# Librarians' Use of Social Media for Promoting Library and Information Resources and Services in University Libraries in South-South Nigeria

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**Abstract**
The study was carried out to determine librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design method was employed for this study. The sample for this study comprised of 304 librarians in 9 selected university libraries from 3 states of South-South, Nigeria. The questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection. Frequency counts and means were used to analyze the data collected. The study revealed that blogs and facebook are the most commonly used social media to promote library and information resources and services in the libraries. Findings also showed librarians' use of social media promotes two-way communication, makes communication with library users easier, and provides forum for feedback and increases library users / usage. Some challenges librarians encounter were also discovered, hence recommendations were made. These include provision of adequate technology and internet facilities in all offices in university libraries and a viable ICT policy amongst other recommendations.
**Keywords:** academic libraries, library promotion, library services and resources, marketing, modern technologies, social media

## 1. Introduction

Librarians, in this digital age, are responsible for a wide variety of resources and services that expand far beyond the typical eight-hour work day. Igun (2010:18) opines that "librarians' role in the global information environment is unique. His roles are critical for the necessary control of information resources in physical and virtual domains". Notably, the advent of other sources of information like the internet, World Wide Web and even social media that has led to a new challenge for librarians to meet the rapidly changing information needs and expectations of the 21$^{st}$ century users. Librarians now have a challenge of making themselves more relevant in this digital age. Iwhiwhu, Ruteyan and Eghwubare (2010) note that the challenge of most librarians is to attract users to the library and to retain them. To deal with this challenge, librarians are reconsolidating, reshaping, re-designing and repackaging resources as a means of promoting their services and information.

A potent means in which librarians and libraries can optimize for their work and services as well as maintain their relevance is through a medium like social media. In this 21$^{st}$ Century, where a paradigm shift in communicating library services to users is evident, a modern and contemporary tool would be needed to promote library and information resources services. Social media are one modern and contemporary new media for effective promotion of library and information services in the technological era.

Promotion in library and information science has a newer meaning. It finds deep roots in social media. It is a set of techniques which is aimed at reinforcing the basic values of the library in a changing environment at the same time meeting the needs of the library clientele. Essentially, promotion is the means of informing users on what you do and what you can do. The benefits for those who promote their library services and resources include: increased usage, increased value in the organization, education of users and changed perceptions.

Librarians desiring to connect constantly with their clients with an eye to increasing users' satisfaction through promotion must make a social presence using social media like Facebook, MySpace, Microblogging sites like Twitter, blog, etc. Today, university libraries have created pages on Facebook, like Kenneth Dike Library, Delta State University Library, etc. Libraries, according to Ezeani (2011), should make social networking sites on the internet widely known to patrons and encourage library patrons to use them so as to promote library and information resources and services. It becomes imperative for these university libraries to promote the library effectively which would in turn help in the development of the university as a whole. Akporhonor (2011) stated that a university library, be it federal or state owned, is part of a university set up. It is against this background that the researcher seeks to investigate librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

As universities in Nigeria are changing to meet the challenges of the new millennium, librarians in university libraries who are providing library and information resources and services to readers must do same. There is an ever and rapidly changing academic and information environment, which has led to new challenges for librarians in university libraries. Librarians are faced with a problem of meeting the increasing academic demands of users and competing with alternative sources of information and providers like the internet, World Wide Web (WWW). Librarians are also gradually losing their relevance because of this advent of other sources of information.

A university library that is well equipped with all the needful library and information resources and services, but its resources and services are not duly promoted cannot maintain its relevance in this 21$^{st}$ century. Furthermore, studies have suggested that when Nigerians go online (predominantly with their phones) they go basically to social media applications like facebook, twitter, blogs and YouTube. Terragon (2013) gave a statistics of social media users in Nigeria as 5,357,500. This invariably makes social media a must use by librarians in promoting library and information resources and services. Therefore, this study seeks to examine librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

## 3. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this research;

1.  What types of social media do librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria use for promoting their library and information resources and services?
2.  What are the benefits derived from librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services?
3.  What are the challenges the librarians encounter in the use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services?

**Literature Review**

## 4. Theoretical model
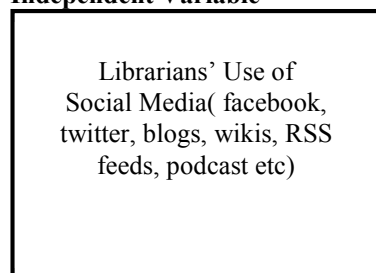
**Independent Variable**                                          **Dependent Variables**
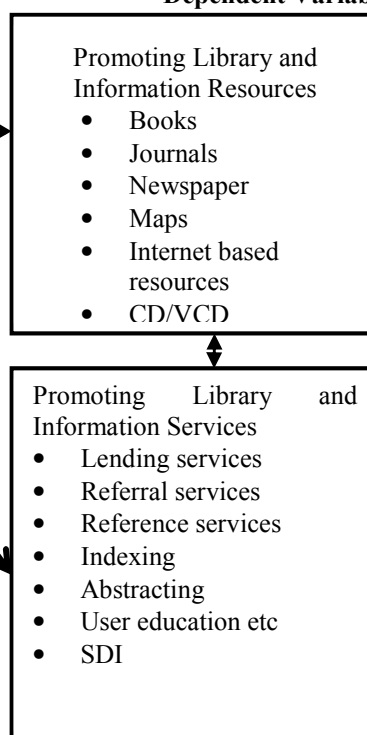


**Figure 1: A self designed model for librarians' use of social media to promote library and information resources and services (LUSP).**

The theoretical model shows the Librarians' Use of Social Media for promoting Library and Information Resources and Services (LUSP) model. It explains how the variables of this study interact with one another. It portrays librarians using social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikis, Blogs and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) Feeds to promote Library and Information Resources and services. The independent variable for this study is librarians' use of social media while the dependent variable is promotion of library and information resources and services.

In this model, librarians using social media may likely promote either library services like lending services, referral services, reference services, technical services, indexing, abstracting, user education etc or library resources such as books, CD, VCD, journals newspapers, yearbooks, maps, dictionaries, internet- based resources etc. This is because librarians in university library using social media for professional purposes would in the long-run be letting users know what they offer, what they are doing , what resources and services they offer and what they can offer to their users.

**5. Types of Social Media Tools Used by Librarians to Promote Library and Information Resources**
Social media is a product of web-based or internet technologies and they depend on these online and mobile technologies to operate. The different types of social media are Facebook, blogs, microblogging, YouTube, twitter, Wikis, Mash Up, Digg, Delicious Second Life, Flickr, Picasa, amongst others.

**5.1 Facebook**
Facebook is a platform that features interactions between users.  Facebook users can create a friend list right after membership process and can specify those who can or cannot take part in the interaction (friend selection and limitation of authority) when they sign in.  Sharing can be conveyed among friends and enriched with comments.

One of the primary uses of Facebook by academic libraries is to promote the library with a library homepage.  Libraries advertise hours, locations, website information, newly acquired materials, etc on Facebook. Fakas (2007) adds that by linking to the library's website, the Facebook page acts as a portal to the library. Since students frequently use outside search engines for academic research, even a basic Facebook page can serve as a reminder to users the resources available at an academic library. Wan (2011) adds that university libraries can use facebook to provide updates on library services such as new reference services, document delivery, research supports etc. Some libraries can also put up post related to library collections such as updates or promotions of electronic and print collections, database trials and other research resources.   Libraries also create event invitations for programs as an additional forum to promote library activities (Chu & Meulemans, 2008).

**5.2 Blogs**
A blog can be defined as a user generated website where entries are much in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order.  Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, 63) describe blog as the social media-equivalent of personal WebPages and can come in a multitude of different variations from personal diaries describing the author's life to summaries of all relevant information in one specific content area.

A blog can be used for promoting library and information resources and services.  It can be used in a library for outreach, dissemination of information, building library image, internal and external communication, highlight new and valuable recently added materials and most importantly for promoting.  In view of this, Hsu, Liu and Lee (2010: 293) state that "blog marketing is about not only becoming confidants of internet users, but also the need of good words from a "trusted" online spokesman. Ekoja (2011) opines that blogs are very helpful in promoting library services like new acquisitions, opening hours, library events and programmes, online discussions, etc.  They can also be used for supporting the activities of the parent communities of libraries such as community news about festivities, ceremonies, sports, etc.  Dickson and Holley (2010) add that librarians can post news about the library as well as events occurring in the library.
Librarians can periodically post messages, share information on a particular subject or issues both in the institutions and government and allow users to comment or contribute to the content., articles on thought provoking issues can be posted and expect instant reaction (Ezeani and Igwesi, 2012).

**5.3 Twitter**
The concept of Twitter relies on messaging service, whether it uses a cell phone, instant messenger, such as Yahoo Messenger or MSN Messenger, or through specific websites.  It allows the user to send messages to friends and family quickly and easily.  Twitter only asks one question, "What are you doing?"  As long as an answer is 140 characters or less, it is possible for thousands of people to see the answer immediately (Marion & Omotayo, 2010).

Waddell and Barnes (2012) note that the ease of posting and sharing information on Twitter makes it an essential tool for libraries to reach their users.  Librarians in Nigeria can use this platform to give users firsthand information on the on-going national election.  Users can send instant messages (IM) on complaints or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using twitter (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012).University libraries use Twitter accounts to notify users of new relevant items from collection and events.

Other types of social media librarians use in promoting library and information resources are YouTube, wikis, RSS feeds, Flickr etc.

## 6. Benefits Derived From the Use of Social Media for Promoting   Library Information Resources and Services

Social media have become a dependable platform for the dissemination of information, forum for feedback mechanism, for research and of course for promotion. It is therefore not surprising that libraries all over the world have not failed to embrace social media for promoting their services. The social media like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Wiki, etc, are useful for the promotion of library resources and services and for the speedy collection of feedbacks from library patrons. The benefits of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in university libraries are:

### 6.1 Building Brand Loyalty

Promoting library and information services with social media helps libraries to not just advocate the library but also brings library users to become library advocates.  Social media is a centre for engagement that would enhance two-way communication like never before. This in turn builds the library's image. Using social media in university libraries increase reliability on the library thereby building brand loyalty.

In line with this, Gall (2010) explained that in this age of social media, libraries have created their own personal brands for years just like how celebrities and media commentors have done.  University libraries generally do not have a direct sales function, but they do have a history of building lasting relationships with different stakeholders, including university administration researchers, instructors and students.  Indeed, one of the most important things that a good academic library can offer is a long term relationship with the people who use library services.

### 6.2 Saves Time

Social media for promoting library and information services save time and library staff hours.  Social media have helped libraries in providing quick updates to users and provide a forum for quick and speedy feedback from library patrons.  Moreso, social media make it easier to reach a large number of library patrons in the most time-effective manner.  Although there is a wide perception that social media marketing takes a lot of time and energy for it to be worthwhile.  Street (2013) has argued that the biggest benefit of social media marketing is the simple fact that delivery online content can be the most cost effective and time-effective part of the marketing mix.

### 6.3 Enhances fast Two-Way Communication

One of the most important tenets of customer service is to be responsive to users concerns or praise – Recognize them and show that the library is interested in and care about their opinion.  There is no controlling of what is said about a library but librarians can influence the message that comes back.  This is where social media come to play as social media create a forum for feedback in library promotion.  Pierson (2011) notes that monitoring the comments and questions of library users give the library immerse power to offer clarification on issues and potentially make improvement.  This is a form of promotion that boosts the library's image.  This is why, Villoldo (2012) affirms that communication with the library user is the service that has most benefited from the implementation of social media.  The creation of profits on social networking websites, the use of digital sinage and thematic blogs etc are just some of the ways in which librarians are now communicating with patrons.  Social networking sites have audio and visual capabilities consisting of web-blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, media sharing spaces, RSS Feeds, microblogging sites, Facebook, LinkedIn having capabilities to promote synchronous or asynchronous interactions and communication (Hussain, 2012).

### 6.4 Saves Costs and Increases Revenue

Villoldo (2012) categorically states that many of these social media technologies cost next to nothing.  Using social media for marketing library and information services allows for a vast reach yet having very low cost.  In fact, using social media to market library services does not cost a single kobo. A library can perform actions/activities on social media like Facebook, blogs, twitter about products and services without investing a dime.  All the library needs is a Facebook account, or a Twitter account or MySpace account, etc.  The library can have patrons and the community and stakeholders to follow them or Twitter or "like" their Facebook account. Then, promotion can begin.

In yet another vein, promoting libraries through social media increase revenue.  Promotion of library resources and services through social media is becoming a necessity if librarians wish to raise revenue from stakeholders and the management of the university.

### 6.5 Increases Library Users

The online community is opened to all as long as there is an internet connectivity.  In Facebook, for instance, the activities of a friend or fan of a library page are known by friends connected to that friend or fan.  Hence, when a fan of a library page comments or likes a status/post put up by the library, others can come to the knowledge of

the promotional activities carried out in a library. This can motivate a friend of a library fan to join the library. Also, social media can increase library patron's satisfaction with the library. This is not to say that the services rendered in the library should not be effective otherwise promotion of such services would not attract more library users.

Apparently, social media has become the catalyst in projecting library and information resources and services and maintain relationships with users. As librarians are yearning to remain relevant in a digital society, social media can be seen as the tool to help libraries entice and retain their users through promotion. Besides, the overall process of promoting libraries through social media becomes more understanding to both libraries and library users.

## 7. Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for this study and samples of 304 librarians were selected in 9 university libraries in 3 selected states in South- South Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to select three states which have the highest number of librarians in South-South Nigeria. The selected states were Cross River, Edo and Rivers states. On the other hand, the census sampling was adopted for the 304 librarians which constitute the entire librarians in the 9 university libraries in the three selected states.

## 8. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The research questions raised for this study will be answered using the data obtained from field.

**Research Question 1:** What types of social media do librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria use for promoting their library and information resources and services?

The data in Table 1 are used to answer this question.

**Table 1: Social media types used to promote library and information resources and services**

| Types of Social Media | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | | Undecided | | Total | | $\overline{\mathrm{X}}$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| Facebook | 3 | 1 | 168 | 56 | 38 | 12.7 | 11 | 3.6 | 80 | 26.7 | 300 | 100 | 3.01 |
| Twitter | - | - | 5 | 1.7 | 51 | 17 | 80 | 26.7 | 164 | 54.6 | 300 | 100 | 1.65 |
| Blog | 12 | 4 | 176 | 54.7 | 36 | 12 | 21 | 7 | 55 | 18.3 | 300 | 100 | 3.23 |
| Wikis | - | - | 11 | 3.7 | 19 | 6.3 | 39 | 13 | 231 | 7.7 | 300 | 100 | 1.36 |
| YouTube | - | - | - | - | 1 | 0.3 | 9 | 3 | 290 | 96.7 | 300 | 100 | 1.03 |
| LinkedIn | 9 | 3 | 15 | 5 | 44 | 14.7 | 59 | 19.6 | 173 | 57.7 | 300 | 100 | 1.76 |
| RSS Feeds | - | - | 10 | 3.3 | 20 | 6.7 | 21 | 7 | 249 | 83 | 300 | 100 | 1.30 |
| Mash-up | - | - | - | - | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1.3 | 293 | 97.7 | 300 | 100 | 1.03 |
| Dig | - | - | - | - | 1 | 0.3 | 6 | 2 | 293 | 97.7 | 300 | 100 | 1.02 |
| Flicker | - | - | - | - | 2 | 0.7 | 9 | 3 | 289 | 96.3 | 300 | 100 | 1.04 |
| Podcast | - | - | 2 | 0.7 | 4 | 1.3 | 3 | 1 | 291 | 97 | 300 | 100 | 1.09 |
| Instant Messaging | 4 | 1.3 | 102 | 34 | 80 | 26.7 | 73 | 24.3 | 41 | 13.7 | 300 | 100 | 2.85 |
| MySpace | - | - | - | - | 5 | 1.7 | 5 | 1.7 | 290 | 96.6 | 300 | 100 | 1.05 |
| Plurk | - | - | - | - | 2 | 1.7 | 2 | 1.7 | 290 | 96.6 | 300 | 100 | 1.05 |

**Criterion mean = 3.0**

Out of the numerous types of social media tool used for promoting library and information resources and services, only blogs ($\overline{\mathrm{x}}$ = 3.23) and Facebook ($\overline{\mathrm{x}}$ = 3.01) were used by librarians in the university libraries studied, for promoting library and information resources and services since they have mean value that is higher than the criterion mean.

This corroborates the findings of Draper and Turnage (2008) as they found that blogs were overwhelmingly used to promote library services. However, the findings is at variance with that of Collins and Quan-Haase (2012) as they found that twitter was the most commonly utilized social media format used by academic libraries to promote libraries' services.

**Research Question 2:** What are the benefits derived from librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services?

The analyzed data in Table 2 provide answer to this research question.

**Table 4.9: Benefits derived from librarians' use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services**

| Benefits derived | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | | Neutral | | Total | | $\overline{X}$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| Builds brand loyalty | 41 | 13.7 | 174 | 58 | 43 | 14.3 | 16 | 5.3 | 26 | 8.7 | 300 | 100 | 3.63 |
| Saves time | 56 | 18.7 | 152 | 50.7 | 35 | 11.7 | 44 | 14.6 | 13 | 4.3 | 300 | 100 | 3.64 |
| Enhances two-way communication | 90 | 30 | 179 | 59.7 | 10 | 3.3 | 12 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 300 | 100 | 4.09 |
| Saves cost | 84 | 84 | 101 | 33.7 | 45 | 15 | 52 | 17.3 | 18 | 6 | 300 | 100 | 3.60 |
| Increase revenue | 50 | 16.7 | 102 | 34 | 30 | 10 | 76 | 25.3 | 42 | 14 | 300 | 100 | 3,14 |
| Makes connection to library use easier | 91 | 30.3 | 170 | 56.7 | 15 | 5 | 21 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 300 | 100 | 4.08 |
| Provide forum for feedback | 65 | 21.7 | 168 | 56 | 40 | 13.3 | 17 | 5.7 | 10 | 3.3 | 300 | 100 | 3.87 |
| Increases library users/usage | 49 | 16.3 | 162 | 54 | 30 | 10 | 29 | 9.7 | 30 | 10 | 300 | 100 | 3.57 |
| Provides forum for fund raising | 24 | 8 | 81 | 27 | 87 | 29 | 58 | 19.3 | 50 | 16.7 | 300 | 100 | 2.9 |
| Allows for collaboration for interactivity | 66 | 22 | 163 | 51 | 40 | 13.3 | 29 | 9.7 | 12 | 4 | 300 | 100 | 3.77 |
| Encourages the use of social media | 60 | 20 | 150 | 46.7 | 35 | 11.6 | 57 | 19 | 8 | 2.7 | 300 | 100 | 3.62 |

Criterion mean = 3.0

Table 4.9 shows the benefits derived from librarians' use of social media. These range from the fact that the use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services enhances two-way communication ($\overline{x}$ = 4.09), makes communication to library users easier ($\overline{x}$ = 4.08), provides forum for feedback ($\overline{x}$ = 3.87), and helps build brand loyalty ($\overline{x}$ = 3.63). Other benefits, in order of significance, are use of social media increase library image ($\overline{x}$ = 3.57), save cost ($\overline{x}$ = 3.60) and increase revenues ($\overline{x}$ = 3.14). However, majority of the respondents were of the view that librarians' use of social media does provide a forum for fund raising having a mean score of 2.9 which falls below the criteria mean for this study.

This finding is quite surprising since it was discovered that social media increase revenue yet does not provide a forum for fund raising. Perhaps, it may be because since librarians' use of social media saves cost, it is a way of increasing revenue in terms of revenue saved but does not provide a forum for funds to be raised. This is in line with Street (2013) findings as he discovered that librarians' use of social media is cost effective and time-effective.

**Research Question 3:** What are the challenges librarians encounter in the use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services?

The analyzed data in Table 3 provides answer to this research question.

**Table 3: Challenges librarians encounter in their use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services**

| Challenges | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | | Neutral | | Total | | $\overline{X}$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| Network problems | 116 | 38.7 | 100 | 33.3 | 40 | 13.3 | 44 | 14.7 | - | - | 300 | 100 | 3.96 |
| Lack of social media skills | 15 | 5 | 40 | 13.3 | 147 | 45.7 | 97 | 32.3 | 21 | 7 | 300 | 100 | 2.87 |
| Lack of awareness | 23 | 7.7 | 49 | 16.3 | 84 | 28 | 129 | 43 | 15 | 5 | 300 | 100 | 2.78 |
| Lack of funds | 30 | 10 | 31 | 10.3 | 71 | 20.3 | 80 | 26.7 | 98 | 32.7 | 300 | 100 | 2.38 |
| Privacy concerns | 92 | 30.7 | 175 | 58.3 | 24 | 8 | 9 | 3 | - | - | 300 | 100 | 4.16 |
| Erratic power supply | - | - | 3 | 1 | 151 | 47 | 80 | 26.7 | 76 | 25.3 | 300 | 100 | 2.23 |
| Low level of technology penetration | 73 | 24.3 | 184 | 61.3 | 26 | 8.7 | 14 | 4.7 | 3 | 1 | 300 | 100 | 4.03 |

Criterion mean = 3.0

As indicated in Table 4.10, privacy concerns is the major challenge librarians encounter in their use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services having a mean score of 4.16. Other challenges are low level of technology penetration ($\overline{x}$ = 4.03), and network problem ($\overline{x}$ = 3.96). Lack of awareness ($\overline{x}$ = 2.78), lack of funds ($\overline{x}$ = 2.38), lack of social media skills ($\overline{x}$ = 2.87) and erratic power supply ($\overline{x}$ = 2.23) were not significant challenges since they had a mean score below the criterion mean of 3.0 for this study.

Alasa and Kelechukwu's (1999) study showed that poor power supply is a general constraint against Internet usage in Nigeria. However, erratic power supply was not indicated as a challenge, perhaps because the university usually has an alternative power supply medium in terms of generator sets.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this work, it could be seen that despite the very small extent social media is been utilized by librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria, the place of social media for librarians in promoting library and information resources and services cannot be overemphasized. This implies that for university librarians to reach out to 21st users better, communicate better with feedback and comply with innovations in this computer world, using social media becomes a must. However, challenges such as privacy concern problems, low level of technology penetration and network problems are issues that must be looked at critically for maximum tapping of the benefit derived from the use of social media in South-South Nigerian university libraries.

## 8. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made by the researcher in order to enhance effective use of social media for promoting library and information resources and services in the library;

i)      Adequate technology and internet facilities should be made readily available in all the offices in the university libraries. The library management can liaise with philanthropic bodies or the university management and even the TETfund for the purchase of modern computers and internet subscriptions in their libraries.

ii)     Information and communication technologies policies should not only be formulated in the libraries but should also provide a section for the use of social media among librarians and even non-professional staff in the library.

iii)    Finance should be adequately and promptly provided by the parent institutions to further enhance the use of social media to promote library and information resources and services in South-South Nigerian libraries.

iv)     Librarians using social media to promote library and information resources and services should be very careful and mindful of what they post on social media because once a content is shared online, it might be very difficult to take it offline again and it will remain there for everybody to see.

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