

Social Media Strategy, Procedures, and Best Practices

CUL'S GOALS USING SOCIAL MEDIA

- Promote brand awareness for CUL as a vibrant, essential cultural center and educational institution
- Build awareness of, appreciation for, and use of library expertise, collections, and services
- Engage with our followers both inside and outside Cornell
- Build participation in library events
- Help elevate the Cornell brand

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES

LibComm maintains mature CUL-wide social media accounts on three platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We are happy to publicize content from units and departments that further CUL's social media goals.

Units and departments can also maintain their own accounts following these procedures:

Creating an account

a. Before creating an account

- Identify your audience and goals.
- Consider if sharing content on CUL accounts with established followership might meet your needs
- Look at peer organizations to gauge which platform(s) garner the greatest engagement from your projected audience.
- Consider what types of content you're equipped to create or source.
- Calculate how much time you can devote per week to maintaining a social media presence, and consider whether you can devote time consistently, as neglected or underutilized accounts are counterproductive.
- Think through what will constitute success and create target metrics for future assessment and ROI analysis (e.g. x number of followers and y engagement within a year of launch)

b. Communications review

Set up a meeting with LibComm for feedback and guidance. Bring your identified goals/audience and your time projections. Be prepared to discuss the basic components of your account(s): profile image, bio, handle, profile name, etc.

c. University Relations review

Cornell University Relations review and brand ambassador training will be scheduled as needed.

d. Preparing for launch

- Familiarize yourself with the policies and all the helpful information posted on [Cornell University's social media site](#)
- Finalize the basic components of your account(s): profile image, bio, handle, profile name, etc. Keep in mind that many elements of social media profiles have character limits. In the account bio, @mention the CUL institutional account and, where appropriate, include a link to the CUL homepage. If you're creating graphics, please consult the CU and CUL branding guidelines.
- Prepare a plan to promote your account through your existing networks.
- Write your first few posts ahead of time. For Instagram, try to plan your first nine posts so that you'll quickly have a full grid for new followers to view.
- Gather a list of accounts and hashtags to follow on each platform. Consider including campus partners and collaborators, your counterparts at other universities, and accounts that share content central to your work.

BEST PRACTICES

1. You are a brand ambassador!

Always keep in mind that on institutional accounts you speak for a Cornell entity and not for yourself.

Therefore, some posts that are appropriate on your personal accounts are not appropriate on an institutional account. When in doubt, check in with LibComm.

2. Learn from the analytics

Every social media platform offers analytics tools to track demographic and engagement data of followers and previous posts. It is imperative to use this invaluable information for understanding who you are talking to and for creating engaging content by building on successes and avoiding posts that do not resonate. This data can also help fine tune the timing of posts for maximum reach.

3. Participate in discussions

LibComm shares a calendar of notable opportunities for social media coverage and leads discussions on topics related to social media best practices. Be an active participant and feel free to ask questions and suggest topics for discussion.

4. Facebook

a. Platform demographics*

Facebook is the most widely used social media platform in the United States; 69% of Americans have an account on the site. About three quarters of users visit Facebook at least daily.

- 51% of 13–17 year olds use Facebook
- 76% of 18–24 year olds use Facebook
- 84% of 25–30 year olds use Facebook
- 79% of 30–49 year olds use Facebook
- 68% of 50–64 year olds use Facebook
- 46% of 65+ year olds use Facebook

b. Content

Facebook is a good avenue for event promotion when followers can be segmented in a way that they line up with the intended audience. It has built-in event features: followers can indicate their interest, follow event updates, and share events with their friends. Posts about rare and distinctive holdings, positive stories with emotional components, campus images, links to articles, blog posts, and videos tend to perform well on this platform. Stunning images and short posts tend to be engaging.

c. LibComm practices

The CUL-wide Facebook account has over 29K followers all over the world. Its content is geared toward a world-wide broad followership, alumni, parents, and some Cornellians. LibComm periodically and judiciously boosts posts that show a strong start, that have good potential, or when the message is strategically important.

d. Maximizing engagement

Make sure your content is compelling.

Tie into topics of current interest when appropriate.

If you have enough compelling content, one post per day yields maximum engagement.

Respond to comments on your posts.

Tagging relevant accounts, using a couple of hashtags and/or one emoji can also help engagement.

5. Twitter

a. Platform demographics*

About 22% of American adults use Twitter. The academic community on Twitter is robust, so content geared towards undergraduate and graduate students, scholars, and peer librarians, as well as other institutions tend to do well; Twitter is ideal for reaching targeted communities with niche interests.

- 44% of 18–24 year olds use Twitter
- 31% of 25–30 year olds use Twitter
- 26% of 30–49 year olds use Twitter
- 17% of 50–64 year olds use Twitter
- 7% of 65+ year olds use Twitter

b. Content

Twitter is the most time-conscious of the three platforms and is thus the most popular for sharing news and timely web content. Twitter has also become popular for promoting virtual events. Twitter is conversational and lends itself to one-on-one interactions with other accounts, so the use of @mentions and #hashtags help engage with users' comments. The use of images and brevity of tweets are important drivers of engagement. Limiting posts to 71-100 characters allows others to retweet and add their own message. Tweets with images receive 150% more retweets and 90% more likes than those with just plain text. You can selectively amplify academic library news that is of primary importance to your followers.

c. Maximizing engagement

Make sure your content is compelling.

Tie into topics of current interest when appropriate.
If you have enough compelling content, one to five post per day yields maximum engagement.
Respond to comments on your posts.

6. Instagram

a. Platform demographics*

Of the three platforms, Instagram is the most consistently used by the traditional university student age group (18 to 30 years old). Instagram is markedly more popular for personal than for professional use, so create engaging, enriching content geared toward a broad audience: students, scholars, and any social media user interested in learning.

- 75% of 18–24 year olds use Instagram
- 57% of 25–30 year olds use Instagram
- 47% of 30–49 year olds use Instagram
- 23% of 50–64 year olds use Instagram
- 8% of 65+ year olds use Instagram

b. Content

Instagram is photo-based, so it's driven by good visuals. Images of collections items and evocative photos have a natural outlet here, with accompanying very brief text to provide relevant and compelling information. Instagram is the weakest of the platforms in terms of driving traffic to events and web content; it's best for storytelling and building brand awareness. Captions of 140 –240 characters get the best engagement rates. Use 2-4 hashtags.

c. Maximizing engagement

Make sure your content is compelling.

Tie into topics of current interest when appropriate.

If you have enough compelling content, one post per day is ideal, with a maximum of two posts per day/six posts per week.

Respond to comments on your posts.

7. Maintaining an account

- Check notifications regularly, or at least as often as you post.
- Acknowledge positive comments and respond to questions (see below for how to handle negative comments)
- Be social! In addition to posting content, check other accounts and hashtags. Like and comment on their posts. Tag others in your posts. Reshare content from others.
- Periodically check your analytics to see what your audience likes and responds to and provide more of that kind of content.
- Keep track of your login credentials in a secure location. Consider assigning two account administrators. It can be difficult — if not impossible — to regain account access if the password is lost and the original account holder's email address is inactive, so use your departmental email address to register. Change the passwords periodically and definitely when an account administrator leaves.

- If you have accounts on multiple platforms, consider a social media management platform to streamline scheduling and content creation. If you're interested in HootSuite reach out to LibComm for advice.
- LibComm is always available for social media consultations. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us to discuss planning, creating, and posting regular content.
- Accounts that have remained inactive for six months or more should be deactivated. LibComm reviews the accounts periodically.

8. What to post

- Post the most engaging content you have to offer and play to your strengths.
- Assess your followers and keep content targeted to meet their needs and interests.
- Given the differences between platforms in followers as well as engagement algorithms, it is best practice to customize your posts to each platform rather than sharing the exact same posts on multiple platforms.

Specifically, post about

- events
- feature collection items (RAD and non-RAD)
- feature library staff as approachable experts (RAD and non-RAD)
- promote engaging library stories (such as Chronicle stories or blog posts)
- campus/library images/happenings
- library resources/services (in synch with milestones in the academic calendar, e.g.: orientation, finals week, etc.)
- amplify relevant posts from other accounts
- create promotional campaigns (e.g.: #CornellRAD, #AskaLibrarian)
- user stories and testimonials
- late breaking news about library access or services, such as unexpected change in operating status, important announcements, hours, etc.

9. What not to post

- Photos of anyone under 18 without a signed release form.
- Partisan content or political views and opinions.
- Personal, sensitive, or non-work-related information about yourself or others.
- Anything you wouldn't share in an email with your supervisor and staff.

10. In case of confrontational comments

Consult with LibComm immediately sharing with us screenshots of the original message and comments, and any information about the user that you find. LibComm will advise you on next steps and will involve others if needed, such as University Relations and relevant library managers or administrators.

11. Helpful connections

Jose Beduya, CUL social media coordinator, jpb57

Ask Jose to add you to the Slack channel for CUL social media practitioners.

Join the email listserv for social media practitioners.

* Helpful source for detailed social media demographics by platform:

<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics/#FB-demos>

LibComm
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