MANAGING YOUR LIBRARY'S SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS
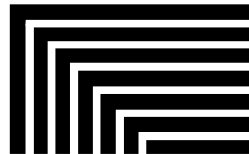
David Lee King

Library Technology

R E P O R T S

Expert Guides to Library Systems and Services

Managing Your Library's Social Media Channels

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About the Author

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Abstract

This issue of *Library Technology Reports* addresses the management of social media channels: setting goals, assigning roles for staff, and using analytical tools to measure effectiveness.

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Introduction

In the last few years, many people have written about setting up social media channels and using them to market and promote an organization, a business, or a brand. There are even books, articles, and blog posts about how to use social media for libraries. However, there has not been much written about the process of managing social media channels for libraries, setting goals and strategy for those channels, and measuring the success of efforts using social media in a library setting.

That is the focus of this issue of *Library Technology Reports*. The process of implementing, managing, and measuring social media channels in a library setting will be discussed. Tips include:

- creating strategy and goals for social media channels
- creating teams to run the library's social media channels
- connecting and communicating with customers using social media
- tracking usage and engagement levels using analytics and insights

Here's a summary of each chapter:

- **Chapter 1: Why Use Social Media?** This chapter provides reasons why a library should use social media to communicate with customers. Current social media trends are discussed.
- **Chapter 2: Landscape of Social Media for Libraries.** This chapter provides an overview of current popular social media channels, suggests activities that can be done with each of them, and includes examples of libraries successfully using each type.
- **Chapter 3: How to Connect with and Communicate with Customers.** Setting up a social media

channel is easy, but connecting with customers using that channel can be tricky. This chapter provides tips and tricks on how to connect and communicate with customers using social media. Included is information on how to create connections, how to start and continue conversations, and how to effectively share library news using social media.

- **Chapter 4: Social Media Teams.** This chapter discusses a great way for a busy library to create social media content—by creating social media teams. Discussions include why a team-based approach is a good idea, who should be included on a social media team, and effective ways for a social media team to function.
- **Chapter 5: Analytics, Goals, and Strategy for Social Media.** An effective social media channel needs to have goals and strategies to meet those goals. Two types of goals are discussed: goals for the social media channel itself, and ways to use a social media channel to meet the larger strategic plans of the library.

This chapter also provides an in-depth look at social media analytics: the types of analytics available for each social media channel and ideas on how best to use those analytics to provide insights.

- **Chapter 6: What to Do from Start to Finish.** The final chapter details the steps of setting up a new social media channel. Included are how to initially set up the social media channel, how to create goals for the channel, who to friend, how to create content, and what to measure using analytics.

So roll up your sleeves, grab a mug of your favorite drink, and let's begin!

Why Use Social Media?

Social media is not new. MySpace, an early social media channel, was created in 2003. Classmates.com (figure 1.1) was started in the early days of the web in 1995. Based on those two sites, social media is somewhere between eleven and nineteen years old. Based on the older date, social media appeared around the same time as DVD technology.

Even though DVDs are an important part of many libraries' collection plans, social media channels often are not. Either they're an afterthought or they are considered a secondary service the library uses to communicate with customers. Some library administrators still question the need for social media; they don't see the importance of it.

Before we get too far into ways to successfully use and manage social media channels in a library, we should answer that important question, Why use social media? The answer will provide a foundation for the rest of your library's social media operations.

Social Media Trends

Social media has captured the attention of the world. Here are some recent statistics about web and social media use in the United States.

According to *The Web at 25 in the U.S.*, among American adults:

- 87 percent use the web
- 68 percent connect to the web with mobile devices
- 90 percent own a cell phone
- 58 percent own a smartphone[1]

In about twenty-three years (1991 being the beginning of the publicly available web[2]), web usage has morphed from a handful of academics and researchers to most of the United States.

The other important fact to note in the above statistics is the devices people use to connect to the web. The numbers show that a majority of Americans connect using mobile devices. Smartphones (58 percent ownership) make up the majority of those devices.

Mobile device use is important in a discussion about social media. Why? Because that's how most of us connect to our favorite social media channels. Mobile technology has provided us with a way to connect to the web and to social media pretty much anywhere, instead of only connecting via a desktop computer with a wired Internet connection.

How Many People Use Social Media?

As you might have guessed, there are also a lot of people using social media. Sixty-seven percent of US citizens ages 12 and up use social media of some type.[3] Some of the more popular social media channels see a lot of use, too.

For example, 57 percent of all American adults are using Facebook. If you think about that statistic in your own community, that means that over half of your service area is on Facebook. If you're thinking of your younger customers, the statistic grows; about 73 percent of teens ages 12–17 are on Facebook. Most Facebook users—64 percent—visit the site every day.[4]

How about Twitter? Currently, 16 percent of US adults use Twitter.[5] Although that's a much smaller percentage than Facebook users, 16 percent of your community is still a lot of people.

Why Do People Use Social Media?

Think about your own use of social media for a second. Why do you use it? Most likely, you use social media to connect. You might want to stay connected to friends and family. Maybe you have a favorite hobby and want to discuss it with people who share similar interests. Maybe you have a favorite rock band or TV show and want to stay up-to-date with it.

Your community has similar interests. In some communities, social media has changed people's lives. For example, in recent years, social media has helped people in some countries organize protests and even revolutions.

Why Use Social Media in Libraries?

We've established that a majority of your customers and surrounding service area use social media. Now, let's connect those customers to the library using social media. What are some good reasons to create and use social media channels to connect to customers?

Here are five, and I'm sure there are others! Those reasons are:

- listening
- making connections
- getting responses
- taking advantage of mobile technology
- extending reach

Let's look at each of those reasons:

Listening. Social media tools provide a handy way to listen to what your community and customers are talking about (figure 1.2). Listening is a good way to get a feel for the general issues of the day in your community. By creating a couple of alerts and saved searches on your library's name and on important local issues, you can see what your customers and community think about your library.

Connections. One of the main reasons many people use social media is to connect with people they care about or are interested in. People also enjoy connecting and sharing their thoughts on an event taking place, like a football game or a TV show. In both cases, people using social media are sharing
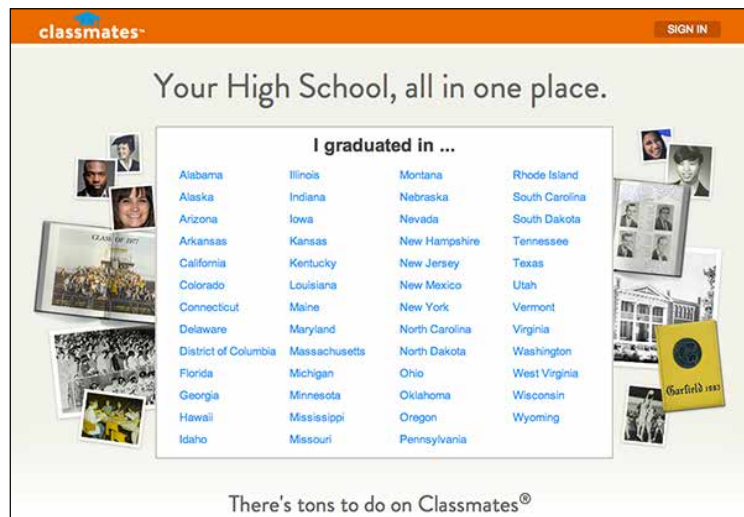
Figure 1.1
Classmates.com—an early social media channel

something about themselves—what they're doing or what they think about something—and other people are responding to them by commenting and adding to the conversation.

When well implemented, social media can be extremely useful when it is used to connect the library to its customers. Almost 70 percent of your customers are already on social media, using it to connect with and talk about people and stuff they like. Most likely, many of those people like the library and are a Like or a Follow button away from being connected to the library in a way that's never really existed before. And it's free.

Responses. The other side of listening is asking for and receiving a response. Your active social media channel is a great place to crowdsource for ideas. For example, ask a question when you want customer input.

You can "listen" to the responses; that part is easy. The harder part is figuring out what to do after you have asked for opinions. Asking sometimes implies that you plan on using those responses to help the library grow and improve.

Mobile. The rapid growth of mobile technology provides us with a great reason to use social media. Why? Because your customers are in love with their mobile devices and are using them multiple times a day. You don't have to wait for customers to sit in front of a desktop computer to read your message; they can see it anytime, anywhere.

Reach. Because of increased usage of social media, social media channels are a great place for libraries to share what's going on at the library and to reach their customers where they are "hanging out" (on social media). If you share, there's a good chance that your customers will see your post, read what's happening, and want to respond in some way (e.g., by checking out the book, attending the event, or using that new service).

Figure 1.2
Listening in on social media conversations

Be in That Space!

There are some great reasons for libraries to use social media to reach their customers. However, the best reason to participate in social media is a simple one. Social media channels potentially provide libraries with a direct connection to your customers.

When a library establishes an active presence in a social media channel, the library is able to share some pretty traditional-sounding library-related activities in a new online space that customers have access to 24/7. For example:

- **Answering questions**. Through a variety of social media channels, library staff can answer reference questions. Those questions might come through a Facebook chat, a Twitter mention, or a direct message from a library friend or follower. Even though the delivery method for the question might change, the question itself will be one of the same types of questions library staff answer in more traditional settings.

- **Conversing with customers**. Casual conversations happen every day in a library—at the reference desk, at the circulation desk, or even in the stacks while searching for a book. Casual conversations can happen through a social media channel, too (figure 1.3). For example, my library (Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Topeka, KS) sometimes asks Facebook Page followers what they plan to read next. When we ask that question, we usually receive a lot of replies! Library customers are book lovers and tend to enjoy sharing favorite books and authors in a Facebook comment.

- **Promoting and marketing**. You might create posters and hang them in your building. You can do a similar thing online, using social media tools. For example, you can create a Facebook event and post about the event in other social media channels. You can create a video about a new library service and share that video using Facebook and Twitter. The upside to this? You are sharing about a new service

Figure 1.3
Example of a library asking customers "What are you reading?"

or event with people who have "signed up" to see those promotional pieces.

- **Sharing classes and events**. Events, classes, and instructional tutorials can be created and shared using a combination of your website and social media tools. This is a great way to share insider or "pro" tips with your community.

- **Reaching outside the building**. Most important, a library using social media has the opportunity to connect outside of its physical building and build relationships with customers through social media channels.

This is a very exciting time for libraries!

Notes

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Landscape of Social Media for Libraries

This chapter explores the most important social media tools in use by libraries today. Will this list change by next year? Very possibly—social media is still expanding and morphing. However, there are some tools that have matured enough to have staying power (and the attention of your customers).

Here are the most used social media channels currently in use in libraries.

Facebook

Many libraries are using Facebook, and it should be considered essential in today's social media landscape. As we learned in the last chapter, 57 percent of US adults are using Facebook.[1] It makes sense for libraries to set up shop with a Facebook Page since a majority of customers are already using Facebook.

What are libraries sharing on Facebook? They are sharing two types of content:

- **Library news**. Libraries are sharing about themselves—what's happening at the library, what will happen, and what recently happened. For example, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library recently purchased and unveiled a new bookmobile. The library shared about the new bookmobile (figure 2.1) through its Facebook Page: "This beauty is 37 feet long and 94 inches wide. Come see its grandness for yourself tomorrow during our Bookmobile Grand Opening. Come to the library's parking lot at 9am for a chance to be the first person to check out on the new Sherlock Holmes-themed bookmobile. Fun!"[2] To date, this post has received sixty-four Likes and eleven Shares.

- **Fun stuff**. Libraries are also sharing what I'm calling "fun stuff." These are light-hearted or humorous posts that one often finds on Facebook. These types of posts tend to make people smile and click the Like button. That's the goal. The more often a Facebook user interacts with your library's Facebook content, the more Facebook's content algorithm decides that the user enjoys that content. Then Facebook will allow more of your library's content to be shown in the person's Facebook news feed. That means more of your library's Facebook Page content—the library news and the fun stuff—will be shown to your Facebook Page followers.

Twitter

Twitter is another useful social media channel for a growing percentage of your community. Although Twitter's user base is much smaller than Facebook's—around 16 percent of your community uses Twitter[3]—it's still worth exploring.

Who are your Twitter users? According to Pew Research, Twitter has "particular appeal to younger adults, urban dwellers, and non-whites."[4] Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library's Twitter followers run the gamut from teens with smartphones, to young professionals, to the homeless. It's a fun and interesting mix of people who like sharing and discussing quick snippets of information and news.

Figure 2.1
Topeka's Facebook Post about its new bookmobile

Figure 2.2
Kansas City Public Library Tweeted about Weird Al Yankovic

What should you share on Twitter? Many libraries share current information and news about their library—that "what's happening now" type of content. Twitter is a popular "breaking news" tool, whether that breaking news is about a major world event or about the amazing pizza restaurant down the street from the library.

Kansas City Public Library (Kansas City, MO) recently shared this Tweet (figure 2.2): "Weird Al's newest album is available on @FreegalMusic with your @kclibrary card! http://kclibrary.freegalmusic.com/artists/view/l…"[5] This Tweet coincided with Weird Al Yankovic's new music release that was featured pretty prominently in many online outlets, including YouTube.

Kansas City's Tweet is a great example of how to share content via Twitter:

- It was a posting about a timely news event.
- It focused on fun, entertainment-based information.
- The library connected the event (and its Tweet) to a library database (in this case, Freegal).
- The post seems to have been successful. Kansas City's Twitter followers Retweeted (shared) it with other Twitter users.

YouTube

Most people don't really think of YouTube as a social media channel, but it is. YouTube includes socially shared content, friends and followers, Favoriting, rating, sharing, bookmarking, and commenting—all very much in the realm of a social network.

YouTube is not a small, niche social media channel, either. It has a huge user base—enough to make it the second largest search engine in the world. Fifty-one percent of US adults use YouTube.[6] Among younger adult audiences, there's a stronger reach. According to Nielsen, YouTube reaches more US adults ages 18–34 than any cable network.[7] That's a pretty amazing statistic, since YouTube has existed for eight or nine years, while cable television has been around for approximately thirty years.

What are libraries sharing through YouTube?

- **Reference and entertainment**. Want to learn something fast? There's probably a YouTube video about it. Want to listen to a new song? Increasingly, YouTube is where bands put their newest music (lyrics-only videos), even before the official music video is created.
- **Library information**. YouTube is also a great place to post library-related instructional videos.
- **Social content**. YouTube is a social network, too. So if you post videos, there's a good chance people will follow your channel and comment or Like your videos.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is well known as a business-focused networking tool. Nineteen percent of US adults use LinkedIn to post their job history and their resume and to connect with like-minded people.[8] It's also turning into a growing social network. A LinkedIn user can reach out to
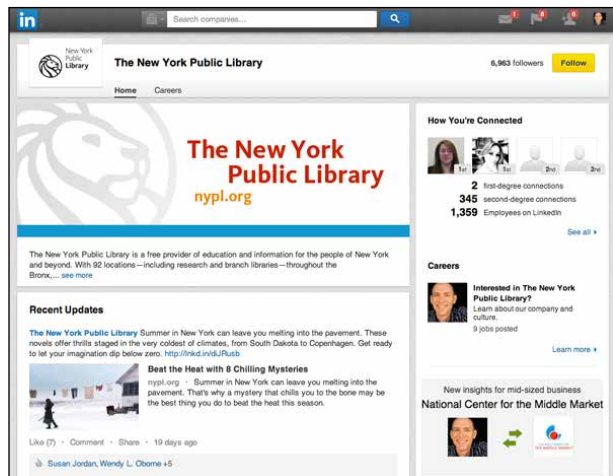
Figure 2.3
New York Public Library's LinkedIn company page

Figure 2.4
Los Angeles Public Library's Instagram account

others for job and work leads and can create a group for focused discussions.

Libraries can use LinkedIn to connect with the professional community in their service area. Make sure to post useful business and finance-related content on your library's LinkedIn page. Set up discussions about a business or marketing book (and offer the book to the group).

Make sure to set up a company page (figure 2.3) for your library, too.

Tumblr

Tumblr is a quirky blog-like social media tool that has been growing in popularity. For adults, it takes a back seat to other social media tools; 4 percent of US adults use Tumblr.[9] Teens and younger adults use it slightly more often.

Tumblr can be a fun, popular place for animated gifs and visual-based posts for libraries. Tumblr is also a good place to be slightly irreverent (while remembering that you represent the library, so don't overdo it!).

Pinterest

Pinterest is a great place to find interesting visual content. Fifteen percent of US adults use Pinterest[10]—mostly women. According to Mashable, almost one third of US women use Pinterest, while only 8 percent of men use the service.[11]

My library uses Pinterest to Pin interesting content that we find or that is happening in the library. We also Pin new books. By doing those simple things, we have almost two thousand followers on our main page and thousands of followers on each of our subject boards.

Instagram

Instagram is a fun social media channel dedicated to sharing photos and short videos. Facebook recently bought it and has been making improvements to the service.

There are a lot of people using Instagram; 12 percent of US adults use the photo-sharing service.[12] People under the age of 29 are more likely to use Instagram.

What do you do with Instagram? You can do quite a lot, including taking a photo or short video and adding comments to each image. You can also add keyword-based hashtags to each photo, which makes your photo more findable.

Libraries can share photos of what's happening at the library—fun stuff and behind-the-scenes pictures (figure 2.4). You can also use Instagram to give your library a human touch—to share the human side of the library.

Snapchat

Snapchat allows users to post photos and videos, add text and drawing to the photo or video, and set a content timer. This allows the user to share content that will disappear after a set amount of time.

Because of the more ephemeral content, Snapchat is more like a visual conversation that can be shared with friends. Snapchat has about thirty million active users, mostly teens.[13] If a library posts content that is similar in scope to Twitter and Instagram, it will be headed in the right direction.

Vine

Vine is an interesting new tool owned by Twitter where users can take and share six-second videos.

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Since Twitter owns Vine, this tool integrates nicely with Twitter posts. Vine isn't as popular as some of the other services we've examined. Just 3 percent of US adults use Vine.[14] The percentage is much higher for teens.

A library can use Vine to create visual content that's similar to the content in Instagram. Just remember that this content is all video and lasts only six seconds. Believe it or not, you can share a lot of content in six seconds! Try doing a six-second book review, for example. Creative limitations can be good!

Google Plus

Google Plus (also known as Google+ or just G+) is Google's growing social network. Google had tried previously to create a social network—Google Buzz. It didn't take off and lasted only about a year. But Google Plus has been steadily growing in popularity. Currently, 14 percent of US adults use Google Plus.[15]

Content on Google Plus is very similar to what you would find using Twitter or Facebook. With 14 percent of your community there, Google Plus is definitely worth exploring further.

Flickr

Let's not forget an oldie but a goodie, Flickr! Flickr is used by ninety-two million users worldwide[16] and is a great place to store and share photos online. It also has a strong, loyal social network.

Flickr is also very simple to use. Set up an account, upload some photos, Friend people in your community, and make sure to share those Flickr photos elsewhere, especially on your website.

How Should a Library Post to Social Media?

There are definitely a lot of social networks for today's library to choose from. This chapter has only touched the surface by exploring the most popular ones. Thankfully, posting methods are similar in most of the social media channels listed above.

Make sure to create great, useful content. This is the hardest "rule" of social media and the one that will gain you the most traction in using social media for an organization. Share great content, and your customers will want to connect with you.

Besides great content, what else should be in that post? Here are some ideas:

- **What I'm doing**. Share what's happening in the library. You can also share something big that recently happened at the library. For example, my library recently shared pictures of the ribbon cutting for our new bookmobile on Twitter and Facebook. Our customers liked that and commented on it.
- **Tips and tricks**. Share tips and shortcuts for using library databases or the library's ILS. Have a great way to discover new authors? Share that process with customers.
- **Photos and videos**. Make your library come alive online by sharing how it looks through videos and photos.
- **Entertainment and fun content**. Be fun or funny once in a while. Share silly stuff—especially in Facebook. That's how its news feed functions.
- **Networking and connections**. Finally, make sure to network and create lasting connections with your customers. Library staff already know how to do this in person. Do the same thing online. Friend people. Comment on what they're doing, and in general be helpful.

Some Examples

Let's look at some examples of libraries that are using social media well.

Facebook: Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. I love what my library is doing with Facebook. You'll hear more about our approach to content later on in this publication. But for now, check it out and browse around.

What will you see? You'll see posts that are a mix of fun and library-related content presented in a way that involves our community. Our customers like to respond by adding comments and clicking Likes and Shares.

Facebook: Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library
https://www.facebook.com/TopekaLibrary

Twitter: Kansas City Public Library. Kansas City Public Library is doing a great job of sharing in-the-moment thoughts and content on its Twitter feed, and its customers seem to respond positively.

Twitter: Kansas City Public Library
https://twitter.com/kclibrary

YouTube: Allen County Public Library. Check out this library's videos! It has a great mix of interviews, kid and teen programs, and fun videos. Look hard enough, and you'll even find an interview with me in the video archive.

LinkedIn: New York Public Library. Check out what New York is doing in LinkedIn. It's sharing what's happening at the library and information about its larger-name events. For example, it recently acquired Maya Angelou's archives and shared this information on LinkedIn. It received forty-two Likes and a couple of comments from that post.

Tumblr: Darien Library. Darien Library does a great job connecting to young professional adults with its Tumblr account. What does the library share? It shares content like recipes submitted by staff, a video of a rabbit that discovered the library's garden, and fun book reviews, among other things.

Instagram: Lloyd Sealy Library, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Check out what the Lloyd Sealy Library does; it's very focused. The library specializes in criminal justice, and you can tell by looking at its Instagram account. The account is full of old pictures of gangster mug shots.

Pinterest: Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. I'll also share what Topeka is doing on Pinterest (figure 2.5). We are sharing subject-related content that directly corresponds to the library's print collections. The library staff has arranged many of our materials into genre-related content called neighborhoods. Content that gets shared on Pinterest matches a genre neighborhood in the library building.
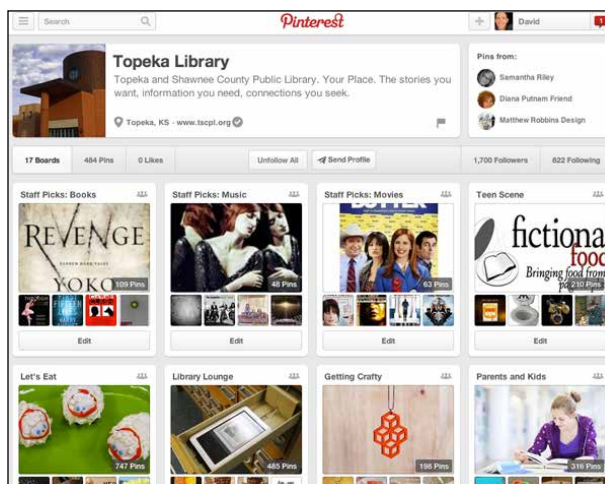
Figure 2.5
Topeka's Pinterest account

Vine: Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. Yes, another one from my library. Hey, that's why I'm writing this LTR! Using Vine, we share quick snippets of what's happening in the library. We have also done some stop-motion animation and some quick book reviews. For example, we were closed for a week during an RFID migration project. During the week, we shared what staff members were doing using Vine videos (and other social media tools). Our customers loved watching.

Google Plus: New York Public Library. With over 812,000 followers, I'd say that NYPL knows how to use Google Plus! Looks like the library uses it to share fun stuff and events and library information in an accessible, informal way. Nicely done.

Flickr: Boston Public Library. Flickr is still a really useful tool for photo and image sharing. And Boston Public takes full advantage of Flickr's capabilities. Boston shares archival photos using Flickr.

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How to Connect with and Communicate with Customers

S o far, we've learned about why social media can be a useful tool to help a library connect with customers. We've also scanned the current landscape of social media channels and discussed what channels libraries are using.

Now let's roll up our sleeves and start using them! This chapter will discuss tips and tricks libraries use to connect to customers using social media—particularly creating connections, starting and continuing conversations, and effectively sharing library news.

Personal Accounts versus Library Accounts—There's a Difference!

These days, most people use some form of social media to stay in contact with family and friends. They might also use it to keep up-to-date on their favorite hobby or pastime. Social media is a great professional information-gathering and networking tool, too, and many of us use it for that as well.

Because of this, we are familiar with the process of posting content to a social media channel. However, representing a library on a social media site that was originally created to represent an individual can be tricky. How do you represent the library, but also

make personal connections with your customers at the same time?

Content Really IS King

The first, most important part of setting up an organizational social media channel is not your banner, the color scheme you use, or the images displayed on your social media page. It's the content. The content you present under the moniker of the library will make or break your social media channel.

Unfortunately, many libraries have not yet mastered this crucial step. The easiest way to turn followers into engaged fans—fans who interact with your posts (Like, Share, comment, click links, etc.) and hopefully your library—is to create compelling, interesting content.

How do you do that? It's not as hard as you'd think. Here are ten tips, hints, and tricks for turning your library's social media content into something that your customers will want to engage with:

1. Be relevant.
2. Be consistent.
3. Pay attention to different tools and different rules.

4. Share the library's story.
5. Be human.
6. Type like you talk.
7. Be helpful.
8. Think short.
9. Be visual.
10. Encourage audience participation.

Let's explore each of these tips in more detail.

1. Be Relevant

You have to be relevant to your audience to engage them, and there are at least two ways to think about being relevant. First, you need to know who your audience is or what customers your library wants to focus on. You could focus on the people who are friending or following your social media channel. Most likely, they are already library lovers. They might already use the physical library, and they liked the content they saw on the social media channel.

The fact that they're library lovers is awesome because you don't have to convince this group that the library is great. They already believe that. Don't pretend these fans are new library users!

Instead of posting content to try to convince them about something they are already convinced about, post content that your "insiders" would like. Provide them with tips on new books or new videos the library just purchased. Share about a new service of the library. Is there a big author event that your favorite customers would be interested in? Share that information on your social media channel.

You can also share expert tips with this group. For a library, expert tips might be things like shortcuts on library use, better ways to search for (and find) something in the ILS, or how to set up alerts on a subject or author.

The second way to think about your audience is to focus on your library's strategic plan and on the demographic groups that your library is strategically trying to reach. For example, one of my library's strategic initiatives is for every child to be ready for school. Using social media, the library might target young parents ages 20–35. We would create content for that age and lifestyle demographic. Having a specific target audience in mind when you are creating content really helps narrow your focus and ultimately helps to make your social media content more interesting because you're no longer trying to be everything to everyone.

2. Be Consistent

Lack of posting consistency is another major reason why many library social media channels struggle to gain followers and engagement. When the library isn't using social media channels consistently, postings tend to be sporadic. Other content (like phone number or hours) might not get updated quickly, either.

Being inconsistent with posting can happen for a variety of reasons. Maybe one person was assigned the task, and that person found another job. Then no one was assigned to do the Facebook posting for six months. Or possibly it's just not a high priority in the library. A staff member was assigned to post to Facebook, but that person is too busy (aren't we all?). If it comes down to choosing, he or she will choose to do first the things the boss has prioritized as important. And social media is not it.

The easiest way to fix posting inconsistency is to simply schedule the task of posting. If your library's goal is to post once a day and you're not getting to it, just schedule that task in your calendar (and then make sure to follow through).

3. Pay Attention to Different Tools and Different Rules

As you post it's important to remember which social media channel you are using and to post accordingly. You might have different groups of users following you on different social media channels, so your posting style might need to adapt to each group. For example, you might have young moms following you on Facebook, but your audience in Twitter is primarily young professionals. On LinkedIn, those young professionals' managers might follow you. In Tumblr, you might have those managers' teenaged kids following you. Make sure to adapt your content to each of those groups.

Also, each social media channel has different rules built into the system. Twitter allows 140 characters; Facebook allows more. Tumblr is more blog-like, and YouTube needs a video (plus a title, description, and tags). So content about the same library service can vary greatly in social media based on posting rules and content requirements for each channel.

4. Share the Library's Story

Remember to share the library's story using social media. You can do this many ways. Share milestones; did your library recently build a new wing or buy a new bookmobile (figure 3.1)? Share that information with your followers. Share what's cool or exciting about it. Share why it's important. Share customer stories as you share library news to show why your customers are excited about that new service.

Share what's going on behind the scenes at the library. Share pictures of staff. Share awards. Why? These are all parts of the library's story, and your customers enjoy getting the inside scoop about a place they enjoy.

5. Be Human

One of the hardest things to do when posting content as a library or organization is to post library-related information . . . and make that content sound "human." Why is that? Most of us have not adapted our writing styles from more academic (which we learned in college) and business-focused (which we learned in high school) to a more modern, casual, conversational style of writing. Many of us are still more comfortable creating bookmarks, brochures, and press releases that use a highly polished writing style.

That worked fine for twentieth-century, print-based marketing, but in a social media channel, there are better ways to write. Social media tools were created for people to connect, which requires a highly casual, conversational writing style. If your social media content sounds like a brochure or an ad, you will be ignored.

There's an easy cure for this; it's in the next tip.

6. Type Like You Talk

The easiest way to create that conversational style of writing is to type like you would talk. Some of us do that automatically (that'd be me, to the bane of my editors). For those of us who struggle to write informally, there's an easy trick to quickly create more conversational-sounding content. Simply type whatever it is that you want to say, and then read it out loud. If it doesn't sound like something you'd actually say to a friend or a coworker, rewrite until it does.

Also, as you are writing, pretend that you are talking to a friend, a coworker, or a familiar customer. This will help you create a more conversational writing style.

Just remember that you're still at work, representing your library. The goal is "business casual"—not "weekend casual."

7. Be Helpful

Another way to make the library's social media posts seem more human-sounding is to simply be helpful. If you are answering a question that has come up or are helping customers navigate a new service or database, you will sound friendlier because you are being helpful.

You might have to be more proactive here to let customers know they can ask questions. For example, you might post the fact that customers can ask you questions via Twitter or Facebook and that you will answer those questions. You can also use an open-ended question or a fill-in-the-blank style of question to prompt followers to respond.

If a social media channel has direct or private messaging, make sure customers know they can use those features, too. Not all customers want their questions to be seen (and responded to) by other customers.

Figure 3.1
Topeka's Tweet about its new bookmobile

8. Think Short

One thing social media is *not* is long. And that makes sense. Since social media tools provide ways to hold online conversations, it makes sense that you'd keep your posts short. Usually, an individual talks for a short period of time in a conversation, and then the other person involved in the conversation shares to keep the conversation going.

Social media functions the same way. Some social media channels actually require short posts. Twitter, for example, allows 140 characters per post. When using Twitter, you want to keep your post shorter than that, if possible. You might need to leave room for a hashtag or a person's Twitter name for a Retweet. In that case, instead of 140 characters, your Tweet should really be about 115–120 characters long. Now that's concise!

Facebook posts can be longer. But posts between 100 and 250 characters, or less than three lines of text, get more Likes, comments, and Shares than longer posts. So just because you can write longer posts doesn't mean you necessarily should.

You'll want to make your YouTube videos as short as possible. There is not a hard-and-fast rule for video. As long as the video is interesting and moves along at a good clip, you can have longer videos. Usually, though, your goal is a video that is under three minutes.

9. Be Visual

Pretty much all social media channels have a visual component these days. Even traditionally text-heavy

Managing Your Library's Social Media Channels   **David Lee King**

tools like Twitter frequently include images or short videos that are posted alongside the Tweet itself.

This is good because people like pretty pictures. Make sure to include a visual element in your posts. Posts that include a picture or a video generate more engagement than a text-only post.

What should your images look like? Images for social media serve a couple purposes: (1) complementing the topic, and (2) making you click.

For an image to complement the topic, it simply needs some type of relation to the content. So if you're posting about a new book, include the book jacket as an image for the post. Even better would be a close-up of a staff member or a customer holding the book (people like seeing images of people).

The other goal is to motivate customers to click. Your goal is to get information out and also to have your readers engage with that content. That means getting your readers to click Like, to leave a comment, to click through to your website, or to click Share and share the content with their social media friends.

Work on making your images "clickable." To get some ideas, browse through popular Instagram images or popular Pinterest images. In general, most of these images use slightly saturated colors, have a single clear focal point, use bold visuals, and get up close to their subjects.

Video is similar. A post that includes a short video will elicit more engagement than a text-only post. So make that video interesting!

10. Encourage Audience Participation

There are some easy ways to start improving engagement through audience participation techniques. Here are some ideas:

Ask a question. People love answering! My library frequently asks our Facebook followers, "What are you reading?" (figure 3.2). Sometimes we use a slightly more creative version of that question, like "What's on your bedside table?" Guess what? Our customers love answering those types of questions!

The same type of question works effectively when applied to other topics, too. I have asked our Facebook customers what they'd want in a library Twitter account, for example.

Call to action. A call to action is simply the thing that you want your readers to do after they read your post. It's providing the "next step" to your customers (figure 3.3). Make sure to include a call to action as often as possible. This gives your followers something to respond to. For example, if you're talking about a new book or linking to a video book review, the call to action might be to check the book out of the library. If you are describing an upcoming computer class, the call to action might be to click the
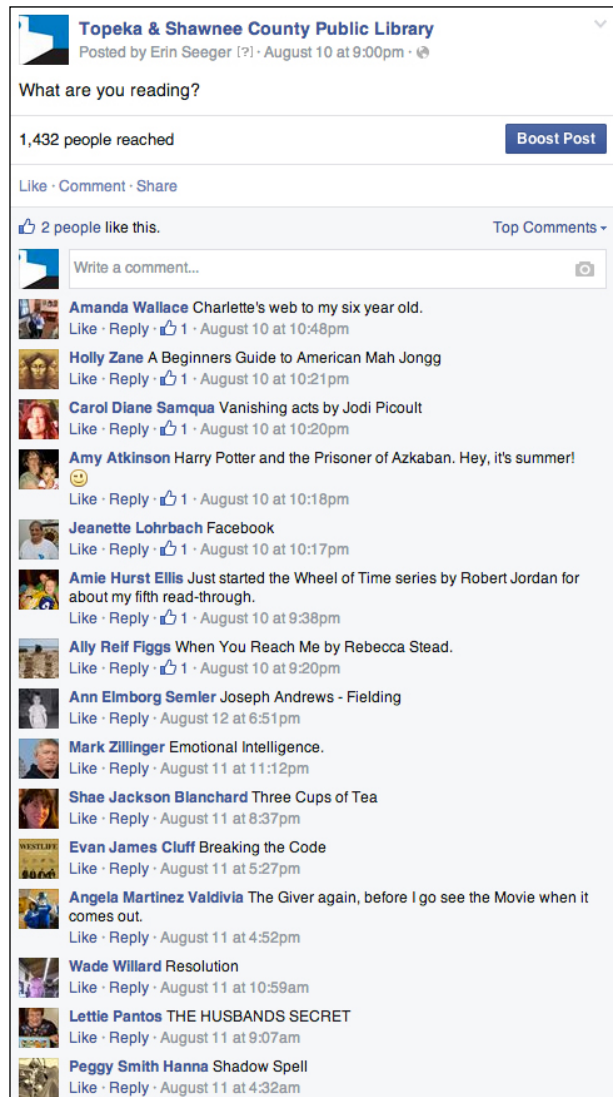
Figure 3.2
Topeka's Facebook Post asking "What are you reading?"

registration link to sign up for the class.

To have maximum impact, your call to action should be in the first ninety characters of the post. In Facebook, that's in the first three lines of text.

Quirks and Tips for Each Channel

Now that you have some general guidelines, tips, and tricks for posting to social media channels, here are some channel-specific tips.

Facebook

Facebook's algorithm for news feeds recently changed. This change affected a lot of organizations and companies because they experienced a huge drop in

Figure 3.3
Call to action in a Tweet

engagement rates. Many Facebook Pages that primarily published viral content now have a significantly diminished Facebook reach.

I don't think this is really a big deal for libraries, but it can affect us in two main areas:

- Buying ads for Facebook Likes isn't as effective as it was last year. You can create a Facebook ad that invites people to become fans of your Page. My library has done this multiple times. Last year, we'd get forty to seventy Likes a day with the ad (we pay $10 per day for these ads). Earlier this year, those Likes dropped to about ten to fifteen per day, and sometimes fewer than that. That's okay. It's still a useful tool because ten new fans are better than no new fans! It is good to be aware of the reason behind the drop, though.
- Content reach and engagement have dropped for some. Companies that focused on viral content have noticed the largest drop in engagement. Some brands have seen a drop in reach of 40 percent or more.[1]

However, some companies and organizations are not experiencing this drop in reach. What are they doing that's different? They are creating useful content that their customers want to interact with. Here's a simple Facebook formula to remember—*useful content = more engagement.*

Twitter

A great place to learn more about posting with Twitter is the company's business- and organization-based Twitter for Business pages. Twitter for Business includes a lot of best practices for brands and businesses to successfully connect to customers using Twitter.

> *Twitter for Business*
> https://business.twitter.com

Also, make sure to use the tools Twitter provides. Twitter tools include hashtags, in-post links, and link shorteners. When possible, include an image or video in your post. Create relevant hashtags. They are searchable, so if it's a useful one, people will probably use it.

YouTube

START RIGHT AWAY

Make sure the first fifteen seconds of your video is awesome and to the point because that's the most important part of your video. This is the amount of time it takes for a viewer to decide whether or not to continue watching.

So in the first fifteen seconds, don't waste time. Don't create a long introduction or use scrolling credits. If you can "just start" and jump right into the content, that's even better (figure 3.4). If you have to include a brand image, show it for five seconds, then start the video. Or include it off to the side of the video.

DON'T USE A SCRIPT

Don't script the video. My guess is that you are probably not an actor or a professional newscaster, so you probably sound very much like you are reading or have memorized a script. Instead, write what you want to say, or better yet just outline it. But don't memorize or read from your script. Instead, look the script over once or twice, then wing it. You will sound more conversational.

HAVE GOOD SOUND AND LIGHTING

Audio is a very important part of video quality. How can you improve a video's audio quality? Here are a few ideas.

Shoot up close. If the resulting video looks a bit too close to the subject, think about purchasing a wide-angle lens. Wide-angle lenses take in more of the

Figure 3.4
In Topeka's most popular YouTube video, the content starts immediately

surrounding area, so they visually "push" the subject farther away.

You can also purchase an external microphone. Some of these can plug directly into your camcorder or digital video camera. Others will need an external audio recording source. Then make sure to sync the audio and video portions of the final video together into a new video.

Lighting. Another really important thing in video is the lighting. If you have great audio but poor lighting, your video will look unprofessional. Thankfully, it's easy to achieve good lighting.

The least expensive form of lighting is the lighting you already have—the sun, windows, and overhead lights. Make sure the light source is shining toward or directly on the subject rather than behind the person.

You can also buy lighting. Cheap clamp-on shop lights can be found at any hardware store for $20–$30 and work great. If you need more options, you can buy simple or more complicated video and photography three-point lighting systems.

When it comes to video and audio gear, don't overdo it. Your goal isn't really professionally polished videos (although those are nice). Your goal is to be seen and heard without distracting viewers.

Note

1. Justin Lafferty, "Studies Show More Than 40 Percent Decreased Organic Reach on Facebook," Inside Facebook, December 23, 2013, accessed August 15, 2014, www.insidefacebook.com/2013/12/23/studies-show -more-than-40-percent-decreased-organic-reach-on -facebook.

Social Media Teams

Now that we have learned about social media channels and their use in libraries—why we should use social media channels, how they work in libraries, and some tips and tricks for posting—let's turn our focus to getting the work done.

In this chapter, we will look into the nuts and bolts of running a successful social media channel for the library. What does it take? How do you get it done? Are there ways to make it easier for staff?

What Does It Take?

What does it take for a library to successfully run a social media channel? We have already covered some aspects of this question in previous chapters, but the information bears repeating. It takes three things:

1. great content
2. knowing your audience
3. consistency

   Let's look at each of these.

1. Great Content

We have already discussed having great content, so I won't say a lot more about it here. I will, however, say this—content really is king. It is the most important part of your social media channel. I frequently receive questions from libraries about their Facebook or Twitter presence. They mention problems their library is having with social media, like "We're just not getting anyone

visiting our page" or "We're an academic library—students aren't interested in friending the library."

What's the real problem? There could be several, but the largest issue usually revolves around content. The content these organizations have created is simply not interesting enough to their fans and followers, which is why that content is not receiving more attention and interaction. Usually, their content feed is full of marketing and PR-related material, often describing an upcoming event the library is holding or a new service the library is creating.

Posting this type of content is fine in small doses, but it shouldn't be the sole focus of your library's content strategy. When the library focuses primarily on marketing content, the posts are similar to a billboard or an ad. What do people usually do with billboards and ads? They ignore them.

The simple solution? Stop posting primarily marketing content! No one's reading it, and it's wasting your valuable time. Instead, ask your customers what types of content they'd like to see using that social media tool. Then figure out a plan to start posting that type of content. Do this, and your interactions and reach will increase.

2. Knowing Your Audience

Another problem facing a library's social media channel is that the organization simply doesn't know its audience (figure 4.1). The library probably does know the customers who visit the building as well as departmental and service-oriented audiences. Librarians know their regulars.

Figure 4.1
You need to know your audience

On social media channels, however, some libraries haven't figured out who their audience is yet. They also might not have examined demographics for the library's service area and determined who the audience is that the library wants to reach.

The easiest way to figure out if you know your digital audience is to look at your library's strategic plan. Are there any large, system-wide goals to reach a certain segment of your community? Perhaps your library wants to reach out specifically to young professionals or teens. If so, you can tailor your social media posts to reach that population segment.

For example, my library has a strategic goal of helping children ages 0–5 get ready to read by kindergarten. Obviously, we're not going to go after a 3-year-old on Twitter! But it makes a lot of sense for us to start attempting to reach young parents, ages 20–35. That age category also fits nicely with another goal, which is to help small businesses in the area grow and succeed. Why? It's the same audience. Young parents are also the young entrepreneurs in Topeka. If we tailor content to that age group, we'll have a better chance of reaching them.

"Friending" is another angle to use to assess your audience. Some libraries tend to friend me. While I love it that people and organizations want to friend me, I am not their customer. They might also friend ALA or a library in another state.

Instead of friending other libraries, known library writers and bloggers, and national library organizations, a library needs to really narrow in and focus on just its service area. A university library needs to friend students, faculty, alumni, etc. A public library needs to friend people in its community.

3. Consistency

The final thing that can cause a library social media channel to fail is inconsistency. Library staff don't regularly post. Thankfully, this is another simple thing to fix. Figure out how many posts you want to create in a given amount of time (for example, a day or week), and then assign the work and schedule it. Put it on your calendar if you're having trouble remembering to do it.

Yes, we're all busy, and some things get prioritized more than others. But if you have created a social

media channel for your library and expect customers to visit and interact with the content they find there, then you have to actually post.

Creating a Social Media Team

Libraries divide the work of posting to social media in different ways. One really successful model is the team-based approach. You will get more done if you have a team to do the work.

Why should you set up posting in a team-based format? There are a few reasons. The most obvious reason is to make posting to the social media channel much easier for all staff involved with the project. The task of creating and editing images, creating status updates, and replying to comments and questions can be much easier if there is more than one person responsible for the tasks.

Using a team-based approach also gives the library an easier way to cover all parts of the week. For example, because of scheduling, it might be easier for "Mary" to post on Mondays, but on Thursdays she doesn't work because she has a weekend shift. Assigning someone else to Thursdays brings consistency to the number of posts throughout the week because there will be new posts on Thursday just like any other day.

And since social media can be a fun activity, it spreads the fun among more staff members than if just one person is doing the work.

Who should be on the team? This can vary by institution. At my library, we have a mix of team members on our social media teams. We usually include:

- The digital services director (me). I'm in charge of social media at the library, so it makes sense that I would be part of the team.
- Public services staff. This is essential. Public services staff—reference librarians, children's and teen librarians, and circulation staff—are the ones who actually interact with customers on the front lines in the building. They work directly with customers and tend to know the answers to many library-related questions that come up.
- Marketing, PR, communications. Including staff from this area is also important! They are usually the "keepers of the library's voice"—they promote a consistent image and brand. These people also know how to word "sensitive topics" in a way that makes the library look good. They are also familiar with the big-picture, system-wide library events that need to be publicized.

I strongly suggest that you do not have only marketing or reference or IT or managers running the social media channels exclusively, if possible. Any one of those departments can provide only part of the library experience and has limited experience in other areas. For example, marketing doesn't answer questions at the reference desk and doesn't usually interact with customers on the floor. So marketing staff are probably not the best fit for everyday posts or for answering reference questions via Facebook.

On the other hand, reference doesn't usually market upcoming events or new library services. Marketing does that, so it makes sense to have marketing continue that process.

Too Small for Teams?

If you work at a small library, you might not have enough staff to create a posting team. That's okay: you can still get your work done! Instead of scheduling content for a team to complete, you might only have one or two people, or it might be just you—the director—who posts to social media. Make sure to schedule ten to twenty minutes a day to create some posts on your social media channels and to answer any questions that appear.

What Do You Post About?

Rather than posting about any random thing that comes up, it's good to have some posting guidelines in place. These guidelines will narrow your content in a good way.

For example, my library has three broad areas we post about in Facebook. They are:

- **Reader's advisory**. Here we post about new books, new movies, author information, etc.
- **Current events**. Here we post about current local and national news, entertainment news, etc.
- **Library offerings**. Here we post about events, classes, and new services.

You can see that we don't post about everything the library does, and we don't attempt to post items of interest to all age levels. By narrowing our focus to those three areas, we have made content simpler for staff.

How Do You Post?

As I have mentioned, the easiest way to post is to create a posting schedule and then to stick to that schedule. Assign staff members to each of those content areas and to a day of the week. That's their posting day, and they will be responsible for two to four posts throughout the day.

The person assigned to post on that day will also be responsible for monitoring comments, private

messages, etc. If the poster receives a comment on one of the library's posts, he might reply to the comment with a thank you. If he receives a question about something, he might have to do some research or find the appropriate person to answer the questions and ask that person to craft the response, if needed.

Dealing with Problems

There will potentially be a host of problems that appear once your social media teams are created. Here are some of them:

Answering difficult people. Sometimes a customer will post a mean, untrue, or off-color comment or question on your social media channel. Before that happens (and it will happen), you need to decide: Who answers those questions? How are the questions answered (i.e., will you actually answer the question, or will you simply acknowledge the question by saying something like "Thank you for the comment")? Do you answer or ignore the question? In my library's case, the person responsible for addressing problematic responses is usually the digital services director—the person in charge of the social media team. Sometimes it's the head of marketing. Ultimately, it doesn't really matter who is responsible, as long as someone is assigned to it.

Different voices, one library. Sometimes, two people posting for the same organization will have very different tones of voice. They might use different words, different punctuation, and different sentence structures for each post.

Some variation is acceptable, since multiple people on your social media team will be posting. Too much disparity in voices, though, can lead to a slightly disjointed social media channel.

This disparity can be improved by developing some guidelines for posts. For example, you can create a style guide for your social media channel or for the library's social media in general. In the style guide, you can specify things like the use of active or passive voice, how to use conversational language, or the use of smaller words and abbreviations. Offer training sessions on how to post to your library's social media channels can also improve posts.

Sick days! Someone at your library will get sick. If it's the day that employee is assigned to monitor social media, you'll probably need to find a temporary replacement.

Staff wanting to post other topics. If you have narrowed your posting topics, you might have some staff asking if they can post a random topic anyway. You need to know what to say when that occasion arises.

Too many staff volunteers. Social media teams are great when they're small. But social media can't really accommodate twenty or more staff. So, depending on the size of your organization, there might come a time when you have to say no—we're full. Not fun, but necessary.

Analytics, Goals, and Strategy for Social Media

M ost likely, if you're reading this report, you already have social media channels set up for your library or organization. You are post-ing, 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 differ-ent 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 sec-tion 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 engage-ment on your five most recent posts; and a compari-son 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 corpora-tion trying to outsell the competition! But the com-parison 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.

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, Pinners, Repins, Repinners, 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 checkout 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.

What to Do from Start to Finish

et's take everything we have learned previously and use it in a practical way. Let's pretend that there's a new, popular social media channel that has gained traction in your community in the last year. Droves of people are using it, which means that you need to be there.

What do you need to do to turn that good idea into a powerful tool to help the library achieve its strategic initiatives?

Try these six steps:

1. Set up the channel.
2. Create goals.
3. Listen.
4. Create a team.
5. Create content.
6. Use analytics to measure success.

Let's look at each step in more detail.

Step 1. Set Up the Channel

Before anything else can be done, someone needs to set up the channel. Name it the same thing you name your other library social media channels (my library would use "topekalibrary"). You will need a small square badge image to represent your library in the new social media channel. My library uses our logo, but some libraries use a recognizable image of the building, or smiling staff.

You might need another larger image for the background of the social media channel's main library page. Twitter, Facebook, and Google Plus all include background images in their social media channels. Have fun with this image. It can be fun, or it can further represent what your library does or how it serves customers.

You might also need to create some links back to your library's website, connect the new social media channel to other social media tools the library uses, and write a short sentence or paragraph describing the library and what you hope to accomplish with the social media channel.

Step 2. Create Goals

The next step in setting up your new social media channel is to create some goals for it. Go back and read the goals sections in the last chapter. Think about who uses the tool. Do you know any basic customer demographics for the tool (e.g., lots of teens use it)? Also consider the types of content that can be posted on the channel—text, photos, video, etc.

Let's create three starter goals for our new social media channel:

1. Gain local followers. One goal should be to attract library customers and advocates to your new channel.
2. Engage with young business owners and entrepreneurs. You've done some research and have

discovered that young professionals ages 25–45 are using this new social media tool. Focusing on that user group helps narrow and focus your content appropriately.

3. Attract that demographic to library events and materials. Why interact with this group? Hopefully, your library has some interesting content and events that this demographic would find useful. So one of your ROI metric goals will be to successfully point customers to these events and materials by using the new social media channel.

Step 3. Listen

The next step is to *stop*. Don't post anything yet. You have set up the channel. You have some beginning goals, and you are starting to gain some followers and friends. Before you start posting, take some time to listen in on the conversation already happening on the social media channel.

You're listening for several things, including:

How the tool works. Watch for the social media tool's quirks to make sure you understand how it works. For example, if you were setting up a new Twitter account, you would need to understand how functions like Retweets, mentions, and hashtags work. You might also want to explore how to use a URL shortener and add an image or a video to a post.

Does the new tool have a posting limit in terms of words or characters? Does it have other limiting features? You will need to know these things before you start posting.

Learn what people are saying. Start Friending and following your customers and community members, and listen to the conversations they start and participate in using the tool. See how they interact, and pay attention to the subjects discussed. Poke around and do some searches. Watch for locally based hashtags, and start listening to the things your community discusses. Make sure to Friend some of your customers.

Library mentions. Also listen to find out what people say about your library. Are their comments accurate? Do they have questions? Can you answer them or fill in the blanks? If so, then you're ready for the next step!

Step 4. Create a Team

As we discussed previously, you need to figure out who is going to post. If possible, create a small social media team for your new social media channel. Assign team members one or more days each week to monitor and post to the channel.

This shouldn't be a huge burden. After all, it's social media, so it comes and goes pretty fast. If a helpful desktop software tool exists, set it up. Check out TweetDeck or Hootsuite (or use e-mail) to monitor the channel, library mentions, and your saved searches. Are you at a smaller library, where only one or two people can work on the social media channel? Have one person watch in the morning, the other in the afternoon. If you only have one person to monitor social media, schedule specific times of the day to tune in for fifteen to twenty minutes to see what's happening.

If you do have a team, make sure this team holds regular meetings to discuss social media channel goals and improvements.

Step 5. Create Content

Your new social media channel is set up. You have a team, and you have some goals. You have Friended some people and organizations. You've listened to conversations and have discovered that you can add to the conversation and fill in the blanks about the library, too.

Now it's time to start creating and posting content to your new channel. One way to do this is to set up a content calendar for posting. Your social media team is already assigned a day or a time to monitor the channel. Have team members post during that time, too.

Also, remember the goals created for this social media channel, and post only content related to those goals.

Step 6. Use Analytics to Measure Success

Now that you are doing everything needed for the social media channel to thrive, you have one final step. You need to measure your success to see if you're achieving the goals you set and to see where improvements might be needed.

Remember the three goals that were created for this new social media channel? They were:

1. Gain local followers.
2. Engage with young business owners and entrepreneurs.
3. Attract that demographic to library events and materials.

How would you use social media to achieve those goals? Here are some ideas for each goal:

1. Gain Local Followers

This one's easy. Count total followers at the beginning of each month, and see if you are gaining new

followers. If you are—great! If not, see if there are areas that can be improved.

Use the social media channel's analytics to help. Look at individual post impressions. Are people reading your posts? If not, consider posting at a different time of the day. Look at post engagement. If people aren't engaged, a change might be needed in your team's posting style. Make sure to include next steps in each post so people have something to do once they read your post.

2. Engage with Young Business Owners and Entrepreneurs

This is a larger strategic goal of the library and not something that can be achieved simply by posting content related to the demographic. Before you post, your library needs to plan events and purchase materials that might attract that demographic. Once this is done, your social media team can create posts emphasizing those events and programs.

Your team can post articles that this demographic might find interesting. You can also post a question that asks what types of content would be helpful to small business owners in your service area. Ask how you can help them succeed and meet their goals. Readers will continue that conversation—in the library and on social media—if you start it and are persistent in continuing it.

3. Attract That Demographic to Library Events and Materials

When you are engaged with your demographic, this step should happen automatically. You can easily measure success by taking a simple survey asking where people heard about an event.

For materials, see if the items mentioned were checked out. Even better—compare those checkout dates with the date your social media post was published. If the two dates coincide, that means that you met this goal.

Again, It's Conversation

The goal of this report has been to help your library and your social media teams manage social media channels in a library setting. We focused on why social media is good for the library, how to set up a social media team, how to create goals for the social media channel, and how to use that channel to meet the library's strategic plans. We explored how to use analytics to measure your success at meeting goals, and finally, we looked at an example of putting all of these concepts into practice.

If you don't get anything else out of this report, remember this: when it's all said and done, social media channels are a way to hold conversations—it's just good ol' communication. They provide a unique way to start and continue conversations, a way to add pertinent information to a conversation, a way to correct wrong information, and a way to connect to your customers.

Thankfully, each of us knows how to start, hold, and finish conversations! So just start using social media channels to do what you already do well—hold conversations with your customers. Then adapt and grow the social media tool as needed. Sometimes, "just starting already" is the best way to discover a tool's usefulness. Use it daily for a month—post to it, Friend people, and interact with them. At the end of the month, take a step back and see if you gained followers, helped people out, and added to the conversation. If you did, then it's probably a useful social media channel for your community and for your library.

Keep in mind that posting to social media is fun! Social media isn't popular because it's medicine, after all. It's fun to connect with friends, celebrities, and organizations that you like. It's fun to add your thoughts to a conversation. People like using social media, and libraries can jump right in and join the fun. Your customers are already there, so your library can invite customers to Friend the library. And they most likely will, because they already like the library, and they like using social media.

Find out where your customers are, and set up a social media channel in that space. Put some of the tips and ideas presented here into practice.

Start posting . . . and have fun!

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