# General Best Practices, Tools, and Resources

here can be a lot of information overload in the world of Instagram (IG) and Snapchat content creation. Every blog, article, and app has something to say about how to make your content shine. This chapter cuts out some of the noise by featuring some essential tips, tools, and resources for further exploration.

# Creating a Social Media Strategy and Policy

While not essential, it can be beneficial to develop a social media strategy and policy. As social media becomes more integral in your library's marketing and communication efforts, creating documents that describe how platforms should be managed and guides for certain decisions will be worth it in the long run. I offer three main stages to consider when composing an official social media strategy and policy for your library: the proposal stage, the strategy stage, and the policy stage.

#### **Proposal Stage**

The proposal stage tackles the "why" behind each account as well as reasoning for assessing the "value-add." You may be past this stage, but hashing out the reasons why each different account is needed can help you make a case for adding Snapchat, IG, or both to your social media offerings.

SNAPCHAT VS. IG ADOPTION

There are a lot of similarities between Snapchat and IG, especially with the introduction of IG Stories and

associated filters, stickers, GIFs, and so on. Regardless of everyone's feelings concerning this facsimile of Snapchat Stories, IG Stories have become more or less accepted by users. While the consensus in the marketing world seems to be leaning toward IG adoption,1 the teen and young adult demographic on Snapchat is still going strong. A recent report from eMarketer reveals Snapchat to be the most popular social network among internet-using teens aged between twelve and seventeen, at 16.4 million users.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Constine reveals that Snapchat's early teen adopters have "now aged up and are headed to college," making the eighteen-to-twenty-four age range an important core user group as well.3 There is also an active international community on both platforms. Based on a leaked memo from Snapchat cofounder and CEO Evan Spiegel, there will most likely be a concerted effort to grow in developing markets.4 However, there is no denying that Snapchat is going through a rough patch. 5 Whether that will result in its demise has yet to be seen. @librariesluc did mention that since the debut of IG Stories, their patrons started using Snapchat less.

If you are waffling between launching a Snapchat or an IG account, important things to think about are your target audience and if you have the bandwidth for platform management and support. The majority of the patrons you want to reach might be using both IG and Snapchat. If that is the case, you could go a few different ways: if you have limited resources, then it might be more efficient to go with Snapchat; if you can support both, then it would be beneficial to manage both to cast the widest communication net possible. The latter is the case for @NCSUlibraries, who said, "If they're only on one, then we want to make sure we're reaching them there; if they're on both, then no harm no foul." Similarly, @librariesluc recalled students expressing

that Snapchat was the only way they were getting library information and were not on IG, which has been one of the reasons why they still use both platforms, despite more students using IG. If your patrons are partial to Snapchat over IG, then the answer is obvious there. Probably one of the most important considerations is to figure out what the patrons in your library are using. You can look at trend reports and articles regularly, but they might not reflect your specific situation. It is probably most efficient to speak with patrons informally or run a brief survey.

#### **Strategy Stage**

The next phase is the strategy stage, where you map out and focus your content approaches, brand, "voice/ tone," and so on for each platform. Also, while it is important to tweak material according to the platform you're using, most likely you will want to cover overarching campaigns, holidays, and events across all platforms. Creating a plan ahead of time gives you more time to craft high-quality content that garners more engagement. For example, do you want to use social media to increase attendance at a specific event? How do you want to do that? What type of content do you want to create? When should your posts be published? Do you need to coordinate across library branches or campus locations? What metrics will indicate that you are tracking toward that goal? All those questions can be answered during the strategy stage. There are a variety of different resources for building an effective social media strategy. Here are a few:

- · "Managing Your Library's Social Media Channels," specifically chapters 5 ("Analytics, Goals and Strategy for Social Media") and 6 ("What to Do from Start to Finish").6
- The webinar "Getting Started with Social Media for Your Library"; take a look at the slides for the presentation "Maximize Your Library Technology."7
- "How to Create a Social Media Marketing Strategy in 8 Easy Steps"8
- "How to Create an Extraordinary Social Media Strategy for 2018"9
- "A Social Media Strategy Is about More than Just Posting"10
- "How to Set Better Library Social Media Goals"11

### **Policy Stage**

The last step is the policy stage. A recent survey by WebJunction revealed that the majority of libraries do not currently have a social media policy, with some respondents reporting that they have "social media guidelines for staff" or "guidelines for patrons and staff."12 Social media policies (also called best practices, principles, or codes of conduct) generally cover the dos and don'ts of handling social media and come in two main flavors: internally facing and public-facing. An internally facing social media policy is utilized by your library's social media managers and covers topics surrounding organizational expectations, patron privacy, inappropriate or spam messages, controversial content area or subjects, disclaimers, what to do when a social media manager leaves the library, and so on. These documents are typically posted on the library's intranet and available only to staffers. A public-facing social media policy is often displayed on an organization's website and is available to the general public. These documents include a summary of how your library uses social media and any guiding state and federal laws and regulations that your library adheres to. Typical topics include user privacy (including photo and video consent), general employee conduct, and patron guidelines (including actions for misconduct). Here are a few resources for designing an effective social media policy:

- · WebJunction's "Social Media Policy Examples"— This webpage includes a useful list of social media policies currently implemented by libraries.<sup>13</sup>
- "Creating a Social Media Policy: What We Did, What We Learned"—This article has some great library-specific information.14
- "How to Write a Social Media Policy for Your Company"15
- · "Creating a Social Media Policy for Your Library"—Laura Solomon teaches this workshop for ALA Publishing periodically.<sup>16</sup>

Chapters 3 and 4 cover a few platform-specific points you might want to include when you get to the Snapchat or IG sections in your prospective strategy and policy design.

## **General Management Ideas, Tools, and Resources**

IG and Snapchat can be a little tricky when it comes to management. Neither is very amenable to automated posting from third-party tools. Snapchat does not allow multiple people to be logged in at the same time, and both have disappearing Stories metrics (Insights for IG Stories currently last two weeks after initial posting, 17 and Snapchat Stories analytics last only as long as the snap is active). Both platforms are tailored more toward in-app, real-time posting, which can make it difficult when trying to manage from a library branding standpoint. This section covers a few tools that you can use to make this a bit easier and more streamlined.

Google Analytics is a free and highly robust tool that you can use along with Google's Campaign URL Builder. The URL builder lets you construct a trackable URL to follow custom campaigns in Google Analytics. This is an especially helpful resource for tracking website or library catalog visits from your IG bio, book holds from your Snapchat snaps, event signups from your Snapchat snaps, and so on. Some strategic places you might want to place a custom URL include your IG bio; each social media clickable logo on your website, newsletter, email, and so on; and campaignfocused linked Snapchat snaps. Placing trackable links in these places will allow you to answer questions such as these:

- · How many book checkouts or holds came from our Snapchat snaps?
- How much website traffic was generated from our IG and Snapchat channels?
- · How many people signed up for our upcoming event, information literacy session, or workshop from our IG and Snapchat posts?
- How many new IG or Snapchat visits were generated from our email, promotional poster or bookmark, website, and so on?

Google Analytics https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web

Campaign URL Builder https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder

Content manager and library marketer Angela Hursh created a useful step-by-step guide tracking your marketing efforts using the Google Analytics and URL Builder.<sup>18</sup> You can also use Bit.ly and the Google Campaign Builder together if you want to create custom shortened URLs.19

There are a few third-party tools that work with IG or Snapchat. However, since both platforms change so rapidly, it is often hard for these companies to keep up. For example, IG currently does not allow you to schedule or publish carousel content or IG Stories material from a third-party tool.<sup>20</sup> I have used Inconosquare, Hootsuite, Buffer, and SproutSocial to manage IG content. Regarding IG content management, I have not found these tools to be particularly helpful for posting, as I often want to post more than one photo (i.e., carousel content) or an IG Story post. Still, these features could be added at any time. If you are interested in the analytics side or "hashtracking" on IG, I would recommend Inconosquare as it is more robust. If you want to explore and test some management tools, Forbes has a few helpful articles.21 The librarians I spoke with prefer to use their smartphone's notification feature to remind them when to post and then go directly to the mobile app to publish their content.

Inconosquare https://pro.iconosquare.com

Hootsuite https://hootsuite.com

Buffer https://buffer.com

SproutSocial https://sproutsocial.com

#### Collaboration Ideas and Tools

When working on a team where you are assigning specific content or days for posting, several tools can help streamline the process. Nonetheless, it is also beneficial to schedule regular meetings or brainstorming sessions with everyone on your team to generate ideas, plan new campaigns, talk about what is working and not working, and so on. These times vary depending on the department and organization. @acclibraries hosts an in-person "goal setting/brainstorming meeting" once a year. When I managed social media for the University of Denver's Office of Graduate Studies, I would meet once a week with my in-office team and every six weeks with those managing social media aimed toward graduate students during a "social media roundtable." Listed below are a few top resources (One caveat I would add is that these tools are only as effective as the amount of buy-in and consistent usage that you get from the entire team):

- Content calendar—Content calendars allow you to map out your publishing schedule in advance, keeping everyone abreast of upcoming content. As long as all managers check the calendar and adhere to the marked events, then it should be a successful endeavor. Shared calendars, such as Google Calendar or Outlook Calendar, that allow you to partition according to the project (such as Social Media Marketing Calendar or even more granular like Snapchat Marketing Calendar) can be handy.
- Task management and workflow tools such as Asana or Trello22—I am a huge fan of Asana over content calendars, but it is definitely a personal preference. What gives these tools a leg up over content calendars and email communication are the enhanced organizational elements. Users can create a calendar, project, or campaign and assign various individuals to specific tasks. They can also add attachments (such as image or video assets), @mention specific users, and communicate with others under the specific task using the comments section. These tools can also be

integrated with Google Calendar or Outlook Calendar. I would also recommend creating a Slack channel for all individuals on your social media team (which can also be synced with Asana or Trello).23 The "Searchable Log of All Conversation and Knowledge," or Slack, is a collaboration tool mainly focused on communication between team members, with different chat rooms or "channels" that you can create for your various projects and interests.24 Slack operates on a freemium business model and is currently free "for an unlimited period of time" for small teams.25

Shared image or video repositories like iCloud or Google Photos-Images, videos, memes, and so on are what make the social media world go round, but it is often difficult and overwhelming to tackle when working on a smaller team. Soliciting content from your colleagues and student staffers via shared image and video repositories such as Flickr, iCloud, or Google Photos can help with this, saving time on the content-creation side and helping to incorporate diverse visual perspectives. You will likely cull the most content if you make it as easy as possible for other staffers to send you material, necessitating the use of various transmission methods, including an image repository, Slack (if you have it), email, and texts.

Slack https://slack.com

# **Content Ideas, Tools, and** Resources for IG and Snapchat

Before we go into the specifics tools you can utilize and content you can share with your audience, there are a few best practices that you might want to think about or add to your social media strategy:

· Master the art of chocolate cake and broccoli—In my forthcoming article, the higher education expert I interviewed incisively analogized the process of balancing the content that you want to promote (e.g., library events, books in the collection, etc.) with posts that your users like to see (a funny meme, library building beauty shot, etc.) to serving "chocolate cake and broccoli."26 To do this right includes diversifying what you post, tweaking your message according to the platform you are using, and finding ways to keep things intriguing. @librariesluc touched on this by recommending that libraries focus on "getting those cool and interesting shots mixed with pictures of promotional content so you can draw them in."

One way to keep things fresh is to work with other departments and branches in your library and encourage them to send you content to post.

- Don't bleed the feed—@acclibraries mentioned that they "don't want to bleed the feed and post 10 photos at once," because doing so causes a negative engagement return on IG. On a non-event/campaign/promotional day, you should post approximately one post per day in your IG feed and around two to five posts on your IG and Snapchat Stories. Depending on your bandwidth, you could post one story per day or even one story per week. The important thing to remember is to strike a balance: you want to post consistently, but not so often that your audience tunes you out (you can measure this by looking at your Story's drop-off rate; see chapters 3 and 4).
- Pay attention to engagement upticks—Engagement ebbs and flows on social media, and looking at your data can inform you of the optimal times to post throughout the day or year. For example, academic libraries tend to be slower during the summer months, so scaling back during this time to allow more time to create fall campaign assets might be beneficial. If you know that your users tend to check their IG or Snapchat during lunchtime or between classes, prioritize your most important post to go out during that time.
- Create materials ahead of time—When ramping up for a campaign or holiday, make your life easier by creating photos, videos, and copy in advance. That way, when it comes time to make that snap or IG post you simply just need to upload your content. This method also provides more time to create higher-quality material. If you are soliciting the assistance of others to share your content to help get the word out, send them predesigned assets and boilerplate language to make it as simple as possible to share on their end.
  - Make it vibrant—This is a twofold concept: showcasing the library as a fun or useful place to be, and doing so in an effective manner. This means crafting photos that feature patrons and making sure those images are high quality. For example, @librariesluc stated that they have seen library feeds in the past that are blurry or show disengaged people not looking at the camera. Additionally, @TheRLPL advises that posts be image-focused without a lot of text, explaining that if they need more text, they will "break it up between snaps, so followers aren't overwhelmed." It might take longer to implement these tactics, and you might even post less frequently, but it is worth the effort.
- · Collaborate and interact with other professionals—The library community on IG and Snapchat

is rich and full of opportunities to interact, share, and inspire. Challenging peer organizations to a #RiotGrams contest like @CMCLibrary, engaging with them at conferences like @acclibraries, and commenting on and liking their content are all great ways to build community, generate new ideas, and grow your network. Additional opportunities for collaboration can include interacting with publishers, local authors, and book-focused influencers (e.g., a #Bookstagrammer if you're on

#### #RiotGrams

https://bookriot.com/2018/01/31/riotgrams-instagram -challenge

#### #Bookstagrammer

https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags /bookstagrammer

· Have fun and don't stress!—All the librarians I spoke with emphasized both incorporating an element of silliness or humor into your content as well as not taking yourself too seriously. @acclibraries stated that content that is "absurd, whimsical, silly, weird, or offbeat," such as their snowman book sculpture, is normally pretty effective (see chapter 4). @orillia library echoed this sentiment with "be stupid, be weird, be fun," and @CMCLibrary provided the helpful reminder: "Nobody's an expert. If you make a mistake just learn from it." Along this vein, you can get a little riskier and experimental on social media as the stakes are not incredibly high.

#### IG AND SNAPCHAT STORIES TIPS

When it comes to compiling an engaging IG or Snapchat Story, less is more. There is a lot of competition in the social space, and you are just one swipe away from being skipped. To get as many eyeballs on your content as possible, post no more than five to seven segments per Story. If your Story is longer, Amy Elderkin at Hootsuite recommends breaking it up into chapters with title pages to introduce new subject matter.<sup>27</sup> One brand that does this well is @Epicreads, which has created some longer divided chapter-style stories for their Author Confessionals series on IGTV.<sup>28</sup> While this example is more produced, most likely involving a dedicated team, you can make similar videos (albeit a little more mid-grade) with some of the editing tools (see next section). Regardless of length, keep in mind that your story should be cohesive. When recording an event at your library, it is best to record the raw footage, edit it to include only the highlights, and then post it to IG or Snapchat. Alternatively, you can shoot short videos on your phone and then decide the best ones to add to your Story. Just keep it organized, whether based on time (e.g., a day), event, or story arc in a book that you are featuring (i.e., have a beginning, middle, and end).

#### **Photo and Video Editing Tools**

Videos and photos can now be easily created outside of IG and Snapchat using a whole host of applications. (There is an excellent issue of Library Technology Reports by David Lee King that takes a deep dive into video creation that I highly recommend.29) With Snapchat's camera roll saving capability, content can also be created on the platform and shared on IG, Facebook, and so on (or vice versa). A few IG trends that are currently popular include film or vintage effects and minimalism. The section highlights a smattering of options that can be used to create assets for any platform you are currently using:

- 8mm Vintage Camera<sup>30</sup>—"Shoot authentic retro films." Currently available only on iOS. Price: \$1.99.
- Canva<sup>31</sup>—A click-and-drag graphic design tool. Price: free. This is a handy web resource if you are not proficient in Photoshop or Illustrator.
- Huji Cam<sup>32</sup>—Makes photos look like they were taken on film. Price: free.
- iMovie<sup>33</sup>—A robust and intuitive video editing software created by Apple. The app is available only on iOS devices, and the desktop software is available only on Macs. Price for the app: free.
- Quik<sup>34</sup>—Created by GoPro but usable with any mobile device, Quik adds music to your photos or video and automatically cuts the compilation according to the music beat. This can be especially helpful with IG Stories, and Snapchat as your footage can be automatically cut into Stories' required fifteen-second (IG) or ten-second (Snapchat) increments. David Lee King has a helpful article on IG, music, and copyright if you are interested in using adding music.35 You can also share directly to IG or Snapchat from the app. Price: free.
  - Try it Out! Capture photos and videos on your phone at a library event, then open Quik and use its 24H Flashback feature to automatically create a highlights reel along with some fun background music.
- Snapseed<sup>36</sup>—Photo editor recommended @topekalibrary. Price: free.
- Ultralight<sup>37</sup>—Simple and intuitive new mobile photo and video editing tool. iOS only. Price: free and pro versions available.
- VHS Camcorder<sup>38</sup>—Used by celebrities and influencers. Allows you to "shoot videos that look and

sound like videotape recordings" from the 1980s. Price: \$3.99.

- Videorama<sup>39</sup>—User-friendly video editor recommended by @NISDstevenslib. iOS only. Price: free.
- VSCO<sup>40</sup>—Great editing tools. Very art forward with its own social sharing. Price: free seven-day trial; \$19.99/year.
- YouTube—You don't need an official library YouTube account to use its video editing suite. One feature that is especially handy is its automatic subtitle and closed captions capability, which uses its speech recognition software to automatically add captions to your video, letting you add captioning in YouTube, download the cc'd video, and then upload it into IG or Snapchat.<sup>41</sup> If you have time, you can manually add subtitles and even translate them to add subtitles in a different language to increase inclusivity of your videos.<sup>42</sup>

YouTube http://www.youtube.com

# Celebrations, Tentpole Days, and Events to Add to Your Calendar

We covered the background and application of recurring content in chapter 1, explaining that tentpole events such as #NationalDoughnutDay are easy ways to increase engagement while also promoting your content. In addition to straightforward events such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, Valentine's Day, and so on, here are a few library-, book-, and information-centered occurrences that you can add to your content calendar:

- Author birthdays, author visits, or book releases—@orillia\_library follows various authors and publishers on Snapchat so they can keep up to date of various milestones.
- Book award announcements—@acclibraries reported that they like to create posts around events like the Hugo Awards every year.
- · Banned Books Week.
- Finals week, start of the semester, end of the semester, graduation, and so on (academic libraries).
- Literary holidays such as Dictionary Day, Limerick Day, Science Fiction Day, and so on.—Bustle, Bookglow, and the 5 Minute Librarian are good places to start for gathering ideas.<sup>43</sup>
- · Library card sign-up month.
- Library conferences such as ALA Annual/Midwinter, PLA conference, IFLA, ACRL, and so on.
- · National Library Week.
- Summer reading programs (public libraries).

Hugo Awards www.thehugoawards.org

Banned Books Week https://bannedbooksweek.org

Library Card Sign-up Month www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks /card

National Library Week www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks /natlibraryweek

If you are looking to keep up with more general but lesser known days (e.g., #SocialJusticeDay, NationalTriviaDay, etc.), there are several blogs out on there. I like HubSpot's, Hootsuite's, and Sprout Social's articles.<sup>44</sup>

#### Conclusion

In the next two chapters, we are going to get into the nitty-gritty of Snapchat and IG content. While these platforms have many similarities, there are also many differences. User expectations vary, with Snapchat, for example, being the place where you would chronicle your bad hair day and IG the platform for showcasing your haircut and resultant beauteous locks (with a variety of variation and exceptions in between). I will be presenting the content recommendations that tend to perform well on each platform. However, many methods I discuss can be applied to either, and I would recommend browsing both regardless of where your loyalties lie. Also, with the saving capabilities on both, you can easily make content on one and share it on the other!

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