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# SOCIAL MEDIA OPTIMIZATION

PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING  
AND ENGAGING COMMUNITY

Doralyn Rossmann and Scott W. H. Young

**Library Technology Reports**

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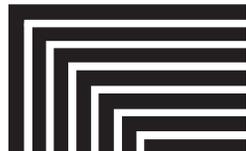
# Library Technology

R E P O R T S

Expert Guides to Library Systems and Services

## **Social Media Optimization: Principles for Building and Engaging Community**

*Doralyn Rossmann and Scott W. H. Young*



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**Social Media Optimization:  
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## **Abstract**

Social media optimization (SMO) is programmatic strategy for building and engaging community through social networks. This issue of *Library Technology Reports* (vol. 52, no. 8), "Social Media Optimization: Principles for Building and Engaging Community," by Doralyn Rossmann and Scott W. H. Young, offers practical guidelines for implementing this flexible and comprehensive community-building model, structured around five interrelated principles:

- Create shareable content.
- Make sharing easy.
- Reward engagement.
- Proactively share.
- Measure use and encourage reuse.

SMO ultimately benefits both the library and library users by introducing a model for connecting users with relevant content, listening to the community, and building sustainable relationships.

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# Introduction to Social Media Optimization

## *Setting the Foundation for Building Community*

**Scott W. H. Young**

Social media optimization (SMO) is a programmatic strategy for building and engaging community. By following this series of interrelated principles for creating and sharing content through social networks, the library can become an active voice in a thriving community. With SMO, your library's unique personality emerges on social networks, thereby activating a rich multitude of community interactions.

SMO fundamentally offers a framework for connecting with people. SMO benefits your library and your community of users by establishing a plan for creating and sharing relevant and meaningful content. The primary goal of SMO for libraries is to encourage social media engagement and content sharing through the major social networks that constitute our users' learning and research environments. The primary outcome of SMO is an engaged community of library users. An engaged community can then generate many secondary effects, including increased Web traffic to library pages and increased library resources usage, as well as establishing and reinforcing the library as a trusted member of the community.

As an overall concept overview, it will be helpful to outline what SMO is and what SMO is not. Content is a key element of SMO. Content can include resources shared through the Web and through social networks, whether in a URL, a hashtag, a geolocation, an image, or the text of a social network post itself. While content is a central element of this strategy, SMO is more than just content, and more than

marketing the library. While those aspects are well represented within SMO, the underlying focus is grounded in a sense of community. In this way, SMO is not just about the library pushing out content, but about being active on social networks to the benefit of your community. SMO offers a wide-reaching and flexible structure for connecting with users, listening to the community, and building relationships. SMO encourages the library to develop and demonstrate a genuine interest in the community for the benefit of both the library and the library's users.

This issue of *Library Technology Reports* is intended for beginning and intermediate social media practitioners who wish to implement an effective method for sharing content and building community. Our discussion primarily centers around the social networks of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and we also touch on Tumblr, Pinterest, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, and Yik Yak. The terms *social network* and *social media* can be applied both to these specific platforms and to the work of SMO in general. We focus our usage on the terms *social network* and *social networking*, though we also employ the term *social media* in more colloquial settings, especially when communicating directly with our community through these platforms.

The five principles of SMO are closely intertwined and often share complementary concepts. In the chapters of this report, we sequentially present and discuss each principle separately. Given this structure, we wish to emphasize that SMO will most effectively be

**Table i.1.** Social Media Guide—outline

Guideline	Definition
Community Focus	The target audience for your social media community building
Goal	The overall mission and purpose of your social media activity
Values	The values that you wish to express and present through social media
Activity Focus	The types of activity you wish to cultivate
Tone and Tenor	The style of communication
Posting Frequency	How often you will create and reply to social media posts
Posting Categories	General categories to help shape your social media content creation
Services and Resources	The specific services and resources you highlight and amplify through social media
Ongoing Series	Specific categories to help shape your social media content creation
Posting Personnel	Assigned roles and responsibilities

implemented by combining all five principles together.

This introduction begins by outlining the five principles of SMO, then proceeds to detail a fundamental first step: implementing a sustainable model for building and engaging community through social networks.

## Principles of SMO

### Principle 1: Create Shareable Content

The principle *create shareable content* begins by identifying and creating Web resources that can be shared via social networks. These might include items from a digital collection, or news articles that are relevant to your community. This principle also includes practical planning for creating and sharing Web content across multiple platforms.

### Principle 2: Make Sharing Easy

The principle *make sharing easy* means putting tools in place to encourage sharing content at the point of use. This principle will help reduce barriers to sharing by taking advantage of sharing features built into many major platforms, such as Facebook Open Graph, Twitter Cards, social buttons, and hashtags.

### Principle 3: Reward Engagement

The principle *reward engagement* involves actively monitoring community interactions on social media and recognizing and rewarding users who engage with library content. We can listen to users by monitoring community conversation through library mentions, use of hashtags and geotags, and references to information needs. By showing personality and the human side of the library, we can generate goodwill and engagement in our community.

### Principle 4: Proactively Share

Libraries can be some of the best promoters of content by *proactively sharing* our resources and services

through social networks. This begins by understanding the interests of the community through methods such as focus groups and surveys, then following through with library-led interactivity and content sharing.

### Principle 5: Measure Use and Encourage Reuse

*Measuring use* recognizes that users want to share, repost, and embed resources into multiple social networks and that libraries can utilize a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to measure the use of content. Libraries can furthermore *encourage reuse* by developing a culture of sharing and reuse in the community. The application of this principle can help create a self-sustaining community of engaged users who regularly use the library and its spaces, services, and collections.

## Creating a Plan for Sharing Content and Building Community

Creating a strategic and sustainable plan for sharing content and building community is a foundational first step toward social media optimization.

Since 2012, we at the Montana State University (MSU) Library (in Bozeman, MT) have developed and maintained a cohesive and adaptable plan for building community with SMO. This strategy—which we call our Social Media Guide—has been critical for understanding our community and shaping our content to match.<sup>1</sup> The plan is framed around ten guidelines (table i.1).

We completed each step of the guide and implemented the full set of guidelines for Facebook and Twitter (table i.2).

In order to assess our guide, we developed a research study that examined our content and our community.<sup>2</sup> Through this study, we found that our content clearly influenced the composition and engagement of our community. To determine this, we analyzed the types of posts that generated

**Table i.2. Social Media Guide—Montana State University Library**

<b>Guideline</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
Community Focus	Undergraduate student population; greater Bozeman community	Undergraduate and graduate students; other MSU units/departments; library and information professionals and organizations
Goal	Increase undergraduate and community awareness and use of library services and resources; cultivate an inviting online personality; create a Facebook page that can serve to extend the library's services and community activity.	Build an online community of library supporters via social media engagement, accomplished through regular interactions with students and others on Twitter; form partnerships through mutual support of other MSU entities via Twitter; engage and connect with other libraries, librarians, library organizations; increase awareness of library services, resources.
Values	Intellectual curiosity; information sharing; undergraduate learning; book reading; use of web-based information-related technology; community building; friendly and accessible library service	Availability to help students; care/concern for followers; professional engagement; scholarly research; specialized library services and resources
Activity Focus	Emphasis on information sharing while remaining responsive to social interaction	Emphasis on information sharing and social interaction
Tone and Tenor	Welcoming, warm, cheerful, energetic	Welcoming, warm, cheerful, energetic
Posting Frequency	1–5 posts per day, with monitoring of subsequent interactions	5–10 posts per week, with regular monitoring of subsequent interactions; no automatic posting; tailor wording of posts for community and 140-character limitations; commenting on other's Twitter posts, Retweeting, and favoriting as appropriate
Posting Categories	Announcements, events	Events, news, and other content that focuses on matters important to students who use the library; original library content
Services and Resources	New books, instructional sessions, periodical highlights	Ask-a-librarian, library databases, institutional repository content, copyright and author services
Ongoing Series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion: faculty and staff recognition, library-related news articles</li> <li>• Community building: One Book One Bozeman, banned books, MSU news and events</li> <li>• Interactive: question posts, library- and university-related quizzes</li> </ul>	Blog posts (ideally 1 per month), "Tip of the Week," Services and Resources: new databases, current databases and guides, ask-a-librarian
Posting Personnel	Members 1 & 2 of Social Media Group	Member 3 of Social Media Group

user interaction on Twitter, as measured by likes, retweets, and replies. We studied our content and community according to two time periods: before we implemented our Social Media Guide and after we implemented our guide.

Before the guide, our social network posts were mostly automated via RSS feeds from our blog. Our social network activity was entirely one way with virtually no interactivity with our followers. With this broadcasting style of communication, our social network content during this period was bland and lacked a personality or a point of view. And in studying our follower community during this pre-guide period, we found that most of our followers were local and regional businesses, and very few of our followers were from our target audience of university students. During this pre-guide period, we ultimately found that our content was drab and that our community was disengaged.

Once we implemented our Social Media Guide, we altered our approach to social network content

creation to include a dynamic and inviting style of communication that was characterized by interactivity and personality. In this post-guide period, we dedicated one librarian specifically to Twitter who regularly created posts that offered a personality-rich point of view targeted at our student population. In this way, we transformed our content and—in turn—transformed our community. We had identified our campus's undergraduate community group as our key members, and so we shaped our content to match their interests by tuning in and listening to their perspectives through social networks. Our hand-crafted posts presented a point of view that was in touch with our community, often responding to our community's interests and values. We also formed an internal library committee—the Social Media Group—to help guide and support our social network activity. The Social Media Group comprises four librarians and one library staff member who meet biweekly to discuss and strategize for social networking.

After we studied our follower community during

this post-guide period, we found that most of our followers were students and that many businesses had chosen to stop following our library's account. In fact, in the pre-guide period, only 12.5 percent of our posts generated an interaction, as measured by like, retweet, or reply. During this period, nearly 50 percent of our followers were businesses, and only about 6 percent of our followers were students. In the post-guide period, 46 percent of our posts generated an interaction, and nearly 30 percent of our followers were students. Given our goal of building an engaged community of student users, we considered these outcomes to be a major success.

In sum, setting a plan for social networking is essential, and our Social Media Guide represents an

effective model that can be adapted for SMO-driven content sharing and community building. A plan of this kind thus represents the initial step of SMO and sets the foundation for successfully implementing the five principles of SMO.

## Notes

1. "Social Media Guide," in "Social Media at Montana State University (MSU) Library," Montana State University Library website, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://lib.montana.edu/about/social-media/#guide>.
2. Scott W. H. Young and Doralyn Rossmann, "Building Library Community through Social Media," *Information Technology and Libraries* 34, no. 1 (2015): 20, <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ital.v34i1.5625>.

# Principle 1

## *Create Shareable Content*

Scott W. H. Young

The work of social media optimization (SMO) begins with *creating shareable content* for the Web. SMO aims to build community and engage users by creating compelling content that generates user-initiated sharing through social networks. To unlock this potential for community growth, creating shareable content is the first step. The chapter on this principle starts by describing the defining characteristics of shareable content and concludes with a discussion of a comprehensive strategy for creating content across multiple channels and platforms. Our discussion of Principle 1 includes approaches for identifying and creating Web content that is relevant and meaningful to your community. In our discussion of Principle 4, we detail methods for gaining insights about your community through surveys, focus groups, and experimentation and how to use that information to determine what, where, and when you proactively share on social networks.

### Defining Shareability

Two key characteristics define identify shareability: technical structure and community relevancy.

#### Technical Structure

From a technical perspective, shareable content will be in digital form and published on the Web with a unique Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that can be accessed through a web browser or a mobile application. This basic technical structure allows content to be accessed, shared, and tracked through unique Web addresses. The URL—a fundamental aspect of the Web—is a critical component to shareability. An item

*Create shareable content* represents the first of five SMO principles:

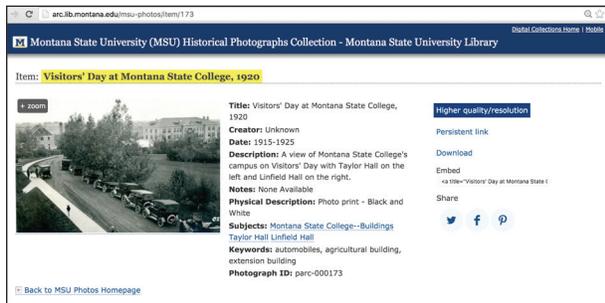
1. **Create Shareable Content**
2. Make Sharing Easy
3. Reward Engagement
4. Proactively Share
5. Measure Use and Encourage Reuse

of Web content can be shared through social networks only if it can first be located at a unique address on the Web.

Shareable Web content is typically created through one of two methods: either by digitizing existing analog content, or by publishing content that was born digital. *Born digital* is a term describing content that originated in a digital format, such as an image from a digital camera or a digital video recording. Your library may already have produced and published many forms of share-ready digital content, including

- digital collections items
- blog posts
- institutional repository items
- e-mail newsletters
- videos
- staff directory pages

Figures 1.1–1.6 demonstrate various types of shareable content. Each example features digitized or born-digital content that can be accessed, shared, and tracked through its own URL. Discussions about the other principles of SMO demonstrate how this content appears when socially shared.



**Figure 1.1**  
Item page from the MSU Historical Photographs digital collection

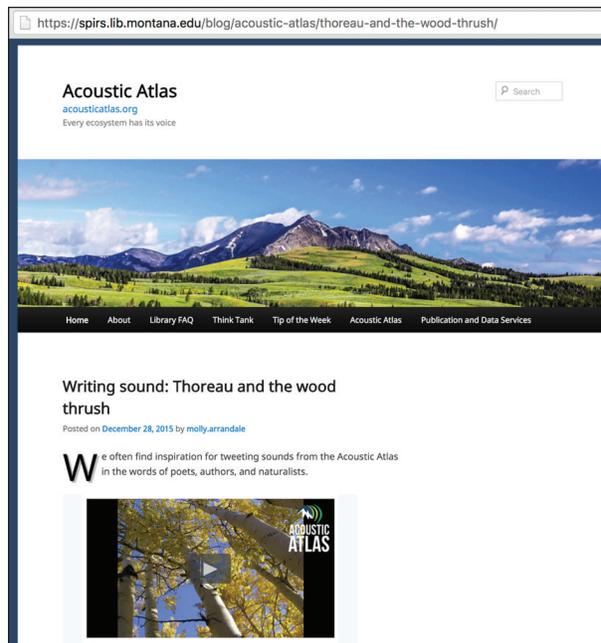
It's not always easy to identify content that your library could produce for social sharing. Major national libraries often have robust digital content that is well suited for sharing on social networks, and looking to these libraries can provide inspiration and content for your own program.

The New York Public Library (NYPL) is a stellar example of a national library that offers a great diversity of digital content and social networking inspiration. The digital mission of NYPL was recently expressed by Ben Vershbow, the director of NYPL Labs: "We see digitization as a starting point, not end point. We don't just want to put stuff online and say, 'Here it is,' but rev the engines and encourage reuse."<sup>1</sup> The work of SMO aligns with this vision of digital content, with a first step of creating shareable content and working ultimately towards the broader goals of encouraging sharing and reuse and building engaged communities of library users. The NYPL achieves its digital mission by producing and publishing digital content and then sharing that content through social networks—but it doesn't stop there. The NYPL also wants to help others find, share, and reuse its content. The NYPL Public Domain collection, which features more than 180,000 digital objects, is a veritable font of shareable content that is free to access, share, and reuse through social networks or any other digital platform.<sup>2</sup> The NYPL's Public Domain digital collection is just one example that your library can draw from to create shareable content.

*NYPL Labs*  
[www.nypl.org/collections/labs](http://www.nypl.org/collections/labs)

## Community Relevancy

Once content is digitized and published on the Web, then it's time to determine which content will engage your community and encourage users to share through social networks. In practice, this means identifying relevant content that adds value to the conversations of your community. Community relevancy and



**Figure 1.2**  
Blog post for the MSU Library's Acoustic Atlas digital collection

content shareability are tightly linked, as content is most shareable and engaging when it is relevant to the interests of the community. Understanding your community is therefore an essential component of SMO. Our discussion of Principle 4 offers detailed methods for gaining insights about your community's interests that can help shape your sharing strategies.

We can also look to other libraries as models for identifying relevant content, and here again the NYPL provides outstanding practical examples. NYPL's community has shown enduring interest in historic maps of New York City, and NYPL is fortunate to hold extensive collections in this area. The NYPL Facebook page therefore regularly posts content related to maps (see figure 1.7 for an example).

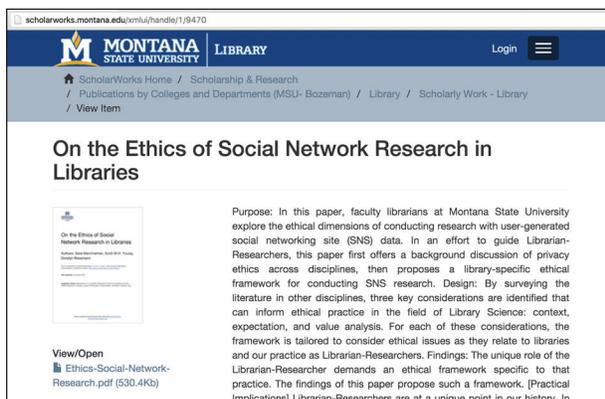
NYPL Facebook posts featuring map-related content typically generate high levels of engagement, as measured by likes, shares, and comments. In this way, NYPL has identified digital Web content that is relevant and engaging to its community.

Shareable content is therefore defined by these two key characteristics:

- digitized and published on the Web at a unique URL
- relevant to the community

## Content Strategy

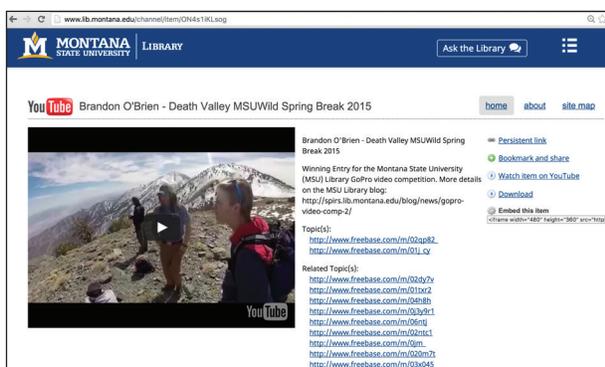
Once you have identified and created shareable content, we can expand the scope of this SMO principle to include a broader view of your library's Web content.



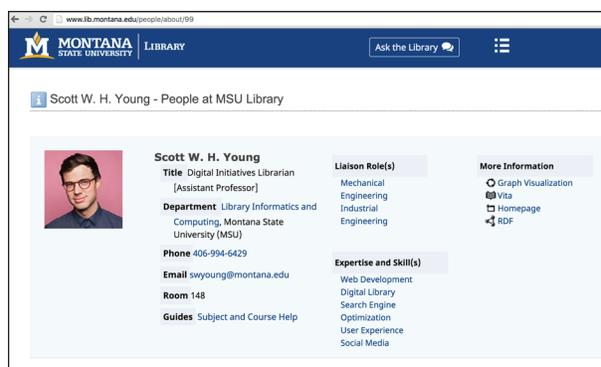
**Figure 1.3**  
Item page from ScholarWorks, MSU’s institutional repository



**Figure 1.4**  
MSU Library social network e-mail newsletter



**Figure 1.5**  
MSU Library YouTube channel



**Figure 1.6**  
MSU Library staff directory

Content can include resources shared through the Web and through social networks, whether in a URL, a hashtag, a geolocation, an image, or the text of a social network post itself. Our users receive and read Web content in many different contexts and formats that are complexly interrelated. With a view toward the wide variety of Web content creation and consumption, both the library and its users will benefit from implementing a comprehensive and sustainable plan for creating content across channels and platforms.

For this more general model of content creation and planning, we can turn to the concept and practice of *content strategy*. Content itself is a central element of any organization’s Web presence. Content strategy plans for the creation, publication, and management of useful, usable content.<sup>3</sup> In essence, content strategy provides a broad framework for creating consistently good content across your physical and Web spaces—social network content included.

Good content is defined by the following set of characteristics:<sup>4</sup>

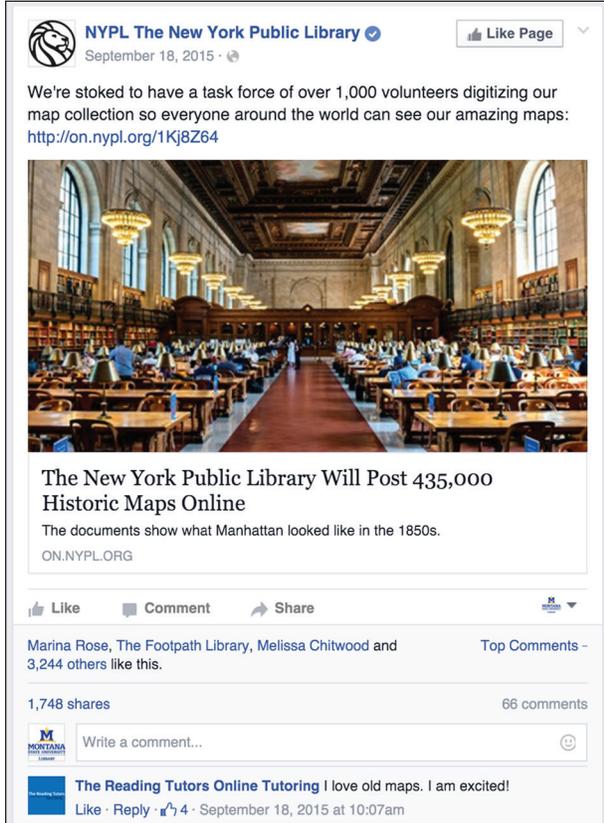
- appropriate (right for user and right for the library)
- useful (content has a purpose)
- user-centered

- clear
- consistent
- concise
- supported with a sustainable management plan

The Social Media Guide, as described in the introduction, can provide a sustainable management plan for creating social content that demonstrates these traits. Articulating a sustainable strategy can help structure not only your social content, but also your Web content in general. An understanding of the full context of your Web content will provide a clear path forward for your social network content creation and community-building efforts. The Social Media Guide is just one model of a targeted content strategy. A broader strategy for your Web content can be shaped through a consideration of your library’s voice, values, and tone, and through a consideration of your users’ emotional perception.

### Voice and Values

Any item of content that your library creates—an FAQ, a policy page, or a Facebook post—should be conveyed



**Figure 1.7**  
Blog post shared on Facebook by NYPL about digitizing maps

in the voice of your library and should communicate the values of your library. A combined expression of content and values defines the voice of your organization. While libraries in general can draw on decades or centuries of cultural identity, each individual library may wish to convey a unique set of attributes that are appropriate for unique contexts. In this way, the element of “organizational values” inherent to content strategy signals a larger visioning project for determining the mission, vision, and values of your library. If these elements are already in place, then the work of content strategy can easily be adapted to fit existing values statements. Otherwise, content strategy and organizational values can develop as a joint initiative.

To help clarify your library’s values and voice, completing a brief fill-in-the-blank paragraph can be an engaging and useful exercise (figure 1.8). This exercise involves filling in the blanks of a paragraph with the voice and values of your library. This approach can help surface differing views within your organization while also providing fertile ground for building a shared vision and finding a shared voice.

As content is often the first and last touchpoint encountered by a user, it will be to your library’s advantage to ensure that your content reflects your values and is expressed in your voice.

### Fill-in-the-Blank Exercise for Voice and Values

Our library will be home to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ content that speaks with a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ voice, reflecting our organization’s commitment to \_\_\_\_\_ thinking.

When a user visits our site for the first time, they should immediately see that we are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. When that user goes further into the site, they will also notice that we are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

When a user shares our content with peers and colleagues, they will say that we are a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ organization.<sup>5</sup>

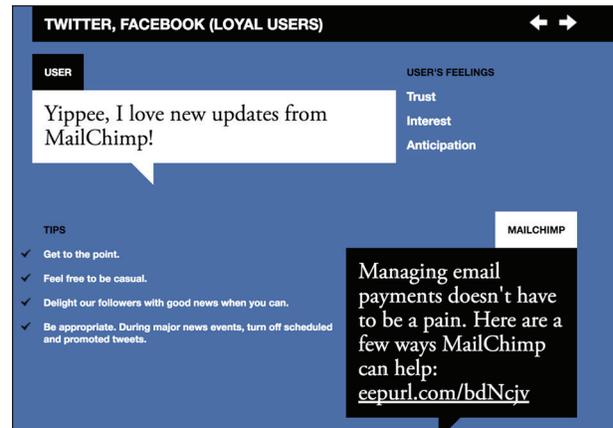
### Completed Fill-in-the-Blank Exercise for Voice and Values

Our library will be home to relevant, accessible content that speaks with a thoughtful, welcoming voice, reflecting our organization’s commitment to insightful thinking.

When a user visits our site for the first time, they should immediately see that we are approachable and engaging.

When that user goes further into the site, he or she will also notice that we are research-focused and innovative. When a user shares our content with peers and colleagues, they will say that we are a friendly, inspiring, and passionate organization.

**Figure 1.8**  
Values and voice exercise (Source: Sarah Krzarich, “Content Strategy,” workshop, Designing for Digital 2016 conference, Austin, TX, April 7, 2016, <http://d4d2016.sched.org/speaker/sarakrzarich>.)



**Figure 1.9**  
Screenshot from MailChimp’s Voice and Tone website

### Tone and Emotion

With the voice of your organization established, you can turn to the tone of your content. *Voice* represents a stable organizational identity, while *tone* represents a flexible and context-dependent expression of your voice. Tone will be dictated by various contexts in which your users will experience your content: digital

**Table 1.1.** Content landscape matrix—blank

	<b>Content Lead</b>	<b>Content Types</b>	<b>Workflows &amp; Tools</b>	<b>End-User Goals</b>	<b>Internal User Goals</b>	<b>Tone</b>
<b>Website</b>						
<b>LibGuides</b>						
<b>Blog</b>						
<b>Digital Collections</b>						
<b>Institutional Repository</b>						
<b>YouTube Channel</b>						
<b>Social Networks</b>						
<b>Catalog</b>						
<b>Automated System Messages</b>						
<b>FAQ</b>						
<b>Hours &amp; Events</b>						

**Table 1.2.** Content landscape matrix—completed

	<b>Content Lead</b>	<b>Content Types</b>	<b>Workflows &amp; Tools</b>	<b>End-User Goals</b>	<b>Internal User Goals</b>	<b>Tone</b>
<b>Website</b>	Scott	services, resources, policies, initiatives, directional (points to things)	CMS	Informational	Access and ease of use	Straightforward
<b>LibGuides</b>	Many	Course, Subject, Citation, Technology	LibGuides templating (non-strict)	Info / Research / Teaching	Autonomy Access Ease n' Speed	Accessible
<b>Blog</b>	Scott, Molly, Sara/Leila	Events, Database trials, promotional	WordPress	Informational / News	Promotion	Lighthearted
<b>Digital Collections</b>	Jason	Special Collections and Archival materials	Local CMS	Research / Public Curiosity	Access and Preservation	Scholarly
<b>Institutional Repository</b>	Leila	Publications	DSpace	Research	Access and Preservation	Scholarly
<b>YouTube Channel</b>	Jason/Scott	Video: events, tutorials	YouTube	Informational	Promotional / Event documentation	Lighthearted
<b>Social Networks</b>	SMG	Varies by platforms and account (see SM page)	Guides + various platforms	Interactive	Community building	Warm, welcoming
<b>Catalog</b>	Anne	Bibliographic records	Sirsi	Discovery	Workflow efficiencies	Academic
<b>Automated System Messages</b>	Varies	Notifications	LibAnswers, Iliad, Catalog	Informational	Informational	Varies
<b>FAQ</b>	Ryer	Informational	LibAnswers	Informational	Informational	Welcoming, Helpful
<b>Hours &amp; Events</b>	Various	Events	LibCal	Informational	Informational	Welcoming, Inviting

signage, newsletters, e-mails, overdue notice e-mails, borrowing policies, and social network posts. Each of these contexts carries varying types and degrees of emotional response. For example, the experience of receiving an overdue notice may generate feelings of distress for the user, while reading a newsletter may be a more neutral or positive experience.

Understanding your users is essential for creating good content. Your content can be made especially appropriate and useful through a consideration of the context-dependent emotional experience of your users. The e-mail newsletter company MailChimp has created a Voice and Tone website that neatly outlines the emotional contexts of their users, with corresponding guidelines for multiple categories of content (figure 1.9).<sup>5</sup> A user can experience a range of emotions across different types of content.

By considering the emotional experience of users, librarians can create a comprehensive plan for appropriate user-centered content, including content shared through social networks.

## Content Strategy in Libraries

A leading voice for content strategy within libraries has been Rebecca Blakiston, who in 2010 published a seminal article on content strategy for libraries.<sup>6</sup> In the article, Blakiston detailed a comprehensive plan for the creation and sustainable management of Web content built around three key points of implementation:

- Assigning roles and responsibilities
  - In this step, the library establishes meaningful governance of content. Blakiston accomplished this by creating “content managers” corresponding to various teams and departments throughout her library. Likewise for social networks, creating a “social content manager” can help ensure the success of social networking.
- Establishing workflows
  - This step entails documenting the creation process around content. In the context of social networks, this could include an articulation of the personnel, tools, and procedure for creating social network posts. This documentation can be shared on the library intranet or other space accessible to all throughout the organization, thus allowing for a wider level of understanding and participation in content creation.
- Ensuring sustainability
  - Blakiston recommended specific strategies for maintaining the long-term success of content strategy, including implementing structures of accountability, staff trainings, performance metrics, and adaptability. These strategies are all applicable for social content creation as well. The Social Media Guide described in the introduction provides accountability and

adaptability, while assessment metrics (detailed in the chapter on Principle 5) can help inform decision making. Internal workshops and trainings with library staff can also help build awareness and support for Web and social content creation.

To lay the groundwork for the content strategy described by Blakiston, we created and completed a content landscape matrix at our library that maps the full range of our content tools, personnel, and workflows (tables 1.1, 1.2).

Creation of this table situates social networks within the broader context of our content landscape and helps provide the planning and documentation for sustaining content creation throughout the library and across multiple platforms. By following Blakiston’s model for content strategy, libraries can design and implement a wide-ranging and forward-looking plan for creating content.

## Conclusion

The work of social media optimization begins with *creating shareable content*. This principle presents the concepts and practical guidelines for creating shareable content, which we define from both a technical perspective and a community perspective. First, shareable content has been digitized and published on the Web with a stable URL, enabling that content to be shared and tracked through social networks. Second, shareable content is relevant to its intended community. The principle create shareable content then extends to include a comprehensive strategy for creating content across multiple platforms. Implementing an in-depth content strategy can provide a sustainable action plan for all of your library’s content.

## Notes

1. Ben Vershbow, quoted in Jennifer Schuessler, “New York Public Library Invites a Deep Digital Dive,” *New York Times*, January 6, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/06/books/new-york-public-library-invites-a-deep-digital-dive.html>.
2. “Public Domain Collections: Free to Share & Reuse,” NYPL website, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://nypl.org/publicdomain>.
3. Kristina Halvorson, *Content Strategy for the Web* (Berkeley, CA: New Riders, 2009).
4. Erin Kissane, *The Elements of Content Strategy* (New York: A Book Apart, 2011).
5. “Voice and Tone,” MailChimp, accessed May 12, 2016, <http://voiceandtone.com>.
6. Rebecca Blakiston, “Developing a Content Strategy for an Academic Library Website,” *Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship*, 25, no. 1 (2013), 175–191, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1941126X.2013.813295>.

# Principle 2

## *Make Sharing Easy*

**Doralyn Rossmann**

The second principle of social media optimization (SMO) is *make sharing easy*, which espouses the ideas of providing simple ways to share website content on social networks, making the socially shared content readily findable through searching social networks, and rendering the shared content in a way that is engaging visually or auditorily. Here, we discuss three methods to achieve these goals: offering social share buttons and social share button counts, using hashtags for social network campaigns, and implementing social media cards to enhance content sharing on Twitter and Facebook. Underlying each of these efforts is the opportunity to engage with and build community through meaningful and easy connections to the content users who decide to share.

### Social Share Buttons

To make sharing easy, tools need to be added that encourage users to share content at the point of use. For example, social share buttons placed on a webpage make one-click promotion of a page easy through social networks. These buttons usually include a small icon associated with that network and, when clicked, open up the platform selected (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest) where the content can be posted.

Using the guidelines from the chapter on Principle 1, *create shareable content*, the MSU Library presents social share buttons on the pages we consider to include shareable content, such as our digital collections, blog, and articles and databases pages. The presence of social media share buttons serves a purpose beyond offering a means for users to share library content on social networks. Consider that these buttons send a cue to users that the library is active and

*Make sharing easy* represents the second of five SMO principles:

1. Create Shareable Content
2. **Make Sharing Easy**
3. Reward Engagement
4. Proactively Share
5. Measure Use and Encourage Reuse

### Developer Sites for Most Common Social Networks

#### Facebook

<https://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/like-button>

#### Twitter

<https://dev.twitter.com/web/tweet-button>

#### Pinterest

<https://developers.pinterest.com/tools/widget-builder>

reachable via social networks, which may lead users to engage in these networks with the library beyond just a social button share. Social buttons offer the opportunity for users to share library content with their community, and they introduce and reinforce that the library is also a part of that community of sharing. The chapter on Principle 5 includes an in-depth discussion of evaluating social share buttons.

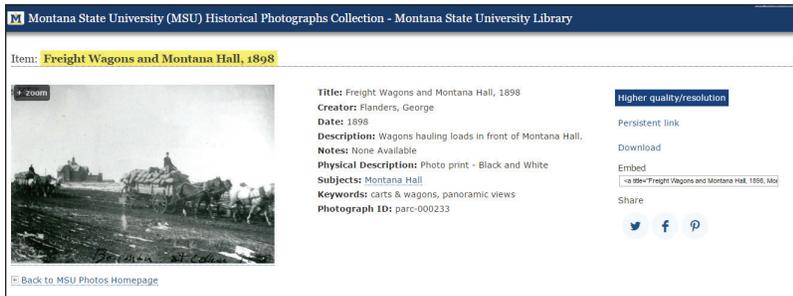
Each social network manages how information gets shared to its feed differently. Generally, every

```

<ul class="social-icons">
  <a class="twitter" onclick="_gaq.push(['_trackEvent', 'Share Buttons',
  'Click', 'Twitter-msu-photos']);" href="https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?original_
  referer=http://arc.lib.montana.edu/msu-photos/item/233&source=tweetbutton&tex
  t=Freight Wagons and Montana Hall, 1898&url=http://arc.lib.montana.edu/msu-photos/
  item/233&via=msulibrary" target="_blank">
    <li class="icon-twitter"></li></a>
    <a class="facebook" onclick="_gaq.push(['_trackEvent', 'Share Buttons', 'Click',
  'Facebook-msu-photos']);" href="https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http://arc.
  lib.montana.edu/msu-photos/item/233" target="_blank">
    <li class="icon-facebook"></li></a>
    <a class="pinterest" onclick="_gaq.push(['_trackEvent', 'Share Buttons', 'Click',
  'Pinterest-msu-photos']);" href="http://www.pinterest.com/pin/create/button?url=http://
  arc.lib.montana.edu/msu-photos/item/233&media=http://arc.lib.montana.edu/msu-
  photos/objects/thumb-parc-000233.jpg" target="_blank">
    <li class="icon-pinterest"></li></a>
</ul><!-- end social <ul> -->

```

**Figure 2.1**  
HTML for adding social share buttons with Google Analytics outbound event tracking



**Figure 2.2**  
Social share button on a MSU digital collection page (lower, right-hand side)



**Figure 2.3**  
Prepopulated information when Twitter share button is clicked in MSU digital collection object

## Prepopulated Share Button Information

Ideally, the content produced from clicking on these buttons is branded so that the sharer can have prepopulated information in the content of the share, thus making sharing easy. This information might include the social account name associated with your organization, a title you have crafted, a simple URL, and any other information that you think would make an eye-catching post for the user. The developer sites discussed in the previous section provide guidance in how to populate these shares on the associated platform. Figure 2.3 demonstrates how a clicked social share button for Twitter could look before the tweet is posted.

## Social Share Button Share Counts

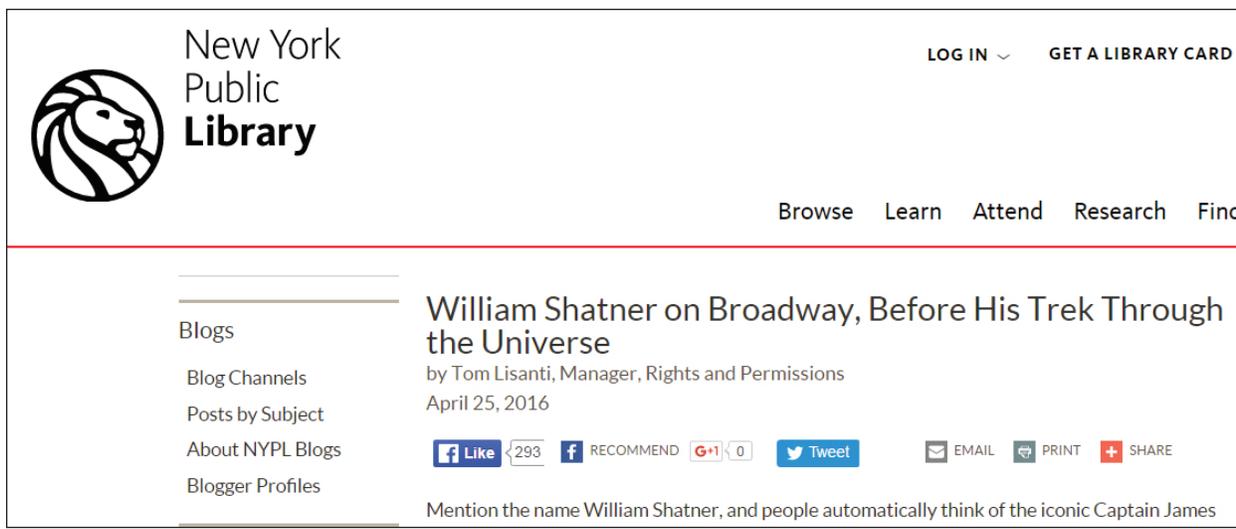
Many sites include share counts below their social share buttons indicating how many times the item has been posted to Facebook, Pinterest, or other network. While it may be tempting to add a share count, it is important to consider the actual value (or possible reduction in value) by including a share count. In November 2015, Twitter deprecated the share count, as announced on its blog:

The Tweet button counts the number of Tweets that have been Tweeted with the exact URL specified in the button. This count does not reflect the

network has a preferred icon and guidelines for customizing the content that is shared in the post.

Figure 2.1 provides an example of code using PHP to produce buttons on a webpage for Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest. This local implementation is used for the MSU Library digital collections and can be adapted for other uses. Figure 2.2 demonstrates how this code is rendered on the MSU Digital Photograph Collection webpage for this item.

network has a preferred icon and guidelines for customizing the content that is shared in the post.



**Figure 2.4**  
NYPL blog post with social share counts

impact on Twitter of conversation about your content—it doesn’t count replies, quote Tweets, variants of your URLs, nor does it reflect the fact that some people Tweeting these URLs might have many more followers than others.<sup>1</sup>

As the Twitter developers noted, a count tells only part of the story behind content shared on social networks. For example, what message might a share count of zero convey about the value or popularity of content? Conversely, if you have content that you find is actively shared on social networks as indicated by referrer analytics such as Google Analytics, a share count can provide your community with an idea of what is popular. For example, New York Public Library has opted not to offer social share counts on its digital collections pages, but it does offer them on its individual press release, news, and blog pages (figure 2.4).<sup>2</sup> If your library decides to add social share button counts to some of its webpages, Figure 2.5 offers code examples to include such counts through PHP using JSON.

## #Hashtags for Campaigns

Another effective strategy to make sharing easy is the promotion of hashtags around collections or communities. Hashtags consist of a number sign (#) and a word or a string of words without spaces between them. Some hashtags may be already established, such as those used by your institution, city, or state. For our library, these commonly used hashtags are #Montana-State, #Bozeman, and #Montana. When #Montana-State is added to our posts, our content is introduced into a high-profile stream of posts and is more likely to be seen and shared. Posts with #Bozeman and #Montana help surface information to people interested in

those regions when the library shares content specific to the city of Bozeman or the state of Montana.

There is an opportunity to be creative with hashtags associated with new endeavors. The MSU Library joined with other Montana organizations for two social network campaigns. The first was hashtagged #MontanaRides. This campaign was run during the month of May 2015 and focused on means of transportation in Montana whether mechanical or animal. Partners in this effort included the Montana Historical Society, the Montana Memory Project from the State of Montana Library, Montana Tech, the University of Montana, and Montana State University. We identified common elements across institutions that might lend themselves well to sharing through social networks and would be of interest broadly in follower communities. With the summertime travel season approaching and the shared desire in our communities to explore the American West, the idea of #MontanaRides was born. Before settling on this hashtag, we did a search of common social networks to see if this hashtag was already in regular use, which it was not. Sharing in this campaign included digitized photographs and manuscripts from existing online collections and content digitized for this campaign, which were then added to existing collections (figures 2.6, 2.7, 2.8).

This campaign saw some participation from other groups and individuals in the forms of likes and shares as well as some individuals and groups who used the hashtag in their own shared content. Even the governor of Montana, Steve Bullock, took note of our social collaboration (figure 2.9).

In that initial campaign, we found that it was helpful when the other entities participating in the campaign reshared our posts to reach a broader community. We also found that, while the followers of

```

<?php
$persistentURL = 'http://arc.lib.montana.edu/msu-photos/item/196';

function getTwitterCount($persistentURL){
    $twittercount = json_decode( file_get_contents( 'http://urls.api.twitter.com/1/
urls/count.json?url=' . $persistentURL . ';' ) );
    return $twittercount->count;
}

function getFacebookCount($persistentURL){
    $facebookcount = json_decode( file_get_contents( 'http://graph.facebook.com/' .
$persistentURL . ';' ) );
    $facebookShares = 0;
    if (isset($facebookcount->shares)) {
        $facebookShares = $facebookcount->shares;
    }
    return $facebookShares;
}

function getPinterestCount($persistentURL){
    $pincount = json_decode( file_get_contents( 'http://api.pinterest.com/v1/urls/
count.json?callback=receiveCount&url=' . $persistentURL . ';' ) );
    $pinShares = 0;
    if (isset($pincount->count)) {
        $pinShares = $pincount->count;
    }
    return $pinShares;
}

function getSocialCount($persistentURL){
    return getTwitterCount($persistentURL) + getFacebookCount($persistentURL) + getPint
erestCount($persistentURL);
}
?>

<p><?php echo getSocialCount() ?></p>

```

**Figure 2.5**  
PHP code for adding social button share counts

the Montana Historical Society were enthusiastically engaging with old photographs, it was more challenging for our library to work that type of content into our regular social network streams at a level any more than we already share that kind of information. As described in our research study in the introduction, we found that our primary social network community consists of MSU undergraduate students and, to a lesser extent, graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni. They tend to engage with posts about events in and around the MSU Library building, such as our therapy dog visits during finals week and poetry readings, information about cool tools like Go-Pro cameras for checkout, photographs of our employees in action, and shout-outs to student and faculty research and service. While our users may enjoy an occasional old photograph, we find that they unfollow us or do not engage with such content if there are more than a

couple of those kinds of posts within any given week.

Taking what we learned from the #MontanaRides campaign and from what we know of our user community, The #MontanaRides campaign participants decided to try a second campaign using the hashtag #Montanimals. Here our library expanded the content from historical library photographs and manuscripts to include the breadth of library services and collections offered in hopes of creating more interest in our community. The Montana Historical Society continued its focus on historical photographs, which are the types of posts it already regularly shares. At MSU, we shared photographs of MSU Library employees' pets; we posted images of book and DVD covers from library collections relating to animals in and around Montana; we shared links to Montana animal topics in MSU theses and dissertations found in MSU's institutional repository, ScholarWorks; and we shared

historical photographs of animals from our digital collections. While the Montana Historical Society's followers largely expect historical materials, expanding this campaign's focus at MSU allowed us to follow our Social Media Guide more closely in posting the kind of content our community regularly experiences through our social networks and, as a result, we saw



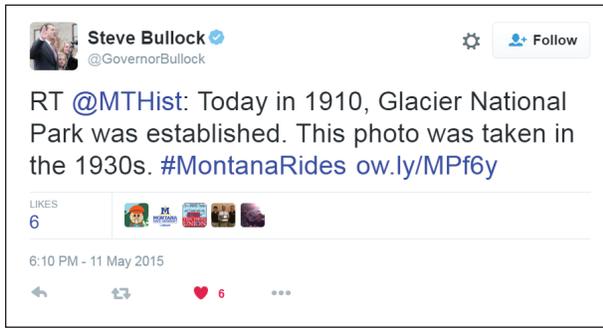
**Figure 2.6**  
Montana Historical Society photo shared on Twitter with #MontanaRides



**Figure 2.7**  
University of Montana photos shared on Facebook with #MontanaRides



**Figure 2.8**  
Montana State University photo shared on Instagram with #MontanaRides



**Figure 2.9**  
Twitter share from Montana Governor Steve Bullock



**Figure 2.10**  
Twitter post of URL of page with no Twitter Card

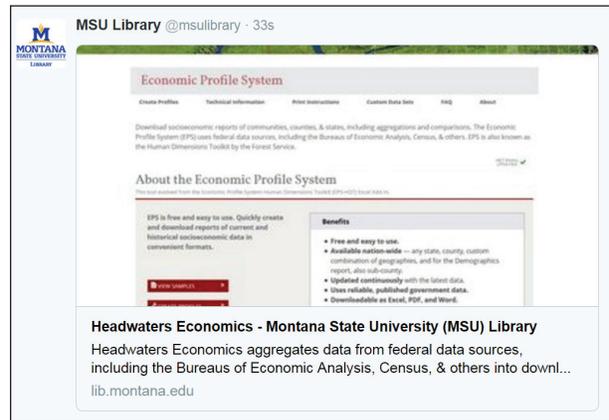


**Figure 2.11**  
KBZK news article using Twitter Summary Card with a thumbnail image

more engagement with posts in this campaign.

## Social Media Cards

Another means to *make sharing easy* is to embed Facebook Open Graph and Twitter Card tags into the code of webpage headers to control how content is displayed when shared through these networks. Twitter’s official documentation states: “With Twitter Cards, you can attach rich photos, videos and media experience to Tweets that drive traffic to your website. Simply add a few lines of HTML to your webpage, and users who Tweet links to your content will have a ‘Card’ added to the Tweet that’s visible to all of their



**Figure 2.12**  
MSU database page using Twitter Summary Card with a large image

```
<meta name="twitter:title"
content="Alexander Street Press Video
(cross-searchable platform) - Montana
State University (MSU) Library">
<meta name="twitter:description"
content="This platform enables users
to search across all of the library's
current Alexander Street Press
streaming video collections.">
<meta name="twitter:image:src"
content="http://www.lib.montana.edu/
resources/meta/img/screenshots/600.jpg">
<meta name="twitter:url" content="http://
www.lib.montana.edu/resources/about/600">
<meta name="twitter:card"
content="summary_large_image">
<meta name="twitter:site" content="@
msulibrary">
<meta name="twitter:creator" content="@
msulibrary">
```

**Figure 2.13**  
Twitter Card HTML for page shared in figure 2.12

followers.”<sup>3</sup> Without Twitter Card HTML in a webpage, tweets will just include the link shared and any text and images the user adds manually. Facebook, on the other hand, will attempt to fill in information in a shared link if there is not Facebook Open Graph HTML in the page being shared. As Facebook’s documentation notes, “Without these [Open Graph] tags, the Facebook Crawler uses internal heuristics to make a best guess about the title, description, and preview image for your content. Designate this info explicitly with Open Graph tags to ensure the highest quality posts on Facebook.”<sup>4</sup> In essence, adding Twitter Cards and Facebook Open Graph tags to the HTML of your library’s webpages allows your library to control how



**Figure 2.14**  
AcousticAtlas.org Player Card with audio and text added to tweet itself

content is displayed when that content is shared over social networks, thus allowing you to tailor your content to your community. Both Twitter and Facebook provide an overview of how to structure this markup:

#### Twitter

<https://dev.twitter.com/cards/getting-started>

#### Facebook

<https://developers.facebook.com/docs/sharing/webmasters#markup>

### Twitter Cards

For greater context in this discussion of Twitter Cards, figure 2.10 shows how a link without Twitter Cards in the page shared would appear in a tweet.

This link is rather meaningless without clicking on the link for more information. To make sharing easy, a little bit of HTML markup can go a long way. The content of Twitter Cards displays in addition to the 140 characters within the tweet itself. While we know that our pages have Twitter Cards on them, others who share our pages may not be aware of this coding or that we have it installed until they post the URL to Twitter. Since installing the Cards, we have heard from some members of our community who noticed the change and indicated that they wish more sites provided this markup since it allows for more content per tweet. One drawback to Twitter Cards is that, in some browsers and devices, the user must click the View Summary link in the tweet to expand the post and view the Card. Other browsers and devices display the information automatically in the post. There are several types of Twitter Cards and, here, we cover types of Twitter Cards that

```
<meta name="twitter:card"
content="player">
  <meta name="twitter:title"
content="Elephant seals, males and
females, (0000824), Acoustic Atlas
Recording - Montana State University
Library">
  <meta name="twitter:description"
content="Vocalizations of elephant
seals at Piedras Blancas rookery
(California).">
<meta name="twitter:image:src"
content="https://acousticatlas.org/img/
proxy/2013-02-28-01-36500_orig.jpg">
  <meta name="twitter:url"
content="https://acousticatlas.org//
item/824">
  <meta name="twitter:player"
content="https://acousticatlas.org/meta/
inc/twitter_player/player/container.
php?identifier=aa0000824.mp3&image=img/
proxy/2013-02-28-01-36500_orig.jpg&show_
artwork=true&visual=true&origin=
twitter">
  <meta name="twitter:player:width"
content="435">
  <meta name="twitter:player:height"
content="300">
```

**Figure 2.15**  
Twitter Card HTML for page shared in figure 2.14



**Figure 2.16**  
Facebook post of page that includes Open Graph tags

will likely be of greatest interest to libraries.

### Twitter Summary Cards

Summary Cards include a title, a description, and the name of the Twitter account associated with the site (such as @msuLibrary). You can either use a Summary Card that has a thumbnail image, as seen in figure 2.11, or you can have a large image, as seen in figure 2.12. Figure 2.13 shows the HTML code for the Twitter

Card in figure 2.12.

There are several steps involved in implementing Twitter Cards, so it can be useful to start by installing Cards on a single digital collection or set of webpages before installing them more broadly across your site. You will need to have a Twitter account handle (such as ours, @msulibrary) associated with your website, as this is a required element of a Twitter Card. Also, Twitter’s Web crawler, Twitterbot, will need to have access to your website so it can find and render the Twitter Card HTML you have included to allow it to appear in tweets. If your site has a robots.txt file, which is set to prevent indexing, it will need to have an exception allowing the Twitterbot to access your site. Twitter recognizes many of the tags from the Facebook Open Graph protocol, so if you plan to optimize your page for sharing on Facebook, you can reduce the number of duplicate tags by following the guidelines at the Twitter Card URL provided earlier in this discussion.

Once the Twitter Card tags have been added to your site, the freely usable Twitter Card Validator can render a preview of your card to make sure it looks the way you want.<sup>5</sup> Player Cards, which provide the ability to play audio or video within the Twitter app or as a preview with a link to a player, will require that you request Twitter to whitelist your site. Other forms of cards do not have this requirement.

Our MSU Library Digital Historical Photos collection was the first to have Twitter Cards applied using the Summary Card with large image.<sup>6</sup> We chose this type of Card because the focus of the database is digitized photographs with associated metadata about those images. Our experience sharing images from this collection via our library’s social networks suggested that it was very shareable content that might benefit from application of Twitter Cards and

Facebook Open Graph tags. More recently, we added these same tags to our paid database descriptions, as we want to make any social shares of these resources as robust and eye-catching as possible for our community and the extended communities of our users. The chapter on Principle 5 will explore analytics for this collection before and after the Cards were installed.

### Twitter Player Cards

As noted earlier, the Player Card will play audio or

```
<meta property="og:title"
content="National Park Service Web
Camera Database">
<meta property="og:description"
content="National Park Service Web
Camera Database - Montana State
University (MSU) Library">
<meta property="og:image"
content="http://arc.lib.montana.edu/
national-park-service-webcams/meta/img/
thumb-national-park-webcams.jpg">
<meta property="og:url" content="http://
arc.lib.montana.edu/national-park-
service-webcams/index.php">
<meta property="og:type"
content="website" />
<meta property="og:site_name"
content="National Park Service Web
Camera Database - Montana State
University (MSU) Library"/>
```

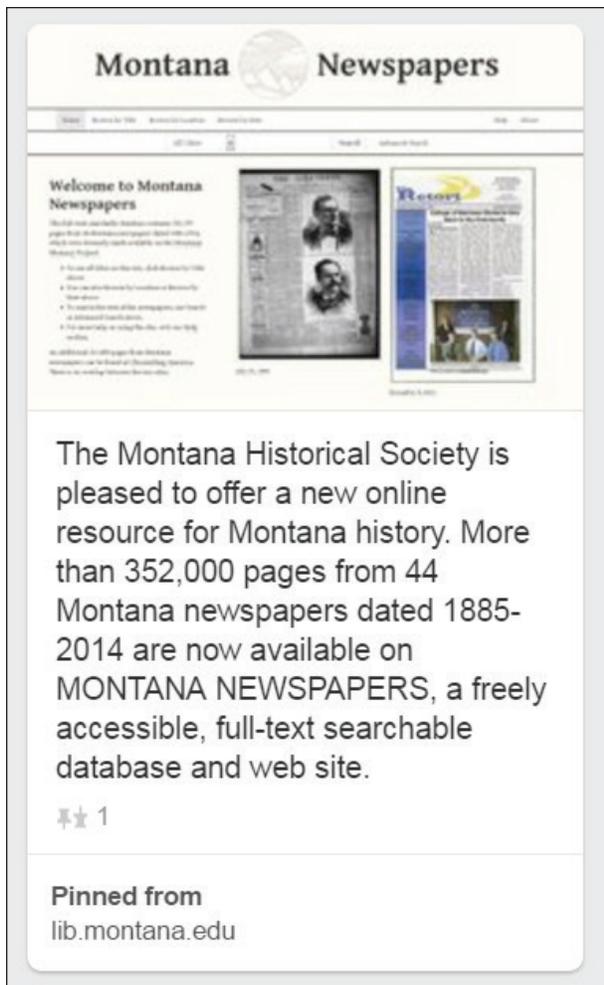
**Figure 2.17** Facebook Open Graph HTML for page shared in figure 2.16

**Table 2.1.** Comparison of social network sharing features

Network	Social Media Markup Option	Supports Social Share Buttons	As an Organization, Can Follow Others on Same Platform	Supports Indexing of Hashtags
Facebook	Facebook Open Graph	Yes	No	Yes
Twitter	Twitter Cards	Yes	Yes	Yes
Instagram	No	No	Yes	Yes
Pinterest	Automatically surfaces images, alt text description if on source page	Yes	Yes	Yes
WordPress Blog	Includes Twitter Cards and Facebook Open Graph	N/A	N/A	No
LinkedIn	Automatically surfaces images, alt text description if on source page	Yes	Libraries part of a bigger organization (such as a university) likely can't join. Library of Congress could.	No
Google+	Automatically surfaces images, alt text description if on source page	Yes: <a href="https://developers.google.com/+/web/share/#language-codes">https://developers.google.com/+/web/share/#language-codes</a>	Yes	Yes



**Figure 2.18**  
Facebook share of Montana Newspapers



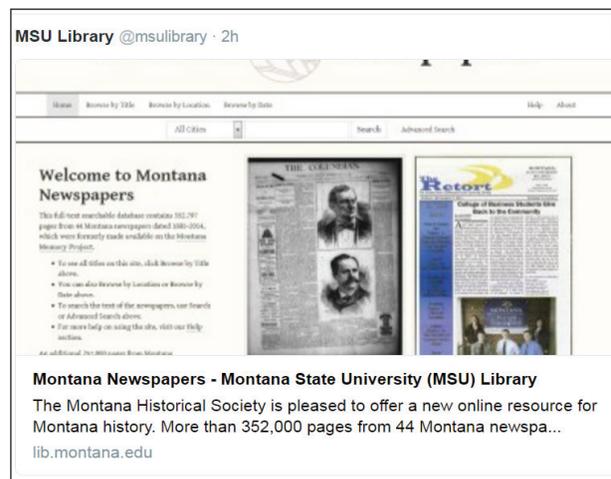
**Figure 2.19**  
Pinterest share of Montana Newspapers



**Figure 2.20**  
LinkedIn share of Montana Newspapers



**Figure 2.21**  
Google+ share of Montana Newspapers



**Figure 2.22**  
Twitter share of Montana Newspapers

video within the Twitter interface, making it much easier to share this content. Behavior of this type of Card varies by operating system and whether it is viewed through a mobile app or a web browser. The Twitter Player Card must meet certain guidelines, such as playing across multiple platforms (different web browsers, Twitter apps, etc.) to be whitelisted for playing on Twitter. As such, these Cards require more configuration than other types of Cards. Fortunately, Twitter offers guidance for setting up this type of Card.<sup>7</sup> The web server hosting the audio or video must have a secure socket-layer (SSL) card on that server, thus producing a URL beginning with “https.” Additionally, the content needs to be in an MPEG-4 (.mp4) format. Finally, a player for your audio or video needs to be selected. Some players work across various operating systems and mobile device apps and browsers while others are optimized for specific systems.

Our library set up Player Cards for our audio collection, Acoustic Atlas, as seen in figures 2.14 and 2.15.<sup>8</sup>

Getting this type of Card working requires some trial and error because there are fewer examples of this format to reference since it is not as widely adopted as the Summary Card. The Twitter Developer Forums can be helpful in troubleshooting any issues and in selecting the audio and video hosting platform that best meets your library’s needs.<sup>9</sup>

### Facebook Open Graph Tags

Turning to Facebook, the application of Open Graph tags to pages is a similar process to adding Twitter Cards. Open Graph includes basic tags and can have additional tags applied for audio, video, or location information. The tag “type” allows you to pick from one of twenty-four defined forms of information being shared such as an article, a website (figures 2.16, 2.17), a song, or a product. Like Twitter, Facebook provides a means to test your tags to ensure the display is how you expect it through its Sharing Debugger.<sup>10</sup>

For those sites using Drupal or WordPress for webpages, both sites offer plugins that make adding social share buttons, Twitter Cards tags, and Facebook Open Graph tags to pages easy:

*Yoast plugin for WordPress*

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-seo>

*Social Media module for Drupal*

<https://www.drupal.org/project/socialmedia>

The chapter on Principle 5 provides an overview of analytics tools to gauge the effects of all of these efforts around making sharing easier.

## Optimizing to Share on Multiple Networks

Instagram does not allow uploading images to its platform from social media buttons via its API: Application Programming Interface. Its developer website notes,

At this time, uploading via the API is not possible. We made a conscious choice not to add this for the following reasons: 1. Instagram is about your life on the go—we hope to encourage photos from within the app. 2. We want to fight spam & low quality photos. Once we allow uploading from other sources, it’s harder to control what comes into the Instagram ecosystem. All this being said, we’re working on ways to ensure users have a consistent and high-quality experience on our platform.<sup>11</sup>

The Instagram model raises questions about the sharing experience for libraries and their users differing across platforms. How can libraries optimize content to be shared on many different platforms, and which platforms are optimal for organizations? Table 2.1 provides an overview of the social network sharing within and across networks.

To illustrate how the same resource might display differently depending on the markup and the social network, figures 2.18–2.22 show the posts of the Montana Newspapers page across social networks. The MSU’s Montana Newspapers page includes Facebook Open Graph tags, Twitter Cards, an image, and a description (along with other elements for search engine optimization such as linked data elements, Schema.org markup, etc.).

As is evident, the display of each share varies by platform, but the inclusion of an image and a description of the resource makes for engaging, eye-catching, and informative displays of the resource. As for Instagram, there is no option to share a URL or an image through the native interface.

## Conclusion

There are many ways to *make sharing easy*. Use of social buttons, hashtags, Twitter Cards, and Facebook Open Graph tags reduces barriers to getting Web content onto social networks. These strategies also help you connect more effectively with your community by providing fun, engaging content. We recommend you follow similar approaches to what we have presented in this chapter in considering where to employ social share buttons, to check potential hashtags, and to share your content through social networks so you can see how the content is displayed. Ideally, your community finds that it is easy to share your content and to engage with the information shared.

## Notes

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2. “Press Releases,” New York Public Library website, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.nypl.org/press>; “News,” New York Public Library website, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.nypl.org/news>; “NYPL Blogs,” New York Public Library website, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.nypl.org/blog>.
3. “Twitter Cards,” Twitter Developer website, accessed April 27, 2016, <https://dev.twitter.com/cards/overview>.
4. “Open Graph Markup,” Facebook for Developers website, accessed April 27, 2016, <https://developers.facebook.com/docs/sharing/webmasters#markup>.
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10. “Sharing Debugger,” Facebook for Developers website, accessed June 8, 2016, <https://developers.facebook.com/tools/debug>.
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# Principle 3

## *Reward Engagement*

**Doralyn Rossmann**

The social media optimization (SMO) principle *reward engagement* builds library connections with community by interacting with users who are active on social networks. Engagement comes in many forms: shares of library resources, library mentions, use of hashtags, references to information needs, interactions with community members about the things they post to social networks, and following back users who follow you. By rewarding engagement, the library has the opportunity to interact proactively with users and build community. Through these efforts, we can alert users to library resources and services, we can let the community know the library is listening, and we can provide a personality-rich human element to the voice of the library. In this discussion, we will also explore the role of privacy and user engagement. In sum, this chapter explores listening to your community and engaging with users based on their activity on social networks to strengthen your library/user community relationships.

### **Rewarding Shared Content**

An approach to rewarding engagement is interacting with those users who have shared library content. One way to discover this type of interaction is through various tools, including Twitter Analytics and Facebook Developer. The chapter on Principle 5 explores analytics in greater depth; here, we explore how Twitter Analytics, specifically, can help you discover and connect with users who share library content.

#### **Twitter Analytics—Overview**

Twitter Analytics provides a variety of data points for

*Reward engagement* represents the third of five SMO principles:

1. Create Shareable Content
2. Make Sharing Easy
3. **Reward Engagement**
4. Proactively Share
5. Measure Use and Encourage Reuse

tweets with Twitter Cards, which are detailed in table 3.1. Your library could use this information to identify top influencers and reward them for their interaction with library content by resharing the post through library social network accounts, replying to the user, favoriting or liking the post, or following the user. There is also opportunity to alert the user to related content from the library (or elsewhere) that may be of interest but possibly unknown to the user. Likewise, a user may have shared your content through a blog post, which may offer the opportunity for the library to comment on the post or to reshare what was put on the blog.

#### **Twitter Analytics—Examples in Practice**

To illustrate the concept of interacting with a user who has shared library content, our library discovered a post from a new brewery near the university. The brewery shared a photo from our digital historical photographs collection that shows vacant land from one hundred years ago where the brewery is located today. The brewery used our photograph to connect with potential customers highlighting “then and now” changes to the landscape.

**Table 3.1.** Twitter Analytics types (Source: "Analytics," Twitter website, accessed June 10, 2016, <http://analytics.twitter.com>)

Twitter Analytics Type	Purpose
Changes over time	How tweets with your Twitter Cards affected your impressions and clicks for self-selected date range
Card types	The top performing Twitter Cards that drove clicks to pages on your website
Links	A list of links in tweets with your Twitter Cards that got the most clicks
Influencers	The top users that tweeted links to your content
Tweets	A list of tweets with your Twitter Cards that drove the most clicks
Sources	A breakdown of the apps, websites, and widgets from which your content was tweeted



**Figure 3.1**  
Interaction with brewery that shared an MSU historical photograph on Twitter

We discovered this share through Twitter Analytics.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, we gave the brewery extra exposure to our community by retweeting its post and adding a comment welcoming it to the neighborhood. Our retweet resulted in two community-building outcomes. First, we shared the brewery's original post, which introduced that business to more community attention and interaction. Second, we generated goodwill and a feeling of connectedness with this member of our community (figure 3.1).

In another example, we found a user through Twitter Analytics who was not following the library's Twitter account and who had shared an MSU Library photograph (figure 3.2). We followed the user back because he tweets engaging content, and we shared

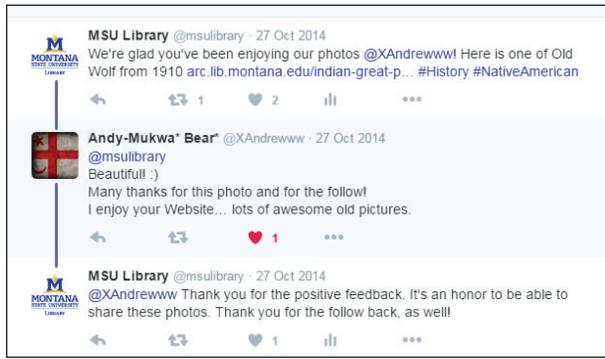


**Figure 3.2**  
Share on Twitter of MSU Native American Peoples Database photograph

with him another photograph from the same collection that we thought he would find interesting. Figure 3.3 shows the subsequent conversation with this user, which also resulted in him following us back.

## Monitoring Mentions

Another means to reward engagement on social networks is to monitor mentions of the library and to



**Figure 3.3**  
Subsequent interaction with Twitter user who shared MSU photograph

follow up with those users through direct interaction. Some social networks will notify you of direct mentions, but other references may be more subtle, requiring that you regularly read the posts from the library community and search social networks for mentions.

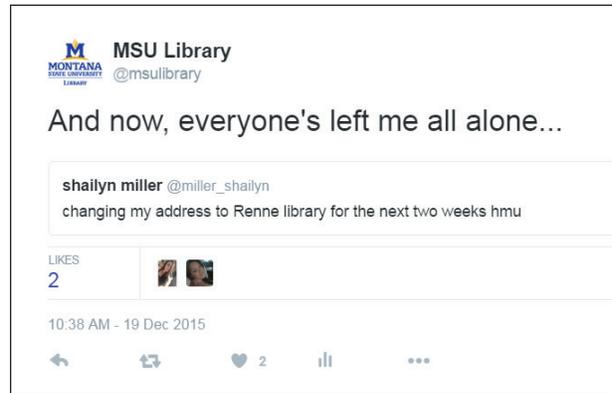
### Indirect Library References

Users may mention the library, but not necessarily directly by name. Sites like Yik Yak are location-specific and can surface user opinions, such as attitudes about the library. If there is a popular post about the conditions in the building, for example, you might consider remedying those conditions to address the problem. The library can even reply to active Yaks (i.e., posts) to update the community on the situation. Another possibility for discovering indirect mentions is through Instagram, which allows for searching for images by geolocation. If you search your library's location, then you can find anyone who has taken a photograph and tagged it with the library's location, thus offering the opportunity to like the post and make a comment.

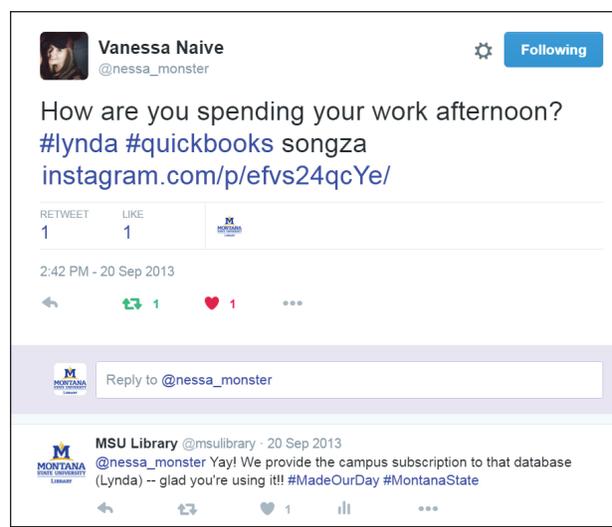
Twitter is another place where the library may get mentioned indirectly. Figure 3.4 shows a quoted tweet from a person who mentioned the Montana State University Library building name (Renne Library) during finals. The retweet from the MSU Library quotes the user and notes the current library conditions. The retweet was subsequently liked by the original poster and another community member.

In another instance, we noticed that one of our students mentioned using a database to which the library provides access. Our subsequent interaction with her gave us the opportunity to let her know that we are listening to our community and to share with others that a student found this library resource of value (figure 3.5).

In a third example, a student expressed his frustration with trying to find an electrical outlet in the library, but did not mention the library directly. We follow this student on Twitter, and he frequently posts



**Figure 3.4**  
Quoting an indirect reference to the library



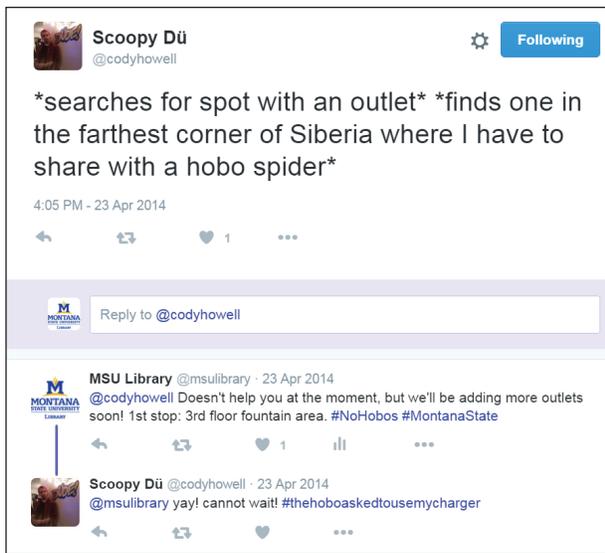
**Figure 3.5**  
Interaction with MSU student who mentioned an MSU-subscribed database on Twitter but did not tag the library

about being in the library. While we couldn't solve his dilemma immediately, we did reward his engagement with sympathy, and we let him know that help is on the way in the future with planned renovation projects (figure 3.6).

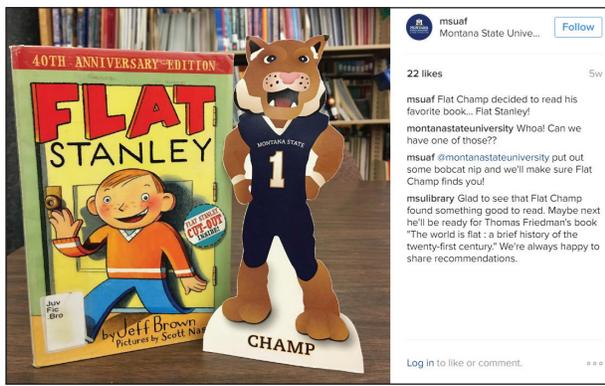
Sometimes you may spot the library in a photograph. In figure 3.7, we noticed an Instagram post from MSU's Alumni Foundation with "Flat Champ" along with a "Flat Stanley" book in the MSU Library. We proactively jumped into the conversation and added a comment to the post that mentioned another good flat read.

### Direct Library References

Sometimes the library may get mentioned in a post by direct reference. In our case, we may be mentioned by our account name, "@msulibrary," or by a commonly known name in a hashtag, such as #msulibrary



**Figure 3.6**  
Interaction with student talking about an experience in the library



**Figure 3.7**  
Instagram post in the library by MSU Alumni Foundation

or #rennelibrary. Your library can configure your social network accounts to generate e-mail or in-app notices when you are mentioned in a post.<sup>2</sup> Responding to the user demonstrates to that user and anyone observing the interaction that the library is listening and is interested in the voices of its community. Keep in mind that Instagram shows only your most recent seventy-five mentions, so you will want to check regularly so you do not miss anything.

In one example (figure 3.8), an MSU faculty member mentioned the library on Twitter as a part of a conversation regarding an article being behind a paywall. Because we have our Twitter account set up to notify us about mentions of the library, we were able to respond right away—on Christmas Eve, when the tweet was posted. In doing so, we pointed the user to the library's author fund. This situation provided an opportunity to learn about the conversation of which



**Figure 3.8**  
Library mention by faculty member in a tweet

the faculty member was a part and to share information about the library's author fund in a genuine way. Additionally, the faculty member was rewarded for engaging the library by getting a quick reply that added to the conversation with his community.

Users may also reply to your posts. Figure 3.9 includes a response from a user who commented on our Facebook post about the digitized MSU student newspaper. The interaction gave us the opportunity to let the user know we appreciated her story.

## Responding to User Needs

Your library can also reward engagement by listening to your community and chiming in when the library



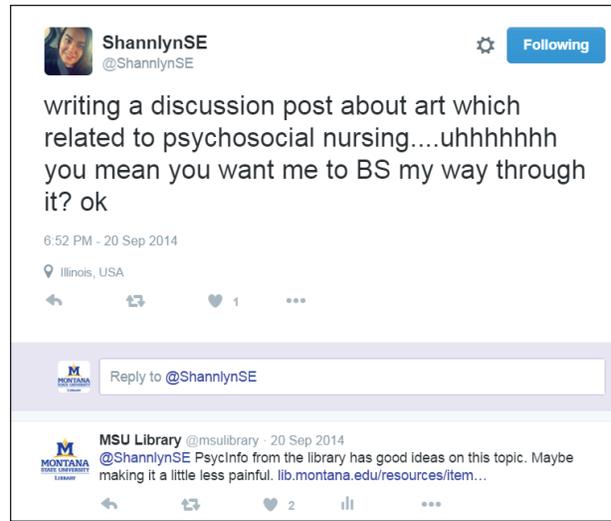
**Figure 3.9**  
Direct library mention on Facebook

can help. In one instance, a student mentioned a service that we knew the library could provide for her. We took the opportunity to point her to the library's subscription of PsycInfo (figure 3.10).

## Monitoring Hashtags

Beyond using hashtags to encourage sharing of content as described in the chapter on Principle 2, monitoring hashtags and those used by your community members can offer opportunities to reward engagement by the community by replying to the users when they use a certain hashtag. Several social networks index hashtags, which can be searched through the platform's native interface or through other third-party services, such as Hootsuite. As noted in the chapter on Principle 2, hashtags consist of a number sign (#) and a word or a string of words without spaces between them. These tags may be a part of a larger conversation when employing a commonly used tag, or they may provide greater context to the sentiment in the posts from your community when the tag includes emotions.

Hashtags may be established around an event (e.g., #AcademyAwards, #SuperBowl #OccupyWallStreet). They may be widely employed because they are commonly used words to describe an entity or person (e.g., #DavidBowie, #DeltaAirlines), an experience (e.g., #MontanaMoment, #FirstDayOfSchool),



**Figure 3.10**  
Interacting with a student who mentioned an information need on Twitter

or an activity (e.g., #Travel, #Photography, #Sewing). Hashtags can be used to express a sentiment using an everyday word or phrase (e.g., #Annoyed, #CommonSense, #Happy) or a string of words providing sub-text to the post (e.g., #LoveSleepingIn, #SoOverIt, #GettingMyMoneysWorth). And, as discussed in the chapter on Principle 2, they can be used to describe a place (e.g., #Florida, #NewYorkCity, #WrigleyField, #Outdoors, #Beach) or a social media campaign (e.g., #IReadEverywhere, #BPLgetcarded). Finally, people attending conferences or online chats may tag around those events as part of a community conversation (e.g., #BayBookFest, #MTedChat, #ALAMidwinter).

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, and LinkedIn all support use of hashtags in the original posts and in any comments and replies. Within these networks, you can search for hashtags used. Google+ supports hashtags in posts and comments as well, and it will add hashtags to content if its algorithms determine them appropriate to the content. (This option can be turned off through user settings.) Let us consider the use of hashtags for several of the major social networks.

Our University Communications office established #MontanaState as its hashtag of choice for promoting activities around the university. We regularly check this hashtag to see what others are posting about the university, and we add this hashtag to posts that we wish to associate with the university and possibly surface to the university's social media coordinator, who we know also regularly monitors this hashtag and therefore might reshare our content to the broader university community. A student may post an enthusiastic tweet about being accepted to Montana State University using the hashtag #MontanaState. We

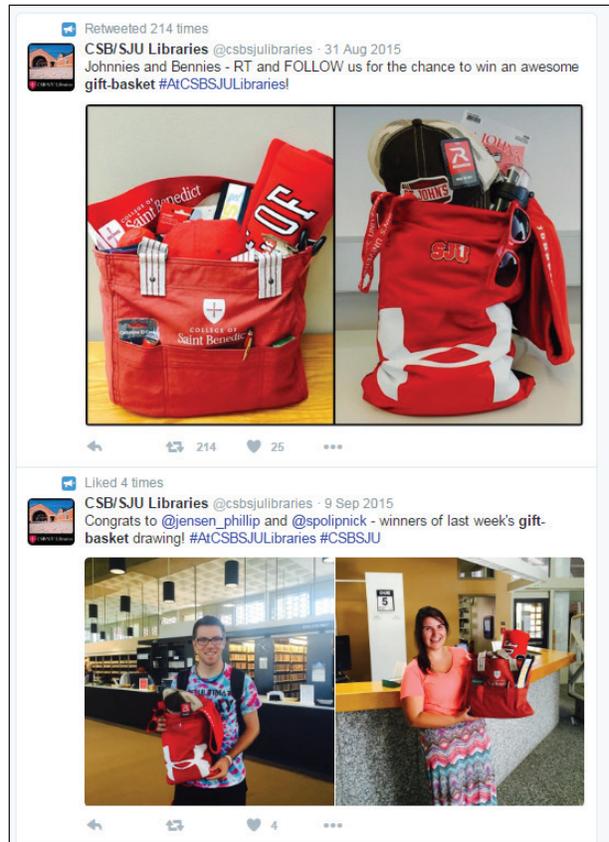


**Figure 3.11**  
Student tweet with library photo found by monitoring #MontanaState hashtag

would use this opportunity to reward engagement by congratulating the student on her acceptance and let her know that she is always welcome at the library.

We also follow many Montana State University students on Twitter and Instagram to see what is happening in our community and to chime in, as we see appropriate. For example, if a student posted an Instagram photo of a dirty keyboard at a library computer keyboard and humorously but pointedly used the hashtag #NeedAHazMatSuit, we have the opportunity to reply knowing that the student was not impressed with the condition of the computer equipment. As an example, an MSU student used the #MontanaState hashtag in a tweet that included a picture of the library that was the setting for a film being made by an MSU student group. We replied to this post and had a nice interaction with the student group (figure 3.11).

Some libraries create campaigns that have a contest element, encouraging users to use a designated hashtag. In these content-style campaigns, the library offers prizes for those participating, thus rewarding engagement. The College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University (CSB/SJU) used the hashtag



**Figure 3.12**  
CSB/SJU gift basket promotion

#AtCSBSJULibraries in conjunction with a gift-basket contest. People were encouraged to retweet and follow the library to be entered into the drawing. Figure 3.12 shows the initial call for the drawing and the eventual prize winners. Such a campaign can generate community growth and engagement as members of the library's community share library content with their own communities.

## Rewarding Geotagging

Using geolocation tagging or “geotagging” is a way to engage with members of your community in a specific location. Social networks like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter all allow tagging a place in a post—known as geotagging. Each platform varies in the level of specificity for the geotag. Jessamyn West offers three ideas for libraries and geolocation services: people finding the library, the library finding people, and people and the library interacting.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, we discuss the library finding people, and people and the library interacting through geotagging. In the chapter on Principle 4, the topic of people finding the library is discussed.



**Figure 3.13**  
Instagram photo tagged with the MSU Library by a student

Through a geotag search, the library can find people who have tagged the library or a nearby location in photos. Figure 3.13 shows an image of a student who tagged two images from the MSU Library’s second floor over the five hours she spent studying. We were able to find this person who is a library user, follow her on Instagram, and interact with her with a comment about the post. Regular monitoring of geotags offers the opportunity to find members of your community, to understand how they are using the library building, and to engage with their posts to strengthen the library/user connection.

### Positive Community Contributions

Being active on social networks, and being a part of a community more broadly, offers the library the opportunity to reward engagement in those networks. Engaging with your community lets them know that you are listening, that you care about them, and that the content you post isn’t all about you, the library.

In another example, we congratulated a student we follow on Twitter on her plans to travel, even though the tweet wasn’t library-related. This interaction with the student rewarded her engagement on social media and gave her a chance to reply and share her excitement (figure 3.14).

In 2016, the MSU men’s lacrosse team completed the year undefeated and won its regional championship. We quoted its victory announcement tweet and added our note of pride, which was subsequently liked and retweeted by other members of our community (figure 3.15). We regularly engage with groups such as MSU sports teams, student clubs and organizations, student government, speaker series, campus events, and so on, as these are part of our larger community for whom we want to show our support and appreciation—as many of them do for us!



**Figure 3.14**  
Student tweet and library interaction when not library-related



**Figure 3.15**  
Quoted tweet of MSU lacrosse team victory announcement

### Following and Following Back

As discussed in the introduction, your social media guide should include a community focus. Following users is rewarding in that it shows interest in what your community is sharing. You will want to be strategic and considerate in deciding who you follow so that you are not overwhelmed by content in your network’s feed and so that others who look at your account get a clear understanding of who you see as your community. You may want to be more liberal with following when initially launching your social network accounts to get a better sense of which users fit into your identified community. You can also follow back users who follow you first if they fit into your community scope. This is another way to reward engagement and show that you are actively listening. Once your

own accounts have matured you may want to unfollow accounts that are inactive or that post content you find not useful. Most social media networks allow you to follow the accounts of your user community. An exception to this is Facebook, which does not allow organizational accounts to follow individual users. And some user accounts are set to “private” and will require the user to approve your request to follow them.

## Privacy Considerations

It is important to consider the role of privacy when engaging with users in social networks. When users interact with the library on social networks, they may have expectations regarding privacy. It is important to be up front about the library’s privacy policies and to respond to users if they voice discomfort. To encourage transparency at MSU, we have both a privacy policy for our entire website and a social media page that provide overviews of how user information is treated.<sup>4</sup> On our social media page, we state: “One of the ways we want to share with you and have you share with us is through our uses of social media. Since social media works by being ‘social,’ we encourage you to comment, re-tweet, and share your stories in all those social media ways.” We go on to say, “We also want to share your experiences, enthusiasm, and ideas with others, so we reserve the right to reuse your comments for research purposes and promotional materials so that we can understand and showcase our thriving online community.” We want users to understand that we seek to build community. Our regular assessment of user engagement will help evaluate impact and value on social networks, thus allowing us to be more productive in our community.

We have only received one piece of feedback expressing discomfort with commenting or interacting

with social network posts. In that case, after we retweeted a user’s comment about studying in the library, the user let us know through a direct message that she was embarrassed since the library’s retweet greatly increased the visibility of her original tweet. We want to be diligent about respecting our users’ feelings, so we deleted the retweet and let the user know that we had done so.

## Conclusion

*Rewarding engagement* offers many opportunities for the library to build its community by interacting with users. We can let users know that we are listening and appreciate their engagement with the library resources and services, with other members of the community, and on social networks. Through these interactions, we can imbue the voice of the library with a human element rich with personality.

## Notes

1. “Analytics,” Twitter website, accessed June 10, 2016, <http://analytics.twitter.com>.
2. “Email Notifications,” Twitter website, accessed June 21, 2016, <https://twitter.com/settings/notifications>; “Notification Basics and Settings,” Facebook Help Center, accessed June 21, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/help/327994277286267>.
3. Jessamyn West, “Meta-Geolocation,” *Computers in Libraries* 35, no. 8 (October 2015): 24.
4. “Montana State University Library Privacy Policy,” Montana State University Library website, accessed May 25, 2016, [www.lib.montana.edu/policy](http://www.lib.montana.edu/policy) and “Social Media at Montana State University (MSU) Library,” Montana State University Library website, accessed May 25, 2016, [www.lib.montana.edu/about/social-media](http://www.lib.montana.edu/about/social-media).

# Principle 4

## *Proactively Share*

**Doralyn Rossmann**

People have to know a resource exists to use it. Libraries can raise awareness of all the resources and services they have to offer by using the social media optimization (SMO) principle of *proactively sharing* through social networks. Proactively sharing involves your library being active on social networks by regularly sharing content that you think will resonate with your community. Libraries can be some of the best promoters of their own material when using an intentional and well-planned approach to this sharing. Additionally, libraries can proactively share content produced by others to build awareness of resources and services and to engage community. The chapter on Principle 1 discusses approaches for identifying and creating Web content that is relevant and meaningful to your community. Here, in the chapter on Principle 4, we discuss methods for gaining insights about your community through surveys, focus groups, and experimentation and how to use that information to determine what, where, and when you proactively share on social networks.

### Local Social Network Surveys

Before your library proactively shares on social networks, it is useful to have a sense of the networks people use, how often they use them, and why they use them. Groups such as the Pew Research Center regularly conduct large-scale, national studies on use of the Internet, mobile and desktop platforms, and social networks, which give readers a good sense of trends across the United States over time.<sup>1</sup> To gain insight into needs and trends unique to your library's community, you can create your own social network survey

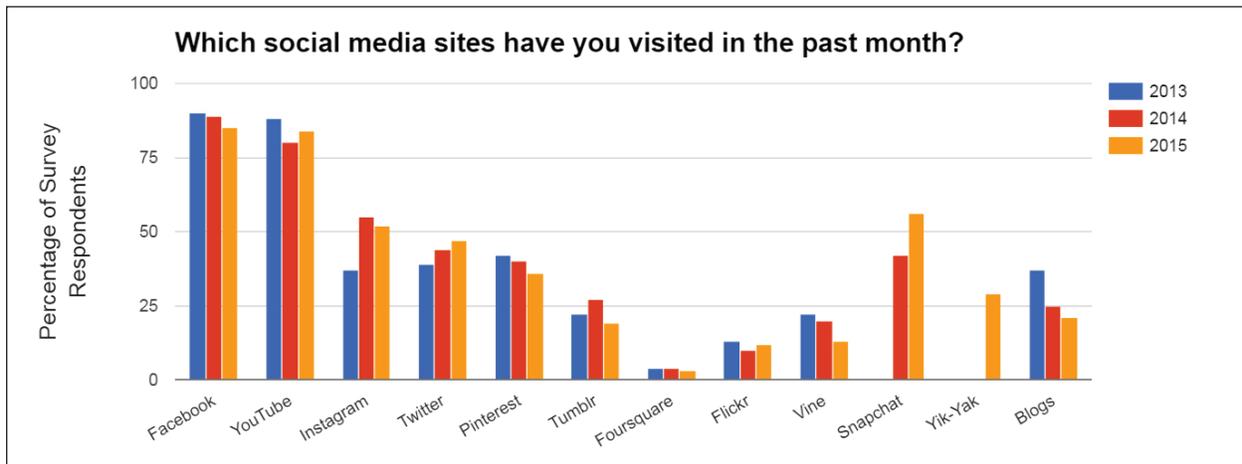
*Proactively share* represents the fourth of five SMO principles:

1. Create Shareable Content
2. Make Sharing Easy
3. Reward Engagement
4. **Proactively Share**
5. Measure Use and Encourage Reuse

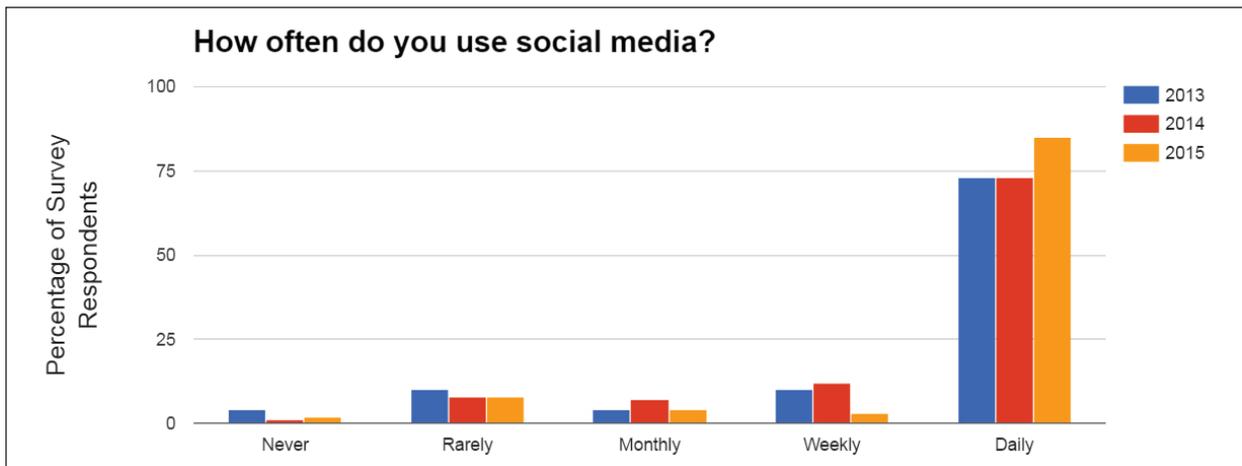
that is designed for your community and that asks the questions you would like to explore.

At the MSU Library, we have conducted surveys in 2013, 2014, and 2015, using the freely available Google Forms, with a few adjustments to questions each year based on declining and emerging social networks.<sup>2</sup> Responses averaged 130 people per survey year, largely consisting of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty. We shared an invitation to take this survey through our Facebook and Twitter accounts and with a carousel slide on our library's homepage.

Our intent with this survey was to understand which social networks our community uses, how often each social network is used, and how our users might expect to connect with the library via social networks. This information, in turn, could help us determine where and how to direct our efforts with social networks, decide how often to post and visit each network, understand who from our community is active on each network, and know what kind of posts and interactions will match our community's expectations. Figure 4.1 illustrates which networks our community uses by network and year, and figure 4.2 shows frequency of social



**Figure 4.1**  
Social network survey: recent visits



**Figure 4.2**  
Social network survey: frequency of use

network use. Notice that Snapchat and Yik Yak were not significantly present in the conversation in 2013 as they were only launched in 2011 and 2013 respectively. By 2015, both networks showed notable adoption by our community. Resultantly, we have explored the library using both Snapchat and Yik Yak, but have not found a way to connect easily with our community as an organization on these networks, as they are more oriented towards individual interactions. We have found that our community does not expect to connect with us through those social networks, either. Also note that daily use of social networks by our respondents has increased year-to-year (figure 4.2).

Results from these surveys informed our decision to continue our efforts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. We have deprioritized our efforts on Pinterest and have increased our efforts on Instagram given our community's use of these networks and level of interest in connecting with us in these venues.

## Local Social Network Focus Groups

To understand further what, when, and where we should proactively share on social networks, we turn to local focus groups, which can offer insights and context into the reasons, motivations, and interests associated with users' participation or lack of participation in different social networks. We conduct occasional focus group sessions with MSU students to gain additional insights into our social network survey results and the motivations and expectations for students interacting on these social networks. Using our social networks, we put out calls for students interested in participating (figure 4.3). Then, using snowball sampling, we ask those students for recommendations of other students we could invite to participate in these groups.

While questions vary from year to year depending on the current state of social networks, we typically ask questions such as these:

- What is your year in school?
- What is social media?
- How has social media changed since you first started?
- Which social media platforms are you active on and how active?
- Why and how did you decide to start your activity on social media?
- How has social media affected your social life?
- Does your use of social media enhance in-person engagement?
- How do you perceive the difference between commercial accounts and nonprofit/education accounts?
- How did you decide who to engage with and how extensively?
- What are your thoughts about advertisements appearing in social media?
- Do you feel a greater sense of community with MSU through social media?
- How did you first hear about the library's social media?
- How do you perceive the tone of the library's social media messages?
- How do you perceive the character of the library's social media?
- What do you expect from building a relationship with the library on social media?

From these discussions, we find that themes emerge such as interactivity and personality. On the topic of interactivity, one student focus group participant offered the following description: “On Facebook I think of it much more as a community, because it’s more interactive and personal that way. Twitter for me is more receiving information. It doesn’t feel community-based, more networked-based” (February 2013). This particular example of student feedback represents the challenge and opportunity of connecting with community through social networks. This student associated personal interactivity on Facebook with feelings of connectedness and community, whereas Twitter usage was characterized as one-way reception of information. Through the practice of regular personal interactivity with users and optimizing content for shareability on these networks, the opportunity is present for libraries to be a part of community-based social networks. This concept is put into practice as described in the chapter on Principle 3 by rewarding engagement. In fact, another focus group participant eagerly sought that kind of institutional Twitter account, saying that she wanted “a Twitter account that was more than just updating you on events, but that was more inviting you in and creating that community” (February 2013).

As a result of interactivity on social networks, people may feel a greater connection to their community.



**Figure 4.3**

Twitter invitation to participate in social media focus group discussion

Another student focus group participant told us, “I never expected to have established personal connections with people on Tumblr, but I ended up doing it. That was pretty cool!” (December 2013). This student used Tumblr as a method to connect with information and, by being active in this environment, made connections that might not have otherwise occurred. This comment suggests that people can develop unexpected relationships through experiences via social networks.

Another theme, personality, is revealed in the comments of several students: “Organizations are sort of notoriously bland on their social media accounts, because everything you say represents the entire organization and it’s very hard to be edgy or funny when you have the organization’s face attached to it” (February 2013). A second student observed, “If you have a Twitter account, you have to give people a reason to follow you. I think a lot of entities at MSU don’t understand that. The library does an awesome job. You guys give people a reason to follow you. You’re responsive. You’re clever. Interesting. And it’s not just event updates. And I’m serious. I really admire all of the social media at the library” (December 2013). When we asked one focus group, “How important is the idea of personality for social media?” a participant responded, “It’s essential.” Another person from the same group stated, “It’s huge. Which again, I think, coming back to campus and coming back to the library, the library . . . has personality, and that’s why people follow it” (December 2013).

The themes of interactivity and personality that emerge from our focus groups reinforce the need to implement SMO in all of its forms. While it is important to *make sharing easy*, it is also important to listen to your community and learn what shared content is meaningful to them. Likewise, while *creating shareable content* is useful for getting information onto social networks, the library will also want to *reward engagement* by community members. *Proactively sharing*, the principle explored here, is easier when you

understand your community and the entirety of their experience through social networks.

## Posting Categories and Schedule

With a better sense from the local surveys and focus groups of how your community is using social networks and what it expects of the library, your library can move to a consideration of what will be of interest for you to proactively share with your community and what may be tiring or unwanted in their social network streams. As discussed in the chapter on Principle 3, users may initiate engagement with the library on social networks. Here, consider that you also want users to discover the library on social networks through its proactive sharing efforts.

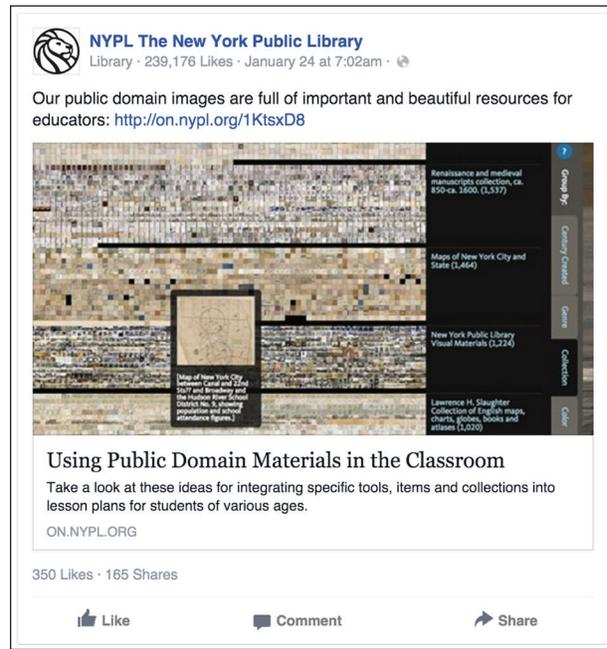
In the chapter on Principle 1, we identify how your library can *create* content that is shareable by anyone active on social networks. In our discussion of Principle 4, we identify how your library can *proactively share* content with your community on its social networks. While you can gain insights through your surveys and focus groups into what to share proactively, additional insights can be gained through trial and experimentation.

### Sharing Library Content

Principle 1 encourages the library to create content that is shareable on social networks, and this high-quality content can be a part of what you regularly post. Sharing content that your library has already produced and published can provide benefits to your Web properties and to your library. Social network sharing activity can drive traffic to your website, blog, or digital library. Sharing your own library's content can also be a great way to deliver news, current events, and historical interests to your community. For example, NYPL shared content from its own public domain collection on Facebook, and the post generated much interest and enthusiasm from its community, as is evidenced in the numbers of likes and shares (figure 4.4). More examples of sharing the library's own content can be found in the subsequent sections of this discussion as well as the other chapters in this report.

### Posting Categories

As noted in the introduction, your library's social media guide can provide focus for your social network efforts. Identifying what posting categories of information you will proactively share is an important part of developing your guide. The MSU Library's Acoustic Atlas Twitter account represents the acousticatlas.org project, which is a database of sounds of animal species and habitats from across the American West. It



**Figure 4.4**  
Facebook share by NYPL with high levels of social network engagement

presents a good example for illustrating posting categories. For this account, we identified many different categories for possible sharing by Acoustic Atlas on Twitter. The posting categories from the Social Media Guide are as follows:

- Heard on Campus #montanastate—recordings of wildlife that can be observed on campus.
- Funny, Weird, and Unusual Days—identify opportunities based on designated days.
- Sounds in the News—sounds paired with MSU, Yellowstone, and Montana-related stories.
- Birding Day—to highlight our extensive bird recordings and engage birding audience. Possible tie into Sacajawea Audubon's Twitter @SacaAudubon and monthly bird report in the Belgrade News @Belgnews and other MT Audubon groups, as well as Bird Note.
- Blog updates.
- Feature highlights: ringtones, downloadable sounds, etc.
- Yellowstone updates tied to our collaborative work.
- Sounds paired with quotes from authors (for example, inspired by our Jack London– and Ivan Doig–themed open houses).
- Blue/Gold Fridays.
- Funday—fun random sound from the atlas.
- Groups to engage/follow/retweet:
  - Audubon groups
  - Conservation groups



**Figure 4.5**  
Acoustic Atlas sounds shared on Twitter for Blue and Gold Friday



**Figure 4.6**  
Acoustic Atlas tweet for International Vulture Awareness Day

- FWP
- Regional national parks
- MSU student groups

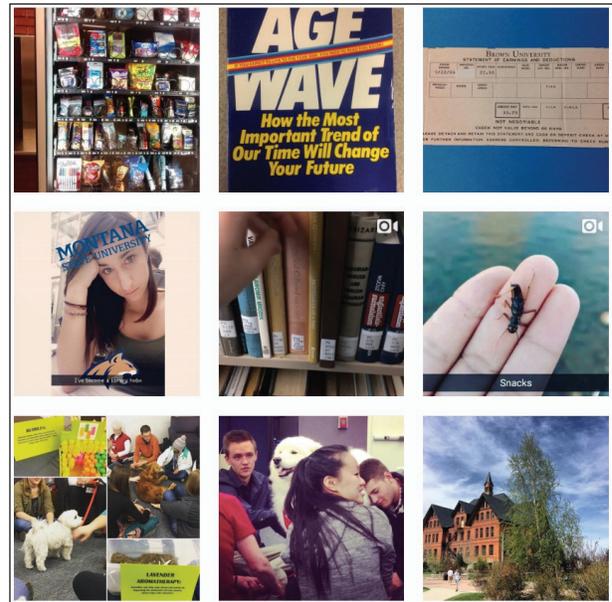
Once you have identified possible categories to share proactively, you can establish when and how often these are shared through a posting schedule.

### Posting Frequency and Schedule

One approach to sharing proactively can be to develop a posting plan to rotate through the kind of content of interest to your community. With this method, a variety of information can be shared with predetermined frequency. This posting schedule could also be incorporated into the social media guide, as discussed in



**Figure 4.7**  
Acoustic Atlas tweet for National Public Lands Day



**Figure 4.8**  
Search of MSU Library tagged location images on Instagram

the chapter 1. For example, the Acoustic Atlas account could follow this posting schedule on Twitter:

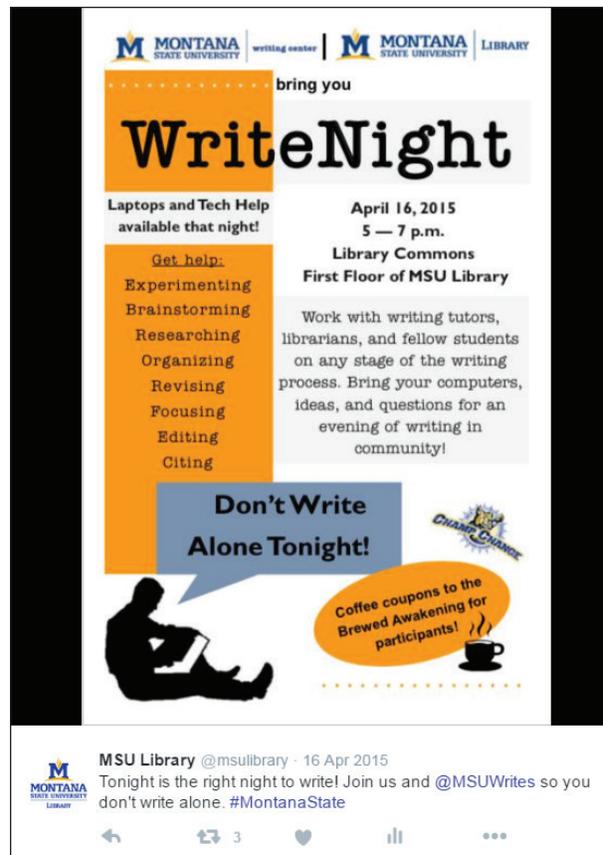
- *Monday*: Sounds paired with quotes from authors
- *Tuesday*: Sounds in the News
- *Wednesday*: Feature highlights—ringtones, downloadable sounds
- *Thursday*: Blog post or Yellowstone update reflecting our recording team in action
- *Friday*: Blue/Gold Fridays with #MontanaState hashtag
- *Saturday*: Birding day
- *Sunday*: #SundayFunday with random sound from the Atlas



**Figure 4.9**  
MSU Writing Center Twitter post with MSU Library mention

For example, the Friday posting schedule for Acoustic Atlas ties in with a broader effort. Fridays at MSU are “Blue and Gold Fridays,” which reflect our school’s colors and school spirit. The Acoustic Atlas has a number of blue- and gold-named animals, so we identified several pairs of these animals to highlight on Blue and Gold Fridays (figure 4.5). The #MontanaState hashtag is added to pull in anyone who follows that tag. #GoCats shows school spirit in celebration of our MSU Bobcats. Some example pairings include

- Mountain Bluebird (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/311>) and American Goldfinch (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/16>)
- Blue Grouse (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/731>) and Common Goldeneye (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/143>)
- Blue-winged Teal (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/75>) and Golden Eagle (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/199>)
- Bluethroat (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/73>) and Golden-Crowned Kinglet (<http://acousticatlas.org/item/202>)



**Figure 4.10**  
MSU Library Twitter post with MSU Writing Center mention

After following this proactive sharing schedule for a while, you can identify which types of posts seem to resonate with your community and generate engagement, as evidenced by reshares, comments, click-through analytics, uses of the resources promoted, and so forth. Some posting categories may do better or worse on certain days of the week (e.g., people might be more interested in Yellowstone sounds on a Monday after they’ve returned from a Yellowstone vacation) or times of the day (e.g., 5 p.m.–6 p.m. might be a time when many people are commuting and are offline). For further feedback, you can engage people through surveys or in-person user testing to determine which kinds of posts people prefer.

### Unusual Days

A subset of the posting categories is Fun, Weird, or Unusual Days, or days as designated by Days of the Year (or any other number of similar sites). These specific days can be incorporated into your posting plan. An example of days of possible interest for posting on the Acoustic Atlas Twitter account for the month of September 2015 includes



**Figure 4.11**  
Twitter share of a freely available education resource

- Chicken Month—September
- International Vulture Awareness Day—September 5
- Teddy Bear Day—September 9
- No News Is Good News Day—September 11
- Roald Dahl Day (inspiration for Fantastic Mr. Fox)—September 13
- Water Monitoring Day—September 18
- Coastal Cleanup Day—September 19
- First Day of Fall—September 23
- International Rabbit Day—September 26

*Days of the Year*  
www.daysoftheyear.com

From this list of possibilities, sounds from the Acoustic Atlas database can be selected for proactive sharing, using the associated hashtag for that day (figures 4.6–4.7). These themes may be of interest to those already following the Acoustic Atlas Twitter account and may also introduce Acoustic Atlas content to those beyond the current follower community.

## Sharing with Geotags

As discussed in the chapter on Principle 3, geotagging is a feature commonly available in social networks. Tagging a geolocation in a post, or “geotagging,” offers opportunities for the library to share content and show library-related activities beyond the footprint of the library building. For example, the library can geotag any of the photographs it posts to Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter with the library’s location, thus offering anyone else who searches that tag to learn



**Figure 4.12**  
Twitter share of legislative information

more about library-related activity and to see that the library is active on those accounts.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, if the library proactively shares a historical photograph, the location of the image can be geotagged to make the information discoverable by others interested in that location. Figure 4.8 shows a subset of search results for the MSU Library location in Instagram, which includes four images posted by MSU Library and five images shared by members of our community. For anyone searching this tag, they get a sense of life in and around the library as presented by the library and its community. Geotags offer the library opportunities for getting creative by gamifying geolocations through treasure hunts and check-ins or by asking users to post a picture of themselves in action, which could result in a delivery of a prize.

Another benefit to geotagging is that it demonstrates to our community that the library is much more than a building. As library employees, we actively engage in other campus activities such as those events held at our student union, in teaching classes across our university, and in attending training and conferences. Adding geotags to our social network posts from these activities shows that the library is engaged across campus and across the library profession. Because these tags are searchable in the social network platforms, you can find other posts in the same location and reshare that content with your community, as you deem appropriate.

## Engaging with Other Accounts and Sharing External Content

### Engaging with Other Accounts

Library content may be produced in collaboration with other entities in your organization or may be of interest to specific entities. Many platforms offer the option to tag other accounts on the same platform. By tagging others on your post when proactively sharing, you draw attention to the post for that account

by notifying them of the tag. Consequently, they may reshare your post, reply, or follow back your library social network account, if they are not already following you. Of the major social networks, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook allow you to tag others or mention others in your post. For example, MSU Library regularly hosts a collaborative effort with the MSU Writing Center called “Write Night,” and both groups regularly tag each other in posts on Twitter and Facebook (figures 4.9, 4.10).

In both of these examples, the library and the Writing Center retweeted the other’s post, thus broadening the community of users who saw both tweets.

### Sharing External Content

The library can expand its proactive sharing beyond library resources and services to external information that may be of interest to the community. This sharing can demonstrate that the library is listening to and is knowledgeable about a variety of information and services (figures 4.11, 4.12).

### Conclusion

*Sharing proactively* means identifying content meaningful and useful to your community and surfacing

that content through the social networks where you have identified users to be active and engaged. That effort starts by understanding where your users are present and where they might engage with the library. Proactively sharing also requires going beyond direct engagement and looking to referencing your library partners and geolocations to share where you are active. In doing so, your library has the opportunity to engage with community in the spaces and places where they live and work.

### Notes

1. Pew Research Center website, accessed May 22, 2016, [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org).
2. Scott W. H. Young, Doralyn Rossmann, and Justin Shanks, “Montana State University (MSU) Library Social Media Survey,” 2015, Montana State University ScholarWorks, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15788/m26p43>.
3. Jessamyn West, “Meta-Geolocation,” *Computers in Libraries* 35, no. 8 (October 2015): 24.

# Principle 5

## *Measure Use and Encourage Reuse*

Scott W. H. Young

**M** *measure use and encourage reuse* in social media optimization (SMO) recognizes that our users want to share, repost, and embed resources into multiple online social environments and that libraries can utilize both quantitative and qualitative approaches for measuring the use and dissemination of content through social networks. This chapter begins by exploring definitions of social network success, then details the process of tracking and evaluating shared content, and concludes with a discussion of cultivating a culture of sharing.

### Measure Use

The practice of measuring use provides an essential view into your social network activity and also provides an understanding of your community and your content. Measuring use is linked closely with the success of social networking, as measurement can show progress, growth, and change. In this section, we will introduce and discuss quantitative and qualitative approaches for measuring the use and evaluating the success of social network activity.

### Assessing Your Social Network Activity

Effectively assessing social network activity first requires a definition of success that can be measured over time using multiple methods.

### Defining and Measuring Success

Success in social networking does not have a single

*Measure use and encourage reuse* represents the fifth of five SMO principles:

1. Create Shareable Content
2. Make Sharing Easy
3. Reward Engagement
4. Proactively Share
5. **Measure Use and Encourage Reuse**

fixed definition. In the business world, for example, social networking is often deployed for marketing purposes, with the goal of growing sales and revenue. In libraries, social networking is often used for similar purposes, with the goal of increasing the usage of resources and services. Growth often serves as a guiding theme for social media. In our experience with social networks, we have found that a focus on community growth is a productive and mission-driven framework for goal setting. From this perspective, we seek fundamentally to grow our community of users. We measure our success on social networks according to the following three key factors:

- community growth
- community engagement
- connectedness

In achieving these goals, we can produce benefits that flow throughout our organization, with the effect of increasing, for example, our Web traffic, our workshop attendance, and our patrons' sense of togetherness. We measure this success through a combination of quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback.

**Table 5.1.** Growth over time of MSU Library communities on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

	Facebook		Twitter		Instagram	
	Likes	% Change	Followers	% Change	Followers	% Change
10/1/2015	1,527		1,567		85	
11/1/2015	1,529	0.13%	1,573	0.38%	92	8.24%
12/1/2015	1,547	1.18%	1,599	1.65%	94	2.17%
1/1/2016	1,542	-0.32%	1,641	2.63%	105	11.70%
2/1/2016	1,556	0.91%	1,661	1.22%	118	12.38%
3/1/2016	1,559	0.19%	1,671	0.60%	138	16.95%
4/1/2016	1,563	0.26%	1,685	0.84%	159	15.22%
5/1/2016	1,563	0.00%	1,704	1.13%	176	10.69%
6/1/2016	1,570	0.45%	1,722	1.06%	213	21.02%

## Community Growth

To measure community growth, we track the number and type of community members on each social network. At the beginning of each month, we make a proactive effort to record the number of community members on each network and the percent change in number from the previous month (table 5.1).

For Facebook, we record page likes. For Twitter and Instagram, we record followers. These metrics present a high-level view into our social networking activity and let us track our progress in building the membership of our communities. To add nuance to this analysis, we periodically examine the makeup of our community. This process—described in detail in the introduction—helps us understand which user types constitute our community, such as undergraduate students, alumni, campus organizations, or local businesses. When we compare this community analysis with the detailed analytics produced by Google Analytics, Facebook Analytics, and Twitter Analytics, we can start to see the interrelationship between content and community. We seek to grow certain defined types of community through each social network; therefore, we seek to publish content that is meaningful and relevant to those communities. Our guiding question through this reflective process can be expressed by the following: What content will be most engaging to our target community?

## Community Engagement

To measure community engagement, we primarily study the analytics available through Google, Facebook, and Twitter. These platforms provide post-level metrics that help shed light on engagement. Engagement is a broad measure that typically reflects user interactions. For example, engagement metrics can include the interactions of liking a post, replying to a post, or sharing a webpage. Exact engagement measures vary by platform but are all connected by the theme of interaction and the attempt to quantify the level of interest that your community shows in your content. Insights into engagement can be used to

evaluate and shape the nature of your content, with the overall goal of publishing content that is more relevant and meaningful to your community.

## Connectedness

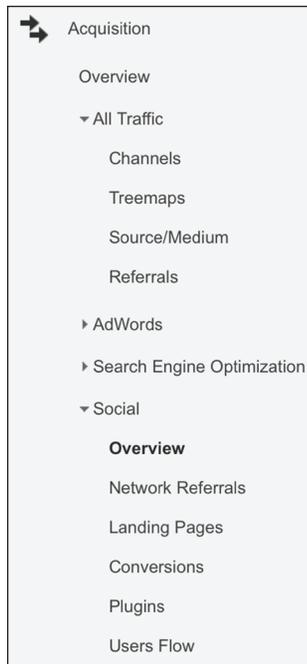
To measure connectedness, we employ a range of qualitative methods that include focus groups and online surveys. The use of focus groups and online surveys to understand and evaluate your community and content is detailed in the chapter on Principle 4. The user feedback generated through these methods can be combined with Web and social analytics to provide a three-dimensional view of your user community that helps shed light on connectedness. Quantitative analytics can tell you how your users behave, and qualitative assessment methods can reveal the motivations behind those behaviors. *Connectedness* encompasses a combined understanding of your community makeup, your users' level of engagement, and your users' motivations for joining your community and interacting with your content.

## Tools and Metrics

Social network activity can be measured through a variety of widely available analytics tools.<sup>1</sup> The metrics produced by analytics tools are best interpreted in combination with complementary user feedback mechanisms. For this reason, implementing a framework of assessment and measurement will aid in interpreting analytics and productively applying insights to your social networking activity. In this section, we provide further examples of analytics in action.

## Google Analytics

Google Analytics is an easy-to-implement and free-to-use Web analytics tool.<sup>2</sup> Google Analytics produces an extensive view of a website's traffic, ultimately offering clues and insights into the behavior of your site's visitors.<sup>3</sup> Librarians from varying contexts have shared



**Figure 5.1**  
Acquisitions menu in Google Analytics

Analytics produces individualized measurements for social traffic. At the MSU Library, we tune in to two key metrics available through Google Analytics: network referrals and landing pages. These metrics are available in the Acquisition menu in Google Analytics (figure 5.1). Network referrals (figure 5.2) produce visitor metrics for a variety of originating social networks. If a Web user visits your site from a social network, Google Analytics will track the behavior of that visitor according to a series of related site metrics. Figure 5.2 shows the social network referrals for the MSU Library website during the 2015 calendar year, along with the site metrics that have been coordinated with each of the our top ten originating social networks: sessions, page views, average session duration, and pages per session. These site metrics point towards certain user behavior that can help shape social sharing strategy.

### Facebook Insights

Beyond Google Analytics, leading social networks provide platform-specific analytics that offer a high level of detail. Facebook's internal analytics is called Insights and can be accessed from the menu bar at the top of any page that you manage. Facebook Insights are organized according to six major categories:

- Overview
- Likes (figure 5.3): Shows how many likes your page has gained and lost and where new likes come from.

Social Network	Sessions	Pageviews	Avg. Session Duration	Pages / Session
1. Facebook	3,510 (70.62%)	12,357 (68.16%)	00:01:55	3.52
2. Twitter	946 (19.03%)	2,906 (16.03%)	00:03:11	3.07
3. Pinterest	422 (8.49%)	2,121 (11.70%)	00:02:26	5.03
4. Tumblr	21 (0.42%)	147 (0.81%)	00:08:11	7.00
5. Blogger	15 (0.30%)	46 (0.25%)	00:04:28	3.07
6. Google+	8 (0.16%)	26 (0.14%)	00:00:37	3.25
7. Pocket	7 (0.14%)	20 (0.11%)	00:00:55	2.86
8. VKontakte	7 (0.14%)	426 (2.35%)	00:07:12	60.86
9. Geni	5 (0.10%)	9 (0.05%)	00:05:43	1.80
10. LinkedIn	4 (0.08%)	5 (0.03%)	00:00:01	1.25

**Figure 5.2**  
Network referrals in Google Analytics

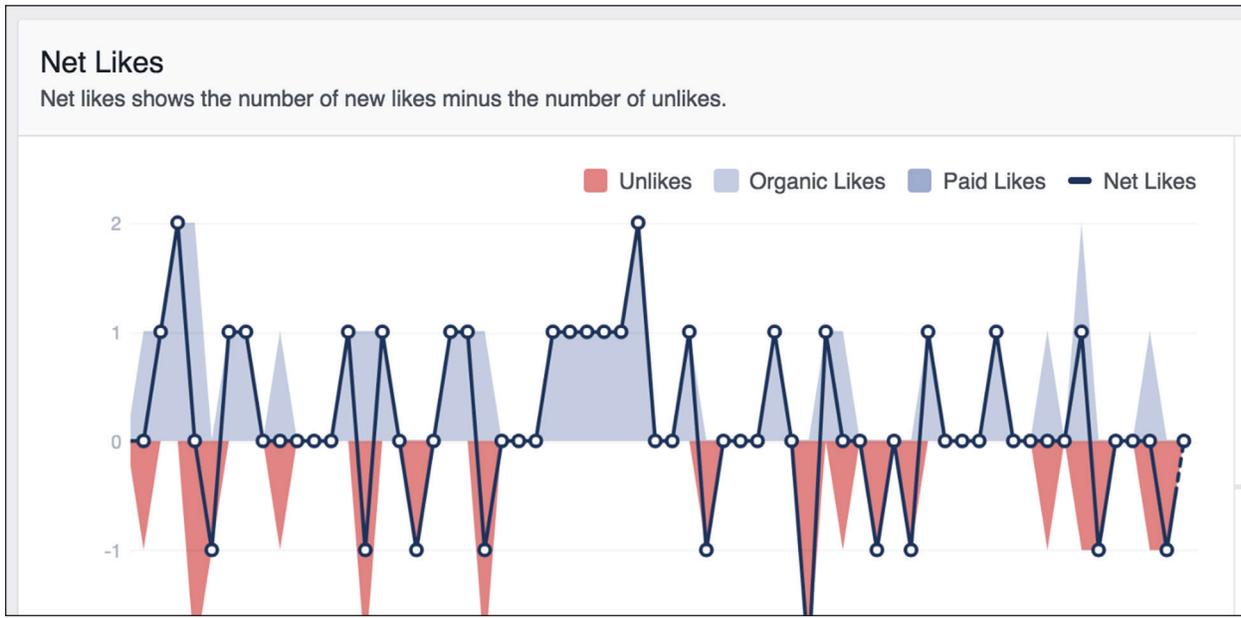
their experiences with Google Analytics, offering wide-ranging examples for implementation and use.<sup>4</sup> For understanding social network interactivity, Google

- Reach (figure 5.4): Indicates the number of Facebook users who see your posts on their news feeds. Posts that receive more reactions, comments, and shares are more likely to appear on users' news feeds. The reach category also shows the level of engagement of your posts. Engagement measures reactions, comments, and shares (figure 5.5).
- Page views (figure 5.6): Reports which sections of your page have been visited and the traffic sources.
- Posts (figure 5.7): Provides metrics, such as reach, for individual posts.
- People (figure 5.8): Shows demographic information about the users who like your page, who have seen your posts, and who have interacted with your posts by reacting, commenting, or sharing.

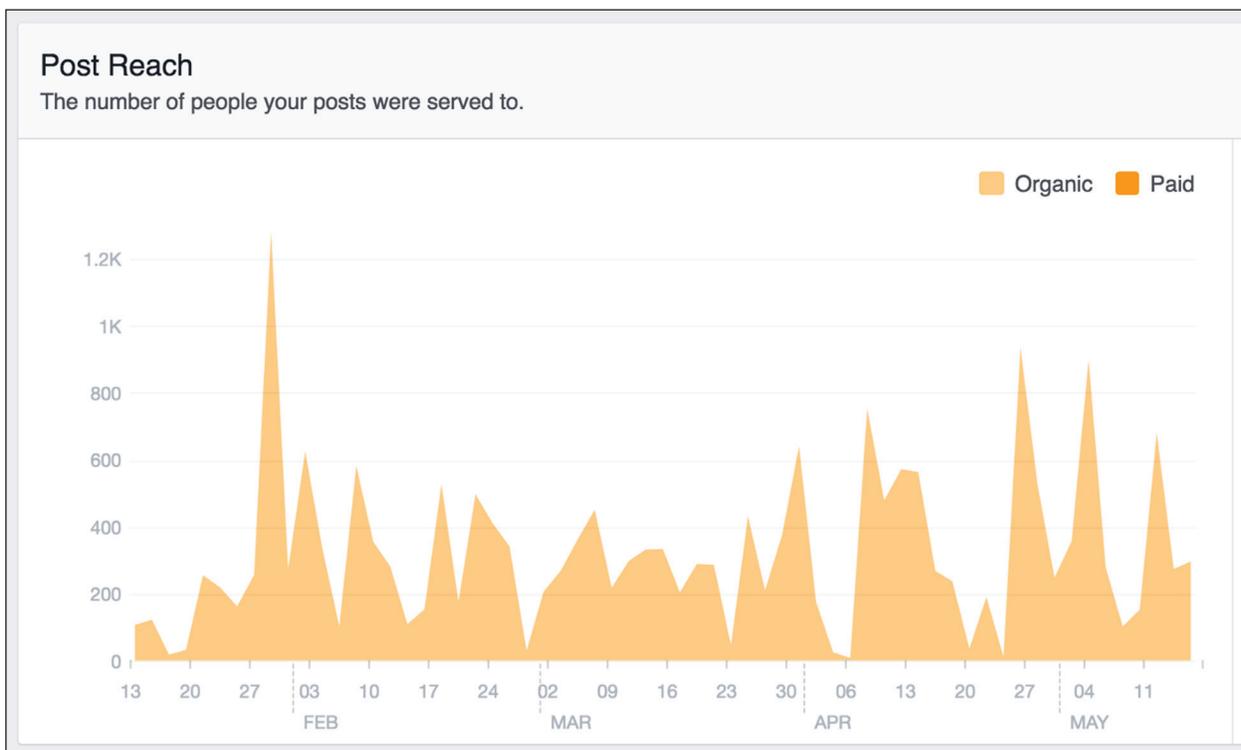
The analytics produced through Facebook are designed to help you understand your Facebook content and community so that you are better equipped to create and publish content that is more shareable and engaging for your community.

### Twitter Analytics

Twitter similarly offers platform-specific analytics.<sup>5</sup> As with Facebook, Twitter Analytics offers a variety of metrics that are unique to the platform, organized into categories: Tweets, Audiences, Events, Twitter Cards, Videos, App Manager, and Conversion Tracking. Only two of these categories will be relevant for most libraries: Tweets and Twitter Cards. The remaining categories are designed primarily for e-commerce and paid content or for use in conjunction with apps designed specifically for Android and Apple platforms. In exploring the full range of analytics categories, you may find metrics that are helpful for your local strategies. At the MSU Library, we focus on the following categories and metrics:

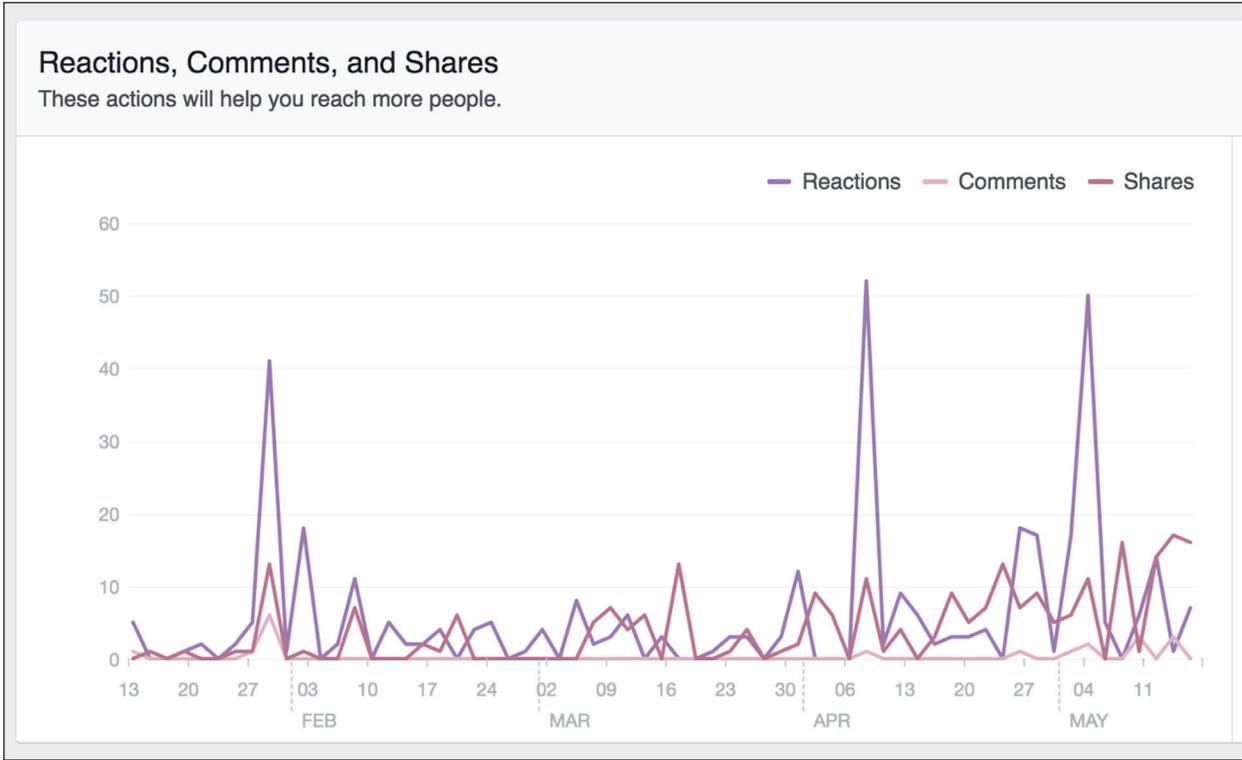


**Figure 5.3**  
Facebook Insights: Net Likes

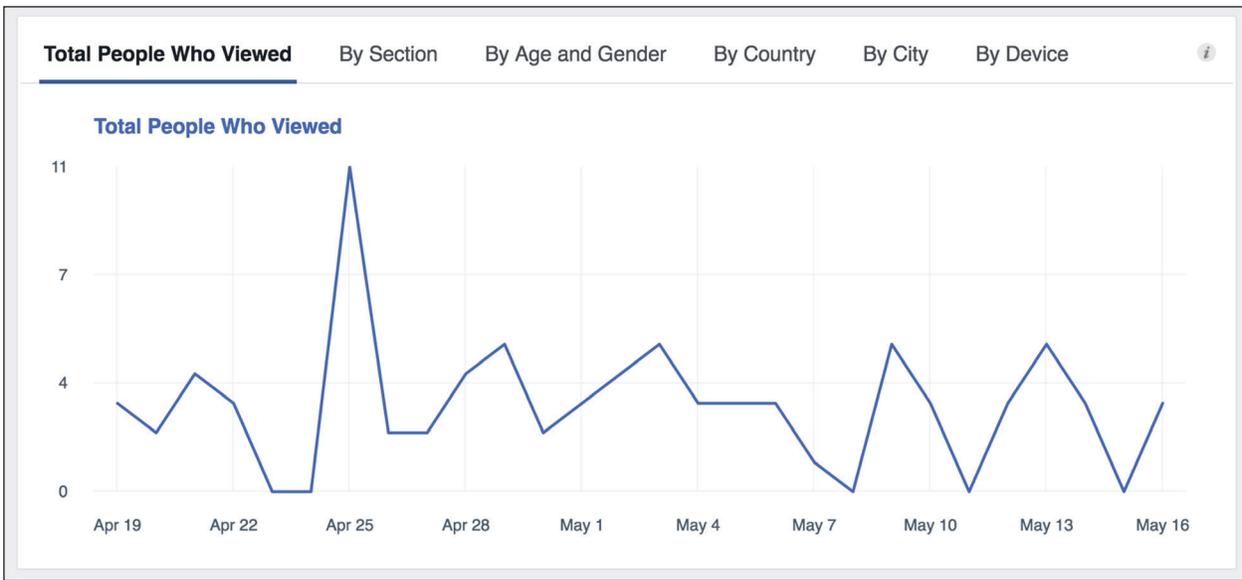


**Figure 5.4**  
Facebook Insights: Post Reach

- Tweets: This category presents key tweet-level metrics (figure 5.9):
  - Impressions: The number of times a user sees a tweet in the timeline.
  - Engagements: The number of times a user interacts with a tweet, measured by retweeting, replying, following, liking, or clicking within the tweet.
  - Engagement Rate: The number of engagements divided by the number of impressions.



**Figure 5.5**  
Facebook Insights: Reactions, Comments, and Shares



**Figure 5.6**  
Facebook Insights: page views

- **Twitter Cards:** This category presents the performance of tweets that include Twitter Cards (we address the use of Twitter Cards in the chapter on Principle 2):
  - **URL Clicks:** Shows click behavior on tweets that have Twitter Cards installed.
  - **Install Attempts:** Shows app installs originating from tweets that have Twitter Cards installed. This metric will be relevant only for libraries with native Android and Apple apps.

Published ▾	Post	Type	Targeting	Reach	Engagement
05/17/2016 4:53 pm	 Check out Professor Peterson's online photobook showcasing the			228 	18 6 
05/16/2016 6:30 pm	 Meet the Staff: Our newest library employee, Christa Montana Ge			476 	44 6 
05/16/2016 1:51 pm	 Hello gardeners! Since we get occasional gardening questions at			30 	2 2 
05/13/2016 10:36 am	 The Library is closed today for staff development. We are also clo			46 	1 3 
05/12/2016 10:55 am	 The meaning of fishing			678 	27 15 
05/12/2016 10:17 am	 A few suggestions for summer reading.			466 	19 6 
05/11/2016 11:05 am	 Friends of MSU Library Book Group - TRUTH & BRIGHT WATER			0 	0 0 

**Figure 5.7**  
Facebook Insights: post-level metrics

- Retweets: Shows retweet behavior on tweets that have Twitter Cards installed.

### Analytics Case Study 1: Google Analytics

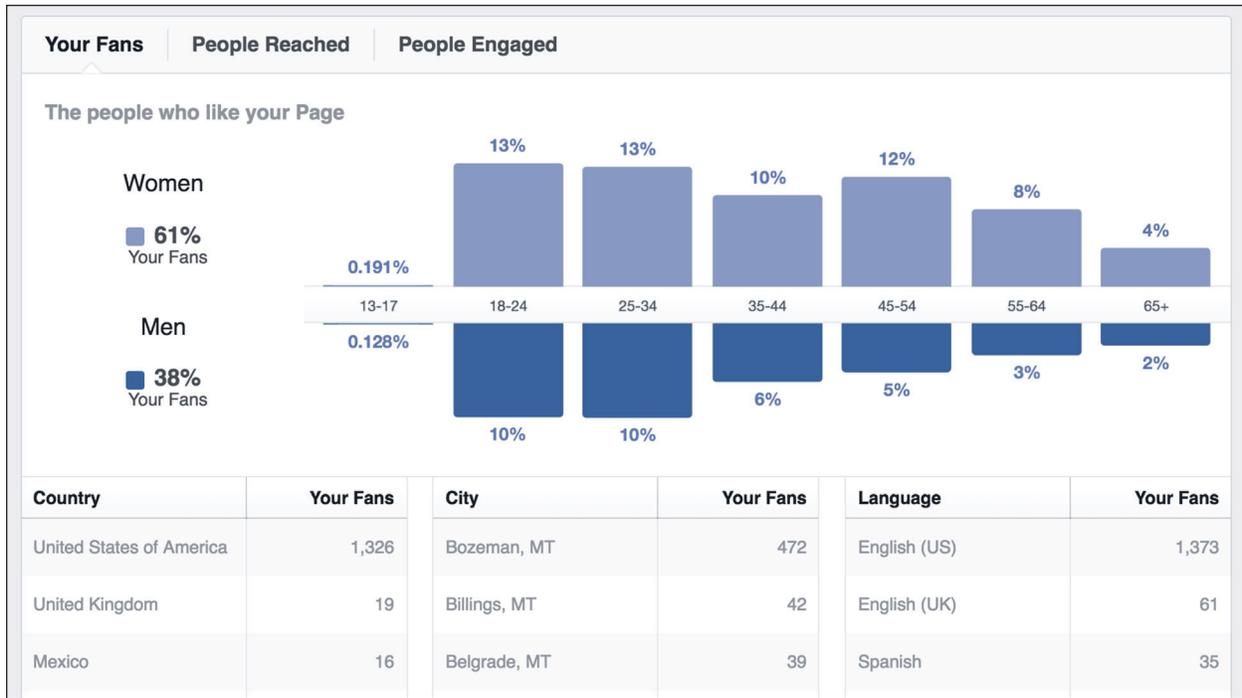
Evaluating the analytics generated through Google Analytics is one possible method for understanding and measuring the success of a social media strategy. Our Google Analytics (figure 5.2) show that the majority of our Web visitors who arrive via social networks originate from Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. The *Sessions* metric provides the clue: of all the visits—counted as a session—from social networks to our library’s website during the year 2015, 70 percent originated from Facebook, 19 percent from Twitter, and 8 percent from Pinterest. These metrics inform our library’s social media strategy, which revolves primarily around Facebook and Twitter. In that sense, we expect to see that the majority of our website’s social network visits originate from our two main social networks.

Additional metrics offer more nuanced views into the behavior of our Web visitors. *Pageviews* represents the total number of pages visited by each visitor during each session. *Avg. Session Duration* shows the average length of time that a visitor spends on our website. *Pages / Session* shows the average number of pages that each visitor views during a session.

We can see from our analytics that visitors from Twitter tend to spend more time on our website, with a 3:11 average session duration. Visitors from Pinterest, however, tend to view more pages, with just over five pages viewed per session. This tells us that Twitter users stay on our site longer, but that Pinterest users range more widely throughout our site. These intriguing metrics serve to signal the behavior of our users but cannot on their own produce a full view of the user. More investigation is required to fully understand why Twitter users and Pinterest users behave differently on our library’s website. In this way, social analytics can produce insights that in turn generate follow-up research questions. These questions are best answered by speaking directly with our library’s community, for example through interviews, focus groups, or surveys. At the MSU Library, we regularly evaluate the effort that we dedicate to each social network with respect to Web traffic generated and then enrich that evaluation through conversations with our users.

### Analytics Case Study 2: Twitter Analytics

At the MSU Library, we use Twitter Analytics to help us understand our community and our content. For the month of April 2016, we can see from our Twitter Analytics that certain tweets have generated comparatively high levels of impressions and engagement

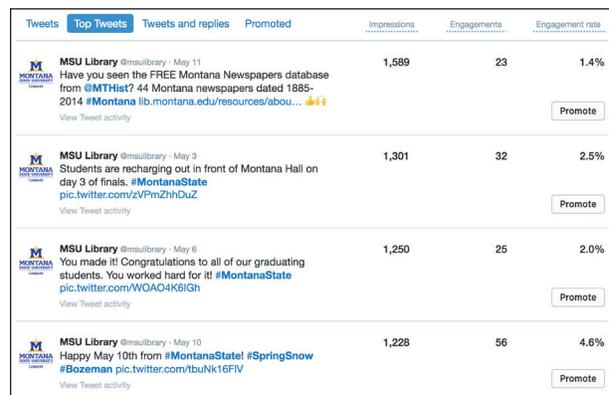


**Figure 5.8**  
Facebook Insights: people who liked your page

(figure 5.9). This view, available through the *Tweets* category, shows the *Top Tweets* for this time period. We can see at a glance that these tweets share related characteristics. Firstly—as described in our Social Media Guide in the introduction—we strive to convey a welcoming and friendly voice through our social network posts so that our library is recognized as an open and accessible member of the campus community. Secondly, we strive to publish content that reflects the values and experience of our community. The top four tweets from April 2016 show that our voice is positive and warm, while the content itself is in tune with the experience of our community of mostly undergraduate students. Twitter Analytics helps us evaluate the relationship between our content and our community. If well matched, our content will be engaging to our community, resulting in increased resource usage and an overall increased sense of connectedness.

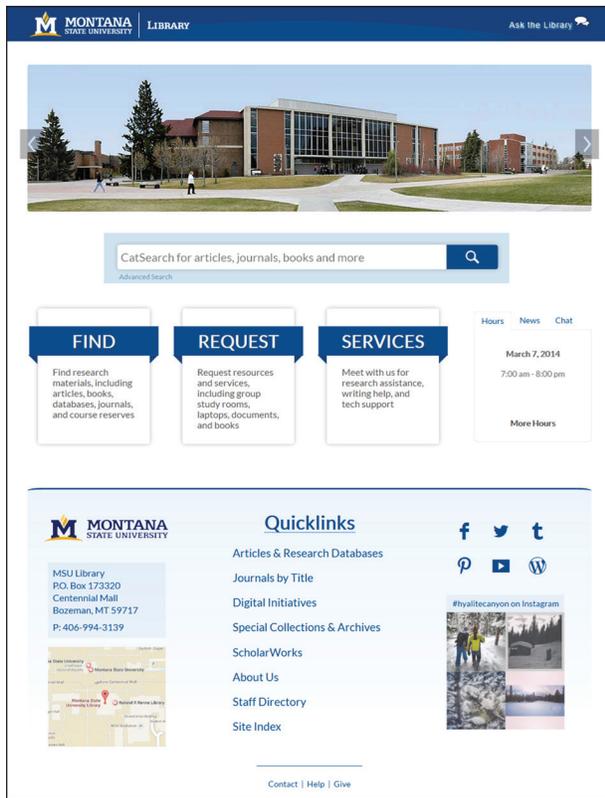
### Analytics Case Study 3: Going beyond the Metric

Metrics are an important aspect of evaluating social network success—but metrics alone can't provide a full measure of success.<sup>6</sup> In this case study, we discuss the complex nature of defining and measuring success for one aspect of a social networking—social links. These links can come in the form of buttons that activate a share or as linked text or icons that lead a user to the social network account pages for



**Figure 5.9**  
Twitter Analytics by post

a company or organization. Social links of this kind are prevalent across the Web. Websites from major brands to minor bloggers include social links on their homepages and throughout their sites. An extensive report released by GOV.UK detailed the performance of social links across the GOV.UK website. The summation of this report: “During the time period we analysed, GOV.UK URLs were shared a total of 14,078 times to Facebook and Twitter using our sharing buttons—that’s 0.2% of the total of 6.8 million pageviews.”<sup>7</sup> GOV.UK has approached this question with the implicit assumption that the click-through performance of social links is the primary measure



**Figure 5.10**  
MSU Library homepage

of value. Based on this performance-based value proposition, the writers conclude: “From what we’ve seen so far, our users aren’t exactly demonstrating an overwhelming case for us retaining social sharing buttons.”<sup>8</sup> GOV.UK click-through rates are indeed low. It’s easy to understand why they would consider removing these buttons, provided that value is measured by click-through rate.

Another example comes from Erik Runyon, the Director of Web Communications at the University of Notre Dame.<sup>9</sup> Social links are present on project homepages throughout the Notre Dame Web domain, and these links are prominently displayed using icons and large text. An analysis of the click-through rate of these social links found the following:

- Twitter: 0.370%
- Facebook: 0.059%
- LinkedIn: 0.008%
- YouTube: 0.112%
- Flickr: 0.028%

Runyon concludes, “Even though these numbers are low, I wouldn’t advocate for pulling them from your site. Let’s be honest, finding you on social media isn’t the why most people visit your site. But obviously some people do want to engage further.”<sup>10</sup>

With this in mind, let’s study an example from the MSU Library. Our social links are displayed as icons in the footer of our library’s homepage (figure 5.10).

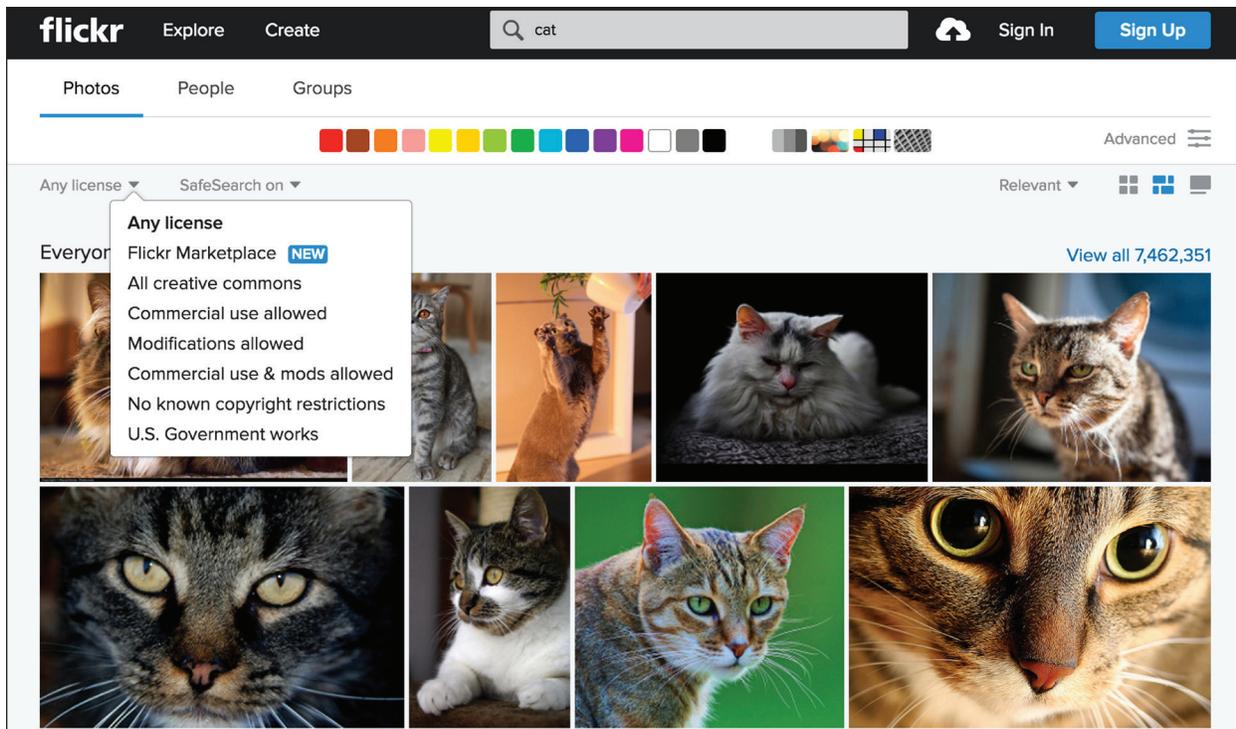
Google Analytics allows us to measure the click-through rate of these buttons, relative to other clickable items on our homepage:

- Twitter: 0.053%
- Facebook: 0.043%
- Tumblr: 0.043%
- Pinterest: 0.031%
- YouTube: 0.018%
- WordPress: 0.018%

These metrics indicate that the level of engagement for these buttons is quite low in the context of the page as a whole. What should our response be? GOV.UK notes in its report that it will benchmark its click-through rates against comparable figures from other sites. Given the similarly low click-through rates across many sites, this will likely offer only limited insight. GOV.UK also says that it will run A/B testing on the position of buttons.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, click-through rates are already so low that alterations in button placement are unlikely to move the meter significantly.

Instead of shifting the placement of social links, we might benefit from shifting our value perspective to a more fully contextual understanding of our users’ relationship to social links. Discussion of social links is often centered on the click-through, a useful but limited metric. A more interesting line of investigation might instead center on the page view, or more specifically, the experience of the page view. From this point of view, we can begin to ask a number of broader user-centered questions: What do our users expect to find on our pages? Do they want to see social links? How do our users feel when they see social links? How are our users’ perceptions of us shaped when they see social links? By taking a more holistic view of the experience of our users, we can start to understand the more subtle and complete effects of social links. Users might not be clicking on our social links very often, but could the buttons be serving a purpose in a different way?

This line of questioning expands the analysis far beyond the click-through metric. Analytics can tell us what our users do on our websites, but to discover why our users behave in certain ways, we must supplement our quantitative analytics with other qualitative user feedback mechanisms such as interviews and focus groups that can begin to answer more complex questions: Will a user see a Twitter button on a library webpage and later think of tweeting at the library to ask a reference question? If your library’s Tumblr or Instagram features images from special collections, will a user see those buttons and later scroll through the feeds and decide to visit special collections in person or



**Figure 5.11**  
Flickr search, with license filters

digital collections online? How can we enable the kinds of social network interactions that bring users into the world of the library? How can we utilize social networking to expand the library community? Are social links an effective way to do any of these things?

Quantitative analytics show us that user engagement is low for social links. These click-through metrics also show us that qualitative follow-up may be necessary to provide a fuller understanding of why users behave in this way, thus offering valuable insight into the nature and effect of social links. It will be essential to ask our users why they're not clicking, what they're seeing and feeling when they encounter social links, and what behavior follows the page view.

In the ongoing evaluation of the value and success of social networking, we will benefit from combining metrics such as the click-through with qualitative feedback mechanisms such as focus groups and user interviews. A well-rounded, user-centered analysis will offer a more complete understanding of social networking value and success.

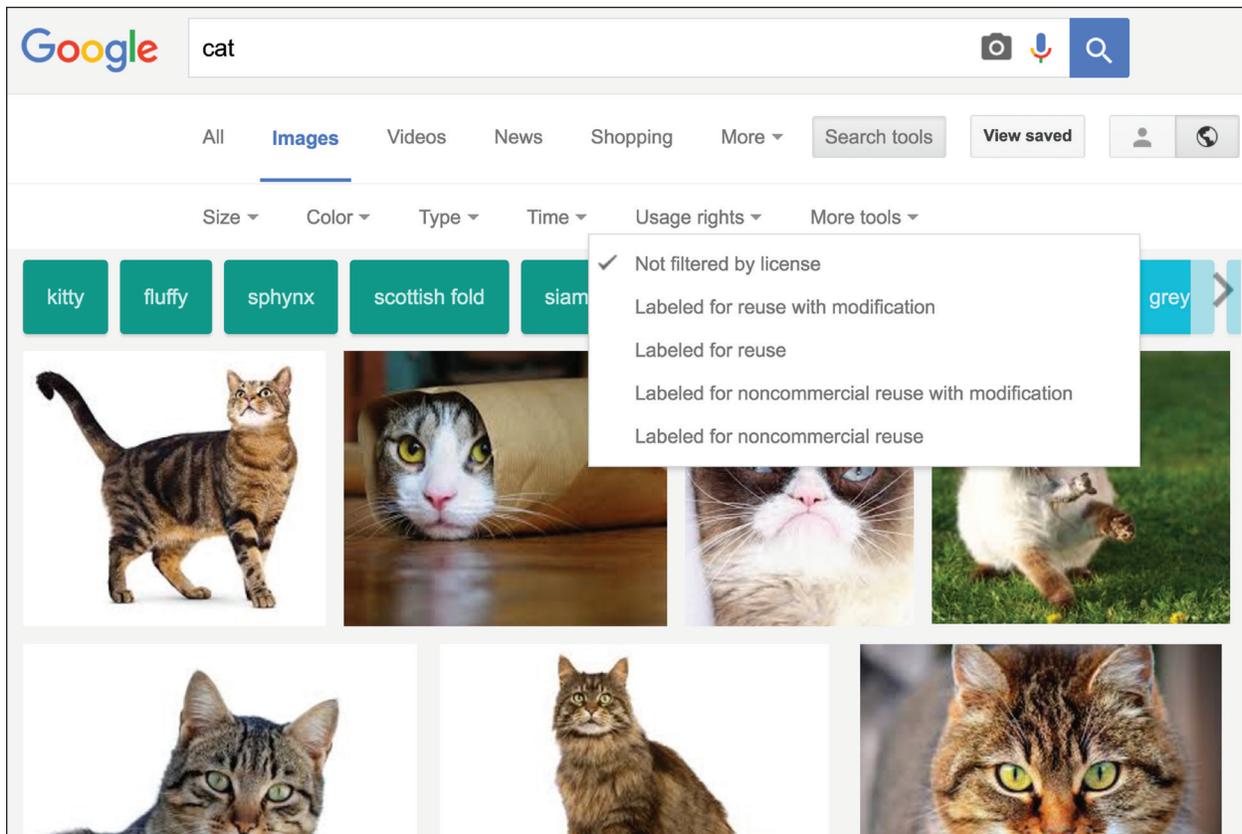
## Encourage Reuse

Just as the methods for measuring use are diverse, so are the approaches for encouraging reuse. Social networks are purposefully built for sharing and reusing Web content. Many users want to share, repost,

and embed resources into multiple online social environments, and the built-in functionality of social networks enables and rewards this kind of reuse. Reblogging on Tumblr, retweeting on Twitter, and sharing on Facebook are just a few examples of platform features of reuse. Libraries can further amplify interactive community-based content sharing by *encouraging reuse* among our user communities. Cultivating a culture of sharing and reuse is a key principle of SMO and can be achieved by promoting reusable content and by leveraging the interactive Web.

## Reusable Content

Not all content is allowed to be reused. Content across the Web may be fully copyright-protected by the owner or creator, with no allowable sharing or reuse. Luckily, shareable and reusable content can easily be found by following licensing guidelines, often in the form of a Creative Commons (CC) license.<sup>12</sup> When libraries create shareable content as described in the chapter on Principle 1, we can also license our content CC, as allowable, to encourage sharing. We can also find CC-licensed content to share through our organizational social network accounts, and we can encourage our users to follow CC guidelines for finding and sharing content through their own social network accounts. A few key sources can uncover ready-to-use CC-licensed



**Figure 5.12**  
Google Image Search, with Usage Rights filter

content: Flickr, Google, Wikimedia Commons, and Creative Commons itself.

The Flickr community maintains one of the Web's most extensive collections of CC-licensed content.<sup>13</sup> The Flickr search tool—also one of the best of the Web—allows users to discover images and video according to a preferred reuse license (figure 5.11).

Google also offers extensive image searching, with a dedicated search parameter for Usage Rights (figure 5.12). Whereas the Flickr engine searches its own collection of user-contributed images, the Google engine indexes the open Web to find images that match search queries.

Wikimedia Commons, the repository for objects published through Wikipedia, offers over 32,000,000 freely usable media files.<sup>14</sup> Wikimedia contains images, video, and audio that can be shared and reused. Finally, Creative Commons itself offers a search portal for discovering reusable content from more than ten different content sources.<sup>15</sup> Not only are these tools excellent sources of content for our own sharing, but through user education, we can help our patrons understand and adopt practices of sharing and reuse.<sup>16</sup> Many excellent LibGuides can be found that can help librarians and library patrons understand and apply the complexities of copyright and content licensing.<sup>17</sup>

Through the SMO principle of encouraging reuse, we librarians can demonstrate a positive model of sharing for our user communities.

## The Interactive Web

The interactive Web presents opportunities to engage users directly with reusable content. By creating Web applications and content promotions, we can invite users into our collections for a creative exploration of shareable and reusable content.

At the MSU Library, we have created targeted campaigns using content from our Acoustic Atlas digital collection. Our Acoustic Atlas Ringtones webpage invites users to download, use, and share sound files representing the calls of various animals of the Western US.<sup>18</sup> Examples from other digital collections further highlight the interactive Web, such as the *Chronicling America* collection from the Library of Congress. This archive of American newspapers dating from 1836 to 1922 encourages users to read and share historical accounts from across the United States. The chronological scope of this collection neatly ends at 1922, thereby placing most content in the public domain, as copyright generally expires for

works published in the United States before January 1, 1923.<sup>19</sup> The collection scope of Chronicling America encourages reuse by intentionally making available this veritable trove of reusable content.

The Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) has creatively engaged users through interactive web application development. The DPLA makes its material openly available for reuse through an API: Application Program Interface, and maintains a growing list of apps that provide unique points of discovery for its vast collection of digitized objects.<sup>20</sup> To pick just one example of many, web developer and librarian Adam Malantonio created “Historical Cats,” a Twitter bot that randomly finds and tweets an object from the DPLA collection.<sup>21</sup> The DPLA also hosts an annual conference, the DPLAfest, that includes a “hackfest” where conference attendees can gather, brainstorm, and build new apps together that reuse DPLA material.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, DPLA representatives travel to across the nation to participate in library conferences and lead hackfests and other collaboration events.<sup>23</sup> In this way, the DPLA has become a leader in encouraging reuse. In the first place, the technical structure of the DPLA allows users to access, reuse, and share its collection in new and creative ways. Secondly, the DPLA is cultivating and promoting a culture of reuse by facilitating new application development at professional conferences.

## Conclusion

In complement to Principles 1–4, the fifth principle of SMO—*measure use and encourage reuse*—brings into view the full picture of optimizing social network activity for building and engaging community. Our discussion of this final principle provides an approach for defining goals and articulating success. With the parameters of success established, it becomes possible to apply quantitative Web analytics together with qualitative user feedback mechanisms to measure and evaluate a library’s social networking activity. This evaluation can then be used in two primary ways: first, to inform and improve future social network activity, and second, to understand and justify the use of social networking by providing evidence of community growth and engagement. SMO can help shape your social network activity so that it reflects your unique community of library users, ultimately serving to expand the world of the library by connecting our users with our collections, services, and people.

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## Notes

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