

# Museums of Cheshire

## Volunteer Training Toolkit

### *Social Media*



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## Social Media: Key Principles

- Social media taps into human need to communicate, share and be members of larger groups
- Social media is a unique opportunity to reach larger, global, and mobile audiences like never before
- Some prominent social media users such as Stephen Fry have more followers than the national newspapers combined
- Social media gives individuals and organisations, such as museums, a unique opportunity to 'sell' their 'goods' – both tangible and intangible

## Popular Social Media Platforms:



**Facebook** – Facebook currently has 800 million active users. Facebook requires individuals to create an account, known as a profile. Profiles allow users to privately message other users and to publicly post content to their 'wall'. A user's wall is like an online notice board where friends (or the public depending on security settings) can view content. Users also have their own newsfeed where they can see new content from their friend's wall. Content can be either text, photographs or videos. Individual users can set up business or organisation 'pages'. Other users can follow an organisations page by 'liking' it. A page has a slightly different set up to a profile but it uses the wall in a similar way. The person who set up the organisations page can add other Facebook users as administrators who can also add content.



**Twitter** - Twitter currently has 335 million active users. Twitter requires individuals or organisations to create an account known as a profile. Having a profile allows users to create and read content. Content can consist of text, video or pictures, although text is restricted to 280 characters. Twitter users can connect to each other by 'following' different users. This allows other users content to appear in their newsfeed, which updates when new content from others is added. Twitter is characterised by the use of hashtags '#'. A hashtag allows subjects to be grouped together. For example, if a user was interested in what twitter users were saying about museums they could search #museums and all the recent content will be displayed. Similarly, if users want to alert others they can use the relevant hashtag.



**LinkedIn** – LinkedIn currently has 500 million active users. LinkedIn is career and business orientated. It requires individuals and organisations to create profiles where they can display their career based experienced and knowledge. User profiles act as an online CV. Users can create content through text, video and photographs. Users connect to other users by requesting a 'connection'. Users can also endorse other users skills. It is also

possible to search for jobs and opportunities on the site. LinkedIn is often used by organisations to achieve corporate objectives.



**Instagram** – Instagram currently has 1 billion active users. Instagram is image based but does allow text content through captions for images. It also allows film media to be uploaded. Instagram requires users and organisations to create profiles where they can post their content. They can follow other users as well as hashtags which work in the same way as twitter. Instagram also has image and video editing equipment built into the app which allows users to manipulate their pictures, create boomerangs and perform other image enhancing tricks. Content uploaded to Instagram can be directly copied to a shared Facebook profile.



**YouTube** – YouTube currently has 1 billion active users. YouTube is video based and allows for text content to be created through descriptions for videos and in comments. Users create a profile and can follow other users by subscribing to their channels.



**Wordpress-** Wordpress is used by other 60 million websites. It is a content management system which is often used for blogging. Blogging allows users to write small, usually informal essays or updates on particular topics. Images and videos can be used on blogs.

## Operating Social Media

Social media is set up to be user friendly, but there are many aspects of it which are confusing and some of their features are not always obvious. Ask your line manager, or fellow volunteers and staff for guidance on how to use different platforms. Also remember that Google is your friend. There are plenty of useful videos, blogs and instruction manuals on how to technically operate social media platforms. You can simply type into Google 'how to post a picture on Facebook' or 'how to make a boomerang on Instagram' and plenty of helpful webpages will be available to you.

## Using Social Media as a Tool: Aims, Goals and Audience

1. **AIMS:** Understanding your museums aims is key. Your line manager should be able to point you in the direction of your organisation's mission statement or manifesto. You can also look to sources like the Museums Association for the wider purpose of museums and cultural institutions. For the Museums Association, museums and cultural institutions should strive to inspire, to educate and to engage, as o.

2. **GOALS:** It is important to know how social media can be used to help goals; both your organisation's wider goals and your personal goals as a volunteer. It might be a good idea to spend some time with your line manager discussing what your museum's goals are and how the social media strategy fits into this. If you have a social media team it might be a good idea to set up a team meeting to discuss and capture these ideas.

Typically social media in museums is used to inform new and current users about upcoming events, increase access to collections and 'behind-the-scenes' and market the museum to encourage new visitors.

3. **AUDIENCE:** By understanding your audience you can create more effective posts that will engage with more people. The more people you can engage with, the likelier they are to follow and share your posts which, in turn, brings you wider audiences. Effective posts can be created through adapting content, structure and style.

You may be able to talk to your line manager about the sorts of audiences you typically attract at your museum – as well as the new audiences your museum is seeking to attract. This information may be available through visitor numbers. Talking to Front of House staff who greet and talk to visitors on a daily basis might also give you a understanding of your typical visitor. If your institution already has social media accounts, see if you can access the analytics. The analytics tells you about the people who have read or engaged with posts in the past and is available on most social media platforms.

## Content and Structure

Content is the most important aspect of social media. It is one of the main reasons that people use social media. New, engaging and regular content helps to keep your audience interested and tempt new audiences to join you. Remember that the purpose of your content should relate back to your organisations aims, goals and objectives.

Often content is designed to inform, educate or engage. In the case of museums it is often to do all 3. This gives you a lot of scope for content.

## Guidelines for content creation:

- Content can span all time frames by talking about the past (such as historical events that are relevant to your institution), things that are happening in the present (such as updating audiences on events or activities happening now), or the future (to promote upcoming events or exhibitions, for example)

- Using other people's or organisations content can be useful. It can lend support to a partner organisation or promote cross-organisational work. It can also be helpful to share others content that is relevant to your organisations work, collections, locality, aims or objectives. Where possible, it is always best to comment on other people's content rather than simply share. This makes you relevant and part of a wider social media conversation.
- Invite audience participation on your social media platforms. This will help keep you relevant and part of wider social media conversations. This could be something simple like encouraging your visitors to share their pictures of their visit or setting up polls to discover which object is current favourite
- Although you want to put out content, it is equally important to follow and engage with other relevant organisations content. This maintains your organisations presence and makes you part of the wider social media discussions.
- Posts with pictures have been proven to be much more effective than text only. Try to use high quality images that are relevant and in focus. You can always edit photos by changing the light or cropping out irrelevant parts of your pictures.

## Inspiration for Content:

- Talk to your line manager about your organisations content strategy. Perhaps you could set up a 'content idea board' somewhere communal where different volunteers and staff can discuss different ideas for content.
- Look at other organisations social media pages for inspiration and to see how they manage their content
- Content can also be influenced by other events happening across the world such as Black History Month or great sporting events. Linking your institution with other national and international content helps to keep your posts relevant and plugged into the wider social network. (Be sure to check your organisations policy on engaging with wider events before posting. Some Museums, such as local authority museums, are prohibited from discussing politics or endorsing particular companies.)



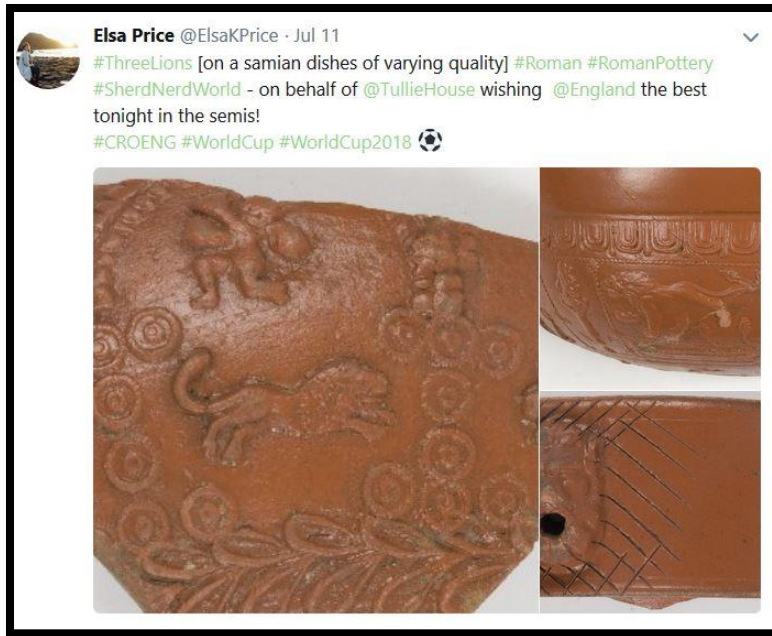
## Content Inspiration Gallery



In this tweet the British Museum is advertising an upcoming display. The tweet is careful to include potential hooks for its audience to gain their attention such as highlighting that the display is free. It uses a poster as an image which is perfectly cropped to fill the screen. The poster contains all the basic information needed which saves on characters. The tweet also contains a link for further information.



Manchester Museum are using their twitter account to promote a new blog entry on their WordPress account. This helps to link up their social media to reach as many audiences as possible. The image, which contains the iconic Manchester Bee acts as a hook for local audiences who affiliate and identify with the image. They also use hashtags and link with other organisations to help spread their message across Twitter.



An individual staff member from Tullie House museum uses Twitter to link the archaeology collections with a current, popular event; the world cup. Hashtags are used to reach new audiences and a highly informal, jovial tone is adopted which makes the collections feel more accessible



The Grosvenor Museum uses Facebook to promote local crafting events. They emphasise the connection of the event with the Museum which engages audiences who are interested in the exhibition and families who want to get more hands on. The image is used to inspire audiences and give them a flavour of the event. A link its used for more information.



The National Trust use LinkedIn to post about corporate news. They use a question as a hook to engage audiences and include a picture of their product to reinforce branding

## Content Frequency

- Too little and people will not follow you
- Too much and people feel spammed
- About once a day for Facebook or Twitter and once a week for a blog – if this feels overwhelming then start small with two tweets a week and one Facebook post a week and build up over time
- Remember that content creates its own momentum over time, especially as you expand your followers and begin to follow others



## Structure

Social media relies on instant fixes, meaning that audiences want information instantly. So content should be structured in a short, snappy and an eye-catching way. For example, it is quite common to post many shorter posts relating to each rather than one long post.

## Guidelines for Structuring Content

- Many organisations use social media management accounts that allow you to schedule posts for future dates. Scheduling content in advance can be useful for forward planning, marketing and easing the pressure for continual content.
- Make sure that your structure is tailored to the type of social media platform you are using. For example, Instagram is picture based, Twitter is mainly text based and limited to a few characters and Facebook is more flexible for text, images and video.
- If you have more than one social media account you can post about the same thing across all different platforms, but try to tailor the post to each platform's culture
- Look at different organisations and how they present themselves on different platforms. This will help you understand the different cultures and styles of social media platforms
- Do not repeat the exact same content. If you want to promote an event several times then think of new ways to talk about it by changing your language or images
- Analytics can help you understand when the best time is to post. Usually this is at lunch time or in the evenings when people are able to take a break and scroll through their profiles.

## Striking the right balance

It is important to present yourself and your organisation in an appropriate and legal manner

## Guidelines

- Make sure you discuss with your Line Manager your organisations privacy and data protection policies so you don't breach any laws or internal regulations
- Ensure that you are not tweeting about anything that is not already public knowledge, such as a prospective high profile loan that has not yet been fully agreed
- If you are sharing images, make sure that you have the right to publish them. If they are from Google you can use advanced settings to select 'free to use and share' from the 'usage rights' dropdown menu.
- If you wish to post about your organisation from a personal account, it might be useful to add a disclaimer such as 'all views my own' in your bio

- Apply common sense and only post content that your organisation would be happy with
- Although you must be careful, try not to be overly formal or stiff in tone and style. The most successful social media accounts have a casual and friendly tone.

## Branding

Presenting your social media as an extension of your organisation is important. This includes its style, demeanour, goals, aims and branding. You may be able to use your museums logos and branding in social media posts to help build up your organisations image.

## Feedback

Having a social media presence will often result in engagement, comments and feedback from visitors. For a successful social media platform these should be encouraged. It is important to respond to both positive and negative feedback. This reassures your audience that you are receptive and care about their opinions.