



## **Taylor & Francis Twitter Party: Use of Social Media in the Library**

Taylor & Francis is producing a White Paper that analyses the challenges and opportunities presented by social media as a communication tool in the library. We hosted a Twitter party to gather insights from academic librarians. The below report outlines the key questions raised at the Twitter party and the feedback received from librarians.

### **Using Social Media Tools in your Library**

#### **Why do you use social media and what do you hope to achieve?**

Most respondents use social media because it is a quick, easy, free way to communicate with library users. Most social media channels are used to inform students of opening times, news, disruptions and to deliver other key messages. It is seen as a good way to communicate with distance students and to provide real-time feedback. Social media is heavily used for promotion of resources and events. Students use it to communicate issues such as noise and queues to librarians and to provide more positive comments.

#### **Do you have a preferred social media channel? Why do you prefer it?**

According to respondents, Twitter is the preferred social media channel for librarians. This is because it is quick, easy and concise and it is possible to schedule tweets. YouTube also seems popular among librarians, for library guides and induction videos. However, the content being posted influences the social media channel used. For example, Twitter is best for short, concise messages, Facebook and blogs for longer messages. Pinterest is favoured to share images and YouTube for videos.

#### **Do your colleagues in other roles use social media differently to you?**

Almost all respondents state that colleagues in other roles use social media differently. Some courses use Facebook for peer-to-peer help, other colleagues use social media to promote different events or resources and some colleagues don't use social media at all.

#### **Do all librarians have access to the social media accounts or do you have one 'gatekeeper'?**

While none of the respondents' libraries have just one gatekeeper for their social media accounts, they are all managed by varying numbers of people. Some libraries have two main users of the social media accounts, while others employ the skills of the entire team. One respondent stated the use of a social media rota while another team asks each member to take care of different roles. These include monitoring the account, posting images and posting text content.

### **Social Media Trends in the Library Community**

#### **What opportunities and challenges does social media present to the library?**

An equal number of challenges and opportunities were outlined by respondents. Challenges include copyright issues, the difficulty of looking after numerous accounts, feeling responsible for followers' tweets, difficulty in responding immediately, especially on weekends, repeating tweets without spamming students and gauging the level of formality required. Opportunities include reaching a wider audience, keeping up with trends, sharing updates and information quickly, reminding students of events and resources, answering queries promptly and good for communicating with part-time and distance learners.

#### **Which social media tools are the most discoverable (in terms of tagging, categorizing etc)**

Most respondents stated that Twitter is the most discoverable social media tool, due to hashtags, searches and mentions. Blogs were also mentioned as a discoverable social media tool.



## **User Engagement and Perception of your use of Social Media in the Library**

### **Are students happy to use social networking sites for information purposes or do they prefer to use it for social pursuits?**

According to respondents, most students are happy to receive updates and information via Twitter, and use Twitter for this reason. One librarian stated that most retweets from their Twitter channel are about opening hours. Students also ask to follow hashtags in lectures. It is evident that Facebook is used more for social purposes.

### **'You cannot use what you cannot find'**

### **How do you promote your Social Networking sites to make it accessible to your users? What is the most effective way?**

Librarians promote their social networking sites in a variety of ways. The most common forms of promoting social media sites are through feeds and buttons on websites, promotional materials such as posters and flyers, induction and training sessions and through word of mouth. Logo and account information are also added to email signatures. Retweeting and favoriting others' tweets are also a good way to gain followers, as is asking the official departmental Twitter accounts to retweet key information.

### **'You cannot use what you cannot find' do you agree with this quote? Why or why not?**

All respondents agreed with this statement. When students are not aware of social media presence, they miss out on opportunities and information.

## **Measurability - The Impact of Social Media**

### **How do you measure the impact of social media at your library?**

Respondents use metrics and audits to measure the impact of social media in their libraries. On Twitter, monitoring hashtags, favourites, retweets and followers is a good way to measure impact.

## **The Future of Social Media**

### **How will use of social media evolve in the future & how this will impact on your role as librarian?**

Respondents believe that the use of social media will increase over time, and libraries need to keep up with the latest social media trends.

### **What are the future trends that you see developing? Are there any tools that stand out?**

Respondents stated that the use of Twitter will increase, particularly in libraries, although Facebook use is decreasing. Real time exchanges of ideas such as Snapchat are also predicted to become more popular.