Social Media Policy

University of the District of Columbia, Learning Resources Division

Updated: February 28, 2019

Introduction

Social media is an important, influential, and ever-evolving communication tool. Each platform attracts and speaks to different audiences. Successful outreach through social media requires daily content creation, monitoring, and audience engagement. This policy aims to help the library develop a sustainable and engaging presence on social media. This document contains guidelines to assist the library in achieving its mission and goals for social media.

Mission

The mission of the library's social media is to enhance its outreach and marketing to inform the University community that we are "The Helpful Place." We will engage the community through informative and friendly content that highlights the library's role as a promoter and supporter of student and faculty achievement and success.

Goals

Social media, while oftentimes fun, is a form of strategic communication. The goals for using the account will evolve with the library's needs and messaging. The current goals for the social media accounts are:

- To conduct "friendly face" outreach to inform the University community and reduce library anxiety.
- To enhance the library's position on campus by amplifying University messaging, programming, and outreach initiatives.
- To promote the library resources, services, and instruction offerings.

Purpose

The purpose of using social media is to support the libraries outreach and marketing initiatives. Additionally, the library accounts will also support the University's mission, goals, programs, and sanctioned efforts, including University news, information, content, and directives.

Scope

This guide covers active library social media accounts managed by the Outreach and Reference Librarian. The guidelines apply to anyone who has access to or provides content for these accounts. This guide reiterates the policies created by the University of The District of Columbia for all University accounts. It also includes information specific to the library.

The University's Social Media Guidelines is available at https://www.udc.edu/web/social-media/.

Current Accounts

The library currently has active accounts on the following platforms:

- Instagram – udc_library
- Twitter – udc_library

Analytics Reporting

Each month, the Outreach and Reference Librarian is responsible for recording and reporting the analytics of active social media accounts. Analytics may be derived from the tools built into the platforms or through third party vendors such as GabStats.

All analytics will be recorded in the online database in OneDrive: [LINK REMOVED FOR PRIVACY]

Policy Updates

This policy will be updated on a yearly basis, whenever personnel changes related to outreach and marketing occur, or whenever the library adds or drops a social media platform. The policy will be reviewed in its entirety and the updated document will be distributed to all relevant parties and posted to the library's intranet.

Procedures

Guidelines

The library has established the following guidelines to help with content creation and account management.

Account Creation

Prior to creating new accounts on any available social media platforms, the Outreach and Reference Librarian will first research the product to determine its use, audience, and viability for the library. If the platform seems to support the library's social media mission and goals an account may be created on a six-month trial basis. After six months, it will be evaluated for engagement and sustainability.

Any new accounts should follow the naming conventions listed in the University's social media guidelines. The preferred name for any new accounts is "udc_library".

When any new account is created, the Outreach and Reference Librarian will inform the Communications and Marketing Office so that the account may be added to the University's social media directory.

Account Evaluation

New social media accounts will go through a six-month trial period. During that time, the Outreach and Reference Librarian will determine if the account is successful and worth maintaining long-term. Each account will be evaluated for frequency of use and user engagement in a way that is appropriate to the platform. Social media accounts that are unsuccessful due to lack of posts or low user engagement may be discontinued. When possible, each unsuccessful account will direct users to other library social media platforms.

The Outreach and Reference Librarian will also assess all active social media accounts every semester to determine goals, messaging, and levels of engagement. Accounts will be updated, repurposed, or deleted as appropriate.

Content

Social media enable communications with followers and other members of the University or public. Social media is about engagement and interactivity. All posts should provide recent and relevant content that encourages commenting and conversation. Posts should contain a mix of text, photos, GIFs, links, and video that are of value to the intended audience. Some posts should also directly pose questions to followers to encourage engagement.

Any content created for the library's social media accounts should be original and fall with-in one of the following areas:

- Resource Marketing
- Service Marketing
- Event Marketing
- Friendly-Face Marketing
- Community Building

All posts must also follow the University's employee policies and editorial guidelines. Additionally, content may not report, speculate, discuss, or give opinions on University topics that could be considered sensitive, confidential, or disparaging.

All posts will be drafted and reviewed for spelling, grammar, tone, and content before they are shared. Lingo, abbreviations, and sarcasm should be avoided.

Voice

The voice of the library's social media accounts is upbeat, positive, and helpful. A nerdy tone and puns may be used when appropriate to encourage personality, humor, and engagement.

The voice of the accounts follows the library's style guide. The style guide is available online at TBD (Guide in Development).

Resharing Content

Content can be freely reshared from any University or University-related account. The library always seeks to amplify the University's message and story. Additionally, content from academic, library, DC, or other accounts may be reshared if it is of interest to our community or builds on the current messaging schedule established by the library or University. The library is also encouraged to reshare any comment that positively promotes use or love of the library.

Deleting Content

Content posted to library social media accounts *should not* be deleted except in cases where:

- An error (grammar, date/time, content) is caught immediately (within 15 minutes) and the post has no user comments. In this instance, the original post may be taken down *only* if it is to be replaced with a corrected post.

- A user requests the post be deleted and their request is in accord with the Take Down Policy (see *Legal Considerations).*
- A personal post was made to a professional account in error.
- The account was hacked, and spam content was posted. The spam posts should be deleted and a comment or apology regarding the hack should be posted immediately if the posted material was offensive.

Branding and Style Guide

Branding is the visual and emotional messaging component of marketing. Branding is shown through consistent use of color, font, imagery, and other cues. The library follows the University's branding and style guide available here: http://docs.udc.edu/misc/UDC_Branding_Style_Guide_v1.pdf

The username and styling of any library-related account must clearly reflect affiliation with the UDC library and University. Each account username MUST include "udc" and "library" in the username with the preferred username being "udc_library". Each account must also provide, when possible, a link to the library's website.

In addition to branding, the library follows a professional style guide to standardize grammar, writing style, and document design. Overall, the Associated Press Stylebook (AP Stylebook) is used for usage, spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, and other written style.

The AP Stylebook is available here: https://www.apstylebook.com/university-of-the-district-of-columbia-2/ap_stylebook

The library's in-house branding and style guide covering specific library and University related issues is available here: TBD (Guide in Development)

Images / Graphics

Whenever possible, the library should only post original images or graphics. The library may also rely on the University's collection of stock photos.

If additional images or graphics are needed, they must come from a free stock photo website with policies that allow for use without royalties, licenses, or attribution requirements. Recommended resources for stock photos include Pexels (https://www.pexels.com/) and Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/).

Original graphics can be created using a royalty and license free website such as Canva (https://www.canva.com/).

Following

The library will follow any official UDC accounts including schools, departments, programs, student groups, or other organizations. The library may follow individual faculty and staff. The library *should not* follow individual student accounts but may refer to and comment on posts from those accounts to aid in community building.

Comment Policy

The library encourages followers and other social media users to leave comments on its posts. The library encourages lively and thoughtful discussion but may moderate or delete comments that do not meet its comment policy. The library's comment policy follows the greater University comment policy.

- Comments should be relevant to the topic discussed and to the point.
- Comments should be clean and constructive.
- Posts that are off-topic, abusive, contain profanity, are threatening in tone or evolve into personal attacks will be deleted.
- Excessively long comments – as determined by the Outreach and Reference Librarian – may be subject to editing for length, clarity, and space limitations.
- Anonymous comments will not be published.
- Spam comments will be deleted.
- The library reserves the right to review all comments and remove comments that violate any of the conditions noted above. Deleting comments is an action of last resort.
- Users with a history of profane, threatening, or spam comments may be blocked. Blocking users is at the sole discretion of the Outreach and Reference Librarian. Blocking users is an action of last resort.

When the platform allows, the comment policy will be publicly posted.

Best Practices

Social media is an ever evolving medium. Some practices, however, have emerged as universally applicable to platforms, content, and engagement.

Accessibility

Every effort should be made to ensure that all posts are accessible (i.e. Alt-text for images). Not all social media platforms provide tools for accessibility, but when tools are available, they should be used. Specific tips for accessibility are shared below:

- Twitter
    - In the settings, turn on alternative text for images.
    - When tweeting a hyperlink, indicate whether it leads to [AUDIO], [PIC], or [VIDEO].
    - Use a URL shortener to minimize the number of characters in hyperlinks.
    - Put mentions and hashtags at the end of tweets.
    - Capitalize the first letter of each word in a hashtag. For example, #udcFirebirds vs #udcfirebirds
    - Avoid using acronyms in posts.
- Instagram
    - Use the post description area to add alternative text to images and to caption video posts.
    - Add captions to video posts when using the Stories feature.
    - Capitalize the first letter of each word in a hashtag. For example, #udcFirebirds vs #udcfirebirds

- Avoid using acronyms in posts.

More information about social media accessibility is available here: https://accessibility.umn.edu/tutorials/accessible-social-media

Authenticity

The best social media accounts show the authentic side of the creator. That means being human with doses of honesty, introspection, and humor. Authenticity also builds trust in followers who can help grow the community around the library's accounts.

Comments and Replies

Any comments received on social media should be replied to as soon as possible, ideally within 12 to 24 hours. Not all comments, however, require replies. Some comments, namely those that are short in nature, may receive a "like" or "up vote" instead to acknowledge that they have been seen.

Community Creation and Social Listening

The feeds for each account should be checked at least daily. This allows for timely commenting or resharing of content. Additionally, relevant hashtags and geotags should be checked daily to provide current social listening.

Etiquette and Engagement

All posts should be pleasant and use everyday etiquette. When replying to comments, users should be thanked for sharing information or compliments. Replies to negative comments should use patience and understanding. No comment may every be replied to with anger, derision, insults, or personal attacks.

Hashtags and Geotags

Hashtags and geotags help users find social media content. They should be used appropriately for each platform. Specifics for these tags are below:

- Twitter
    - Hashtags should include at least one of the following: #udc, #udcFirebirds, #udc1851.
    - Additional hashtags may be used if appropriate.
    - There should be no more than 3 hashtags in a post.
    - Geotags are optional.
- Instagram
    - Hashtags should include at least one of the following: #udc, #udcFirebirds, #udc1851.
    - Additional hashtags related to the content of the post should be included whenever possible. For example: #bookstagram #LibrariesOfInstagram #LibraryLife.
    - The number of hashtags per post can vary but should be no more than 10 in a single caption.
    - Always include a geotag.

Profile Pages

Profile pages should be filled out as completely as possible. Professional quality images should be used for profile, avatar, and header photos. These images should he updated every semester or so to refresh and update the platform. Additionally, profile pages should be reviewed every semester to make sure all the information is correct and up to date. All links and information should be about the library and not the University itself.

Posting Frequency

Social media accounts should be updated and reviewed regularly. Specific schedules for platforms are below:

- Twitter
    - At least 2 posts a day, Monday through Friday
    - Posts should be timed throughout the day to hit different target audiences
- Instagram
    - At least 4 posts a week
    - Posts should be timed throughout the day to hit different target audiences

Memes, Trends, and Lingo

Social media is about staying current in the conversation. Memes, trends, and current lingo (or slang) may be used in posts. Before using these kinds of posts, they should be researched to ensure that they are appropriate for the library. Additionally, care should be paid to the timing of such posts. It is better to skip a trend than be overly delayed in its use.

Tone

The tone of the library's social media should always be positive, outgoing, upbeat, friendly, and welcoming. The library is a cheerleader for all UDC students and anyone who uses our services or follows our accounts. Humor and puns are encouraged and should be used whenever appropriate. Any information posted on social media should be timely, relevant, and appropriate to the platform. Additionally, the library should never take a defensive posture to comments. Sarcasm and obscene or derogatory language are expressly prohibited.

Account Management

The library uses Buffer (https://buffer.com/app) as its account manager. All active accounts will be connected to this platform. Updates may be created and posted directly on each social media platform or through Buffer. Buffer must be used to preschedule posts when the Outreach and Reference Librarian expects to be out of the office.

The queue in Buffer will be reviewed daily. The settings will be reviewed every semester or when any platforms are added or removed.

Audience

The primary audience for the library's social media is current members of the UDC community namely students and faculty. Most posts will be target these constituencies. The secondary audience is UDC

alumni, members of the greater DC area, and others, such as scholars and researchers, who may in interested in the library's resources, services, and events. Some posts may be target these audiences if the content is applicable to them. Finally, the tertiary audience is anyone unconnected to the University who follows or finds the library's social media content. Posts should only target this audience if it builds a community, follows a trend, or answers direct messages or comments.

Professional v. Personal Accounts

The library's social media accounts are considered professional accounts. When using library social media channels, the poster should assume that they are always representing the library and University. Posts must exercise discretion, thoughtfulness, and respect for all members of the University community as well as the general public. Professional accounts may be used to distribute library and University news, but University announcements must be coordinated with the Office of Communications and Marketing office prior to publication.

Personal accounts are those created by individuals for their own use unrelated to the library or University. University logos and/or visual identity may not be used for personal social media accounts without permission from the Office of Communications and Marketing. Personal accounts should not be used to announce or distribute University or library news unless it is referring or linking to an official social media post, press release, or other official documentation. The University and library do not monitor personal social media accounts but all staff with personal accounts should maintain professional standards particularly if they refer to the University or library regularly or in their profile. The University encourages faculty, staff, and students to use social media but reminds users that they may be perceived as a spokesperson of the University at any time.

In response to complaints or information provided to the University, administrators may look at personal social media and use that information in informal or formal investigations. The University reminds users that all content posted on social media or online is very public and permanent (even if it has been deleted). Users should use discretion and maintain professional and personal standards before posting content online. Social media users are also encouraged to review their privacy and sharing settings on all platforms. A good rule is to never post any content unless you're willing to be fired for it, read about it in a newspaper, or see it shared virally online.

The University's complete guidelines for professional and personal accounts may be found online at https://www.udc.edu/web/social-media/.

Roles and Responsibilities

The library's social media accounts are maintained solely by the Outreach and Reference Librarian. The librarian may also designate additional library faculty or staff to help with social media in the case of absences such as vacation or illness. The Library Director also has access to the social media accounts and may post or make changes as they see fit.

Account Access

Access to the library's social media accounts is reserved to those specifically designated to post content. That includes the Outreach and Reference Librarian, Library Director, and any additional staff who are

deemed essential to updating content due to absences, unexpected closures, or during crisis communications. Only these faculty and staff may write posts, update profiles and layouts, or change settings.

The Outreach and Reference Librarian is the primary account manager. They are designated with the day-to-day content creation, messaging, and account management. They are also tasked with pre-scheduling posts in Buffer (the designated content management system) and arranging for coverage for planned absences or vacations.

Expectations

Those tasked with managing and posting to the library's social media serve as direct communicators of the library's mission and message. They are expected to act professionally and helpfully when posting content or interacting with users and followers. Those with access to the social media accounts are expected to:

- Keep social media accounts current and relevant
- Collaborate within the library and with other University departments to amplify reach and better serve the UDC community
- Engage with followers and, if necessary, moderate comments and social conversations
- Take ownership and responsibility for social media content on all platforms
- Maintain communications and relationships with the Office of Communications and Marketing

Transparency

The library's social media accounts are the voice of the library; they are not extensions of personal accounts. The account's connection to the library must always be clearly expressed and maintained. No posts may express personal opinions or viewpoints.

Mistakes happen. To maintain credibility, the library should be open and transparent in such situations. If a mistake is made in a post (i.e. posting a personal post to a library account), the library will remove the post, apologize, or offer a mea culpa as is appropriate in each situation.

Legal Considerations

Authorized Communications and Media Contact

The library's social media may not assume the role of the University spokesperson. Any media inquiries should be directed to the Office of Communications and Marketing. *Only* the Office of Communications and Marketing may make official University announcements.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Confidential and proprietary University, library, student, or faculty information may never be shared publicly or with third-party vendors. Additionally, the library's social media accounts may never discuss or speculate on internal University policies, operations, or decision-making.

User privacy must always be respected. The library's accounts may NEVER release personal information related to the library or University's users, faculty, or staff. The library's accounts are required to follow all HIPPA and FERPA laws and requirements.

Copyright

All social media posts must follow copyright and intellectual property laws. To avoid copyright infringement, the library should use original content whenever possible. The library may also use information and resources that are in the public domain, have a Creative Commons license, or fall under fair use. All posts must give creative attribution when it is needed. The original source of the text, image, or post must be cited or referenced. When necessary, the original content creator should be contacted for their permission and approval to reuse or repost content.

Crisis Communications

In the case of a crisis at the University, the library's social media accounts should never post content without the express authorization of the University's Office of Communications and Marketing. In these instances, the library may share posts created by and/or posted on the University's main accounts.

The library's accounts may not make any announcements, such as evacuations or emergency closings, until an official announcement has been made by the University.

If the library receives any comments, direct messages, or other communications that could be considered threats or dangerous hostile actions, the Outreach and Reference Librarian will contact Public Safety and the Office of Communications and Marketing immediately. The library should never respond to such messages without authorization from the University.

Every care should be taken to keep members of the UDC community from harm. The library may not divulge or share information that could create confusion, spread incorrect information, or contradict messages from the University, law enforcement, or other officials.

Restrictions

The library prohibits paid, third-party advertising and commercial endorsements on its social media platforms. The library *may* showcase the tools and services it offers as a part of our scholarly mission (i.e. e-books, databases, or other tools).

Take Down Policy

Users and followers can request the removal of content. When possible, the following "Take Down Policy" should be displayed: *Users may request the removal of content by sending an email to the Outreach and Reference Librarian at meghan.kowalski@udc.edu. The email should contain the following information: the social media account name, the date of the post, and why the user is requesting its removal. All requests for removal will be reviewed and the user will be alerted to the decision within 48 hours.*

All Take Down requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis with the final decision lying with either the Outreach and Reference Librarian or the Library Director. The library should err on the side of the user in all cases.

Terms of Service

The library is required to follow all platform Terms of Service agreements. If the library cannot follow the Terms of Service or the agreements change and following those agreements becomes untenable, the library should stop using that social media platform.

Security

Account Access

Access to all library social media accounts is reserved to the Outreach and Reference librarian, Library Director, and those designated to post during absences. Only those designated faculty and staff may access, post information, or edit profiles on the social media platforms.

Passwords

Passwords for any of the library's social media accounts should use a combination of letters and numbers OR follow the password requirements for that platform. Passwords may only be known to those designated to access and post to that platform. Passwords may never be stored on public or shared computers.

Two-Factor Authentication

The library should use two-factor authentication on all platforms where it is offered. Two-factor authentication is an additional layer of security that requires the account holder to use a password along with another tool (cell phone number, authentication code or app, fingerprint, etc.) to access the account. Two-factor authentication reduces the risk of an account being hacked or used inappropriately.

If the account needs to be handed off to another member of the library's staff, the new account manager should update the two-factor authentication along with the password.