3-12-2020

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Recommended Citation

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Social media is widely used by libraries and their patrons, from blogs, micro-blogs, chat apps, social gaming and the larger social networks. Did you know that Facebook, a leading social network, had 2.45 billion monthly active users as of October 2019? 79% of the U.S. population had a social networking profile in 2019, an increase from 77% in 2018 (We are Social, 2020a). Globally, Eastern Asia and North America had the highest number of social media users (We are Social, 2020b). The NMRT January discussion focused on how our institutions are using social media (or not using it).

Frequency

Participating members shared that they post to social media at all different frequencies, and this may depend on the social platform their library uses. Hootsuite warns against overposting, noting that it is easier to overpost to Facebook or Linkedin versus sites such as Twitter. (Clarke, 2019). One way to avoid over posting to Instagram is to utilize the stories feature, which was designed to allow constant posts without spamming viewers. Stories allow social media users the option to engage with the content, allowing them to swipe a story away if they don't want to view it (Buchanan, 2020). Some libraries shared that they post 2-4 times a month, once a week

and 2-3 times a day across different platforms. One library noted that they increase their posts when there are upcoming events.

Content

When it comes to what to post on social media, NMRT members had many ideas. Posts cover topics such as new resources, trials, library hours, upcoming events, as well as special dates during the month that will feature library collections. In addition, one member shared that their library posts fun trending memes and noted they were "expanding to try to more "National Day of" or collection highlights and other trending info. We've created a calendar of days/topics we want to post about and members of the team can claim which ones they want to create and post." (Kiebler, 2020).

Pace University Library [@pacelibrary]. (2020, January 20). "Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr. and his legacy today." [photograph]. Instagram.

https://www.instagram.com/p/B7jdtC2HXu6/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

To manage content, some libraries use a calendar to plan posts and some have a dedicated staff member who focuses on content generation. One member mentioned that they take advantage of Tweetdeck, which has the option of scheduling posts in advance. They schedule posts for the entire week on Monday. By focusing on specific themes for each week, they can easily create a few posts to be scheduled throughout the week. Another library found that using Hootsuite to manage their platforms has helped them collect and track analytics.

Communication

The ability to engage with patrons over social media is easy and quick, but not all institutions use these platforms to communicate back and forth with patrons. Some only use social media to share information while others use it as a two-way street, replying to specific users that engage with them. A few members noted that their libraries do not receive many comments on their informational posts. One member mentioned receiving a few comments on a post asking about patron's favorite sci-fi book or movie. Posting more interactive content rather than informational content increased the opportunity to engage with patrons.

One concept that came up in the discussion was *social listening*. Many major brands engage in social listening, which is when you look for mentions of your brand or any related keywords on social networks (Newberry, 2019). Social listening can be useful for libraries, one example: "sometimes [patrons] report things in the library that we can act on. Recently someone took a picture and tweeted a damaged wall that staff were unaware of." (Puzier, 2020)

Engagement & Platforms

Overall our members found that engagement is going up over the past few years, particularly on Twitter and Instagram. Those using Facebook did not notice an increase. Having a team work

on social media or just having a dedicated social media manager can help increase engagement. One library had success by engaging with other library social media accounts. Connecting with other local libraries can be a fun way to capture the attention of your patrons.

Some libraries are using social media for reference support. Patrons can send a reference question via Twitter or Facebook and a librarian responds. One library mentioned they have recently linked up their social media (Twitter and Facebook) to their reference ticket system so that patrons can ask questions (reference or general) on a social media platform and librarians answer through the ticketing system. This helps their patrons to get timely research help on the platform of their choice.

Concerns

Using photos of library patrons on social media is a concern that comes up often. While ALA does not have a policy on this, there are some [resources and best practices](#) available. ALA encourages libraries to protect the rights of the photographer and the privacy of patrons when using images online (American Library Association, 2010).

What are we posting?

> "We had a lot of success in the Fall with staff Halloween and ugly holiday sweater contests. We posted pictures of individual staff members in their costumes (who wanted to participate) and the person with the most likes won a prize. It got a TON of engagement and students liked commenting on the costumes." (Kiebler, 2020)

UAlbany Libraries [@UAlbanyLibs]. (2017, September 21). *On Saturday @UAlbanyFootball takes on*

Villanova. [image attached] [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/UAlbanyLibs/status/910911502944792577?s=20

"Our social media manager also connects with other university libraries... Check out this

back and forth exchange we had prior to a sports game against a friendly rival

@FalveyLibrary: https://twitter.com/UAlbanyLibs/status/910911502944792577" (Puzier,

2020)

"Our main platform is Twitter and our Facebook account is more of a repository of our

tweets. We also have a YouTube playlist within the university's YouTube channel."

(LaMoreaux, 2020)

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