

Purpose

These guidelines outline William F. Laman Public Libraries' responsibility to our community in the use of our social media pages. They are also meant to give staff members the tools they need to manage a successful social media account.

Guidelines

Social media provides a valuable and timely way for the William F. Laman Public Library to provide information about and promote library news, events, projects, readers' advisory initiatives, and services. It also serves to inspire conversation and develop connections. Social media is also used, with careful discretion, to occasionally share news from local organizations that meet the needs and interests of our social network audience and contribute toward the building of community and partnerships with local organizations. William F. Laman Public Library regards social media as equally important as any other venue for the dissemination of library information.

Social media is defined as any web application, site, or account created and maintained by the William F. Laman Public Library.

Social Media accounts:

Branches and departments may establish, with the Executive Director's permission, social media accounts they are able to maintain at a high, professional standard. The manager may assign an employee or employees to manage social media accounts in coordination with the Communications Director. The library may require another member of the library administration or IT team to be added as account administrator to ensure continuity of access. Staff members are encouraged to make use of post-scheduling options, which allow multiple days' worth of posts to be planned and pre-approved by the appropriate officials. All social media accounts should be kept active with regular posts and quick responses. Accounts that cannot be regularly updated should be suspended. Bring messages and comments to the Communication Director's attention as soon as possible.

Content of posts:

Language for social media posts should be conversational and light in tone (though still professional). Be friendly, sincere, and energetic. When posting for the library, use the point of view of the "We," which represents the library as a whole and not as an individual staff member. As the online face of the library, staff members should refrain from expressing their personal views when posting on the library's behalf. Social media, when put to their best use, serve as a way for members of the public to communicate with the library and one another. These media should be used in ways that appeal to the broadest possible audience and that are tolerant of multiple points of view and interests.

Library staff should protect patron privacy and confidentiality.

Add video, graphics, or images to posts whenever possible, as these are much more likely to get users' attention. If you need help designing attractive graphics, consider asking your manager, the Training Specialist, or Executive Director for training resources that can be used for continuing education hours.

Here are some points to consider:

- Does sharing this story further the library's mission of educating the community or providing access to information not available elsewhere in the community? If this is information related to a local event, sharing the story would likely meet these criteria.
- If facts of the information cannot be verified, be certain to indicate the actual source of the story. Also, consider the reliability of the source. Just as the reputation of information providers are considered when materials are selected for library collections, so should the source of information be considered when sharing something on social media.
- Seek out bias-reducing strategies when evaluating social media content. It is natural for personal bias to be intertwined with the creative work that is produced on a professional level, so it is important to seek multiple perspectives and objective feedback to ensure inclusivity with the library's social media environment.
- Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights, or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the rightsholder(s).
- William F. Laman Public Library encourages its team members to be champions on behalf of the library. While social media creates opportunities for personal expression, it also creates responsibilities. When you use social media for the library, you should try to build relationships, but you should also be aware that you have access to confidential information that should not be made public. So, you should not share patrons' personally identifiable information. First names or ages may be used with verbal permission from the patron if they add to the narrative, such as congratulating specific children as they read 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten.

Self-Expression

Library employees have the same right to self-expression enjoyed by members of the community when discussing matters of public concern. However, what you say while performing your official duties is not protected under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed a violation of any policy of the library. Employees should keep in mind the following best practices when posting content about library-related subjects and issues on personal time.

Library staff members have an ethical responsibility to represent themselves and their colleagues, institutions, and associations, in both their professional and personal lives, with respect, courtesy, sensitivity and fairness, according to the American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics. Article V of the ALA Code of Ethics states "We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions." Losing sight of this responsibility can lead to ethical violations in the form of social media interactions that are inappropriate and insensitive to colleagues or patrons.

Article VI of the Code of Ethics states "We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions." Article VII states "We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources." Both of these statements address a separation between private/personal and public/professional. Library employees are often recognized as

community helpers and leaders, and what we post on our personal social media accounts may be associated with our professional position regardless of our intentions. [Harvard Business Review](#) and [Queens University of Charlotte](#) provide methods to separate personal and professional identities on social media.

Additionally, anyone who chooses to interact with the library's social media platforms using their personal accounts should consult [Questions & Answers on Speech in the Workplace](#).

You should also be aware that in nearly all cases the library "would own the copyright in the articles, posts, and other content created by its employees in the course of their jobs" (per the [Digital Media Law Project](#), which was a project of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society from 2007 to 2014, and which remains accessible though no longer updated.).

Social media lets you communicate incredibly fast and have your message go viral in seconds. This makes it difficult to fix an inaccurate message once you've shared it. The best thing to do is double check all content before sharing, both for accuracy and to make sure it furthers the library's mission. No matter what your personal privacy settings, you should only post content you would feel comfortable showing up on the front page of a major news site.

Also, unapproved drafts or film cut from library videos should not be shared from your personal account.

Responding to users:

Managing social media is not just about publishing posts; it requires responsiveness and engagement. Staff members are assigned to check accounts and respond to messages and/or posts in a timely manner. Patrons using social media expect quick responses -- especially during our operating hours.

Negative comments or complaints should not be deleted. Instead, engage with the patron as we would with any other complaint, preferably by moving the discussion to a private venue. For example:

- *Thank you for telling us about your experience in the library. We want to address your concern -- please check your direct messages.*

Complaints and negative posts may be deleted if they are harassing, obscene, personally name staff members, or meet the other criteria in these Guidelines. If you delete a post, document it, inform your supervisor, and send a direct message to the poster explaining why. For example:

- *Thank you for telling us about your experience in the library. We removed your post because it contained language that violates our social media policy. However, we would like to address your concern.*

Usage Rules

The William F. Laman Public Library welcomes comments, posts, and messages from community members and recognizes and respects differences in opinion. However, all comments, posts, and messages will be periodically reviewed, and the William F. Laman Public Library reserves the right to, but is not required to, remove any comment, post, or message that it deems inappropriate or off-topic.

The William F. Laman Public Library is not responsible for content posted by any participant in a library social media forum who is not a member of the library's staff. By joining, utilizing, and/or posting on the library's social media sites, you agree to comply with these Guidelines, and the Library's Policy on Internet and Computer Use, as applicable. While the library encourages dialogue, we respectfully request that commenters be mindful that our social media sites are open to the public and that commenters be courteous and civil toward one another. Patrons should be aware that they may be held personally liable for commentary that is defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous by any offended party, not just Laman Library.

What You Can Expect of Us

Library staff exercises editorial control on our social media platforms to create a safe and welcoming environment and to support our aim to create online communities around the library and its services. We moderate comments, and the library reserves the right to remove content that is unlawful, is off topic, or otherwise does not comply with our expectations below.

Posts are for informational purposes only. They do not imply the library's endorsement of a particular candidate or side of a political issue in any way. Postings by users do not indicate library endorsement of the ideas, issues, links, or commentary posted. Additionally, endorsement is not implied via "following," "friending," or otherwise linking to other online entities.

What We Expect of You

William F. Laman Public Library social platforms provide a public forum to facilitate the sharing of ideas, opinions and information about library-related subjects and issues. Our social platforms are intended to create a welcoming and inviting online space where library users find useful and entertaining information and can interact with library staff members and other library users.

While William F. Laman Public Library encourages an open forum, posts and comments are moderated by library staff. Laman Library reserves the right, within its sole discretion, not to post and to remove submissions or comments that are unlawful or violate these Guidelines. The library asks that individual user complaints be addressed directly to the library administration so they can be addressed quickly and specifically.

Please be aware that when engaging with William F. Laman Public Library over social media, you are agreeing to the following:

- Always communicate with respect. Be considerate of others. Obscene, harassing, or abusive language is not tolerated.
- Act legally and ethically. Acting or attempting to act in violation of state, federal, or local law, ordinance, or regulation, or library policy, is prohibited.
- Protect your privacy. Do not post personally identifying information. Young people under age 18, especially, should not post information such as last name, school, age, phone number, or address.

The library reserves the right to remove posts that include:

- Obscene content or hate speech
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Private or personal information, including phone numbers and addresses, or requests for personal information

- Potentially libelous statements
- Falsification of identity
- Comments advocating illegal activity or material that violates copyrights/trademarks
- Comments, links, or information unrelated to the purpose of the forum
- Duplicated posts by an individual user
- Spam or other commercial, political, or religious messages unrelated to the library or its social media postings
- Solicitation of funds
- Any images, links, or other content that fall into the above categories

The library reserves the right to ban or block users who have posted in violation of these Guidelines. Appeals may be made to the Executive Director. In addition, users are expected to abide by the terms and conditions set by third party social media platforms as well as follow appropriate Federal and State Law.

You are subject to the Terms of Service (TOS) of the host site. Information (photos, videos, etc.) you share with or post to official William F. Laman Public Library pages is also subject to the TOS of the host site and may be used by the owners of the host site for their own purposes. For more information, consult the host website's TOS.

More Information

See ALA Committee on Professional Ethics' "[Ethics and Social Media Q&A](#)" for more information. The staff of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom answers questions about social media policy and practice, First Amendment issues, professional ethics, and privacy. Inquiries may be directed via email to oif@ala.org or via phone at (312) 280-4226.