

ALA American Library Association

MASTERING MOBILE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

CREATING ENGAGING CONTENT ON
INSTAGRAM AND SNAPCHAT

Paige Alfonzo

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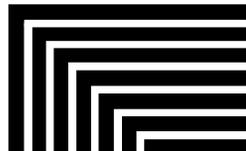
Library Technology

R E P O R T S

Expert Guides to Library Systems and Services

Mastering Mobile through Social Media: Creating Engaging Content on Instagram and Snapchat

Paige Alfonzo



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Mastering Mobile through Social Media: Creating Engaging Content on Instagram and Snapchat

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About the Editor

Paige Alfonzo received her M.S. in Library Science from the University of North Texas and B.A. in English from Texas State University. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Denver studying Research Methods and Statistics. Previously, she worked as an academic reference librarian at the rank of assistant professor at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. She started blogging about Snapchat in the library (<https://librarianenumerations.wordpress.com/category/promotion-tools/snapchat-promotion-tools>) in 2013. In 2014, she created a Snapchat contest in her library to promote National Library Week. She has also held various social media management positions and has written extensively on the use of social media in libraries and higher education more broadly. She specializes in social media research, qualitative and mixed methods analysis, and information literacy instruction. In her dissertation, she is examining the impact of contemporary social movements by modeling Bennett and Segerberg's Logic of Connective Action and Papacharissi's related work on affective publics, using a novel method that combines social media content analysis and structural equation modeling. In 2016, she published the book *Teaching Google Scholar: A Practical Guide for Librarians*.

Abstract

In this issue of *Library Technology Reports*, Paige Alfonzo explores the ways libraries can maximize their presence on Instagram and/or Snapchat, paying special attention to the transitory world of Instagram and Snapchat Stories. She starts with a mini-case study based on interviews she conducted with 11 standout library professionals who are using the aforementioned platforms in very effective ways. She then builds upon these ideas to bring you a series of practical ideas, tools, and resources you can implement to enhance your library's content on these primarily mobile applications. This report can be used by individuals at any stage of the marketing process from considering if your library is ready for Snapchat and/or Instagram to finding new ways to craft fresh content on your established account(s). Currently used by many librarians to tap into the exclusive world of the teen to young adult crowd, Instagram and Snapchat provide a unique and valuable communicative avenue to reach these demographics. The intention of this report is to provide you with considerations for platform management and offer new ideas and concepts to get your creative juices flowing.

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Introduction

Over the years, librarians have discovered the benefits of using social media to communicate with their patrons. Platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram are now communication staples for many key library demographic audiences, particularly those between thirteen and thirty-four years old. Along with that popularity, social media platforms have become more sophisticated, and user expectations have increased. A simple text post or even a basic image just doesn't cut it anymore. It's not uncommon to see video posts that include animated GIFs, digital stickers, music, and filters. Additionally, ephemeral content sent with Snapchat Stories and Instagram Stories are created alongside more stable forward-facing timeline posts. These advanced features and heightened user expectations are often hard to stay abreast of in the ever-changing social media environment. While many librarians are starting to use Snapchat and Instagram Stories, they are still looking for guidance on more creative avenues for reaching their library patrons.

In this issue of *Library Technology Reports*, I explore the ways libraries can maximize their presence on Instagram and Snapchat, paying special attention to the transitory world of Instagram and Snapchat Stories. I start with a mini-case study based on interviews I

conducted with 11 standout library professionals who are using the aforementioned platforms in very effective ways. Then, I build upon these ideas to bring you a series of practical ideas, tools, and resources that you can implement to enhance your library's content on these primarily mobile applications. Special focus has been devoted to Snapchat and Instagram in this issue because they offer a broad suite of creative applications, which often require more advanced skills and knowledge specific to each platform.

The increased usage of Snapchat and Instagram (particularly when it pertains to video content) over the past two years and growing interest among librarians using these platforms speaks to the need for this report. It can be used by individuals at any stage of the marketing process, from considering if your library is ready for Snapchat or Instagram to finding new ways to craft fresh content on your established account(s). Currently used by many librarians to tap into the exclusive world of teens and young adults, Instagram and Snapchat provide a unique and valuable communicative avenue for reaching these demographics. This issue is intended to provide librarians with best practices, content ideas, and real-world examples that can help them enhance their current social media outreach efforts.

Real-World Examples

In an effort to reach as many patrons as possible, many librarians over the years have worked hard to leverage their social media accounts, both as promotional tools and as communication resources. As many library users (especially teens, young adults, and first- and second-year college students) are migrating to more interactive and private networks, an interest in reaching these demographics has been increasing in the library community. At the forefront of these conversations are photo- and video-sharing heavy hitters Snapchat and Instagram. Some professionals are at the beginning stages of deciding whether to add these platforms to their social media repertoires, while others are seeking ways to effectively incorporate digital book talks, #BookFaceFriday hashtags, and custom library geofilters. To get a window into these inner workings no matter what stage of the decision-making process you are in, I decided to feature some trailblazing library professionals to get their take on Instagram and Snapchat. While many of the topics outlined in this chapter will be discussed in-depth in later chapters, I wanted to start this report by featuring a summary of what an effective library Instagram and Snapchat presence looks like.

For this chapter, I interviewed 11 library professionals from nine different libraries. Some individuals I spoke with manage both Instagram and Snapchat, while the majority handle one of the two. To preserve the anonymity of the participants and the flow of the chapter, I refer to each individual using their library's @handle. Listed below are the libraries that participated, along with details including library type and the platform on which I focused my interview:¹

- **@acclibraries**—academic library with an interview focus on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/acclibraries>)

- **@CMCLibrary**—public library with an interview focus on Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/cmclibrary>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/cmclibrary>)
- **@libraryul**—academic library with an interview focus on Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/libraryul>)
- **@librariesluc**—academic library with an interview focus on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/librariesluc>)²
- **@NCSULibraries**—academic library with an interview focus on Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/ncsulibraries>)
- **@NISDStevenslib**—high school library with an interview focus on Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/nisdstevenslib>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/nisdstevenslib>)
- **@TheRLPL**—public library with an interview focus on Snapchat (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/therlpl>)
- **@orillia_library**—public library with an interview focus on Snapchat (https://www.snapchat.com/add/orillia_library)
- **@topekalibrary**—public library with an interview focus on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/topekalibrary>)

Why Instagram/Snapchat?

If we had a mission statement, it would be to never ever hear a student say, “Oh man, I’m graduating next week and I didn’t know you had that.”

—@NCSULibraries

For almost everyone I spoke with, the rationale for adding a platform stems from a desire to reach a population

or communicate a message that they were not able to beforehand. As @orillia_library summarized it, “Right now teens are using Snapchat, so that’s what’s working.” Similarly, @TheRLPL wanted to find a way to reach tween-young adult age groups, as they had seen a drop in teen attendance at their programs and a decline in teens and twenty-something interaction on Facebook. They now use Snapchat to, among other things, highlight their ability to “offer more of what teens enjoy and need from the library.” @acclibraries added that in addition to reaching different demographics, Instagram allows them to communicate something new and different, being able to literally paint a picture of what the inside of the library looks like and add a lighthearted “human” element. Tapping into patron proclivities has paid off for @topekalibrary, with them hitting the 1,000 follower mark on Instagram in just a year and a half.

Staff Management

Social media management is not an afterthought, but rather an area for concerted time and devotion.

—@CMCLibrary

Deciding whether to add another social media platform to most librarians’ already full plates is also an important consideration. All but one of the librarians I spoke with handle social media as part of their established job responsibilities. With this structure, an additional platform has the potential to overwhelm someone who is already juggling a variety of different tasks, as @CMCLibrary expressed it: “I don’t want to say social media is my side job, but I’m at the reference desk and assisting patrons all day, so sometimes things fall to the side.” To help manage this potential pitfall, many participants intentionally carve out time on a consistent basis for social media. For example, each of the social media managers at @acclibraries tries to dedicate about one hour per week to ensure that content is consistently managed.

Another way some libraries set everyone up for success and ensure a steady flow of quality content is by dividing *tasks* by day or person or separating *platforms* by person. Task and platform division was easily adopted by @acclibraries, @CMCLibrary, @librariesatluc, @topekalibrary, and @NCSULibraries, who have established teams of social media managers. @librariesatluc designates one main person per platform, with all positions being supported by the library’s PR and outreach committee. Similarly, @CMCLibrary has designated social media liaisons who coordinate social media across departments or branches in the library. For them, specific days on Snapchat break down to one librarian managing

#TeenBookTuesday, Wednesday nonfiction roundups, and Thursday announcements, and the other librarian posting graphic novel book talks on Mondays. Maintaining a certain level of flexibility is important for @topekalibrary: “We don’t do the thing that all the branding people say you’re supposed to do on Instagram; we let each individual staff member do their own thing.” @topekalibrary implements co-management of Instagram, comprising approximately eight people. @acclibraries has a “social media team” of six members and a designated team leader, with each person primarily handling one platform, but no person “owning” it. @acclibraries explained that this setup allows social media to be a fun and doable activity that supplements current librarian duties and functions and facilitates multiple voices.

Regarding Snapchat, @NCSULibraries has implemented the unique approach of allowing students to manage the account. @NCSULibraries maintains a larger staff and designates social media management and oversight to the larger library marketing and communications department, which consists of five full-time staff members. @NCSULibraries explained that the primary rationale behind adopting a “student-run” Snapchat account is to create space to get those who best understand the platform involved, stating “Snapchat is the thing that makes me and my team feel old, and it’s just not intuitive to us.” @NCSULibraries also added that the student workers have the benefit of being able to put on their résumé that they ran a major social media platform for a fairly large organization. For those on a smaller team where duties cannot be easily split up, it is helpful when those managing Snapchat or Instagram are naturally interested and/or avid users themselves. This was the case for one library professional at @librariesluc, who originally created and managed the Snapchat account, but later handed the reins over to a librarian who was more of a Snapchat user.

Regardless of whether the platform is managed by one person or multiple people, community contribution and collaboration are always encouraged. @librariesluc explained that non-social media managers in the library periodically send content to the Snapchat and Instagram manager to be sent out and promoted. Participants mentioned using an internal Listserv, email, intranet file service, or Google Drive for these purposes. @CMCLibrary tries to make content creation as easy as possible, allowing liaisons to post content directly to a platform or send it to a social media manager or coordinator. Additionally, while individuals need to have been a librarian or library staff member for at least a year to help manage a platform, @CMCLibrary does open it up to volunteers and community members by allowing them to send content to the library for possible inclusion.

Account Logistics

Before creating any social media account, it is important to have some preliminary best practices and guidelines established (see chapter 2). The creation of guidelines is mainly administered by managers during the onboarding process; they cover topics including privacy, how often to post, what days and times to post, and so on. However, as @CMCLibrary pointed out, since social media is constantly in flux, these guidelines are always changing as well.

To Follow or Not to Follow? And Other Patron Privacy Issues

Snapchat has a more “closed network” feel than Instagram, allowing users to send snaps to specific users, groups of users, their entire contacts list, or their Stories (with custom, live, and public options available). Also, depending on a user’s settings, one user might not be able to send others individual snaps if they do not follow the user. This can be particularly inhibiting for librarians seeking to add another communication channel for reference services. As a result, many librarians wrestle with whether or not to add patrons back as friends. Some participants I spoke with have a strict “no-follow” policy on Snapchat, especially in the case of public libraries. @CMCLibrary also carries this no-follow policy over to employees, stating that they do not follow employees back or @mention them in any posts to preserve everyone’s privacy.

Other libraries were a little more flexible in this area. On Instagram, @topekalibrary recommends libraries follow patrons back to help build community and, from a pragmatic standpoint, boost algorithmic exposure. To bypass the follow/not follow quandary, @orillia_library stated that they add everyone back but do not look at the content, explaining that they send everyone a snap that reads: “Thanks for following us. Just so you know, we won’t ever view your stories. We only view messages that are sent directly to us.”

Another common privacy issue surrounds posting photos or videos featuring individual patrons. For some, consent involves a verbal agreement with individuals, with the library asking the patrons if they can post the picture or video on social media after taking it. @topekalibrary has general terms and conditions on their website that states that groups of three or more patrons may be photographed or videotaped in the library; when there are fewer than three individuals in a photo, the library utilizes a simple video release form. @acclibraries takes a hybrid approach, operating under their institution’s blanket policy that photos can be taken for publicity purposes when students are on campus, but also getting verbal confirmation.

Account Promotion

Participants implement a variety of tactics to attract new followers on Instagram and Snapchat. @NISD-stevenslib recently moved from the school district’s middle school to the high school and has recently created all new social media accounts. To get the word out, they utilize visible signage in the library and bookmarks featuring their Snapcode and username as well as face-to-face discussions as students visit the library. (If you don’t know what a Snapcode is, don’t worry; we’ll cover that in chapter 3.) Similarly, @TheRLPL features its Snapcode and username, using the graphic design web tool Canva, on both visible signage and digital assets, which they cross-post on other social media channels (see figure 1.1 for an example of a cross-posted promotional Snapcode). Cross-promotion for @CMCLibrary also includes Snapchat information located in the “bio” section of their YouTube and Pinterest accounts. @orillia_library likes to combine both digital and face-to-face methods to promote their account, choosing to AirDrop³ their Snapcode at events such as their local comic con as well as passing out swag such as buttons and bookmarks. @libraryul enlisted help from groups and departments with more established Snapchat accounts and student connections, such as the Students’ Union. @orillia_library and @libraryul also solicited the assistance of teen advisors and student peer advisors to help get the word out.

Canva
<https://www.canva.com>

Content Creation Tips and Ideas

A photo with just a book on a shelf isn’t going to get a whole lot of engagement; we need someone holding that book.

—@acclibraries

It is important that those seeking to use Web 2.0 technologies such as Instagram and Snapchat avoid using them in a Web 1.5 manner. Jackson and Lilleker coined the term *Web 1.5* to describe an extensive use of Web 2.0 architecture of participation without maximizing its inherent democratic structure.⁴ One of the key differences between Web 1.0 and 2.0 is that rather than being solely consumers of content, users become both consumers and participants.⁵ So, rather than merely broadcasting information, librarians creating successful content are embracing all the elements of Web 2.0, including diverse and creative text, audio, and video content; the incorporation of user-generated content, live stories, commenting/sharing/liking, linking, #hashtagging, @mentioning,



Figure 1.1
 Example of a Facebook post promoting @libraryul's Snapchat account using a snapcode (Source: University of Limerick Glucksman Library, [@ULlibrary], "We're on Snapchat," Facebook post, February 13, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/ULlibrary/photos/a.364124327122777/674343926100814/?type=3&theater>.)

@geotagging, lenses, and filters; and an invitation or an opportunity for viewers to respond or interact with the content. Listed in this section are some key tactics and topics that you can tap into when creating your own Instagram or Snapchat content. However, if you do not read anything else in this report, the main takeaway would be this: Have fun with it, be silly, and it never hurts to throw in a cute animal picture.

Topic: Book Talks/Readers' Advisories

The public and K–12 school librarians I spoke with discussed success with book talks. @TheRLPL explained that book talks are an effective way to show the "face behind the account as well as learn about some great books." @NISDstevenlib organizes the majority of their content around book talks, creating recurring themed days including #MANGAmond, #TeenBook Tuesday, and #FlashBackFriday (which focuses on a "classic book or a good book that hasn't gotten a lot of love lately"). These book talks traditionally involve taking a picture of the cover of the book, the inner flap with the book summary, and the first page so users can get a sample. They also include the genre and a variety of different emoji. @NISDstevenlib reported

that not only do students engage with the snaps online, but some individuals visit the library with the sole purpose of checking out the highlighted book. @CMCLibrary also incorporates themed days including #TeenBookTuesday, but rather than use Snapchat to record the video, they capture content using a professional-grade camera, post it on YouTube, and then share a link to the YouTube video on Snapchat.⁶ This approach was prompted by Snapchat's unpopular interface update last year that resulted in fewer views from their followers. As with @NISDstevenlib, @CMCLibrary has found that these features usually result in a fast turnover of the highlighted book (which are also on display in the library).

@CMCLibrary on YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/cmclibrary>

@orillia_library creatively sneaks in readers' advisory by creating BuzzFeed-style personality or quiz prompts, such as "What book should you read based on your star sign?" or "Tell us your favorite horror movie, and we'll recommend the next video game you should check out." In a very Web 2.0 fashion, they also make things interactive, such as creating a truth-or-dare game on Snapchat based on the book *Truth or Dare?* @TheRLPL also likes to incorporate more than just books in readers' advisories and book talks and also features music and DVDs as they arrive on the shelves monthly.

Topic: Library Services/Programming/How-To

Probably second most important from a marketing standpoint would be the promotion of library services. This content often includes what @libraryul and @TheRLPL listed as how to find or reserve a book, get a library card, cite a reference, or connect to the library remotely, as well as some need-to-know information such as library closures, weekend services, and so on. On Snapchat, @libraryul likes to use the URL feature (see chapter 3) for these purposes. However, unfortunately, some platforms are not as amenable as others to this type of pragmatic posting. @librariesluc lamented that Instagram posts focusing on library programming generally do not perform as well as campus beauty shots (see the Library and Book Beauty Shots section below) but revealed that the recently released Instagram Stories have provided a more organic place for this content. @acclibraries, also an avid Instagram Stories user, reported that the library strives to keep things relevant, focusing on student success and making students' lives better.

Topic: Recurring Content

Holidays; recurring celebrations or “tentpole” days or events; and weekly, monthly, and yearly themes can be great ways to interest users. @topekalibrary jumps on #ThrowbackThursday by spotlighting various subjects from their local history department. @CMCLibrary cultivates some FOMO (fear of missing out) during their annual comic convention (Cape Con) by posting videos on Instagram Stories. @CMCLibrary also mentioned posting videos on Instagram from monthly cooking classes, which feature a local chef from the community, maximizing reach by @mentioning the local business. This content is also cross-posted on platforms such as Pinterest, which creatively involves a branded recipe pin. This approach has let them move from “just a library in Cape May County to being global.”

@CMCLibrary's Cape Con
<https://capecon.cmclibrary.org>

CMCL Cooks on Pinterest
<https://www.pinterest.ch/cmclibrary/cmcl-cooks>

Finals week is always popular in the academic sphere. @NCSULibraries likes to snap locations where they are giving out cookies, coffee, and study “survival kits” with fun gifts and snacks, using the opportunity to encourage students to follow their account. @acclibraries supports ACC's Support Center through the management of a small semesterly textbook services program for financially eligible students and makes sure to share that information on Instagram so those individuals can stay in the know. They also jumped on the Textbook Hero movement and created a fun campaign involving a READ-style poster photoshoot that highlighted classroom faculty offering open-access textbooks as part of ACC's OER initiative (see figure 1.2). On the public library side of things, summer reading programs regularly provide a bevy of content to post. @CMCLibrary cited examples of a video showing how badges were created and posts displaying the prizes they were giving away. @topekalibrary added that incorporating pictures or videos of animals is always a good bet for garnering interaction with their summer reading posts. To make things interactive and encourage teens to report on their summer reading progress, @orillia_library created a leaderboard called “beat sneaky Pete,” in which students would try to read more books than the top summer reader, cleverly dubbed “Sneaky Pete.”

Tentpole days and events (occurrences such as National Cat Day, National Best Friends Day, etc.) are effective ways to connect trending topics to library content. @acclibraries, who adopts a lighthearted playful approach, recalled a recent successful post in

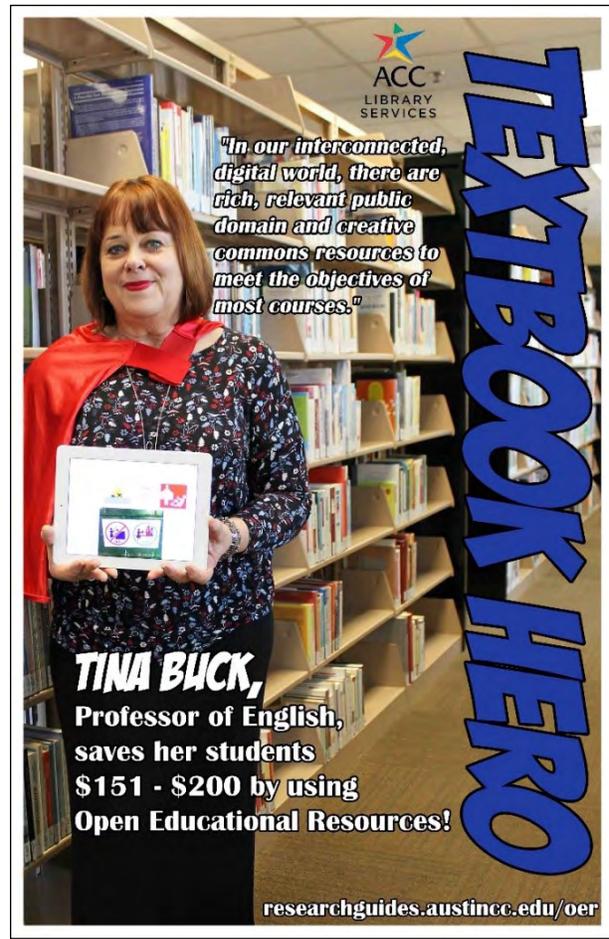


Figure 1.2

@acclibraries READ-style poster example (Source: Austin Community College Libraries, [@acclibraries], “Textbook Hero Tina Buck,” Instagram photo, March 7, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgB--57DUjs/>.)

which they photoshopped a giant cat next to one of their reference librarians for National Cat Day (see figure 1.3). @librariesluc reported that they do a big push for voter registration, using the motivating hashtag #LoyolaVotes. One tentpole event that never disappoints in the library realm, National Library Week, was commonly discussed among participants. Building off of 2016/2017's ALA Presidential Initiative, “Libraries Transform: The Expert in the Library,” @acclibraries created a video series entitled “Expert in the Library,” promoting their librarians' different backgrounds, skills, and professional areas of specialization.

National Library Week

<http://www.ala.org/conferenceevents/celebrationweeks/natlibraryweek>



Figure 1.3
Tentpole event post example from @acclibraries (Source: Austin Community College Libraries, [@acclibraries], “International Cat Day,” Instagram photo, August 8, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BmOvU9Ilgk_k/?taken-by=acclibraries.)

Milestone events and celebrations lauding various library, university, or city achievements were mentioned as popular ways to build hype. @topekalibrary reported they made sure to post during their celebration of “75 years of bookmobile service,” and @CMCLibrary had a video ready for when they reached 1,000 Instagram followers (adding that they waited until it was a bit over that amount to account for any unfollows). @NCSULibraries stated that it is also helpful to craft pre-event posts to build hype and encourage attendance.

Topic: Library and Book Beauty Shots

You can’t go wrong with your standard campus, library, or book “beauty shot,” especially on Instagram. @topekalibrary suggests incorporating photos that pop and are easy to see quickly (see figure 1.4). @librariesluc revealed that high-quality photos of campus or library life, such as the library building, the reading room, the stacks, a nice study space, or #lakeviews from their information commons, always play well. For inspiration on beautiful book arrangements, @CMCLibrary recommends following self-proclaimed bookstagrammer @james_trevino, who has a gift for creating visually impressive book arrays (see chapter 4).

James Trevino (@james_trevino) Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/james_trevino/



Figure 1.4
Library beauty shot example from @topekalibrary/@davidleeking (Source: Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, “Photo of Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library Building by David Lee King,” Instagram photo, August 9, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BmPUfUFRDL/>.)

Tactic: Ask Questions

Invitational phrasing is a useful way to interest your users and encourage interaction beyond simply liking a post. @CMCLibrary incorporates face-to-face and digital tactics, sharing an example that asked, “Who’s your favorite Harry Potter character and why?” on their whiteboard and invited patrons to write down or snap their responses. @orillia_library taps into nostalgia by asking their followers about their favorite kids’ book on #ThrowbackThursday. @acclibraries has found Instagram Stories’ poll feature useful for these types of questions (e.g., What’s the best movie adaptation of a book?), making sure to include a follow-up post with the results. One great resource for ideas in this domain is BuzzFeed, which has really mastered the art of crafting queries that speak to millennial and Gen Z audiences.

BuzzFeed
<https://www.buzzfeed.com>

Tactic: Tweak by Platform

When composing content, it is important to either create posts specific to the platform or tweak the message if cross-posting. In general, what works on Facebook does not perform the same way on Snapchat and vice versa. This has to do with a variety of things including algorithms and the different audiences using each platform. (Snapchat skews younger while Facebook skews older.) @NCSULibraries explained while content on other platforms is more polished, Snapchat is more “on the ground,” requiring snaps showcasing what it is like to be a student in the library in real time. Limitations

can also be a barrier regarding cross-posted content. For example, @acclibraries pointed out that since Instagram requires videos to be sixty seconds or less, they create a one-minute cut for Instagram and a longer form video for YouTube, the website, their LibGuides, and the institution's content-sharing Listserv (rather than just creating a short video for all platforms).

Tactic: Go to the Source

What better way to understand what teens and young adults want than to go to the source? @NCSULibraries, @orillia_library, and @libraryul all seek the input from their target demographic by using an advisory board. The reason was stated by @NCSULibraries: "We're all a bunch of middle-aged white dudes, so we need to ensure that we are representing other voices and perspectives." @orillia_library also likes to feature teen volunteers in snaps, revealing that allowing "teens [to] see someone their own age featured" is more viewer-friendly and "helps encourage them to share content with their own contacts." Also libraries do not have to pursue the opinions of their target demographic directly from patrons, but can simply garner intel from people of a similar age. For example, one interviewee recalled that when she first started Snapchat, she asked her niece to show her the basics and provide suggestions on interesting things to share.

Additionally, it is also helpful to seek the knowledge of various librarians to help diversify content and facilitate fresh ideas. @acclibraries solicits opinions and content from faculty librarians, staff, and students across all of their eleven campuses, stating that a lot of the job is more management than original posting. @librariesluc similarly seeks information from individuals at their smaller downtown campus, as they do not have the resources to manage social media at both locations.

Tactic: Go with the Flow

Flexibility is essential when it comes to creating engaging content. For @acclibraries, this includes hours outside of the traditional nine-to-five workday as well as increasing or decreasing posting as needed (which often happens seasonally, with less posting during the summer months and more during the fall and spring semesters). Being flexible also means not feeling guilty if you do not have content to post every single day. @NISDstevenslib reported they strive for consistent posting but do not worry about missing a day. This adaptability also means knowing when it is time to move on to something new. For example, @orillia_library noticed that static posts promoting their Nerf Battle event were not performing very well, so they switched to a video of actual teens using Nerf guns, which was much more successful.

Tactic: Tap into In-Office and Community Talent

You never know what librarians are capable of outside of their jobs; there's a lot of untapped talent that sometimes we don't even know about.

—@acclibraries

Users love it when libraries put a human face on their brand. One easy way to do this is to showcase the unique talents of your staff. @CMCLibrary recalled creating a fun video starring a librarian applying her past skills attained from color guard to use ribbons in an entertaining way. Even if you do not have the time to discover everyone's hidden talents, you can promote library services with an "introduce the staff" series, which was recommended by @topekalibrary. Take advantage of the skills of library staffers, such as those who have a keen eye for photography, a talent for mid-level or professional-level graphic design, or an aptitude for putting together a hilarious meme. As @acclibraries pointed out, "You don't have to have a degree in photography to take great pictures."

Tactic: Interact with Patrons

If a patron asks a question on Snapchat, be prepared to follow through fully; treat it like you would a regular reference desk session.

—@orillia_library

It is important to note that whether you plan for it or not, patrons will most likely expect all your available social media channels to function as viable points of communication. This can come in the form of answering a formal reference question or just a comment to show you care. @topekalibrary recommends linking your Instagram account to Facebook to streamline these interactions, stating that they try to answer all comments and questions, even if just to say "thank you." @orillia_library carries an iPad to answer as quickly as possible, even if it's just a quick sticker, stating, "The faster you respond, the more interaction you get." @orillia_library also discussed using the iPad for reference, placing holds for patrons, assisting with a research project, and so on. This is something that @libraryul is aiming to do on Snapchat, but has not quite reached yet.

What's on the Horizon

I would love the opportunity to just sit down and talk about the things that other libraries go through.

—@CMCLibrary

After speaking with these gifted and forward-thinking library professionals, I learned about a variety of social media methods and tools that can be implemented to

serve their patrons. On the direct horizon, I anticipate more libraries will start to utilize Instagram Stories. @CMCLibrary, @acclibraries, and @topekalibrary all mentioned they are starting to experiment with Stories, which @CMCLibrary indicated involves relinquishing some control on the management side. As more and more people recognize the value of social media and start to create easily accessible ways to measure their return on investment, there might be more dollar amounts devoted to it as well. This might mean Instagram advertising forays and increased usage of event-specific custom Snapchat geofilters or lenses. One hope for the future expressed by @CMCLibrary was greater collaboration and idea sharing between libraries. @CMCLibrary stated that even something as simple as a phone conference or a panel or workshop at a regional library association meeting would be immensely helpful. Who knows, maybe a social media library conference or an ALA Annual social media panel will be offered in the future?!

In the next chapter, I will discuss some general best practices, apps, and resources you can use to boost your Instagram and Snapchat content. Then in chapters 3 and 4, I will drill down into content specifics that seem to perform especially well on each platform.

Notes

1. It should be noted that all of these libraries also manage additional accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. However, these platforms were outside the purview of this chapter and thus were not included.
2. The individual I interviewed from @librariesluc has since moved and is no longer working at @librariesluc.
3. AirDrop is an iOS service that allows you to easily transfer files between Mac or iOS devices that are within 30 feet of each other.
4. Nigel A. Jackson and Darren G. Lilleker, "Building an Architecture of Participation? Political Parties and Web 2.0 in Britain," *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 6, no. 3–4 (2009): 232–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331680903028438>.
5. Graham Cormode and Balachander Krishnamurthy, "Key Differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0," *First Monday* 13, no. 6 (June 2, 2008), www.ojphi.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2125.
6. Cape May County Library [cmclibrary] YouTube channel, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/user/cmclibrary/videos>.
7. David Cohen, "Snapchat Continues Its Surge among U.S. Teens, While Facebook Free Falls," *Social Pro Daily, Adweek*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.adweek.com/digital/snapchat-continues-its-surge-among-u-s-teens-while-facebook-free-falls/>.

General Best Practices, Tools, and Resources

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

Creating a Social Media Strategy and Policy

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

Proposal Stage

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

SNAPCHAT VS. IG ADOPTION

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

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

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

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

Strategy Stage

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

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

Policy Stage

The last step is the policy stage. A recent survey by WebJunction revealed that the majority of libraries do not currently have a social media policy, with some respondents reporting that they have “social media guidelines for staff” or “guidelines for patrons and staff.”¹² Social media policies (also called best practices, principles, or codes of conduct) generally cover

the dos and don’ts of handling social media and come in two main flavors: internally facing and public-facing. An internally facing social media policy is utilized by your library’s social media managers and covers topics surrounding organizational expectations, patron privacy, inappropriate or spam messages, controversial content area or subjects, disclaimers, what to do when a social media manager leaves the library, and so on. These documents are typically posted on the library’s intranet and available only to staffers. A public-facing social media policy is often displayed on an organization’s website and is available to the general public. These documents include a summary of how your library uses social media and any guiding state and federal laws and regulations that your library adheres to. Typical topics include user privacy (including photo and video consent), general employee conduct, and patron guidelines (including actions for misconduct). Here are a few resources for designing an effective social media policy:

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

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

General Management Ideas, Tools, and Resources

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

Google Analytics is a free and highly robust tool that you can use along with Google’s Campaign URL

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

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

Google Analytics

<https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web>

Campaign URL Builder

<https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder>

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

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

Inconosquare

<https://pro.inconosquare.com>

Hootsuite

<https://hootsuite.com>

Buffer

<https://buffer.com>

SproutSocial

<https://sproutsocial.com>

Collaboration Ideas and Tools

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

- **Content calendar**—Content calendars allow you to map out your publishing schedule in advance, keeping everyone abreast of upcoming content. As long as all managers check the calendar and adhere to the marked events, then it should be a successful endeavor. Shared calendars, such as Google Calendar or Outlook Calendar, that allow you to partition according to the project (such as Social Media Marketing Calendar or even more granular like Snapchat Marketing Calendar) can be handy.
- **Task management and workflow tools such as Asana or Trello**²²—I am a huge fan of Asana over content calendars, but it is definitely a personal preference. What gives these tools a leg up over content calendars and email communication are the enhanced organizational elements. Users can create a calendar, project, or campaign and assign various individuals to specific tasks. They can also add attachments (such as image or video assets), @mention specific users, and communicate with others under the specific task using the comments section. These tools can also be

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

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

Slack

<https://slack.com>

Content Ideas, Tools, and Resources for IG and Snapchat

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

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

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

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

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

#RiotGrams

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

#Bookstagrammer

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

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

IG AND SNAPCHAT STORIES TIPS

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

then post it to IG or Snapchat. Alternatively, you can shoot short videos on your phone and then decide the best ones to add to your Story. Just keep it organized, whether based on time (e.g., a day), event, or story arc in a book that you are featuring (i.e., have a beginning, middle, and end).

Photo and Video Editing Tools

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

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

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

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

YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com>

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

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

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

Hugo Awards

www.thehugoawards.org

Banned Books Week

<https://bannedbooksweek.org>

Library Card Sign-up Month

www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks/card

National Library Week

www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks/natlibraryweek

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

Conclusion

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

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Snapchat in the Library

Snapchat started in 2011 as a place where users could communicate through photo, video, and text messaging that would disappear once viewed. It was very much a closed network platform with an interface that seemed to be intentionally complicated and geared toward the online habits of teens (Bloomberg dedicated an entire article to this concept entitled “How Snapchat Built a Business by Confusing Olds”¹). It increased its reach and application in the brand and marketing world with the introduction of Snapchat Stories, collections of chronological snaps that expire within twenty-four hours (just like Instagram Stories). Unlike Instagram (IG), Snapchat’s focus is still more closed network with the deliberate absence of public-facing follower numbers and usernames, engagement metrics (i.e., likes, comments, views, etc.), and permanent posts (unlike IG feed posts). Also, unlike its rival, it focuses on a more lighthearted, goofy vibe with lenses, filters, and augmented reality components (e.g., the dancing hotdog).

In the realm of teen users, while IG is rising in the Gen Z population ranks, a recent survey revealed IG and Snapchat to be about neck and neck with monthly usage and Snapchat still leading the way as teens’ “favorite social platform.”² However, to address the ghost-shaped elephant in the room, Snapchat does seem to be losing in the sparring match against its mimetic rival.³ Recent reports of quarterly earnings show a decline in daily active users and share prices.⁴ Some criticize the app for trying to do too much, with private peer-to-peer sharing getting lost in the hullabaloo of redesigns, partnerships, and expansions⁵ (although it would be great if Snapchat offered something similar to what it is doing with Amazon and letting users scan a physical object or barcode and then view a card showing product details!⁶). So right now it seems to be a waiting

game. The next year should reveal whether the app will continue to remain relevant, increase its user base, and keep advertisers interested. It is also important to remember that Snapchat still has around 186 million daily active users worldwide, which is significant.

As Snapchat is a complex topic, which would undoubtedly exceed the textual confines of this brief issue of *Library Technology Reports*, I will not be covering a lot of logistical information, but rather will be focusing on ideas for content generation and account optimization specific to libraries. There are a variety of resources you can use to get up to speed on Snapchat, including their YouTube channel, HubSpot’s blog, and Hootsuite’s blog.⁷ I also periodically teach a Snapchat webinar for ALA Publishing eLearning Solutions that you can keep your eyes peeled for!⁸ Before we get started, there are a few terms and concepts that I would like to outline:

- **Snap**—A photo or video that you send to a user or publish on your Story, which is traditionally ephemeral and disappears after it is viewed. You can record up to six sequential ten-second-long video snaps for a total of a one-minute-long full snap.
- **Snapcode**—A QR code that lets users add you as a friend by hovering their camera over the Snapcode or taking a picture of the image (see figure 3.1).
- Screens and menus
 - **Home screen**—A giant camera where you can take pictures or videos as well as navigate to the chat, discover, and profile screens.
 - **Shutter button**—Located on the home screen. It is the tool used to take a picture (by tapping) or record a video (by holding).



Figure 3.1

Example of my Snapcode. Try it out! Take a picture of the code with your Snapchat camera and see if my profile pops up.

- **Memories menu**⁹—Accessed by tapping the double portrait icon located below the shutter button, Memories is your personal archive within the app. To save a snap to Memories, you need to capture a snap and press the downward-pointing arrow icon on the bottom left of the screen. You can also upload non-Snapchat images and video from your phone’s camera roll, save them to Memories, and share them to your Story. I have my settings set to save content in both Memories and my camera roll so I can easily create and share content across social media platforms (Settings → Memories → Save To → Memories and Camera Roll).
- **Chat screen**—Accessed by swiping right or tapping on the chat bubble icon in the bottom left part of the screen. This is the space to chat one-on-one with users.
- **Discover screen**—Accessed by swiping left or tapping on the double rectangle in the bottom right part of the screen. This is where entertainment content lives with brands serving various shows and stories to users. You can also view your friends’ Stories on this screen (or via the chat screen). In effort to compete with YouTube and IGTV, Snapchat recently started offering short exclusive shows called Snap Originals.¹⁰
- **Profile screen**—Accessed by tapping your profile picture in the upper left corner of the screen. This is where you can retrieve your Snapcode, access the Settings menu, add friends, and manage your Snapchat Story.
 - **Settings menu**—Accessed by tapping the gear icon in the upper right corner of the profile screen.
- **Search menu**—Accessed by swiping down. This is Snapchat’s single search bar where you can search usernames, topics, places, and so on.
- **Optimize your username**—This includes creating a username that is consistent with your @handles on other platforms as well as entering your full library name in the first and last name sections of your profile (rather than just your username). Including both your username and your full name helps those who try to find your account using Snapchat search (@orillia_library is a good example of an optimized username where they utilize orillia_library as their username and Orillia Public Library as their account name).
- **Leverage your Snapcode, link, and username.**
 - **Snapcode**—Snapcodes can be used in a variety of different venues both online and offline. If you are in the beginning stages of account promotion, you could create a blurb in your newsletter, entry in your blog, and post on your other social media channels announcing your new account. One way many brands broadcast their Snapchat account is by periodically using their Snapcode as their profile image on Twitter and Facebook. In the offline realm, Snapcodes can be featured on business cards, posters, signs at the circulation desk, stickers, decals, bookmarks, buttons, handouts, and so on. Sites like Sticker Mule and Canva can help with designing these assets.¹² Carlos Gil at Social Media Examiner highlighted retail store Tilly’s clever incorporation of hanging a giant decal of its Snapcode on its front door,¹³ which could be easily adapted for the library context. If you are at a conference, giving a workshop, or teaching an information literacy session, you could also include your Snapcode on your slide deck or Airdrop or text it during one-on-one discussions or networking.
 - **Custom Snapcode**—You can create a more branded look by designing a custom Snapcode.¹⁴ Some excellent examples include the

If you want to learn more about navigation, Snapchat has a helpful video explanation.¹¹

Optimization

Spreading the word announcing your presence is important not just when you start your account, but also after it has been established since there will always be new patrons visiting the library, moving to the area, and so on. Follower growth is dependent on how discoverable your account is. Discoverability is achieved directly on the platform as well as through promotion on your website, other social media accounts, and word of mouth. Listed below are some easy ways you can enhance the findability of your account:

Snapcodes of the University of Michigan, *National Geographic*, and the *Washington Post*.¹⁵

- **Hyperlinked Snapchat icon**—“Follow me” Snapchat icons on websites are surprisingly absent in the library sphere. While not as convenient as adding a linked IG icon to your page, a hyperlink for your Snapchat icon can easily be generated using [http://snapchat.com/add/\[username\]](http://snapchat.com/add/[username]) (e.g. <http://snapchat.com/add/paigealfonzo>). Since Snapchat is currently mobile-only, it works a little differently from other linked icons, sending the user to your Snapcode rather than the desktop version of the platform. In addition to your website, you can link your icon in your e-newsletter, blog, email signatures, and LibGuides. @NCSULibraries’ website is a great example of how to include your Snapchat logo with your other “follow me” icons (see figure 3.2).¹⁶
- **Username**—You can use your Snapchat username in addition to or in lieu of your Snapcode on print marketing materials on items such as flyers, signs, and so on. You can also use this in a word-of-mouth setting by telling individuals to add you at assemblies, outreach visits, or one on one. Just keep in mind that textual entry is case sensitive.
- **Broaden your reach through settings**—There are a few settings that you can adjust to enhance the discoverability of your account and content:
 - **Filters**—Set to On. Gives you access to Snapchat geofilters.
 - **View My Story**—Set to Everyone. Allows anyone to view your story whether or not they’ve added you as a friend.
 - **Contact Me**—Set to Everyone. Lets anyone send you a snap whether or not they’ve added you as a friend.
 - **Show Me in Quick Add**—Set to On. Includes your account in a user’s suggested friends list.
 - **See My Location**—You can change this to My Friends, Ghost Mode, or Only These Friends, depending on your established social media policy. Set it to My Friends if you have a policy of adding patrons back, as it will enable them to easily locate your library on the Snap Map.¹⁷
- **Decrease lag time**—Snapchat accounts are in danger of being orphaned when the gung-ho individual who once handled the account vacates their position. To help avoid this lag time, utilize a dedicated library mobile device for the account (since Snapchat is currently mobile-only), store sign-in credentials in a secure but centralized location (such as your library’s intranet), and connect the account to a general email (rather than a person’s library email address or personal phone number).

FOLLOW US



Figure 3.2

Example of a Snapchat website page icon (North Carolina State University Libraries, library homepage, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/>.)

Snapchat Tools and Features

- **Snapchat Chat**—You can communicate using text, Bitmoji, stickers, video, photo, voice calls, video calls, and as a group with Snapchat chat.¹⁸ Chats are active as long as you are in the chat screen and disappear once you navigate away. To save text (unfortunately not snaps), you can press and hold the chat, and it will be archived in the chat window.
- **Snapchat Stories**—Snapchat Stories are a set of public-facing chronological snaps that are viewable for twenty-four hours. The focus of this content is to showcase “a day in the life.” Variants of Stories include the Live Story/Our Story, Campus Story, and Custom Stories/Geo Stories.¹⁹ Custom/Geo Stories are collaborative and open anyone who is given access (Custom Story) or is in a specific geolocation (Geo Story).
 - **Library Idea!**—Create a Custom Story for a specific event your library is hosting, granting access to everyone within the radius of the library building for a certain amount of time. There is some risk involved with this approach as someone might submit questionable content. As the Story creator, you can delete undesired content, but it will take regular monitoring. Alternatively, you could add participants by username to give you more control over who submits. In my forthcoming article, one participant mentioned utilizing a “social media street team” involving vetted college student contributors to their Snapchat account.²⁰ You could similarly do this at your event, giving a certain group of teens access to a Custom Story during an event (maybe have open applications to join the “event team” ahead of time). After the event, the Story can be saved to your phone’s camera roll to be edited, cross-posted on your other channels, or uploaded to the event page on your library’s website.
 - **Try it Out!**—I have a Custom Story called Why Do YOU Library? To add to the Story, follow these steps: (1) add me, paigealfonzo, as a friend; (2) send me a chat or snap saying

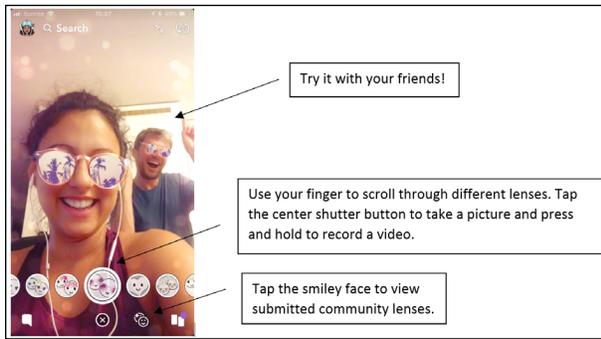


Figure 3.3
Basic Snapchat lens layout

you want to be added to the story; (3) wait for my confirmation; (4) send a snap to the Story saying who you are, your favorite thing about being a librarian, and your favorite LC or Dewey Decimal classification area! As a contributor, you will be able to see others who have submitted within the same twenty-four-hour period.

- **Snapchat Lenses**²¹—If you have seen pictures of your friends with flower crowns or vomiting up a rainbow tongue, you’ve witnessed the magic of the Snapchat lens. Activated by tapping anywhere on the camera screen, these fun animations and augmented reality features can be added to a face (Face Lens) or your surroundings (World Lens). Some include additional functionality such as allowing two people to get in on the action (see figure 3.3), altering your voice, or prompting you with a command such as “raise your eyebrows” or “open your mouth.” In October, Snapchat released Cat Lenses, which should create hours of fun with your feline.²² Snapchat also recently brought lenses to the desktop environment, letting users don the dog face and all the other lenses while using “Twitch, YouTube, Skype, and Zoom.”²³ (This could be very helpful for those hosting their book talks on YouTube.) With Community Lenses, anyone can design a lens and offer it via the Community Lens screen (accessed by clicking the smiley face [see figure 3.3]; for library ideas, see the next section).²⁴
- **Snapchat Filters**²⁵—Filters come in a few flavors: IG-style filters that add hues and tonal qualities to your image or video, frame filters that let you add sticker-type features such as the day or time, and geofilters, which are available only when you are in a certain location. Unlike *lenses*, filters are activated *after* you snap a photo or video by swiping right or left with your finger. You can also layer more than one filter, such as a geofilter and day and time filter by using the layering tool from the right side toolbar (see the next section for library-specific ideas for geofilters).

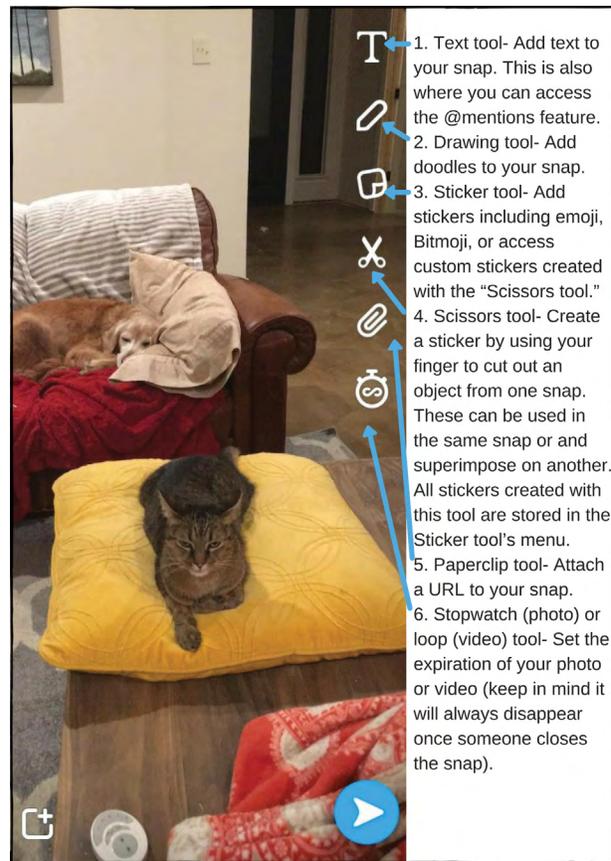
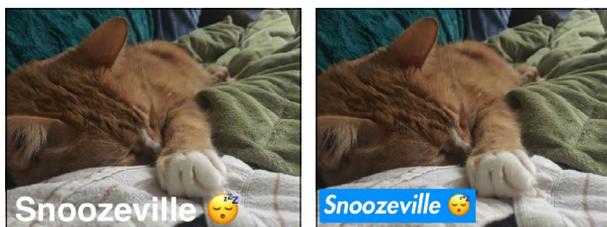


Figure 3.4
Snapchat Creative Tools menu

- **Photo and Video Editing Tools**—After you take a snap, there are several ways you can spice it up, add more information, and even attach a URL with Snapchat’s Creative Tools menu (which appears on the right side of your snap after it is captured). I am not going to discuss each tool in this chapter, but rather cover some ideas you can apply within a library context. If you are interested in going more in depth, Snapchat has a useful webpage devoted to the “how to” of each tool, and Hootsuite has a great “hacks” article.²⁶ In figure 3.4, I have listed each tool’s label as a guide for the next section.

Content Tips and Ideas

In this section I present a few content ideas and tools that work particularly well on Snapchat. (For general topic suggestions and a comprehensive list of tools, see chapters 1 and 2 respectively.) Some things to keep in mind are that Snapchat is zany, not super curated or polished, and favors real-time sharing. You also don’t need to post content created on Snapchat



Figures 3.5 & 3.6

Examples of text with and without a background

on the platform itself, but rather as more of a graphic design tool. With the Save functionality, you can create a snap with, let's say, a filter on a book face, save it to your phone, and then upload it wherever you want. (Not sure if that's sacrilegious to graphic design purists, but hey, it sure beats hours of graphic design tinkering.) Before we dive into some of the more complex content ideas, I wanted to list some short tips and suggestions you can use to enhance your snaps:

- **Diversify**—Relying too heavily on one style or topic tends to cause users tune out over time. Hootsuite recommends Snapchat stories be around one minute, or potentially two minutes if you are giving a tutorial, using only about one filter and one lens per story.²⁷ Diversification also pertains to your mode of delivery. @orillia_library reports that they occasionally send a snap directly to their followers, but only about once a week because otherwise people find it annoying.
- **Insert a soundtrack**—Add background music to your snaps by playing a song on your phone and then navigating to Snapchat to record a video while the song is playing in the background. You can also “name that tune” and share songs by tapping your Snapchat screen when a song is playing, courtesy of the partnership between Shazam and Snapchat.
- **Create a boomerang-style video**—When recording a video, use the loop tool to create fun boomerang-style snaps (see chapter 4 for some boomerang examples).
- **Put a Cat Lens on it!**—If you have any of these furry friends lying around your library, digitally adorn them with bread, googly eyes, or devil horns with Cat Lenses.²⁸
- **Take a peek behind the scenes**—Take users behind the circulation desk and document how a book is processed, an after-hours staff event, “behind the stacks” features, “adventures in weeding,” “a day in the life of a [cataloging librarian],” or before and after pictures or videos at your next makerspace event! You could adopt something similar to Refinery29's exclusive and quirky interviewing style with your library staff, highlighting some lesser known information about what they do.²⁹



Figure 3.7

Book face swap example by Severn School's Zimmerman Library (Source: Severn Library, “Book Face Swap Winner!” Book, Line, and Sinker [blog], May 3, 2016, <https://severnlibrary.wordpress.com/2016/05/03/book-face-swap-winner/>.)

- **Archive your content**—YouTube is a common platform for archiving Snapchat Stories that you want to allow users to view after the content expires. Archive only your top or recurring content and organize them as a playlist, such as “Teen Book Tuesday.”
- **Create legible text**—If you hold up a book or a sign in selfie mode, the lettering will appear backwards. Avoid this by leading with a screenshot of the book's text and then holding it up to talk about it in the next snap. Any textual snap should have a longer time expiration (maybe around ten seconds) to give users enough time to read it (this is done with the Stopwatch tool). Also, with the Text tool you can avoid hard-to-read text by including a background for your captions (see figures 3.5 and 3.6).
- **Don't just rely on the link**—If you are promoting programming or a workshop on Snapchat, include relevant information, including the date and a summary of what is involved, as some users do not like to swipe up or click on links.
- **Enhance your book talks**—
 - Set up an aesthetically pleasing backdrop. Epic Reads creates some excellent backdrops for its Book Haul videos.³⁰
 - Include one still image of the book. (This not only gives viewers time to read the title or take a screenshot, but also, since text appears



Figure 3.8
Event-specific geofilters from @NCSULibraries

backward in selfie mode, it enhances the clarity.)

- Keep track of the titles you talk about so you don't repeat any. This can be especially helpful when you have someone new managing the account.
- Create a script of what you want to say on your computer to read while you're recording your video to keep you on track.
- Occasionally use the face swap filter or add a filter to the cover of a library book (see figure 3.7).³¹
- End with a call to action (CTA) such as "check it out at [library branch]" or "swipe up to view it in the library catalog or place a hold."

Utilize Geofilters and Custom Lenses

While requiring a little more elbow grease and time devotion (and potentially a bigger budget), designing a custom geofilter on Snapchat can be a fantastic promotional resource. One reason is that not only do geofilters entice patrons to use a filter and interact with the library on Snapchat, but also, when they are used, those patron's friends can then see the filter, drastically expanding your promotional reach. @NCSULibraries reported that they utilize two community geofilters (which are free) for the two main libraries on campus (see figure 3.8).³² They revealed that these "are the most engaging part of their account," resulting in a current tally of 100,000 uses and a resultant 1.3 million views (which includes not only the initial user's view but all their friends' views). @NCSULibraries and @TheRLPL both reported purchasing custom filters to promote specific events, with @NCSULibraries explaining that they typically don't use a radius larger than the library building and normally restrict the time frame



Figure 3.9
Example of a custom sticker superimposed on a photo

to an hour before and after the event, and then the two hours during the event. Along this vein, you could also create a custom Snapchat lens, as opposed to a filter, for patrons to use.³³ (Maybe a wiggling AR bookworm lens similar to this elephant is in your future!³⁴). Since lenses are assigned a designated Snapcode, you could also incorporate it into a library scavenger hunt, with hunters unlocking the lens at the end.

Geofilters and lenses can be a great way to promote your library even if you don't have time to manage an official library Snapchat account. If you don't have the bandwidth or time to manage an official Snapchat account, you can create a "dummy account" (an unofficial account primarily used to give you access to Snapchat features), design a geofilter or lens, and make it available to patrons who visit the library. Nashville Public Library had the genius idea of hosting a geofilter contest before it had a Snapchat account to test the waters before making any commitments.³⁵ If you are interested in creating a geofilter, Eventbrite has some useful design tips, including using your business name and logo, incorporating the event hashtag, using only the top and bottom part of the screen, and editing a geofilter template if you don't want to create one from scratch.³⁶

Harness Hilarity

Inject some humor with a Photoshop-style gag or a joke! One of the great things about Snapchat is that with the Scissors tool, you don't need to use robust graphic design software to get a fun effect like @acclibraries' giant cat post (see figure 1.3). Here's how to do it: take a snap or upload a picture from your phone with an object that you want to cut → tap on the Scissors tool → use your finger to "cut out" your desired object → exit out of the snap → take a snap or upload



Figures 3.10 and 3.11

Example of a two-snap joke (Source: Lindsay Kolowich, "14 of the Best Snapchat Accounts to Follow for Inspiration," Hubspot, March 22, 2017, <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/snapchat-best-brands>.)

a picture that you want to superimpose an object on → tap the Sticker tool → select the object you cut out → place it on your new snap (stickers can be resized by pinching them with two fingers) → send the snap to your Story or save it to your Memories or camera roll to be shared on another channel (see figure 3.9).

Jokes can also be a fun way to entertain your users. When crafting your quip, use your first snap to tell the joke and the second snap to reveal the punchline (see figures 3.10 and 3.11). You can also incorporate humor with fun or lesser known trivia, facts, or stats. GrubHub did this during the Super Bowl by sharing a series of three snaps explaining chicken orders during the event.³⁷

And then don't forget about the obvious lenses, filters, and stickers. Put a new spin on #BookFaceFriday with Snapchat's face swap filter or multi-person lens feature! Severn School Library had the great idea of creating an annual book face swap contest that resulted in some wonderfully ridiculous results.³⁸ They also point out that Snapchat isn't the only tool for swapping faces, with Face Swap Booth, Masquerade, and Photoshop all providing similar resources.³⁹ In "Snapchatting with Hugo Cabret," Travis Jonker showcased the magic of both the face swap and the "filter face."⁴⁰

Work in Some @Mentions and Hyperlinks

Snapchat now allows you to @mention other Snapchatters, which serves as a resource for getting others' attention as well as encouraging patrons to @mention your library when they are snapping.⁴¹ The latter has the potential benefit of increasing your followership since those who see a snap @mentioning you have the option to directly add you as a friend.

One of the most popular features mentioned by librarians I chatted with was the hyperlink (which is added using the Paperclip tool). While you don't want to overdo it with this feature (remember diversity is the key), I would recommend using it when you want to direct library users to a specific action (e.g., signing up for a workshop or placing a library hold [see figure 3.12]). The option to place a book hold via Snapchat is advantageous in a few ways. One, it keeps users on Snapchat, allowing them to place a hold and then toggle back to viewing Snapchat Stories. Two, it might create a more comfortable environment for learning about and accessing books on topics that patrons might not want to inquire about in person (such as a book with a transgender protagonist).⁴²

Answer Questions or Provide Instruction

Snapchat chat gives you the ability to answer patron questions and offer reference services directly in the app. Not only can you chat using text and URLs, but you could also experiment with the video calling feature and the front-facing camera if you want to show your screen to someone. One example similar to reference services is the case of Staffordshire University. In 2017, this university let students ask their admissions questions via Snapchat using photo, video, or chat messages.⁴³ Another idea could be to offer a small virtual information literacy (IL) session using group video calling (which supports up to sixteen friends at once).

If you do not want to offer direct chat services, you could highlight IL takeaways or short tutorials or answer reference FAQs using Snapchat Stories. When creating, keep them short, with an introductory snap followed by an explanatory snap (see figures 3.13 and 3.14). A few brand examples of this include Talya Minsberg's demo of how to find the *New York Times* on Snapchat, Michael Britt's real-life application videos created for his introductory psychology class, and Refinery29's Snapchat Story (be sure to check out how well they break up the story with still shots of text).⁴⁴ One idea for a recurring FAQ feature could be to ask users to snap you questions during the week and then designate a day every week or month to answer them. You can also incorporate a video with audio and text, using the latter as a way to highlight key points (since many individuals consume content without sound) or as your closed captioning.⁴⁵

Incorporate Live Action Snaps

Snapchat is all about in-the-moment authentic sharing, making it ideal for live-action snaps both in everyday contexts and during big events. When creating a Story around an event, share three to five "highlight" snaps throughout the day. Alternatively, you could do a few live-action snaps and then a "round-up" of your



Figure 3.12
Example of a snap with a CTA by Johnston Public Library's JPL Teen Advisory Board

best snaps at the end of the day. Netflix's Snapchat Story promoting *Bill Nye Saves the World* is a great example of an event Snap Story that focuses on just the highlights.⁴⁶ Location features such as the Snap Map can further enhance off-site events where you want to encourage participation.⁴⁷ If you have the feature turned on in Settings, patrons will be able to tap your profile on the map and view your Story and location. What Are You Reading Wednesday is another relevant context for a live-action snap. For example, @NISDStevensLib takes snaps of what students are reading in the library right then or grabs teachers in the

hall to quickly ask them about what publication they are currently enjoying (which are even more fun when you throw a filter on them).

Create a Contest

Contests are very effective avenues for promotion, growing your followership, and increasing your engagement in creative and interactive ways. In 2014, I created a library Snapchat contest following the National Library Week theme of "Lives Change at Your Library."⁴⁸ This involved students sending me a short video explaining what book changed their world outlook and why. One thing that really helped participation in this contest was partnering with university faculty on my campus who helped me promote it and even offered extra credit to students who submitted. Other library contests I have seen include teensppl's Halloween costume snap contest, Karen Jensen's snap-venger hunt, Nashville Public Library's geofilter contest (which served a two-fold benefit of library promotion and student graphic design learning), and Severn School Library's book face swap contest.⁴⁹ Some standout brand examples include the University of Michigan's "show us your best selfie," University of Waterloo's Warrior Pride contest, *Harper's BAZAAR's* #BazaarStories, and Google and Snapchat's joint effort, the filter design contest.⁵⁰ When running your own contest, promote it far in advance and follow up with snaps of the various entries and the winners after the contest has concluded.

Aspirational Accounts to Follow

I love following libraries and other organizations that have a penchant for Snapchat brilliance. However,

Snapchat's peer-to-peer sharing focus and case sensitivity make it annoyingly hard to browse. To help with that, I have created a list to help get your Snapchat wheels turning. Following accounts can be helpful if you are new to the platform and interested in seeing how other creatives are engaging with their audiences as well as for sparking new ideas. This does not have to be an exact replication of content but rather an opportunity to get inspired. But a healthy amount of replication is not necessarily a bad thing if proper attribution is included. It can be, in fact, an essential element of making something go viral online and hashtags succeed. Where would the dancing hotdog or "cat bread-ing" be without repeated use and creative application?

GENERAL BRANDS

- bookriot
- grubhub
- hubspotinc
- mashable
- mplatco—Michael Platco is a wizard with the drawing tool.⁵¹
- popsugar
- sourpatchsnaps
- tacobell
- washingtonpost

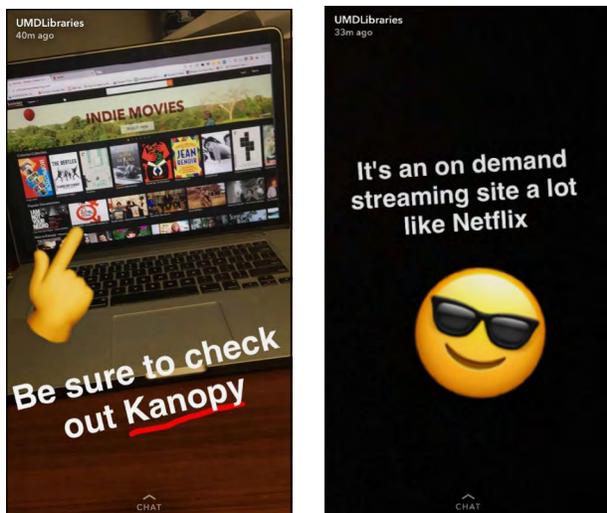
LIBRARIES

- aacpl
- cincylibrary—@CMCLibrary stated that Cincinnati Public Library does some interesting "book of the day" snaps.
- cheshirelibrary
- CMCLibrary
- jpl_tab
- librarycommerce
- libraryul
- orillia_library
- NCSULibraries
- NISDStevensLib
- uwflibraries

If you are interested in following more libraries on Snapchat, I have a running list on my blog.⁵²

Analytics

Tracking analytics in Snapchat is notoriously tricky because the metrics disappear once the Story expires. If you are new to retrieving Stories metrics, Snapchat has a helpful video.⁵³ Currently, the easiest way to record Story metrics is to do it manually in a spreadsheet. Data points you will want to record include the following:



Figures 3.13 & 3.14
Example of an introductory snap followed by an explanatory snap by the University of Maryland Libraries

- **Views**—Each view in your Story counts as a unique view (one view per person, regardless of how many times that person watched your story). Record both total Story views and views per snap. That way you will be able to calculate your drop-off rate and determine if any content adjustments need to be made.
- **Screenshots**—This is a good indicator of how valuable your information is.
- **Story snaps**—@CMCLibrary stated that they like to record the total number of snaps sent in each Story. This is a great way to determine the optimal length of your Stories.
- **Content type**—Keep track of the kind of content (photo, video, photos or videos with text or lenses, filtered images, book talk that’s uploaded all at once versus in spurts throughout the day) to see what content type resonates most with your audience.
- **Subject**—@CMCLibrary recommends including the title or subject of the snap in your spreadsheet so you can see what plays well and what is not as exciting.
- **Time of day**—Track the day and time you send each snap in your story to calculate the snap that gets the most views and screenshots, and then aim to post at that time or day each week. Make sure to post at different times of day and record the unique views and completion rates during those periods.
- **Followers**—You cannot get a list of followers from Snapchat, so this will have to be done manually in a spreadsheet when you are notified that you have a new follower. @libraryul discussed hearing about an alternative method for approximating

follower count by taking the number of story views and multiplying them by 1.5.

- **Chats/responses**—Record the number of conversations and snap responses you receive per day or week.
- **Outliers**—@orillia_library stated that if there is a spike in views for a specific Story, they will save it to Google Drive for later qualitative analysis.

After you have collected all your data, look at it on a regular basis, such as every month, quarter, or semester. Hootsuite provides a few useful calculations you can use when looking at your data:⁵⁴

- **Story completion rate**—This will tell you how many people watched the whole story and is calculated by dividing your final view count by the first view count.
- **Fall-off rate**—This enables you to pinpoint the areas where viewings dropped off and are calculated by taking the “difference in views from one Snap to the next, divid[ing] the difference by the views on the first Snap, and multiply[ing] by 100.”⁵⁵

If you are short on time or you publish a snap on a nonworking day, take a screenshot just before the story expires and then record it in an Excel sheet when you have time. Analytics get a bit better for those who create filters and lenses, allowing them to look at things like impact and engagement.⁵⁶ Earlier this year, Snapchat rolled out Snapchat Insights for select creators and influencers and brands, providing hope that it will be offered more broadly in the future.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Hopefully, these ideas have sparked your creativity and inspired you to go forth and slap a lens on a book or share your next “adventures in weeding” discovery. In the next chapter, we will dive into IG. Remember, many of the ideas presented in this penultimate chapter can also be applied in the IG world and beyond!

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Instagram in the Library

Instagram is a marketing force to be reckoned with. With brands now having the ability to generate revenue via advertising and shopping posts and a growing base of users, it is currently the *it* platform for reaching the coveted Gen Z and millennial demographics. However, as what happened with Facebook, when everyone’s mom, dad, and grandparent join the platform, teens and young adults might once again migrate to the next hip (and probably frustratingly obfuscatory) channel. Despite this, the #hashtags, location pins, @mentioning, and a combination of permanence and ephemerality all create a desirable package that keeps users coming back for more and brands close on their heels trying to grab and keep their attention. Somewhere in the middle of that mix are libraries. Not seeking to make a profit, libraries are in the unique position to use social media for the social good, freely spreading knowledge to those in their communities. Recently with Instagram, they are able to expand outside of their brick-and-mortar locations and reach younger patrons who might not know about certain information sources otherwise.

In this chapter, I will be presenting some tips library professionals can utilize to increase the effectiveness of their Instagram presences. This chapter builds on ideas presented in chapters 1 and 2, including the conversations I conducted with select library social media experts in the United States and abroad (see chapter 1). As with the previous chapter on Snapchat, this chapter will focus more on content tactics and strategies rather than being an Instagram “how-to.” Before I dive into the wonders of Instagram, I wanted to outline some terms that I will be using:

- Instagram = IG: I use *Instagram* and *IG* interchangeably

- @mentions, @tagging, @handle, @usernames: the @ symbol refers to linkable profile names. I also use @mentions and @tagging interchangeably.
- *IG Stories* refers to any content posted on an Instagram Story.
- *IG Feed Posts* describes permanent posts on someone’s Instagram feed.

In-App Instagram Tools and Features

To keep users hooked, Instagram is always adding to its in-app offerings. 2018 saw the debut of Nametag, third-party direct publishing, video chatting via IG direct, and topic channels. The following lists some staple in-app features that you should definitely try out:

- **Carousel photos**—IG carousel posts comprise a swipeable collection of up to ten photos or videos.¹ Previously I used the grid app Layout for collage photos,² but recently noticed a better engagement return with the multi-photo carousel pictures. This chronological feature is a fun and compact way to break up content, making it particularly amenable for book talks, tutorials (with each picture or video explaining the next step), or event highlights.³ I recommend limiting these to around three to five photos so as not to overburden your viewer. The New York Public Library (@nypl) does an excellent job, striking the perfect carousel balance that makes you want to swipe the entire way through.

@nypl
<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bnd6llxFWBe/>

- **Filters**—Filters are IG’s bread and butter. They let you employ Photoshop-style effects to your content. While I would not recommend using this all the time, @acclibraries had the valuable idea of cultivating a cohesive aesthetic by touching up the lighting with filters such as Crema to make content look light and bright.
- **Nametag**—One of Instagram’s newer additions, Nametag works similarly to Snapchat’s Snapcodes, allowing users to easily find and follow others by scanning the customized image.⁴ This can be particularly useful for print materials such as promotional posters, bookmarks, and so on, or, to take a page from @orillia_library (see Account Promotion in chapter 1), AirDropping it to individuals during a conference, school visit, workshop, or class session.
- **Insights**—IG Insights are available only via the mobile app for business accounts or accounts with high levels of engagement. If you have not switched to a business profile yet, Instagram has a great tutorial you can follow.⁵ (I’d also recommend that you do this for your Facebook page.) IG Insights provide a variety of useful information, including audience demographics, account-level metrics such as profile visits and website clicks, and granular post-level data such as peak user activity (so you know when your audience is most active), engagement, impressions, and reach (see the section Analytics below). Take a look at Victoria Wright’s post on Social Media Examiner if you need to get up to speed on IG Insights navigation.⁶
- **About reposting**—I’m a fan of reposting, but Instagram has made a concerted effort to tamp this down. As you’ve probably noticed, you cannot share or repost directly from someone’s feed in the app. While some third-party apps (such as Repost) allow you to do this, reposting without the user’s permission is against Instagram’s terms of service and is illegal. That doesn’t mean you should give up on IG user-generated content. You just have to take a few extra steps, namely first asking for permission and then giving proper attribution. Additionally, users can repost IG feed content on their IG Story as well as repost Story content on their Story if they have been @tagged (see figure 4.1). Try using this to share user-generated content via Stories as well as to update your Instagram Stories Highlights album (see Stories Highlights in the Bio section of this chapter).⁷

Stories, Camera Effects, and Features

Taking a page out of Snapchat’s book, Instagram now offers a wide range of fun effects that you can add to your content. To access these options, tap the camera



Figure 4.1

Example of an @tagged repost by @harpercollinsus. (This is also a nice example of IG sticker usage; see stickers in the section Stories Camera Effects and Features of this chapter.)

icon  in the upper-left corner of the mobile app, and right or left swipe through the selections below the shutter button. The camera effects are tailored toward IG Stories sharing, but content can also be saved to your phone’s camera roll and uploaded to your Instagram feed. To use the regular IG camera for feed posts, tap the plus icon  from the menu at the bottom of the screen.

- **Superzoom**—The Superzoom effect activates a three-second zoom in on the object of your choice, with a submenu to add sound, animation, or both. You can really have fun with these by using them to add high drama, intensity, humor, and/or even a little steam (see figure 4.2).
- **Boomerang**—Boomerang has been around for a

while as a separate app (iOS or Android) and was integrated into the Instagram camera in 2016.⁸ This looping mechanism lets you create GIF-style mini-videos. Booms are best when the subject is making a rapid movement (like flailing their appendages, turning their head, or flipping book pages). iMore has a great article by Cella Lao Rousseau on shooting the perfect Boomerang, which includes suggestions such as layering content (having a few people do different movements in the photo to make it more interesting) and turning the camera on yourself to create a selfie boom.⁹



Figure 4.2
Example of Superzoom with the “hearts” animation by IG user @nolanfellows

- **Type**—Type mode lets you insert a text-only image. Instagrammers normally use this to share a thought or inspirational quote. In the section IG and Snapchat Stories Tips in chapter 2, I relay Hootsuite’s recommendation that when creating a longer story, you should break it up into chapters (perfect for dividing up and organizing a book talk or tutorial!).¹⁰
- **Live**—With Instagram Live you can livestream a video, during which users can comment in real time on what’s happening. To execute properly, IG Live videos take thorough planning but can be an exciting addition. Try experimenting with it for your upcoming library workshop, tutorial, or author Q&A session. I really enjoy the use of the Live feature by contributing *National Geographic* photographer Paul Nicklen (@paulnicklen).

Paul Nicklen on Instagram
<https://www.instagram.com/paulnicklen>

- **Music**—Facebook, and by association Instagram, teamed up with Spotify to facilitate song integration. From Spotify, users can easily share a song to their Story rather than taking a screenshot. Ideas for working this into your strategy could include recommending study or focus songs, playlists, or albums for patrons who are easily distracted; featuring local musicians; sharing a fun fact about

a tune, artist, or band; or recommending a book to go along with a specific genre, artist, or band. You can additionally link your Spotify account to Instagram and record a video with a song, similar to a movie with a soundtrack.

- **Rewind**—The Rewind feature plays your videos in reverse. Abby Norman on Romper has some fun ideas, such as “dropping a microphone and watching it fly up into your hand” and “capturing a fountain in motion and sharing a rewind of the water floating back up.”¹¹ Test it out at your next library workshop or makerspace activity and see what unfolds (or contracts)!
- **Hands-Free**—As the name indicates, Hands-Free allows you to record a video without having to hold your phone. If you have a convenient place to prop up your camera, you could use it to record a book talk. However, videos are limited to a minute long with this feature.
- **Stickers**—Location, @mention, #hashtags, music, polls, questions, sentiment slider scales, dates, GIFs, and emoji all come in the form of stickers on Instagram Stories. With this feature, you can inject a little humor, ask a fun question, and optimize your post’s reach all in the same Story. Shopify has a helpful post if you want to learn more about IG stickers.¹²

Optimization

To reach as many individuals as possible takes a little search engine optimization (SEO) effort on your end. Before I go into specifics, you should do three things to make sure your account is positioned properly. Firstly, set up or migrate your account to a business profile.¹³ This gives you access to IG Insights and certain components available only to businesses. Secondly, to increase discoverability, use the same @handle across all your social media accounts if possible. And lastly, link your library’s Facebook and Instagram accounts to streamline management and help boost exposure.¹⁴

Bio

Your IG bio is the place where users can find ways to contact you, learn more about you, and see IG-specific metrics, including how many followers you have, people you follow, and posts you have published. A properly constructed bio can help generate more followers and drive those users to your website. Listed below are some key components that you might want to consider:

- **Engaging profile picture**—IG profile pictures are small at 110 by 110 pixels on the mobile app. Therefore, you want to ensure that the photo you

utilize can be easily viewable at that size and not too intricate, busy, or pixelated. Many libraries utilize their logo as their profile image. If you decide to go this route, make sure it is designed at the accurate pixel specifications, as directly uploading your current logo might result in cut-off lettering or oblong orientation. Canva's custom dimensions feature can help with this design task. I particularly like the profile pictures of @topekalibrary, @bklynlibrary, @nypl, @britishlibrary, and @labnf. If you have the time, you can change your profile image according to a season or campaign.

Canva
<http://canva.com>

- **Entire library name**—Rather than using your IG @username, spell out the entire library name in the “name” section of your bio. This helps boost your discoverability on the platform, as users often will search for your library by name rather than @username.
- **Mission statement/short blurb**—This is a brief description of what your library is all about. I prefer it when brands veer away from “This is the official account of [brand name]” and make it their own, such as @penguineen’s pithy statement “We are what you read,” or @cambridgeuniversitypress’s clever description, “Publishing since 1564—Posting pics since 2015.”¹⁵ @littlebrown and @epicreads do a great job of inserting fun and informative emoji in this section. Some brands like to include a short call to action (CTA), such as @adobe’s “Share your imaginative work using #Adobe_DreamBig.”¹⁶ You can also modify your description for any campaigns that you want to focus on like @reuters, whose bio in October read: “Our in-depth look at lithium and water worries in Chile’s Atacama desert: [link to article].”¹⁷
- **Library’s main hashtag**—In 2018, Instagram introduced #hashtag and @profile links for the bio section. This is where successful brands insert a short and memorable hashtag that they want users to follow and use when they are posting.¹⁸ You can incorporate this either as a part of speech (e.g. “Sharing photos of #Harvard on campus and around the world”), explain how to use it (“To have your photo featured, tag it with #myethzurich”), or list it at the end of profile description.¹⁹ I found it surprisingly hard to find libraries that have incorporated this feature but did find useful examples in the university space; take a look at @harvard, @uofmichigan, and @ucla.
- **@Affiliate branches or organizations**—You can

drive users to your library’s, partner’s, or branch’s Instagram accounts by mentioning their @handle. @penguinbooks (“portable paperback joy from @vikingbooks and @penguinpress”) and @vodkafordogpeople (“We are @titosvodka & #VodkaForDogPeople! We ♥ 🐕 and work with @emancipet to help create a world with fewer and fewer homeless pets.”) utilize this feature well.²⁰

- **Trackable URL to your homepage/catalog**—A trackable URL will allow you to monitor the effectiveness of your Instagram presence (see the discussion of Google Analytics in the section General Management Ideas, Tools, and Resources in chapter 2). Additionally, Patel recommends that you include a URL that links to a mobile-optimized website as Instagram is a mobile-heavy platform.²¹
- **CTA buttons**—How do you want patrons to reach you? With an IG business account, you can include various action buttons such as call, text, directions, email, book, buy tickets, and reserve. The first four actions are automatically added after you input your library’s email, phone number, and physical address in your profile. (This is done by selecting Edit Profile → Contact Options → Address, Phone, etc.; the others change periodically and can be added by tapping Edit Profile → Contact Options → Add an action button.)
- **Category**—Adding a category to your profile helps users find you on Instagram and could aid in your exposure on IG’s Explore homepage. Conveniently, a library option is available!
- **Stories Highlights**—Stories Highlights are a way to pin and save your best IG Stories content based on a specific theme. I recommend highlighting only posts that your readers will want to see more than once. For example, many events tend to be one-off occurrences, but some content such as “library staff picks” have a longer shelf life. In addition to saving content, you can also create a unified brand image by uploading your own covers (see figure 4.3). Some topic areas could include book talks, readers’ advisory, author visits, and tutorials. @harpercollinsus, @Amazon, @BarnesAndNoble, and @audible_com have crafted some muse-worthy content if you need ideas.
 - **Noteworthy example**—@nypl came up with the brilliant idea of #InstaNovels. This is a collaborative effort between @nypl and designer @magoz involving a digital bookshelf in which users can read a story directly from their IG Stories/Highlights.²²

Post Optimization

Both IG feed and Stories posts now support @mentions, #hashtags, and location tags. Your Stories posts

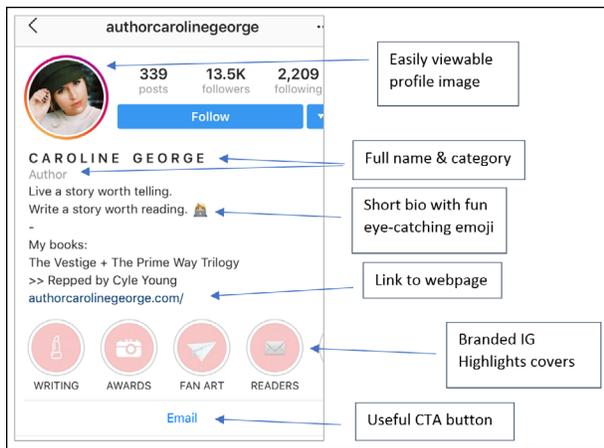


Figure 4.3
 Example of an optimized IG bio, replete with branded Stories Highlights covers (Source: Caroline George, [@authorcarolinegeorge], Instagram page, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/authorcarolinegeorge/>.)

may or may not need these features (which are added from the stickers menu on Instagram), but most feed posts can be significantly enhanced with this type of linked metadata. @mentions let you tag other Instagrammers who are connected to your post. This is a great way to increase your reach, encourage other organizations or departments that you work with to share your content, and interact with your current patrons (if @tagging individuals is in your social media policy). To streamline this process, I keep a running list in an Excel sheet of the usernames of all the departments, partner schools, and so on that I might want to @mention. When featuring students in their posts, @acclibraries makes a point of incorporating their @handles with students' permission. @acclibraries states that not only do students find it fun, sometimes directly asking to be @tagged in the post, but also it is a great way to increase engagement. They also revealed that @mentioning authors or publishers of a book that they are featuring has been successful. This is a very smart way to encourage reposting by an author or influencer, which could handily boost your followership and engagement numbers.

Geotags or location tags can also help increase the exposure of your posts and seem to be preferred by the IG algorithm. @acclibraries noticed geotagged posts performing better on Stories, prompting them to increase their usage of this feature, incorporating location stickers for the library location or expanding the radius to include the college, surrounding city, and so on. @librariesluc reported a similar implementation with IG feed posts, geotagging the library location or university location as well as city hashtags such as #Chicago or #LoyolaChicago.

Speaking of hashtags, these little bits of backend code can yield big benefits regarding engagement.

Unlike Snapchat, Instagram supports hashtags, and they are ingrained in the IG ecosystem. With these metadata descriptors, you easily categorize content to enhance discoverability. This is made even more useful as Instagram added hashtag following to users. With this feature, users can see hashtagged content that they are following (e.g., #LibrariesOfInstagram, #BookFaceFriday, etc.) in their feed, just as they would see content from the people they follow. One best practice in this arena is to include your most relevant hashtags as part of the main text and then bury additional SEO-type hashtags below the text using periods or emoji such as books (see figure 4.4). Instagram blogger Louise Myers suggests using your phone's Notes app to create and save sets of hashtags that you use often.²³ If you need tips on choosing or targeting your hashtags, the Focalmark app is an excellent resource.²⁴ Hootsuite has a great guide on how to properly incorporate hashtags as well.²⁵

In addition to post #hashtags, Instagram now supports #hashtags in the bio section, which provides brands with a prime opportunity to promote an official #hashtag. This could be campaign-specific (like @macmillanusa's #Macmillian175), an ongoing #hashtag that reflects your goals or mission (like @papyrus's #LovePapyrus or @lexususa's #LookAtMyLexus), or a #hashtagged version of your @username (like @librarystreetcollective's #librarystreetcollective). Placing this information in the bio section instructs your audience on the official way to tag their posts when they are in the library. You could even include a CTA like @REI's "Share your adventures with #OptOutside."²⁶ You can enhance the readability of your hashtags by using CamelCase, where the first letter of each word is capitalized.

Content Tips and Ideas

This section presents content ideas and tools that are successful specifically on Instagram. (General topic suggestions and a comprehensive list of tools are available in chapters 1 and 2.) Because Instagram is a place for higher quality imagery and Snapchat a space tailored more toward comical and unfiltered content, I recommend that you tweak your strategy accordingly. However, there is definitely some cross-over, and probably the most important thing to keep in mind is to make it your own. For direct promotional content such as an event announcement or specific book that you suggest patrons check out, it is a good idea to use a shortened URL (Bitly is useful). Because Instagram does not currently support linked URLs in individual posts, an easy-to-type URL can maximize conversions in this area. (If you happen to have 10,000+ followers, you can link your Instagram Story posts.²⁷)



james_trevino Who do you want to see / who do you think will end up on the Iron Throne in the end?



Of course, that will be me. James Trevino, First of His Name, Father of Cats, Breaker of (book) Spines, Taker of Photos, Eater of French Fries.

This pic was equally inspired by Eragon because I am so damn excited about the new book coming out in December.



Anyway, short caption today. Hope your weekend is magnificent.



P. S. - Don't forget that the theme for this week is HALLOWEEN. If you post any Halloween inspired pics till next Friday and tag me in them you get the chance to be reposted on my story the following weekend. Anyone can enter with any number of pics.



#reading #read #goodreads #gameofthrones #verilymoment #daenerystargaryen #targaryen #dragon #ironthrone #fromabove #jonsnow #eragon #fantasyart #literatura #literatur #boek #writersofig #booklover #czytanie #buku #aryastark #dragons #bookfeaturepage #lecture #citoridinromania #bookstagram #tbr #moodygram

View all 877 comments

Figure 4.4

Example of buried hashtags using emoji by @james_trevino (Source: James Trevino, “Who do you want to see end up on the Iron Throne,” October 20, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BpKVZ6pFfiz/>.)

Bitly

<https://bitly.com>

- **Unfold** (www.unfoldstori.es)—This app gives your content a minimalist aesthetic vibe and is also useful for formatting posts for IG Stories. Price: free.
- **Vintage: Logo Maker and Creator** (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/vintage-logo-maker-creator/id878042995?mt=8>)—A handy app for customizing Instagram photos. Available only on iOS. Price: \$2.99.
- **Book sculptures and book beauty shots**—High-quality, artistic book photos are at home on Instagram. Bookstagrammer @james_trevino is especially skilled at the art of impressively imaginative assemblage if you are looking for inspiration.²⁸ But you don't need to be as ambitious as influencer bookstagrammers to draw in users. Constructing an assortment of your top tomes with a fun background or according to color can do the trick. These can be especially apropos during various seasons and holidays (see figure 4.5). Jones recommends thinking about the “theme,

setting, or characters in a book and creating a mini-tableau for a photo shoot” when promoting different books on Instagram.²⁹

- **Contests and prizes**—Who doesn't want to win a free book? The chance to win something is always a sure bet to get users to pay attention. Use pictures with people, books, or both with an informative caption over images of flyers or PDF screenshots. @NISDStevensLib stated that they have had success with monthly book giveaways for parents and teachers at their school.
- **Pictures of book text**—Highlight a fun book passage or inspiring poem with a picture of the text. @nypl has done a great job featuring some intriguing public domain historical gems that are often hilarious or beautifully nostalgic. If you are posting a particularly periphrastic passage in an IG Story, post the same image twice, so everyone has time to read it. You can also use the doodle feature to underline poignant passages.
- **Progression posts**—Instagram Stories' opinion and questions stickers seem like they were custom-made for libraries. When asking something on IG Stories, use a progression or “stay tuned” style, posting a question followed by some of the answers

(see figures 4.6 and 4.7). @acclibraries likes to use the poll feature on IG Stories for a recurring “question of the week” content. @TorontoLibrary has posed some engaging questions and anticipatory posts on IG Stories, which are currently highlighted on their #TPLoves board.³⁰

- **Shelfies and Bookfaces**—Library blogger Gwyneth Jones explains that “shelfies” involve taking a picture of patrons holding up a book that they just checked out or are turning in.³¹ On Instagram, the #shelfie hashtag involves a diverse set of content, including a plethora of aesthetically pleasing book color assortments, well-organized kitchen or bathroom shelves, and rustic seasonally themed book displays. You can use this approach in whatever way you want, making it a little more curated and polished or patron-focused and authentic. #BookFace and #BookFaceFriday are another easy way to get patrons to interact with the physical library space and create some awesome user-generated content. Encourage your patrons to @tag you in their #BookFaceFriday posts and have them get creative! I have seen some really impressive posts by following #BookFaceFriday and recommend that you take some time to scroll through what is currently out there.
- **Instagram takeovers**—Social media “takeovers” are traditionally done by a social media influencer or celebrity, and give these individuals access to post on a brand’s account for a select amount of time (normally a day). @harpercollinsus does this well with authors who have upcoming book releases (see figure 4.8). While limited library budgets might not make something of that scale very accessible, your library could test this out with select students or patrons, library staff from different departments or branches, or teachers at your school. @escpeeuropelibrary did a fun takeover with various staff in their library.³² *Forbes* recently released a helpful article on how to execute an effective takeover, and Buffer also published a useful guide if you are interested in launching one.³³

Aspirational @ccounts and Hashtags to Follow or Utilize

Following outstanding accounts on Instagram can be extremely helpful for idea generation and community participation. This does not have to be solely library-focused. For example, @topekalibrary stated that they follow various photographers and influencers and translate different ideas to a library context. Listed below are a few @ccounts and hashtags you can follow for endless “instapiration.”

- #AmReading, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/amreading>



Figure 4.5 Winter book sculptures by @acclibraries (Source: Austin Community College Libraries, “#booksculpture,” December 20, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bc8k_v4gEO4/.)

- @bodlianlibs, <https://www.instagram.com/bodleianlibs/?hl=en>
- #BookFaceFriday, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/bookfacefriday>
- #BooksBooksBooks, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/booksbooksbooks>
- @BookRiot, <https://www.instagram.com/bookriot>
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- @james_trevino, https://www.instagram.com/james_trevino (recommended by @CMCLibrary)
- @jaybaer, <https://www.instagram.com/jaybaer> (recommended by @topekalibrary)
- @jenns_trends, https://www.instagram.com/jenns_trends (recommended by @topekalibrary)
- #IGreads, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/igreads>
- #InstaNovel, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/instanovel> (created by @nypl for their Insta Novels campaign; see Stories Highlights in the section Stories Camera Effects and Features in this chapter)
- #LibraryLife, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/librarylife> (Hashtags like this help you tap into the ways people like to engage with the library or what digital humanities researcher

Kathryn Eccles calls “moments of meaning making.”³⁴ Understanding user behavior is an effective way to build your future content strategy. For example, if you see a lot of patrons gravitating toward a particular statue, create a cheeky Instagram post with said sculpture. Some museums are very skilled at maximizing the potential of these user behaviors.)

- #LibrariesOfInstagram, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/librariesofinstagram>
- @princetonpl, <https://www.instagram.com/princetonpl> (Princeton Public Library, recommended by @CMCLibrary)
- #Shelfie, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/shelfie>
- @nypl, <https://www.instagram.com/nypl> (*Forbes* put out a great article entitled “What Brands Can Learn from the New York Public Library’s Instagram Stories” that you should definitely check out.³⁵)

Analytics

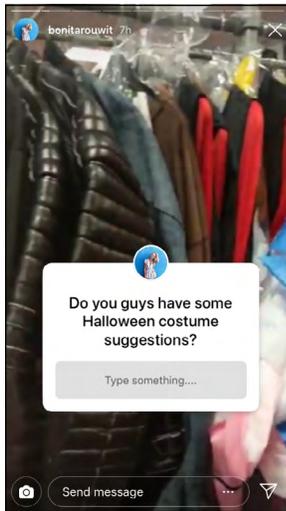
This section introduces a few methods and insights for analyzing Instagram data. However, if you want a more thorough look at platform logistics, the Instagram Help Center is a great resource.³⁶ You can currently look at three areas of data: Activity (day-to-day activity for the last week), content (metrics on individual feed posts, IG Stories content, and promotional material), and Audience (demographic information of your current followers). As this content is inconveniently viewable only from a mobile device and expires after a certain amount of time, it is a good idea to record everything with Excel or Google Sheets.

Post-level metrics (found in the content menu) provide some valuable information about the performance of your content. This data goes back as far as two years for feed posts and two weeks for IG Stories and includes common metrics such as engagement, follows, impressions, likes, and reach. You can also look at post type by using the menu to drill down to photo, video, or carousel post metrics. If you are an Instagram manager, look at IG Insights at least monthly to get an understanding of what played well for that month and qualitatively explore the reasons why that content was successful (e.g., Should we do more content on this topic? What hashtags did we use? What time of year was it posted?). For example, @CMCLibrary perceptively noticed a spike in their social media traffic during the summer and figured out that this was most likely due to vacationers visiting the Cape May area. By looking at that seasonal change, they are now able to plan the type of content they want to send out during that time because there are eyes on their content.

Higher-level reporting on a quarterly or semesterly basis is helpful even if it is just for the benefit of you and your team, as it gives you a chance to see what performed well, plan future content or campaigns ahead of time, and have data ready for higher-level library administrators who might be interested. Listed below are a few areas that you might want to look at when you are pulling your reports together:

- **Growth**—Has your audience, engagement, and so on grown since last year, quarter, semester, or season? By how much? It is helpful to analyze the same season or quarters rather than the previous time unit as the comparison is more accurate. So, rather than comparing spring engagement to summer engagement, look at summer 2017 engagement against summer 2018 engagement.
- **Weighted engagement**—For metrics such as likes, video views, impressions, and reach, I take the total number and divide it by the number of posts sent during the time of interest. This lets you reduce some noise and get a clearer picture. For example, if you have a higher volume of posts sent in one quarter versus another, you most likely have higher total engagement, but this doesn’t necessarily indicate the content was more engaging. You just have more data. Before weighting data, remove any outliers, as they will skew the results; a common rule of thumb is above or below three standard deviations from the mean.
- **Drop-offs**—Drop-off rates can be helpful when looking at video and IG Stories views. Divide the difference by the views of the first video time segment or story post and multiply by 100.³⁷ This will give you the drop-off rate as a percentage.
- **Interaction**—Track how many messages and comments you received on Instagram. You could even look at interaction type, such as reference question, directional question, general compliment, and so on.
- **Conversions**—If you use trackable links that work with your library’s website, you can monitor things like website visits, book checkouts or holds, and event attendance (see the discussion of Google Analytics in the section General Management Ideas, Tools, and Resources in chapter 2). Since Instagram restricts clickable links to the bio section, it is best to create shortened URLs for your individual posts and a campaign-specific URL for the bio section.

Hungry for more data exploration methods? Hubspot and Social Media Examiner have some useful online guides!³⁸



Figures 4.6 and 4.7
Example of a progression post by @bonitarouwit

Conclusion

So that is Instagram in the Library in a nutshell. When creating content, just remember to have fun with it and not take yourself too seriously. Both Instagram and Snapchat are places where you can be a bit riskier and experiment with new ways to reach your library patrons. Just remember, keep it fresh, and you can't really ever go wrong with a cute animal pic. Hopefully, the future holds more collaborative arenas in which library professionals can share ideas with each other. So many amazing ideas are getting cooked up in these spaces, and it would be wonderful if we could discuss them more systematically. I'm excited to see what content libraries will create next!

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Figure 4.8
Instagram takeover for @harpercollinsus featuring *Find Me Gone* author @sarahmeuleman (Source: HarperCollins U.S., "Author Sarah Meuleman Instagram takeover," October 23, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BpRsiVnCko0/>.)

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