LIBRARY SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

OUR COMMUNITIES DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE MISSING

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A common theme among our library clients is that only a small fraction of the people the libraries serve are aware of the library offerings that would interest them. This is unfortunate because these same offerings are often highly rated by users and available for free.

Social media postings are one of the top-ranked ways people prefer to be notified about library offerings based on numerous community surveys. The effectiveness of library social media postings varies widely.

After examining many libraries' social postings and after an extensive literature review, we've identified some of the most effective social media practices for libraries.

IN SUMMARY

- Demographic Targeting
- Platform Selection
- Content Strategy
- Strategy Deployment
- Tips From Libraries
- Examples

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1.) Pinpointing Your Demographic

Identifying the right audience is critical for developing an effective social media presence. Each generation tends to interact with social media in different ways and has their own personal platform preference.

GENERATION Z
- **Born Between:** 1997 and 2012
- **Prefers:** TikTok, Instagram
- **Most Common Content Consumed:** Short-form video content that is less serious and relatable to their generation.
- **Milwauke Public Library TikTok Example (click the image to view):**

MILLENNIALS
- **Born Between**: 1981 and 1996
- **Prefers**: Facebook, Instagram
- **Most Common Content Consumed**: Personalized visual content (less text heavy) and short-form videos.
- **Milwaukee Public Library Instagram Reels Example (click the image to view):**

GENERATION X

- **Born Between**: 1965 and 1980
- **Prefers**: Facebook
- **Most Common Content Consumed:** Short and long videos that are informative and reliable (but not too polished – they want to feel a real connection).
- **Harris County Public Library Facebook Video Example (click the image to view):**

BABY BOOMERS

- **Born Between**: 1946 and 1964
- **Prefers**: Facebook
- **Most Common Content Consumed:** Short and long videos that are informative and simple in presentation of content.
- **Austin Public Library Facebook Reels Example (click the image to view):**

2.) Platform Selection

Choosing the right social media platform is shaped by understanding your demographic. Each platform provides varying tools to present your brand in a unique way.

INSTAGRAM:
    Stories:
- Posted photos and short videos that disappear after 24 hours.
- A place to repost your grid posts and relevant grid posts from others.

    Reels:
- Short videos.
- *"The best way Creators can find a community that is deeply engaged and aligned with their interests."* – Instagram.

    Grid posts:
- Traditional posts that appear on the homepage feed.

FACEBOOK:
    Stories:
- Posted photos and short videos that disappear after 24 hours.

    Grid posts:
- Traditional Posts that appear on the homepage feed.
  - Can include short videos and images.

TIKTOK:
    Stories:
- Posted photos and short videos that disappear after 24 hours.

    "For you" page:
- A place where videos are discovered by a wide variety of audiences.
- Utilizes an algorithmic selection of videos curated for the consumer.

X (Formally known as Twitter):
    "For you" page:
- A place where large audiences can interact with posts.
  - Posts are algorithmically selected for placement on the "For You" page.

Special note: X has a dwindling audience and produces lower engagement in comparison to other social applications; prioritize it based on your specific engagement goals.

3.) Content Strategy

After selecting the appropriate platforms, developing a robust content strategy is crucial to maintaining an engaging social media presence.

CONTENT TYPES

Content types allow for helpful ideas on what to post to keep engagement high. However, do not become attached to the categories, for example, a post can be informative and educational while still being entertaining.

- **Educational Posts:** Share information about library resources, databases, and research tools.
- **Collection Promotions:** Highlight new arrivals, special collections, and featured materials.
- **Event Promotions:** Highlight upcoming events, workshops, and programs.
- **Entertaining Posts:** Post polls, questions, memes, GIFS, and fun interactive content to engage followers.
- **Library Updates:** Inform the community about new services, changes in hours, and other important updates.

FREQUENCY

Most importantly, is finding a number that your team can consistently maintain. There is no industry standard on how frequently to post. Selecting a consistent frequency that your team can support and plan around is an important part of a social media strategy. *Below are frequencies we observed when checking libraries that have a strong following:*

Instagram:
- 1 – 2 per day *(no less than 1 - 2 per week)*

Facebook:
- 1 – 2 per day *(no less than 1 – 2 per week)*

TikTok:
- 3 times a week *(or as much as you can – many find success posting multiple times a day)*

X:
- 1 - 3 per day *(note: this platform may not be worthwhile for posting within your organization)*

TIP: *Sync your Instagram and Facebook feeds to post on each platform at the same time! (These can be the same post.)*

EXAMPLE CONTENT CALENDAR (Based on the minimums)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Plan weekly content and film/collect media	Post a *grid post* on *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and post a *TikTok video*	Film/collect media Post to *Instagram* and *Facebook stories* (could sometimes be a repost of the previous day's post)	Post *grid posts* on *Instagram, Facebook*, and post a *TikTok video*	Film/collect media Post to *Instagram* and *Facebook stories* (could sometimes be a repost of the previous day's post)	Post a *TikTok video*	Post highest grossing TikTok video to *Instagram and Facebook reels*

4.) Strategy Deployment

After prioritizing platforms based on your selected generational user base, maximize the effectiveness of your chosen platforms with a targeted strategy.

STAY UP TO DATE on SEO words for your organization
- This involves researching the search rate of keywords in relation to the content being published.
    - When beginning research, think about what words potential consumers might type into their search engines and whether those terms would lead them to you!
    - Ex.) Author, Book, Read, Library, and words related to your location (e.g., city, town, state)

PRODUCE CONTENT that follows your library's *brand*
- Each post should feel connected to the next post in both aesthetics and the information presented.

CHECK THE ACCOUNTS' performance statistics

- Make sure the account is set up as a business account and statistics will readily be available.
- Informally review your performance statistics with a colleague for motivation and subtle accountability.
- Formally review performance statistics quarterly with your communications/ marketing team and the library director.

REPEATING POSTS
- Utilizing posts across platforms can be beneficial to create consistency and save time.
- However, avoid repeating posts across the same platform, this can cause content cannibalization (the search engine decreases your effectiveness) resulting in substandard performance.

5.) Tips from Libraries

Pinpointing your audience, navigating your platform usage, and utilizing it fully takes time and action. Prioritization is the key! Experiment and find what connects with your audience and document not only your wins but also your setbacks. Any online presence means you are reaching more than you did previously. When working towards your organization's social goals, the following tips may lead you to greater success:

UTILIZE YOUNG VOLUNTEERS
- Many volunteers, especially those from Generation Z, spend hours on social media daily. Unbeknownst to them, this time is spent understanding trends, which can be leveraged to create distinctive content for your organization.

CREATE A SHARED DRIVE
- Develop a system to facilitate the flow of content on the backend, enabling those managing posts to have a constantly evolving selection of photos and videos to add to your feed.
- A great and simple tool is Google Drive – this is a free platform that can be shared among all organization members to easily upload content.
  - Other similar platforms: Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, Shutterfly Share Sites

ANNOUNCE EVENTS
- Keep an event calendar updated with current library events.
  - This can be done on your Facebook events page, consistent posting of an updated calendar (on any platform), and/or reminders of specific events on grid posts and stories, etc.

- Tag the community partners who are participating in an event and encourage them to share your post.
- Create a Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) by using real photos of your library spaces and excited people.

BRAND TEMPLATES
- Having a "homebase" where all photo editing occurs makes for a more cohesive and aesthetic posting scheme.
- Canva is a great tool, which can be used for free, to edit photos and videos. Within the program, there are readily made and simple to use designs or you can create your own designs using their tools.
  - Other similar platforms: Adobe Illustrator (and other Adobe platforms), free Adobe alternatives (Inkscape, Scribus, GIMP)

INCORPORATE PEOPLE
- Content involving real humans tends to pull more focus. Do not forget to utilize people of all ages in your content (including volunteers, staff, and customers).
  - Note: Make sure to acquire consent before using images of people for commercial use.

TAKING RISKS
- Do not be afraid to try new things, whether that be breaking your professional voice to create a funny video or changing the aesthetic of the organization's page. Take chances but do not forget to measure their performance and act accordingly.

SPEND
- For events and announcements that appeal to a broader audience, put some allocate some funds on ad spend behind related posts.
  - Ad spend pushes your chosen posts out to a greater audience in your demographic.
  - Do this strategically by paying attention to overall engagement based on type of post (short video, photo, etc.).

Examples:

Milwaukee Public Library TikTok
https://www.tiktok.com/@milwaukeepubliclibrary?lang=en

- This group takes risks and includes people while making short-form content that is produced across platforms.

Long Beach Library Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/lbcitylibrary/

- This page has a cohesive personal brand.
  - Consistent company coloring
  - Logo usage
  - High quality edited images

Seattle Public Library Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/SeattlePublicLibrary

- This page is direct and informative.
  - Up-to-date information
  - Clear short statements and posts

It has been eye-opening to see community survey responses about libraries across the U.S. Our hope is these social media practices will help drive awareness of the great things your library is doing. Let us know if you have any practices that are proving particularly effective.

Bâton Global provides strategy and leadership services to organizations of all types – including libraries. Let us know if you'd like to discuss your next strategic plan or any organizational challenges.

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