SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES
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Overview of social media at UTL

We are dedicated to providing engaging and relevant services and resources to our users. As access, production, and consumption continues to be digitally mediated, we endeavor to meet our users where they are – online. Instead of being the sole authors of the University of Toronto Libraries story, we are inviting and encouraging all of those who walk in and out of our physical and virtual spaces to participate in the telling of our story through their own content: words, photos, and videos on various established and emergent social media platforms.

Purpose of using social media at UTL

The purpose of this guide is to provide University of Toronto Libraries staff with best practices and guidelines related to the integration, maintenance, and removal of social media channels for institutional use. This guide also outlines recommended procedures for creating, managing, marketing, and assessing social media content.

Goals of using social media at UTL

- To inform, engage, communicate, and create a dialogue with our users and community about libraries, events, services, facilities, resources, and staff
- To improve user experience, by having an outlet for users to provide direct and immediate feedback, and the ability for UTL to directly and immediately address this feedback
- To extend the physical location of the library and build community into digital realms and meet our internal and external stakeholders (i.e. librarians, visiting scholars, students, alumni)

Please refer to the Strategic Marketing and Communications Plan 2012-2015 for a more in-depth overview, located on the Communications and Marketing Support: University of Toronto Libraries LibGuide.

This guide was created by the following librarians involved in the Student Outreach Group:

Rachel Beattie, Heather Buchansky, Nelly Cancilla, Jesse Carliner, Holly Inglis, Judith Logan, Vincci Lui, Stephanie Quail, Kathleen Scheaffer, Margaret Wall, and Tracy Zahradnik.
Creating a social media plan

Before you start to create accounts or generate content, it can be useful to create a social media plan with the sections listed below that will drive the strategy behind your social media accounts. A social media plan should ideally illustrate:

- Your library’s target market
- SMART objectives for your social media account for a specific time period

Library’s target market

Your library can define your target market in a variety of ways. Some of the factors to consider when creating a profile of your library’s target market are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of library user(s)</th>
<th>Part-time students; full-time students; international students; tenured faculty; adjunct faculty; staff; alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Part-time students; full-time students; part-time instructors; full-time instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of study</td>
<td>Undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, continuing education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs the library supports</td>
<td>Health sciences, business, arts &amp; humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information-seeking behaviours</td>
<td>First-year undergraduate students, professional graduate students, research graduate students, faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Age, gender, ethnicity, living arrangement (commuter vs. residence); see if you can get more detailed demographic information from your registrar’s office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychographics</td>
<td>Interests; hobbies; behaviours; values (librarians may have an educated idea about the psychographics of their users already; however, proper assessment and monitoring of your social media accounts will help you)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SMART objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>Be precise about what you want to achieve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measurable</td>
<td>Make sure the objective is quantified and can be easily measured (refer to Assessment section in this document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievable</td>
<td>Make sure you have the resources and personnel at your library to achieve the stated objective(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>Make sure the objective is aligned to your library’s overall outreach and engagement goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-sensitive</td>
<td>State when the objective must be achieved by</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of SMART objectives:

- Gain 50 Twitter followers that are part of the library’s target community over the next six months by tweeting relevant content for students and faculty twice a day, Monday-Friday

- Increase traffic to the library’s research guides by 10% for the Fall 2014 semester by promoting guides through Facebook, Twitter, and library blog posts

Account profile and display

A consistent visual identity helps convey who we are to local and global audiences. It also builds credibility. Please consider the following customized areas below when creating or editing a profile area on a UTL social media account.

Creating a profile or username

In order for our users and social media followers to easily identify that a social media channel is part of U of T, as well as UTL, it can be beneficial to include ‘U of T’ within the profile name and/or username, especially on Twitter when the handle may not always resonate with people.

Here are instructions on how to change your Twitter profile name and username (aka – Twitter handle).
Banner photos
Photos of library buildings, study spaces, or people within these spaces are good options for social media banners/backgrounds. Please make every effort of representing students that reflect the U of T community. And, if people are easily identifiable within the photos, make sure they have signed the UTL photo/video release form, allowing the photo they are in to be used publicly for promotional purposes. Also ensure that the image dimensions are optimal by referring to this social media image size guide.

For central libraries
Please consider using a pre-established UTL banner for your social media account, when a banner is required (below), to help create consistency and credibility.

All other libraries within the system are free to use the UTL banner as well.

Example of a banner photo:

Profile photo
Library buildings and spaces can be used in the profile photo. The library name (i.e. Gerstein) or acronym (i.e. BIC) will also help followers easily identify your account within their feed.

Example of a profile photo:

OISE Library Twitter profile photo

Bio field
The bio field or ‘About’ area is a space to highlight the unique features of your library, and perhaps the people behind the social media account.

Include relevant links to your library website to establish credibility, and list hashtags for followers to use (ex. #uoftlibraries). And, note that it is the ‘official channel’ of the library.
Examples of a bio field:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U of T Libraries Twitter bio</th>
<th>Gerstein Library Twitter bio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U of T Libraries</strong>&lt;br&gt;@uoftlibraries&lt;br&gt;The official Twitter channel of the University of Toronto Libraries. Librarians Judith, Heather, Lisa, and Margaret respond to tweets Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm EST&lt;br&gt;Toronto, Ontario, Canada&lt;br&gt;library.utoronto.ca&lt;br&gt;Joined October 2009</td>
<td><strong>Gerstein Library UTL</strong>&lt;br&gt;@GersteinLibrary&lt;br&gt;Gerstein Science Information Centre- The largest Science and Medicine Library at U of T. Librarians Elena, Allison, and Heather are tweeting!&lt;br&gt;Toronto, Ontario, Canada&lt;br&gt;gerstein.library.utoronto.ca&lt;br&gt;Joined April 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Instagram bio**

The ‘About’ area on Facebook allows for a longer description, as well as listing hours and location. Please refer to the Media Commons and Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Facebook pages for examples and ideas.

**Creating and generating content**

**Persona and tone**
Opt for a friendly, yet professional persona across all of your social media platforms. Contractions are fine. Personal pronouns – especially ‘we’ – give a sense of warmth and personality to your writing.

**Scheduling**
Be aware of what’s going on in your community on a day-to-day and semester basis, and create timely posts to match the concerns of your community. For example, students will be more interested in posts about quiet study spaces during exams. Scheduling software programs, such as Hootsuite, can be used to schedule your communications for several platforms in advance. (Note:
Instagram posts can now be prescheduled in Hootsuite, though it isn’t as seamless as it is for other platforms, such as Twitter).

It may also be useful for your library to create a social media editorial calendar. An editorial calendar will help you organize when you should promote specific events and what platforms you will use for promotional purposes.

**Retweets/reposts/shares**

Other accounts at the university and library are a good source for informational retweets/shares. Following leaders in the field that your patrons are in is a good source as well. Beware social media hoaxes: If you’re retweeting big news (a death, a major event), confirm the story using trustworthy news sources. It’s okay to brag a bit, so feel free to share or retweet compliments or other interesting posts or photos from followers directed at your account.

We recommend [Repost app](#) for reposting Instagram posts, as it embeds image credit onto the image itself, communicates directly with Instagram, and allows you to paste the original caption into your own post.

**Replying**

**When to reply**

Reply to posts that have been directly addressed to your social media account (i.e. your Twitter handle has been used in the tweet).

If there a positive tweet or comment that your library may want to use in its promotions, ask for permission to use their comments as testimonials. It is best to ask at that moment, as it may be difficult to locate the comment later on.
Who to reply to
Make sure that the user is a real person, not a spambot or someone with an ulterior motive. Always look at the user’s profile and recent posts before replying.

How to reply to angry users
Social media provides a needed space for people to vent their frustrations and be heard. You will encounter angry messages or posts directed at your library and/or its practices. This is an opportunity to build a relationship, even if that seems daunting at first. Some key tips:

- Acknowledge user and ‘kill ‘em with kindness’
- Give the needed information immediately or promise to find out what is happening and keep them updated

Helpful links:

How to respond to angry customers on Twitter (presentation by Verist Labs, via Slideshare)

How to respond to public complaints on Twitter (article by Kyle Lacy, Twitter Marketing for Dummies, 2nd ed.)

5 ways brands respond to social media comments (article by Seek Social Media)

Use of hashtags
Hashtags make your content more discoverable. Use hashtags that are appropriate for the content of your post. It’s always a good idea to use #UofT instead of just writing ‘U of T’, so other users searching for posts about #UofT can easily find your content.

Example of hashtag usage:

U of T Archives tweet
**UTL institutional hashtag**
The hashtag #UofTLibraries can be used to allow other UTL libraries to search and find your content for retweets and reposts on Twitter and Instagram.

![UTL institutional hashtag example](image)

**Sharing content among UTL social media channels**

If you have an event, post, or issue that needs ‘amplification,’ contact the other social media managers or student outreach group members on the UTL listserv: UTL-STUDENTOUTREACH-L@listserv.utoronto.ca

**Generating content**
Posting regularly is an important part of maintaining a fresh and relevant social media presence. Here are some suggestions for generating new content on a regular basis:

- Employ student staff to come up with and draft post ideas. You can even have them take pictures or videos to include in the post* (if people are easily identifiable within the photos/video make sure they have signed the UTL photo/video release form, allowing the photo to be used publicly for promotional purposes)

- Listen to what your community is talking about on the social media platform you’re using and write about those concerns. For example, if you see a lot of complaints about the elevators in your building, post about their maintenance issues

- Set up Google alerts for topics related to your field or use an RSS reader such as Feedly to follow online newspapers, websites, and blogs that your target audience may be interested in

- Create standing post types. For example, the @uoftlibraries Twitter feed posts FAQs on the weekends

- Content types you might want to publicize on social media: faculty publications, new books, events at the library or in the faculty department you work with, and articles of interest to your users

- Add photos to your Twitter posts and links, as it usually generates more interest and retweets*
*Please refer to University of Toronto’s Digital Media Bank ‘Understand Rights and Releases’ for more information related to obtaining signed consent for photos.*

Make sure to use a link shortener, such as uoft.me, to make your posts more appealing to read. If you decide to include links that lead followers back to your library’s website, you can use Google Analytics to see how many users are entering your site through a social media link.

**Linking accounts and duplication of content**

If you have multiple platforms with different audiences, it is a good idea to link these platforms so you can reach as broad an audience as possible with one post/tweet/etc. There is some debate about this practice, though, as your followers could see the same post on different platforms and see your content as redundant and annoying.

**Maintenance**

If you find that your social media account is being neglected, you might want to think about closing it entirely. It’s better not to have an account than to have an outdated one. Please refer to the assessment section of this document to learn more about assessment techniques you can use to determine if you need to deactivate a social media account.

**Accessibility**

Third-party software programs, including social media platform like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are not part of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). However, there are certain things we can do with social media posts to make them more accessible to our followers, including:

- use camel casing with hashtags, i.e. #LibrariesOfInstagram
- use contextual hashtags
- provide a brief description of what is in a photo (especially for Instagram, as there is more space)

**Promotions and marketing**

Listed below are ideas on how to promote social media channels

**Print marketing**

(add icon, handle or links to following print materials):

- Flyers
- Workshop handouts
- Business cards (can be done through special requests)
- Bookmarks
• Table top tent signs for desks, tables, and workstations
• Due date slips
• Stickers
• Buttons
• Posters (for primary promotion and standardization for inclusion for other printed library informational materials)

**Digital marketing**
(add hyperlinked icon when possible):

• LCD screens
• Screensavers or splash pages on library computer workstations
• Workshop slides
• Web banners
• Staff newsletter (e.g. *In the Loop*)
• Widgets in LibGuide
• Email signatures

• Social media cross-promotion (post Instagram photos on Twitter)

**Building followers and community**

- Promotion through followings (Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest)
- Subscribing (YouTube) and liking or joining groups (Facebook)
- ‘Like’ or ‘Favourite’ other user’s content, and offline word of mouth communication
- Focus on members of your targeted audience
- Share your page and accounts with existing followers and friends and ask them to like or share with their friend
- Offer incentives
- Have contests
Target audience
- Current and prospective University of Toronto faculty, staff, and students
- Alumni
- International researchers and visiting scholars
- Other community members
- Relevant organizations like associations, media outlets, cultural institutional units (i.e. departments, offices, student groups)

When to promote
At specific times during the term or year, such as:
- Acceptance packages for students
- Orientation materials
- Graduation notifications (i.e. how to stay involved with the libraries)
- TRY or other conferences and staff development events

On a regular basis:
- Exhibitions and displays
- Events
- Instructional sessions
- Library tours

Frequency and timing of posts
There are certain times of the day where posts and tweets receive more attention, so it would be best to schedule around these times. It varies from social media platform. Here is an interesting infographic on when the best times to post items to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Google+.

Other considerations
- Budget: integrate with existing outreach campaigns or separate?
- Collaboration and consultation: ensure through communication that your marketing campaign does not conflict with other libraries or groups on campus. Email the UTL social media listserv.
- Coordination: a social media marketing shared calendar could be created to be consulted when planning social media marketing initiatives, or remember to email the student outreach group listserv.
- Refer to communications policies for marketing at U of T, UTL, and your individual library (ex. Communications @ UTL guide).
Assessment

Assessing the success of your social media strategy is crucial, as maintaining various social media accounts can be time consuming. By collecting data on your social media properties and turning the data into usable metrics, libraries within the UTL system can make evidence-based decisions on areas, such as:

- Types of content to include
- Frequency of posts
- When to discontinue a social media account
- Success of specific outreach campaigns

The following sections will discuss how to assess social media properties in a library context, while also providing librarians with a list of assessment tools and some sample Google Forms for collecting assessment data.

Quantitative and qualitative data to collect

Assess the value and effectiveness of your library’s social media activity by using both quantitative and qualitative metrics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative data to collect</th>
<th>Qualitative data to collect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of followers, likes</td>
<td>Consistency of library’s tone and personality in posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of content posted</td>
<td>Quality of mentions (use of library’s hashtag by followers or non-followers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of content posted (links, images, posts)</td>
<td>Sentiment (Klout score - see Assessment tool spreadsheet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares of content (reply tweets, Facebook shares, repins)</td>
<td>Library’s interaction with target users (number of retweets, comments directed at students, faculty, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals (users clicking through to library’s website via a link on a social media account)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of staff time used to monitor accounts and create content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gathering data

**Track internal social media activity data**
- Use a Google Form to track staff time and activity on social media
  - Sample forms have been created; feel free to copy and customize according to your library’s needs
    - Social media activity form #1    Social media activity form #2
- Track data for all social media interactions on a daily basis to determine how much staff time is being spent on maintaining social media accounts (recommended)
- Every term, export the statistics into a spreadsheet and use appropriate tools and infographics to summarize the statistics and compare with previous terms

**Track external social media activity data**
- There are a variety of tools for tracking external social media activity depending on the platform
  - We have created a spreadsheet outlining some of the tools available for evaluating social media reach, effectiveness, popularity, and user engagement
- Depending on the types of data you would like to collect (retweets, new followers, likes, shares, etc.), you may want to collect data on a weekly basis or have weekly reports sent to you using tools such as Hootsuite or SumALL
- Additionally, with tools such as Facebook Insights you can download data for a 180-day period and analyze larger periods of time
- Every term, analyze your collected data and use appropriate tools and infographics to summarize the statistics and compare with previous terms

Assessing collected data
- Choose appropriate platform assessment tools to gather data on your social media accounts and the amount of staff time being used to maintain the accounts.
- Evaluate the internal and external social media data according to the criteria you have developed that is appropriate for your library.
- Tie your assessment to the social media objective(s) you have created for your library’s social media strategy.
- Benchmarking: evaluate statistics every term to note any trends or whether or not you are achieving the social media objectives you have established.
- Evaluate the continued worth of each platform based on resources used (i.e. staff time) and engagement with library’s target users to decide whether to change your approach to the platform or to deactivate/cancel the account from your social media portfolio.
Using the data

It is best to evaluate relative value and effectiveness of social media activity every term (every 4 months) and annually before yearly planning meetings. Here are some things to consider when collecting and using data:

- Set your criteria based on the unique needs of your library (who are your users, what is the size of your faculty/college/department, what level of staffing do you have?)
- Compare yourself against libraries of similar size and how your social media influence compares (numbers of followers, likes, retweets, Klout score)
- Develop criteria for deletion, so that you can determine if your library can cut back on its social media activities in certain platforms
- Set your goals for improvement and put a plan in place for achieving the goals
- Set up policies and procedures for transferring responsibility for account(s) to another staff member if the current staff member is unable to maintain the platform due to other responsibilities

Remember, criteria for evaluation may be different for each platform.
Appendix

Social media contacts at UTL

Please contact the following individuals for questions or assistance with your library’s social media channel(s):

Heather Buchansky, Student Engagement Librarian
heather.buchansky@utoronto.ca | 416-946-7788
**Contact for:** subscribing to UTL student outreach group listserv

Jesse Carliner, Communications & Reference Librarian
jesse.carliner@utoronto.ca | 416-946-3803
**Contact for:** creating any new social media accounts

Current UTL social media sites
This [UTL social media directory](#) page outlines social media platform at libraries across U of T.