

Analytics, Goals, and Strategy for Social Media

Most likely, if you're reading this report, you already have social media channels set up for your library or organization. You are posting, and you might even have multiple employees assigned to do the work of posting and responding to posts. Some of you probably have created goals and are working on strategies to meet those goals.

The next step is to measure those goals in order to figure out if you are meeting them. You probably also want to know if the work you're doing with social media is making a lasting, positive impact on your library's larger goals.

To accomplish these things, you first need to know about and understand social media analytics. This chapter will explore different types of analytics that each social media channel tracks. How those analytics relate to library goals will also be explained, and ideas for using analytics in your library will be provided.

Social Media Analytics

The types of analytics that can be found on different social media channels vary greatly. This section explores some of the major social media channels that libraries are using and explains what types of analytics are provided using each.

Facebook

Facebook's analytics section is called Facebook Insights, which includes an extensive set of insights for Facebook Page owners and administrators. Facebook Insights provides six tabs of analytics about visitors to a Facebook Page. An export function to an Excel spreadsheet or a comma-delimited file provides more advanced and specific insights. Let's look at each section of Facebook Insights to see what each offers.

Overview. The Overview section provides a quick, at-a-glance overview of activity on your Facebook Page for the current week. Included are Page Likes, reach, and engagement analytics; reach and engagement on your five most recent posts; and a comparison section that allows you to watch other Facebook Pages. A comparison is given to total Page Likes, new Page Likes, posts this week, and engagement this week.

This comparison section might seem like overkill for a library. After all, we aren't a for-profit corporation trying to outsell the competition! But the comparison section is actually very useful. Pay attention to other libraries' Facebook Pages, and see how you compare. If some of those Pages outperform yours in terms of engagement this week, examine the Page and posts to find out what that library is doing differently from you. Then work on improving your engagement levels accordingly.

Pages to Watch				
Compare the performance of your Page and posts with similar Pages on Facebook.				
Add Pages Likes, Comments & Shares				
Page	Total Page Likes	New Page Likes	Posts This Week	Engagement This Week
1 Wake County Public Lib...	14.6K	▲0.4% from last week	8	1.3K
2 Mid-Continent Public Li...	13.8K	▲0.1% from last week	25	1.1K
3 Craighead County Jone...	13.2K	▲0.1% from last week	0	0
4 Topeka & Shawnee Cou...	12.7K	▲0.2% from last week	11	281
5 The Kansas City Public ...	8.3K	▲0.1% from last week	11	191
6 Lawrence Public Library	7.6K	▲0.4% from last week	12	1K
7 Johnson County Library...	3.9K	▲0.5% from last week	25	632

Figure 5.1
Facebook Pages to Watch

Likes. The Likes section shows growth and activity for Likes on your library’s Facebook Page. Included is a current total Like count, net Likes for the current month (recent Unlikes subtracted from new Likes), and where people are Liking your Page (e.g., on a desktop computer or mobile device, on your Facebook Page, from a search, etc.).

Reach. The Reach tab shows the number of people your Page reached. It shows the number of Likes, comments, and Shares that each post and the Page itself has received during that time period. The Reach section also shows Unlikes, Report as Spam, and Hides—not things you hope to see, but very good things to monitor! Finally, Trends for Total Reach are given. This statistic shows the number of people who saw any activity from your Page, including posts, posts by other people, Page Like ads, mentions, and check-ins.

Visits. Visits simply shows how many people visited your Page and your Page tabs. This tab is useful because it also shows the number of times people came from external referrers—websites outside of Facebook.

Posts. The Posts tab shows post-level insights. It includes an average of which days are more popular for activity on your Page, and it shows what time of day has the most activity. For example, at my library, Thursdays are the most popular day of the week, and 9:00 p.m. is the most active part of the day. Then, reach and engagement insights are provided for individual posts. This is a really useful insight because you can see at a glance which posts were more popular. With that knowledge, you can work towards raising the engagement levels of all your posts, and you can monitor progress.

People. The People tab provides demographic insights into your Facebook Page fans. There is a percentage included for gender (for example, my library’s Page fans are 73 percent women and 26 percent men). Age ranges are also provided: 13–17, 18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, and 65+. Then the feature

provides a breakdown of fans by country, city, and language.

Export. The Export function includes the analytics mentioned above, plus many more detailed and specific statistics not provided on the overview pages. You can choose post-level or page-level data to export. At the moment, Facebook is updating the specifics of what you can find in an export to match its recent changes to Insights.

Recent Facebook Reach Problems

This is a good place to pause and reflect on the changes Facebook made in 2014 in reach for Facebook Pages. Many social media experts noticed that, late last year, Facebook organic reach numbers (the total number of people who see your post) seemed to decrease, in some cases by over 40 percent.

What’s going on? Facebook is trying to keep users interested. To do that, they are constantly tweaking what can be seen on the Facebook news feed. When you log into your Facebook account, you are dropped into your news feed, and you can see the Top Stories view (you can toggle to the Most Recent view, which provides all stories). The Top Stories view attempts to automatically sort through your news feed, find the stories that you would most likely be interested in seeing, and present those to you. Then it hides other stories that you would likely not be interested in.

Here’s more on these changes from Brian Boland, who leads the Ads Product Marketing team at Facebook:

Rather than showing people all possible content, News Feed is designed to show each person on Facebook the content that’s most relevant to them. Of the 1,500+ stories a person might see whenever they log onto Facebook, News Feed displays approximately 300. To choose which stories to show, News Feed ranks each possible story (from more to less important) by looking at thousands of factors relative to each person.

Over the past year, we’ve made some key changes to improve how News Feed chooses content:

- We’ve gotten better at showing high-quality content
- And we’ve cleaned up News Feed spam

As a result of these changes, News Feed is becoming more engaging, even as the amount of content being shared on Facebook continues to grow.¹

Because of those changes, some Facebook Pages have had a drop in engagement and reach because Facebook is effectively hiding them. Believe it or not, this is actually a good thing. Why? If you want to attract Facebook fans and keep them interested in, interacting with, and sharing your content, it means that you have to create great content that your fans are



Figure 5.2
Where to find Twitter Analytics

actually interested in reading, viewing, and engaging with by commenting, sharing, and clicking.

If you don't improve your content to make it into the top three hundred posts, your fans will ignore you, and your content won't appear in their news feeds.

Twitter

Twitter recently created a helpful analytics section for Twitter accounts. At the moment, Twitter Analytics is hidden in the Twitter Ads section. To access Analytics, click the Settings gear icon at the top of your main Twitter page, and then choose Twitter Ads (I know, that doesn't make much sense!). Then choose Analytics in the menu bar at the top of the page.

Twitter provides two sections of analytics and an export function that provides the same set of analytics in a spreadsheet format.

Tweet Activity. This section includes an overview graph of Tweet impressions over the last twenty-eight days. Below that are impressions, engagement, and engagement rates for individual Tweets and replies. On the right-hand side of the page you can see information about engagement rate, link clicks, Retweets, favorites, and replies for the current twenty-eight-day period.

Followers. This page provides some insight into your Twitter followers. It shows how many followers you have. Then it shows the interests (e.g., if they're interested in books, news, comedy, etc.), location (city, state, and country), and gender of your followers.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn has company pages that libraries can use. Company pages come with analytics. The analytics provided are grouped on a single page for a quick overview of trends. Included are the following:

Updates. These provide post-level statistics. Analytics include impressions, clicks, interactions, followers acquired from each post, and engagement on each post.

Reach and Engagement. This shows impressions, clicks, Likes, comments, Shares, followers acquired, and engagement rates in a graph format.

Followers. This analytic shows a total number of followers and some basic follower demographics. Since LinkedIn is business-focused, these demographics show what level of job your followers have—things like entry level, senior level, manager, director, etc.

Follower Trends. This section displays a graphic representation of activity on your page.

How You Compare. This shows follower levels for possible "competitors." In my library's case, it shows other libraries' total followers.

Visitors. This area provides a quick visual graph of page views and unique visits.

Google Plus

Google Plus has a basic Insights section. To access it from your Google Plus page, go to Manage Page, and then choose View Insights. This tool provides basic analytics for three areas: Visibility, Engagement, and Audience.

Visibility. Visibility shows the number of views for a variety of time periods. You can choose the last seven days, the last thirty days, the last ninety days, or all time.

Engagement. This area provides engagement levels and views on recent posts.

Audience. This shows the number of followers your page has gained and identifies followers by gender, age, and country.

YouTube

YouTube can provide some helpful analytics for videos on your library's YouTube channel. To access these statistics, start at your YouTube channel and click the Views link. Analytics is one of the choices in the menu.

The main Analytics page provides an overview of what's happening on your YouTube channel—views, minutes watched, and earnings (you can hook up Google Ads to your YouTube channel); engagement levels; and views and minutes watched on your top ten videos. It also shows basic demographic information and playback locations for videos (i.e., the YouTube Watch page, an embedded player on a website, etc.).

The sections Earnings, Views, and Engagement also provide more specific reports. For Earnings you can see estimated earnings and ad reports (not terribly useful for a library unless you are using Google Ads). In the Views report, information on views, demographics, playback locations, traffic sources, devices, and audience retention is provided. Engagement includes information on subscribers, Likes and Dislikes, favorites, comments, sharing, and annotations.

You can also download a spreadsheet version of YouTube analytics by using the Download Report button.

Flickr

Basic analytics can be found under the You menu in Flickr. This provides a thirty-day Views graphic and view counts for today, yesterday, and all time on photos and videos, photostream, albums, collections, and galleries. Total counts are provided for each section.

You can also see your most viewed photos and videos for today and yesterday, including the number of views, the number of favorites, and the number of comments.

Referrers are also shown for today and yesterday. Also included is a breakdown of other information on each photo and video—things like numbers of images that are marked public and private, that are tagged and not tagged, and that have been viewed and have not yet been viewed.

Personally, I don't find Flickr statistics very useful. I would much prefer seeing a thirty-day or a seven-day look at what's happening with photos, which it doesn't currently provide.

Instagram

Instagram doesn't provide statistics. But there is a handy third-party service that does. Check out Iconosquare (formerly Statigram). This service provides some basic viewer-level statistics, including the number of views, comments, and favorites.

Iconosquare
<http://iconosquare.com>

Vine

Vine doesn't have an analytics section. But by going to your Vine profile and browsing through your videos, you can see basic information that includes the number of Likes, Shares, and Loops (similar to views) on individual posts. You can find the number of your Vine account followers on your profile page.

Pinterest

A Pinterest for Business account provides some handy analytics that you can use to track growth and interest in your Pinterest activity. On the main page of analytics, under Site Metrics, you can find a date-range function and some overview graphs. These graphs show Pins, Repins, impressions, reach, clicks, and visitors.

Other menu options include Most Recent, Most Repinned, and Most Clicked.

To find the best analytic numbers, use the Export feature, which will export a spreadsheet version of analytics for the date range and menu items you select. Here's a rundown of what the spreadsheet version of analytics provides.

Site Metrics. Site Metrics include the daily number of Pins, Pinner, Repins, Repinner, impressions, reach, clicks, and visitors. This spreadsheet supplies all the analytics numbers that I use to track performance of my library's Pinterest account.

Most Recent. This includes total Repins, Likes, comments, and a timestamp for each Pin.

Most Repinned. This feature includes the Pin; the image used; the link included in the Pin; total Repins, Likes, comments, and Repins during the time period selected; and a creation date.

Most Clicked. This item includes the Pin; the image used for the Pin; the link used with the Pin; total Repins, Likes, comments, and clicks during time period; and a creation date.

Analytics for Social Media—What Should You Track?

As we have just seen, most social media channels offer some type of analytics or insights that a library can track to monitor performance and trends. In reality, tracking and recording monthly numbers is easy. Actually wringing meaning out of those numbers can be where the challenge lies.

In Topeka, we are currently tracking five areas:

- activity metrics
- audience metrics
- engagement metrics
- referral metrics
- ROI metrics

Let's examine each of these areas in more detail.

Activity Metrics

Activity metrics are simply how many posts, Pins, videos, or photos staff have created and posted during the month. You can count individual posts for each social media channel and then add the totals together. So for example, in May, Topeka's activity looked like this:

- Facebook—91 posts
- Twitter—93 Tweets
- YouTube—5 videos
- Pinterest—15 Pins

When you add the numbers together, you can see that Topeka's total activity for May 2014 is 204 posts.

Why track activity metrics? We track for two reasons.

- It's important to see what staff are doing in each social media channel and where they are spending time. If there's a jump or a lag one month, I can tell at a glance and then figure out what

happened. For example, maybe someone went on vacation and no one else posted. Possibly someone was excited about a particular topic or social media channel, or there was just more customer activity on that channel. Perhaps more customers asked questions, so we posted more responses.

- We also use activity metrics in the ROI metrics section that you'll read about later.

Audience Metrics

Audience metrics focus on growth trends by counting how many followers each social media channel has gained. This is another easy metric to count. Simply go to each channel's main page at the first of the month, and note the number of followers.

Then add each individual social media channel audience metric together so you can track how many new followers were gained across all social media channels for the month.

For an example, let's look at Topeka's audience growth in May 2014. First, look at totals for each social media channel:

- Facebook—12,429 followers
- Twitter—4,338 followers
- YouTube—384 subscribers
- Pinterest—1,704 followers (for Pinterest, I track growth only on the main account page. I don't count followers on individual Pinterest boards).

Then do some simple subtraction to find the total of new followers for the month. For example, in May we had a total of 12,429 Facebook followers. In April, we had 12,380. Subtract 12,380 from 12,429 and you will learn that the library's Facebook Page gained 49 followers in May.

We then add each of those individual audience metrics to get a total number of new followers for the month.

Why track followers?

- It shows growth over time. Most likely, your library does a monthly door count or basic check-out statistics for your collections. This number fits into that category.
- It shows trends in growth. If there's suddenly a lot of growth in a social media channel, or if you notice a slow drop-off in new followers, that's a signal that you need to examine that area further to find out what's happening.

Engagement Metrics

Engagement metrics measure activities that people actually do on your library's social media channels. Those activities include things like clicking Like,

sharing a post, clicking a link embedded within the post, Repinning a Pinterest post, watching a video, or leaving a comment. In Twitter, that can include a mention or a Retweet.

Here's what we track:

Facebook. We track monthly engaged users. Facebook, with all its many monthly analytics, makes tracking monthly engagement difficult. Facebook's numbers are a bit too detailed for a simple monthly total engagement number. They tend to focus on weekly trend reports instead of monthly numbers.

Thankfully, there is a way to find monthly engagement metrics. Download the Excel version of Facebook Insights for the month. I use the Daily Page Engaged Users number for monthly engagement metrics. That field reports "The number of people who engaged with your Page. Engagement includes any click or story created. (Unique Users)." To get a monthly total, simply add the numbers. For May 2014, Topeka's engagement metric total was 5,478.

Twitter. I count the number of favorites, Retweets, and replies. You can find this number by downloading the monthly Excel version of Twitter statistics. This spreadsheet shows daily activity (favorites, Retweets, and replies). Add the daily numbers to get a monthly total. For May, Topeka's Twitter engagement metric total was 143.

YouTube. No spreadsheet is needed here (although one is offered). YouTube's analytics provides a handy month/day filter and an engagement section on the main analytics page. In the engagement section, Likes, comments, Shares, and favorites are shown for the time period selected. For a monthly number, select a specific month using the month/day filter, then add the total Likes, comments, Shares, and favorites. I also include the number of video views for YouTube.

So for May 2014, Topeka's YouTube channel had 67 total favorites, comments, Likes, and Shares, and 12,565 views.

Pinterest. Use the downloadable spreadsheet again. This spreadsheet counts Repins and clicks. For May 2014, Topeka's engagement metric was 212 (total Repins and clicks).

Once you have each engagement metric, add the numbers to get a total engagement metric over all your social media channels used that month. For May 2014, our total engagement number was 18,465.

Referral Metrics

A referral in social media and website lingo is a way of directing a person from one website to another. For example, a library that uses social media might want to direct a follower from the library's Twitter account to a description of an upcoming event on the library's website. The movement from the Twitter post to the

website event description is a referral, and it can be tracked using Google Analytics.

Google Analytics actually tracks individual web pages on your website, so if you wanted to, you could find referrals for individual web pages. For the purposes of monthly analytics and trends, a single total referral number is needed.

Here's how you find that number. Open Google Analytics, then choose Acquisition, then Social, and finally choose Network Referrals.

The Network Referrals report provides individual referral numbers for all social media channels that visit your library's website. I find the Sessions number for each of the four social media channels that I'm tracking, and then I add those numbers together. For May 2014, the library had 865 referrals from social media to the library's website.

ROI Metrics

Return on investment, or ROI, can be a very hard thing to track. When it comes to social media, ROI can even be hard to explain. The main thing to remember is this: when reporting ROI for social media, don't focus on engagement or total follower counts. Instead, focus on actual work being done in the library. For example, is posting to social media channels resulting in more books being checked out? Is it getting more people to your programs? Is it getting people to your website?

These types of actual library goals can be tricky to track, but it is definitely doable. Here's what Topeka is doing.

First, we focus on the direct impact of social media on the library's digital branch. We monitor two trends:

- **The number of visits to the website per post created.** To calculate this metric, divide the total conversions for the month by the number of posts created. For example, in May Topeka had 865 total conversions and 204 total social media posts. Divide the conversions by the posts (and round up), and the total is four. That means that four visits to the website occurred for every social media post library staff created in May. Yes, this shows only a general trend; it's definitely not an exact science. It does, however, show that library staff spending time on social media channels does pay off. It helps direct social media followers to the library's website, which helps those customers check things out, register for events, or read library news.
- **The number of interactions per post created.** This is a similar metric, but it is focused on the work done on social media channels. Divide the monthly engagement metric by the number of posts created for the month. For example, in May, Topeka gained 91 interactions per post created.

This ROI metric tells a nice story. For every post that library staff created in May, that post prompted visitors to our social media channels to do something—to click Like, Share, Comment, Favorite, Retweet, or Watch—91 times.

Why is tracking this activity useful? It shows interest in the library and helps the library with advocacy initiatives. Interest in the library, when shared with friends, can be a powerful thing.

Using Analytics to Track Goals

You can also track ROI in relation to the library's goals and strategic plans. This means that your library needs to set different types of goals for its social media initiatives.

You can set at least two types of goals for social media channels. And these goals can be categorized as small and large goals.

Small goals. Your library should create some small goals for your social media channels and initiatives. These goals might include:

- **Growth.** Gaining more friends and followers. Your library can't increase engagement levels or gain more monthly referrals if no customers are following any of the library's social media channels. Set a target number of customers to gain, and then actively work towards that goal.
- **Engagement.** More engagement means more Likes, comments, and Shares on posts. The best way to find out if customers like what library staff post in the library's social media channels is to track engagement trends for each channel. The library can also set a goal of increasing engagement in one or all social media channels by a certain date.
- **Posting.** You can also create posting goals for each social media channel. Figure out how often you want to post, and then work on meeting that goal. That might mean posting more often, adding more library staff to the posting team, or setting a posting schedule and sticking to it.
- **Content.** You can create goals for what types of content you want to feature. For example, maybe your library needs more visual content on its Facebook Page.

How will you know if you are meeting your goals? That's what you do with the analytics you just learned about. Use these numbers to see if you are meeting your goals. Check the post-level data to see what's working and what's not on your posts, start adapting your posting style to the things your customers seem to respond to better, and see if engagement levels increase.

Large goals. A library should also create some large goals for each social media channel. Most likely,

these goals will come directly from the strategic goals of your library. These larger library goals might be found in your library's strategic plans or might come from a library administrator.

Strategy for the Large Goals

Using social media to help achieve strategic goals can be a welcome addition to a library's toolbox. Here are a couple of examples of using social media to meet a library's strategic goals.

As I mentioned earlier, Topeka has a strategic goal for our community to have every child ready to read when they reach kindergarten. Obviously, this isn't something the library can do on its own. The library will need to make some strategic community partnerships and get help where needed in order to affect change on this large community issue.

How can a library use its social media channels to help achieve this goal? In this case, the strategy is pretty simple—create connections and interactions with young and new parents. They're the ones with kids in that age range.

To help meet this goal with social media, the library can

- actively pursue Friending people in our service area that are young and new parents
- create content that interests those customers
- try to engage them, invite them to events at the library, and feed them links to content they'd be interested in finding out more about

To measure success in this area, we can monitor engagement levels on individual posts that were written to focus on the strategic goal and work on making those interactions better by adapting content and style as needed. We can attempt to increase followers in that age demographic, and we can track referrals by asking if people attending events were referred to the event from a social media channel.

If you work in an academic library, how about creating a goal to connect with new freshmen? Some academic libraries want to make connections to students but find it's hard to do. I've heard "Who wants to Friend the library?" I think lots of students will—if you have the appropriate content.

To meet this goal, you might focus on these types of activities:

- Set up social media channels that your new freshmen use. Are they on Facebook? Then you need to be there. Are they using Snapchat or Instagram? Think about setting up shop there.
- Create timely, useful content. For example, does your university have a freshman-experience class with homework assignments and due dates? Post information that helps the students turn the assignments in on time. Post hints, tips, and tricks to help students successfully complete assignments. Ask what they need, and then make sure to post responses.
- Be quirky. Freshmen are still teenagers, and they tend to enjoy random, quirky things. So be a bit random and quirky once in a while. Share weird facts—about the university or the area surrounding the university. Share pop entertainment news. Answer any question: invite weird ones, and then answer them.

No, this doesn't necessarily relate to the real work of the library, but it will keep the students interested and coming back for more. Then, when they really do need the library for a project, they'll already have a relationship with you.

Note

1. Brian Boland, "Organic Reach on Facebook: Your Questions Answered," Facebook for Business. June 5, 2014, accessed July 18, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/Organic-Reach-on-Facebook>.