

Chapter 4

Diversifying Content Across Social Media Platforms

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors describe how a committee of librarians' project to revamp the social media presence at a public comprehensive university library has helped foster deeper student engagement. By temporarily restructuring the library social media committee into subcommittees and assigning each one a single social media platform, librarians were able to develop stronger understanding of the content, norms, and audience of each platform and create more diverse and targeted content for each. This change has resulted in increased interaction with students across all platforms leading to higher attendance at library events. Preliminary findings also suggest that increased student engagement has the potential to illuminate opportunities for partnership across campus.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has a huge presence in students' lives. With students increasingly invested in an ever-changing social media landscape, librarians concerned with meeting students at their point of need cannot ignore the importance of social media. This constantly evolving mode of communication is now an essential way for academic libraries to connect with their students, faculty, and the larger academic community. At the same time the need for academic libraries to demonstrate their value, often by quantifying their impact on student success, makes it increasingly important that libraries take measures to maintain their visibility in the campus community and in students' academic lives.

As Clark and Melancon observed, social media has changed marketing into an interactive media which encourages "two-way conversations (Clark & Melancon, 2013, p. 132). Social media allows academic libraries to both tell students about events and resources and invite student response at various levels. This chapter will describe how the University Library at California State University Dominguez Hills

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8097-3.ch004

(CSUDH) is using social media to more effectively facilitate these interactions in support of the library's Vision. CSUDH University Library defines its Vision as the desire to:

- Be the center of intellectual and creative life at CSUDH, facilitating teaching, learning, research, intellectual inquiry, and curiosity.
- Be an innovative, collaborative, inclusive, and flexible organization that provides responsive, learner-centered services and technologies that meet the evolving information, curricular, and research needs of CSUDH students, faculty, and staff and the surrounding community.
- Provide vibrant, welcoming, and engaging learner-centered physical **and virtual spaces** [emphasis ours] that facilitate innovation, collaboration, and boundary-free access to information. (CSUDH, 2018)

In the spirit of innovation, flexibility, and centering learners embedded in this Vision, the University Library makes it a priority to meet students where they are. Students who cannot come to campus and visit the library in person, who are enrolled in distance education programs, or who suffer from library anxiety, all have the option of accessing help from a librarian online via chat reference, virtual research consultation meetings, or library email. It is the authors' hope that the library's social media presence will function not only as a marketing tool but as an extension of the library's virtual spaces. Social media includes all students who follow-- regardless of if they are on campus students can read a tweet or see a post on Instagram. Students can access the library and its various social platforms at their leisure, and decide whether they want to utilize a resource or attend an event. They can also learn more about the library's resources and services without having to visit in person or consciously choose to seek out that information on our website. Using social media in this way has the potential to bridge the gap between feeling comfortable in the library and avoiding it due to library anxiety. A student may be less inclined to talk to other students in person about a library event, a book, or a resource, but have no qualms about posting or replying to a comment on Twitter or Facebook. The usage of social media goes beyond advertisement and promotion of the library to engage and support the students as well (Mellon, 2015).

In this chapter, the authors will describe how a project to revamp the social media presence by a committee of librarians at a public comprehensive university library beginning in January 2018 has helped increase attendance at library related events and fostered deeper student engagement. By restructuring the library social media committee into smaller groups and assigning each one a single social media platform, the different accounts have evolved unique voices suited to the content, norms, and audience of each platform. The decision to offer different information across each, or the same information in a variety of ways, allows the committee to better tailor the content on each platform to its audience based on students' feedback and engagement.

BACKGROUND

In considering social media as a tool for promoting student engagement, the natural question to begin with is whether students are willing to interact with library social media accounts at all. In 2015, roughly two-thirds of adults reported using social media, up from just 7% in 2005. Though this increase can be

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