MySpace, microblogging web sites like Twitter and other media like blogs, podcasts, photos and videos. By posting library material via social media on library page, it can be used by the variety of locations on the Web ([Tuten](#), 2001).

## Background of the Study

In developed countries libraries are using latest trends to market their services. U.S. libraries of all types are increasingly using social media tools and Web 2.0 applications to connect with library users and to make library programs and services accessible ([ALA](#), 2001). Library of Congress is also utilizing social media for marketing its services and to interact with its online users. Library uses Blogging, Flickr, YouTube, Social Networking, iTunes and Twitter for its different services ([Braziel](#), 2009). National library of Australia has embraced the use of social media as a corporate communications and community building tools. Library supports every employee to have the opportunity to communicate online via social media, professional networking sites, blogs and personal web sites ([NLA](#), 2010). The National Library of Australia uses a variety of social media for notifying news, relevant items from collection and library events. Facebook is used by the library to inform the library users about major events, activities and recent acquisitions through posting photos, videos and links to resources about the library. Library uses YouTube for sharing videos of many of the events held at the library. Presentations and talks organized on different topics by the library are disseminated via podcasts ([NLA](#), n.d). [Hendrix and Zafron](#) (2009) found that the main purpose of using Facebook in libraries is to market the library and push out announcements to library users for promotional purpose. In order to have a presence in the social network, libraries post photos and provide chat reference service.

Studies conducted at International level show positive results regarding the use of social media in libraries to market their products and services. According to the survey report conducted by the South Carolina State Library, it was observed that majority of respondents (92.2 %) considered Web 2.0 tools important for marketing and promoting library services ([ALA](#), 2001). Similarly, [Burkhardt](#) (2009) identified that library can market its services and events by using fliers, bookmarks, announcements in calendars of events, newspaper ads, press releases. [Rogers](#) (2009) reported that many public libraries in America are embracing social networking tools to promote library marketing services for library patrons. Internet based social media tools like blogs, podcasts, online videos and social networks are giving voice to the opinions of millions of online users. [Mickieman](#) (2009) stressed that libraries should think to fulfill the need of online users i.e. professors, librarians or parents who are in social space. It was found that students were willing to access the library through this unique platform in the right circumstances.

Different studies have shown that social media tools are much popular among new users' generations. As they are growing up with modern information technologies, they rely on social media and use it as a tool for communication, information sharing and discussions. [Bart](#) (2010) studied the social media usage among college faculty. It was found that 80% of the respondents had at least one social networking account. They used it for professional purpose. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were found as most recognizable names among more than 90% of the faculty. It was found that teachers used Facebook, LinkedIn, Skype and YouTube for communicating with peers and students. It was appeared that social media use is more among faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences than those in Mathematics, Science, Business and Economics. Like [Bart](#) (2010), [Kamdani and Kumbar](#) (2006) also found that majority of the respondents visit institutional web site

regularly. It was observed that respondents agreed that libraries should maintain the portal by hosting the Web OPAC. Library portal should provide facility to the users to access library databases. It was concluded that libraries should provide web-based services to their user. [Suraweera et al.](#) (n.d.) explored that social networks are being used by teachers, lectures and students as a communication tool. Many students are using this tool in a very wide range. Teachers, lecturers and professors are using this tool for discussions to post assignment, tests and quizzes. Social networking sites are being used to foster the communication between teachers and parents. [Chand, Suman and Nirmalendu](#) (2008) concluded that adding Web 2.0 studies to the curriculum may also serve to improve the position of LIS programmes. RSS is also very useful to library and information science education and research purpose. With the help of RSS library science students can monitor high school and college scholarship opportunities by using RSS feeds. Library and information science department can also use RSS to communicate departmental news with their students, announcing staff changes, new courses or any other news that is relevant and of interest to the student population.

## Problem Statement

Increasing use of social media by the Internet users is offering new challenges for libraries to keep their image alive into the minds of community that work in virtual environment. Statistics have shown the tremendous use of social media sites by the users all around the world. In Pakistan, the use of Internet by the community is increasing day by day. According to the statistics of 2011, in Pakistan, 20 million of the population is Internet user. It has been reported that about 2.2 percent Internet users belong to Pakistan out of total Internet users of Asia ([Groupin](#), 2011).

In countries with developed education and library systems, libraries are utilizing contemporary trends for marketing their library and information products and services for their remote users. On the other hand, review of the literature shows that in Pakistan, no study has been conducted so far to investigate the ways for libraries to market their products and services among the users in online social space. Research should be conducted in Pakistan (keeping in view the typical problems and challenges being faced by Pakistani libraries), to investigate the attitude of LIS professionals towards the use of social media in marketing of library resources and services and to find out the ways for optimum utilization of social media tools for marketing the library and information products and services.

## Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the respondent's attitude towards the use of social media in marketing of library resources and services.
2. To provide possible implication of social media for marketing library and information products and services.
3. To investigate the problems in utilizing social media for marketing purposes in libraries.

## Materials and Methods

The study used a survey research method. A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted by using different search engines, web sites and blogs. A literature-based questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. It was sent to the peer-reviewers for obtaining their comments. Both the reviewers provided their comments and it was further modified accordingly. It was pilot tested on the small group of respondents (a sample of twenty respondents) in order to remove the ambiguity on respondent's end. Respondents of the study included librarians and LIS academicians working at Bahauddin Zakariya University of Multan and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Data were analyzed by SPSS software version 17. Frequency distribution and descriptive statistics were used to interpret the data.

## Results and Discussions

### Respondent's Institution

In this study twenty respondents (54.1 %) who participated in the survey were from Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) Multan, Pakistan, and seventeen respondents (45.9%) were from The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Hence, total 37 respondents from two Universities participated in the study.

**Table 1. Frequency distribution of respondent's institution**

Sr. No.	Name of University	Frequency	Percent
1	Bahauddin Zakariya University of Multan	20	54.1
2	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur	17	45.9
	Total	37	100

## Respondent's Qualification

Majority of the respondents (94.6%) were MLIS. One of the respondents was PhD and one was Master in Library and Information Science and Master in Computer Science.

**Table 2. Frequency distribution of respondent's qualification**

Sr. No.	Name of Degree	Frequency	Percent
1	MLIS	35	94.6
2	MLIS + MCS	01	2.7
3	PhD	01	2.7
	Total	37	100

## Designation of Respondents

Data shows that majority of the respondents was Assistant Librarian (n= 23). Four respondents were Assistant Professor and four were Deputy Librarian. Two were Lecturer and two were Senior Librarians. One of the respondents was Library Assistant and one was Computer Programmer.

**Table 3. Frequency distribution of respondent's designation**

Sr. No.	Designation	Frequency	Percent
1	Assistant Professor	04	10.8
2	Lecturer	02	5.4
3	Deputy Librarian	04	10.8
4	Senior Librarian	02	5.4
5	Assistant Librarian	23	62.2
6	Library Assistant	01	2.7
7	Computer Programmer in Library	01	2.7
	Total	37	100

## Professional Experience of the Respondents

Data present that majority of the respondents had 6-10 years of professional experience. Ten respondents mentioned that their professional experience is between sixteen to twenty years. Two of the respondents had eleven to fifteen years of professional experience. Nine respondents had more than twenty years of professional experience.

**Table 4. Frequency distribution of respondent's experience**

Sr. No.	Experience	Frequency	Percent
1	3-5 years	02	5.4
2	6-10 years	14	37.8
3	11-15	02	5.4
4	16-20	10	27.0

5	21+	09	24.3
	Total	37	100

## Respondent's Gender

A large number of the respondents were male (n= 31) and only six respondents were female.

**Table 5. Frequency distribution of respondent's gender**

Sr. No.	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	31	83.8
2	Female	06	16.2
	Total	37	100

## Age of the Respondents

Most of the respondents (n= 18) were aged between 40-49 years, eight of the respondents were 30-39 years old, and ten of them mentioned their age as 50+. One was 20-29 years old.

**Table 6. Frequency distribution of respondent's age**

Sr. No.	Age	Frequency	Percent
1	20-29	01	2.7
2	30-39	08	21.6
3	40-49	18	48.6
4	50+	10	27.0
	Total	37	100

## Use of Social Media in Marketing and Promotion of Library Services

Results showed that respondents' attitude was positive about social media usage in libraries as they opined that social media is an important tool for marketing of library products and services among online information users. Respondents of the study agreed that social media is very important for marketing and promoting library services.

**Table 7. Mean distribution of respondent's opinion about the importance of social media in marketing of library resources and services**

Sr. No.	Statement	Mean	St. Dev.
1	How important the use of social media is for marketing and promoting library services?	2.59	.686

Note: 1= secondary, 2= important, 3= very important

## Respondent's Opinion about Social Media Usage Trends

Respondent's opinion regarding the social media usage trends in libraries was inquired. Due to meager resources of libraries, their poor fiscal condition, insufficient awareness and training opportunities in Pakistan, respondents believed that use of social media in libraries will grow slowly.

**Table 8. Mean distribution of the respondent's opinion about social media usage trends in libraries of Pakistan**

Sr. No.	Statement	Mean	St. Dev.
1	How do you perceive Social media usage trends in libraries of Pakistan?	2.32	1.156

**Note: 1= its usage in libraries will stay low, 2= social media usage will grow slowly, 3= social media usage will expand quickly**

## Usefulness of Social Media in Marketing of Libraries

Respondent's attitude towards the usefulness of Social Media in marketing of libraries and information centers was inquired. They showed their positive behavior towards the usefulness of social media for marketing library resources and services. Respondents agreed that social media is integral to market library products and services among online users as it captures potential users of library. Social media offers more than just traditional ways of marketing library services. It allows user to create, connect, converse and share information and help libraries to get closer to the users. Social media grab the attention of the new users, helps in distance learning, knowledge sharing and locating information. Table 3 depicts respondent's opinion about other statements.

**Table 9. Mean distribution of the respondent's opinion about the usefulness of social media in marketing of libraries and information centers**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean	St. Dev.
1	Social media is integral to market library	4.22	.886
2	Social media capture potential users of the library	4.17	.891
3	Social media offers more than just traditional ways of marketing library services	4.09	.887
4	Social media helps students to use library	4.27	.769
5	Social media allows user to create, connect, converse, to contribute, vote and share information	4.24	.723
6	It helps libraries to get closer to the users	4.27	.769
7	It helps libraries in building collaborative network with the users	4.20	.759
8	It is great way to grab the attention of new users	4.11	.774
9	Social media helps students in locating library resources	4.32	.669
10	Social media facilitates knowledge sharing	4.43	.647
11	Social media helps to feed user with information	4.27	.693
12	Social media helps in promoting distance learning	4.43	.728

**Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree to some extent, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree**

## Purposes of Social Media Usage in Libraries

It was inquired from the respondents that what should be the purpose of social media usage in libraries and information centers. Participants of the study strongly agreed that social media should be used for marketing of library product and services and to build discussion groups and collaborative work. They were agreed that it should be used for fund raising, to spread news and service alerts, to provide quick updates to online users and to push library news and press release among online users. (Given table shows the respondents opinion about other statements).

**Table 10. Mean distribution of respondent's opinion about the purpose of social media usage in libraries**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean	St. Dev.
1	Marketing of library product and services	4.54	.691
2	Marketing specific adult programs and services	4.00	1.029
3	Marketing specific children's and youth services programs	3.78	1.205
4	To modernize the library image and e-reputation	4.27	.962
5	To reach a new audience of potential users	4.16	.866
6	To push library news and press release	4.41	.599
7	To provide quick updates to users	4.47	.609
8	To build discussion groups and collaborative work	4.61	.656
9	To spread news and service alerts	4.49	.658

10	For fund raising	4.43	.728
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Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree to some extent, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

### Social Media Tools that should be used in Libraries

A large number of respondents recommended that online news groups/forums, video sharing (YouTube), social networking (Facebook, MySpace), Wikis, professional networking and Blogging should be used in libraries for marketing its different services among social media users. Figure 1 gives information about different social media tools that have been recommended by the respondents for marketing library resources and services.

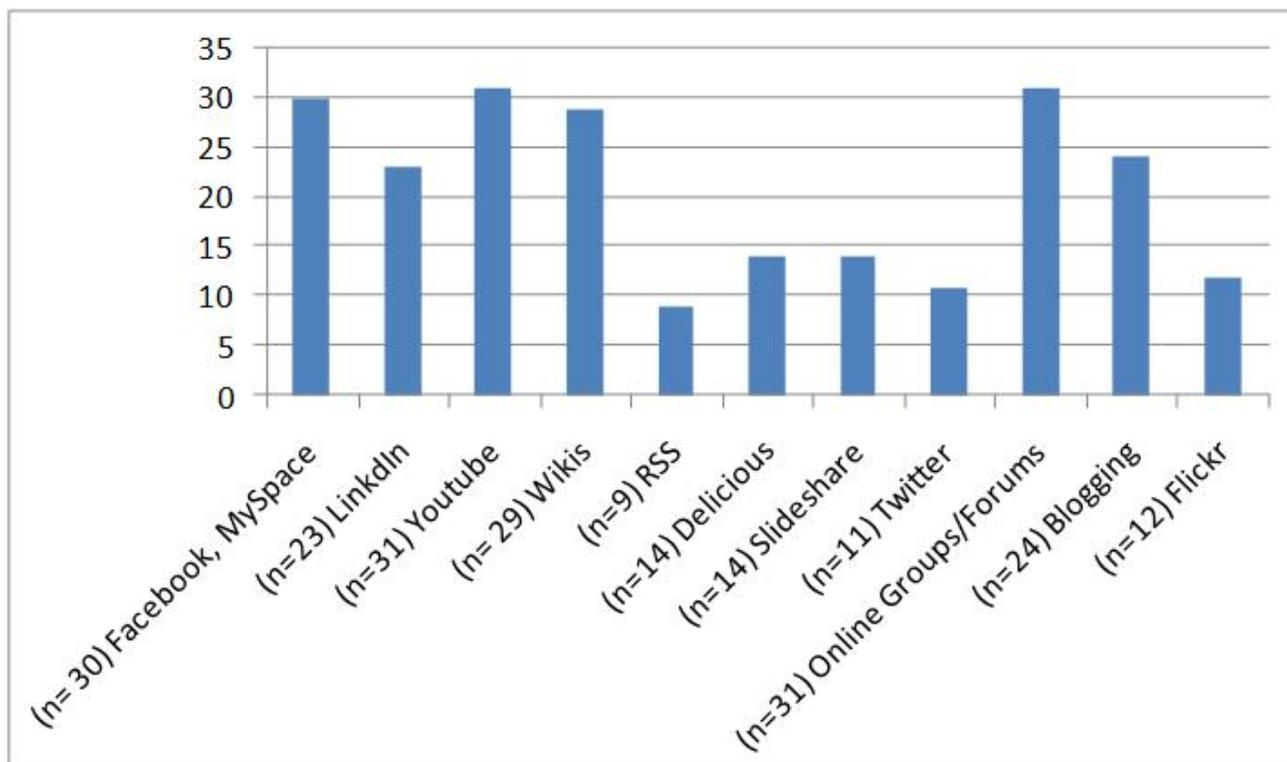


Figure 1. Recommended Social Media Tools for Libraries

### Social Media Services that can be used in Libraries

Respondents were asked that which type of social media services can be used to market library resources and services among online users. They strongly agreed that libraries can use social networking to create professional connections, YouTube can be used to share videos conferences, workshops and library events, libraries can promote services, collection, events and resources by using social media. They were agreed that wikis can be used for collaborative work, Facebook can be used to get library news and events out in the world, IM (Instant Messaging) can be used for reference/research assistance, Twitter can be used for communication, through Blogs libraries can keep current their users with the developments in the field of librarianship. (Given table shows the opinion about other services)

Table 11. Mean distribution of respondent's opinion about the purpose of social media usage in libraries

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean	St. Dev.
1	Libraries can conduct virtual conferences	4.30	.618
2	Libraries can solicit patrons feedback	4.35	.676
3	Libraries can publicize new acquired material and service alerts	4.49	.559
4	Libraries can spread news about the events in other libraries	4.44	.558
5	Libraries can use Wikis for collaboration and sharing of work	4.41	.551

6	Facebook can be used to get library news and events out in the world	4.32	.669
7	Libraries can use (IM) instant messaging for chat reference/research assistance	4.41	.686
8	Libraries can use social networking to create professional connections	4.54	.650
9	Libraries can use RSS and Blogs as a tools for promoting distance learning	4.19	.967
10	Libraries can use Flickr to upload library images	4.28	.741
11	YouTube can be used to share videos conferences, workshops and library events	4.62	.594
12	Libraries can use Twitter for communication with their users	4.38	.861
13	Libraries can use Blogs to keep current with developments in the field of librarianship	4.49	.692
14	Libraries can use social bookmarking web sites to tag and develop online catalog of library resources	4.41	.762
15	Libraries can promote services, collection, events, resources by using social media	4.61	.549
16	Social networking can be used by libraries as a means of communication among participants	4.51	.607

**Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree to some extent, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree**

## Problems in Using Social Media in Libraries

Problems that hinder in social media usage in libraries were inquired from the respondents. They strongly agreed that in Pakistan electricity failure is the greatest problem in using social media for marketing library services. Respondents were agreed that lack of time, privacy and identity theft, too many social media tools to learn, lack of knowledge, slow speed of internet, inadequate funds and staff and inadequate training opportunities are the major problems in using social media for marketing library and information products and services.

**Table 12. Mean distribution of respondent's opinion about the problems that hinder the use of social in libraries**

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean	St. Dev.
1	Too many social media tools to learn	4.36	.593
2	Lack of time to use social media	4.14	.787
3	Lack of privacy and identity theft	4.05	.911
4	Confidentiality of information	4.19	.856
5	Lack of knowledge how to use it	4.35	.789
6	Inadequate funding for libraries	4.24	.760
7	Inadequate library staff	4.39	.766
8	Low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media	4.42	.967
9	Inadequate training opportunities for library staff	4.47	.696
10	Electricity failure	4.73	.608
11	Slow speed of Internet	4.27	.769

**Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree to some extent, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree**

## Suggestions Provided by the Respondents

Only few of the respondents responded to the open ended question. Respondent (n=4) demanded that trainings should be given to librarians about social media usage, they suggested that social media can play an important role in the use of libraries services (n= 02). Library web site should manage social media page (n= 01), for admission in MLIS, adequate knowledge about different computer applications should be compulsory (n= 01).

## Implications of Social Media in Marketing Library Resources

Results showed that Social media is integral to market library resources and services. It offers more than just traditional ways of marketing library services. It allows user to create, connect, converse, contribute, vote and share information. Social media is helpful in accessing information needs of online users and helps libraries to get closer to the users. Different applications of social media are helpful for marketing library services among online community. With the help of Facebook, libraries can advertise their different upcoming events. Libraries can also market their different programs conferences workshops by uploading their videos on the YouTube. They can also share and upload the pictures of different library events and services by using Flickr. Libraries can use Facebook to share the information about their new arrivals and editions of books. RSS and Blogs can be used to market library services among distance learner. With the help of RSS, libraries can republish and syndicate the contents on the Web. Libraries can promote services, collection, events and resources by using social media. Twitter and IM (Instance Messaging) can be used by the libraries to market library reference/research services. Libraries can use Blogs to keep their users current with developments in the field of librarianship. Professional Networking sites, i.e., LinkedIn can be used by the libraries to create professional connections and to market library services among other professionals working in different libraries of the world and can also solicit their ideas and professional experiences. By using social media libraries can spread news about the events in other libraries. By using social media libraries can publicize new acquired material and service alerts. Different applications of social media are useful for libraries for obtaining their patron's feedback and to ensure the maximum engagement of their users in the production of their products and services. Social media is a fine tool for marketing library services among new generation users and to creating user-centered libraries.

## Conclusion

It is plausible that respondent's behavior towards the use of social media for marketing library resources and services was positive. By using social media libraries can promote their users, services, resources, events and communication. Study concludes that according to the changing needs of library users, libraries need to be changed accordingly. Libraries should be facilitated with internet service and develop their web page and social media page. In order to grow social media usage trend in libraries of Pakistan, librarians should be trained and educated regarding social media use for marketing library resources and services and all the problems that hinder in social media usage in libraries should be resolved.

## Recommendations

On the basis of results, study provides the following recommendations:

1. Keeping in view the importance of social media for marketing library among internet users, internet service must be provided in all types of libraries in order to utilize social media tools.
2. All libraries should develop their web site.
3. Libraries should create their social media marketing plan and social media services.
4. In competitive environment libraries should employ social media to communicate the library mission.
5. It is recommended that libraries should provide their patrons with tools for accessing social media by developing social media page on library web site.
6. Facebook is much popular among teens; it is recommended that libraries should develop their Facebook page on their web sites. It would keep the library fresh in teen's minds.
7. Librarians must be educated and trained in using social media tools for marketing library resources and services.
8. Library associations, alumnae and LIS schools should play their role in popularizing the use of social media among LIS professionals.
9. Library schools in their syllabus should emphasize on the practical aspects of marketing and using social media for this purpose.
10. Future research should be conducted to investigate the use of different social media among students and general public.

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