**TALES FROM THE TRENCHES**

Social Media Use at the Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University

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**Overview**

We're thrilled to share with fellow institutions the best communication practices we've developed over the years for blogging, Twitter and Facebook. You too can foster brand ambassadors and grow a social media empire!

So what can you expect to learn from this poster?

- Who we are and how we got here
- How social media can benefit any organization
- Key components of a social media policy
- Best practices for blogging, Twitter and Facebook
- Measures of success
- And finally, how to take your social media to the next level

**Our Story**

We began our social media journey four years ago—but only within the last couple did we really get our act together and begin producing intentional, interactive material.

Our efforts have been amply rewarded. Not only have we gained followers, but only within the last four years has the university begun to attract national attention for our active network. Patrons love us as much as we do them, and they're not afraid to share it!

**Go Social or Go Home**

We use social media to promote services, provide timely updates and foster community engagement. Talking to people—over the internet or otherwise—comprises a significant portion of the librarian's day, making these platforms a natural extension of reference consultation.

Any organization can receive immediate and tangible benefits from social media—if you go about it the right way. Keep on reading to learn how to rock it!

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**Social Media Policy**

Develop an overarching policy to provide guidance to contributors and to maintain consistent service across all platforms. Here's an excerpt from ours:

- **Frequency** - Post often and on a regular schedule
- **Responsiveness** - Reply to messages in a timely manner
- **Educational** - Highlight library resources and share professional insight
- **Entertaining** - Show humor and personality
- **Relevant** - What is our audience interested in?
- **Cyclical** - Exhibit awareness of the academic calendar
- **Cont.** - On handout, below

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**Platform Guidelines**

Content should be tailored to the known audience while matching the strengths of the given outlet. Complete guidelines provided in handout.

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**Blog**

- **Subject** - Pick a relevant topic with an explicit connection to the organization
- **Engagement** - Grab readers with a good headline; keep their attention with a personable tone and a great graphic
- **Variety** - Strive for a balanced message mix
  - 30% conversational @mentions
  - 30% retweets
  - 30% broadcast tweets
  - 10% self-promotional
- **Hip** - Informal language, cultural references
- **Community** - Host fan appreciation events
- **Candy giveaways**
- **Trivia contests with prizes**

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**Twitter**

- **301 conversational @mentions**
- **301 retweets**
- **301 broadcast tweets**
- **301 self-promotional**
- **Retweeted more than you retweet**

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**Facebook**

- **Manually track on spreadsheet**
- **Insights**
- **Followers, @mentions, RTs, bit.ly click-throughs**
- **Fans, likes, comments, wall posts, unlikes, unsubscribes**

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**Measuring Impact**

The value of social media cannot be entirely captured numerically. Also document the qualitative aspects of communication for a more accurate picture.

- **Record unsolicited in-person and online testimonials**
- **Keep a “Hallelujah File” of screenshots with best interactions & accolades**
- **Note the strategic relationships developed, e.g. @JohnsHopkins**

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**TAKEAWAYS FOR SOCIAL DOMINANCE**

JUST GETTING STARTED
- Get your supervisor on your side – Google’s 80/20 rule
- Start small and be intentional
- Recruit help – many hands make light the load
- Keep abreast of developments

TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL
- Establish social media policy and platform guidelines
- Learn from the “competition”
- Make friends in high places

IF NOTHING ELSE...
- Post often and on a regular schedule
- Don’t be afraid to show humor and personality
- Reply to messages in a timely manner, within 24 hrs

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**Acknowledgement**

Please incorporate any and all of these ideas into your own social media empire. We’ve been inspired by too many people to name. However, we would like to thank those who have most influenced the strategy presented: Mashable.com, Paul Sutton of BOTTLE PR, Rebecca Jones of Dysart & Jones Associates, Brian Mathews of UC Santa Barbara and all the speakers at the Computers in Libraries Conference, 2011.