Social Media - LibTech 2014

Intro

- Very few “experts” engaging in library social media: most of us jumped into it based on personal use
- Institutional posting requires more forethought: focus on content/topic, presentation, images, demographics, etc.
- Approach social media the same as any other library project: write a policy!
- Documentation provides structure, scheduling, workflow, best practices.

What are some of the reasons libraries might not want to get involved in social media?

Cons

- Takes time away from real work
- Libraries don’t do social media
- What if someone gets on the library’s page a makes disparaging comments about the library?

Pros

According to the Pew Social Media Update released in 2013 73% of online adults use social media, 42% use multiple sites and 71% of the adults using social media use FB. FB is also the platform of choice for single site users.

- Engage with our communities. These communities may be local, institutional, or disciplinary
- Listen to our users.
- Increase visibility for library events and resources
- Inform others of library resources and values
- Build connections by putting a face to the library
- Instruct
  - Organizational morale, sense of team
  - Building political capital – within a larger institution and community.

Social media provides a platform for libraries to build connections between individuals, organizations, departments, and resources. This is what libraries do best.

Obstacles

The single biggest obstacle is a lack of support for social media within your organization.
• Part of outreach services
• Fairly inexpensive

What do legitimate library projects/programs get?

• Policy or documentation
• Monetary support
• Provision equipment and software
• Designated work time
• Designated staffing
• Communication
• Interest and support from library management

Design of social media platforms

• FB is designed so that views decrease with time. Is meant to encourage paying for promotion.
• Veritaseum video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9ZqXlHl65g
• How to circumvent this...somewhat.
  o Increase the organic reach
    ▪ Have fellow library folk share posts on their timelines.
    ▪ More images!
    ▪ More original/entertaining/innovative content = more time.
    ▪ Spend time liking, sharing, interacting with other pages
  o Pay FB to “boost the post”

Policy Creation

• Policy should answer questions: what platforms? What are your goals? Who is your audience? How do you want to present the library (what voice)? Staffing needs, time constraints, social media team vs. coordinator, etc.
• Use the library’s mission statement (and other outside guidelines) to provide guiding principles.
• Policy provides consistency, but should allow for flexibility to accommodate changing social media practices and possible staffing changes.
• Examples:
  o Texas Collection & Univ. Archives, Baylor Univ. Very structured with clear staffing plan and vision of interactions, identifies goals and audience, specific best practices for individual platforms
  o Metro State Library, Metro State Univ. Cites mission statement, addresses goals, audience, role of social media coordinator(s), evaluation. Best practices were written separately.
  o Langsdale Library, Univ. of Baltimore. Cites mission statement, addresses goals, staffing, outside rules (university, ALA)
The Team

Pros of more than one person doing social media

- Bounce ideas off of each other
- Better coverage of platforms
- Different skill sets
- Another pair of eyes to look at pre-posted content
- Have each other’s backs when it comes to obtaining resources, communicating new plans/policies/practices to the rest of the library

Get People Involved

- Communicate ideas, plans, etc. with others in your library
- Ask for input
  - Do NOT be put off when they actually have input
- Ask for assistance (StarID-fish slide, story of Allison, our highly talented image person)
- Use the skills, talents, and interests of others in the library to enliven your social media content.
- Get involved in event planning and outreach
  - Good things come from cross-pollination: HP Trivia contest

StarID

Some promotional projects must be planned out and some days you just have to get a post up.

- Be spontaneous, and plan ahead.
- Contests and extended promotional campaigns benefit from advanced planning and work.
  - StarID – because we were asked to share our promotional plan with the IT department this required we draft a plan and set a timeline for posting.
  - HP Contest

Workflow

- Create a calendar to keep track of future promotions
- Extended promotions benefit from a promotional plan
- Look ahead, but be flexible
- Never try to create a post 5 minutes before you leave work.
- Set times for evaluation
Possibilities

- Flexible policy means ability to realize new ways to make social media output bigger and better.
- Building relationships (at Metro, Star ID migration led to better relationship with IT department)
- Highlight events, broaden reach, use digital space as an extension of the physical library (at Metro, Harry Potter trivia contest and event postings to highlight traveling exhibit and bring events to online students)

Evaluating new platforms

Start with one or two platforms. If you are working with existing accounts, focus your attention on one or two with the most followers or the strongest existing foundation.

- Not having enough time to do what you want. – You will not have enough time. You will have to make decisions about what goals/audience/platforms you pursue. Make sure you are smart about it and don’t waste your time on tactics or platforms that don’t work.

When evaluating new and existing platforms. Answer the following questions:

- Why this platform?
- What form of media works best on with this platform’s design?
- Who is the audience?
- How active does this platform require us to be?
- Are we really using this platform for social purposes? If not is there a better tool for what we want to do?
- How does the platform make money?

Links

- Metro Mission Statement: http://www.metrostate.edu/msweb/resources/library/about/index.html

References
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Reigniting your relationship with social media: Policies, plans, and peccadilloes
Library Technology Conference 2014


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