

Where the rubber hits the road: recognising and managing digital engagement risks

Presented by Mylee Joseph, State Library of New South Wales www.sl.nsw.gov.au

Abstract

Library staff are engaging with clients, delivering services in social media channels and representing your library brand online. How effectively is your team managing legal and reputation risks, community engagement, strategy, coordination and resourcing risks? This presentation is a guided tour through recognising and managing the online engagement risks they will encounter along the way. Tools featured include: Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, Wikipedia and Wikimedia Commons and the lessons learned at State Library of NSW.

Together we will explore the risks and control options available and the strategies in place across the four different focus areas that the State Library uses social media to deliver on organisational objectives:

1. Developing markets (audiences) and promoting Library events, exhibitions, products, collections and services
2. Promoting discovery of library assets (including collections, services, events, exhibitions, online services, physical spaces and staff expertise)
3. Engaging with clients and the community in their preferred channels and online communities (conversation and service delivery)
4. Collecting social media content for the collection (including social meta data and community created content)

The responsibility for creating social media content and engaging with communities and clients through these channels involves a range of different library roles and stakeholders. Navigating digital engagement as an avenue of service delivery is a key skill for library professionals.

Introduction

The speed and potential reach of social media can be compared to handling a high-powered racing vehicle, there is an ever present element of danger but in skilled hands it is very effective.

Libraries have adopted social media across a range of core functions including engaging with clients, delivering services in social media channels, marketing services and programs, place making, digital collecting, web archiving and broadcasting. In doing so, the skill set required by library staff has expanded to include applying appropriate risk management to decision making, planning and communication in social media channels to their work. McMillan and Murray (2001) recognised the vital part risk plays in innovation, noting that “risk management does not equal the exclusion of risks....to do this would be to limit innovation and new ways of working.”

The areas of potential risk to be considered in adopting social media tools include legal risks, brand management and reputation, community engagement, strategy, coordination and resourcing for continuity. This paper explores recognising risk exposure for libraries and choosing appropriate control activities to support effective digital engagement as background reading for a workshop presented at the ALIA Online conference in February 2015. The date should be noted, as the rapidly evolving social media landscape is likely to overtake some of the information in this paper.

The volume of traffic

The number of Australians using social media continues to grow across a variety of social media channels. Trends can be monitored via the Australian visitor statistics compiled by SocialMediaNews.com.au (2014). The numbers of Australians participating in November 2014 include:

1. Facebook – 13,600,000 users
2. YouTube – 13,200,000 UAVs
3. WordPress.com – 6,000,000
4. Tumblr – 4,500,000
5. LinkedIn – 4,500,000
6. Instagram – 4,000,000 Monthly Active Australian Users
7. Blogspot – 2,950,000
8. Twitter – 2,791,300 Active Australian Users
9. TripAdvisor – 1,750,000
10. Yelp – 1,500,000
11. Tinder – 1,500,000 Australian users
12. Snapchat - 1,070,000 Active Australian Users
13. Flickr – 710,000
14. Pinterest – 340,000
15. Reddit – 170,000

The participation rates across age groups in the Australian community are also revealing as older people increase their use of social media tools. 69% of Australians now use social media and 31% of internet users aged 65 and over are using social media sites on a regular basis and 58% of internet users aged 50-64 using social media.(Sensis, 2014) The increasing integration of social media and traditional media can be seen in political news reporting (Sauter and Bruns, 2013) (Dunlop, 2013), advertising (Mangold, 2009) current affairs, political participation and television viewing habits(Cameron & Geidner, 2014).

How are libraries using social media to deliver services?

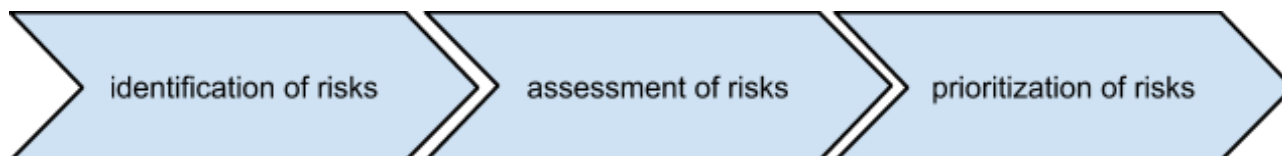
Libraries can use social media to achieve a variety of service delivery goals, including:

1. Developing markets (audiences) and promoting Library events, exhibitions, products, collections and services
2. Promoting discovery of library assets (including collections, services, events, exhibitions, online services, physical spaces and staff expertise)
3. Engaging with clients and the community in their preferred channels and online communities (conversation and service delivery) and
4. Collecting social media content for the collection (including social meta data and community created content) (Joseph, 2013)

In order to achieve these goals, staff across a range of library roles need to have skills, knowledge and awareness of the social media landscape and the inherent opportunities, challenges and risks entailed. Social media policies and procedures provide guidance for library staff, but the immediacy of social media publishing and the potential reach means training in risk assessment and management may be a key factor in minimising incidents and optimising opportunities.

Risk assessment

Some risks are generic to all types of library activities, while others are unique to social media or even specific to a particular social media tool. Most commonly, risks are managed in library environments and activities through policies, procedures, training, monitoring and evaluation - but risk management also requires key preliminary activities. The key stages include:



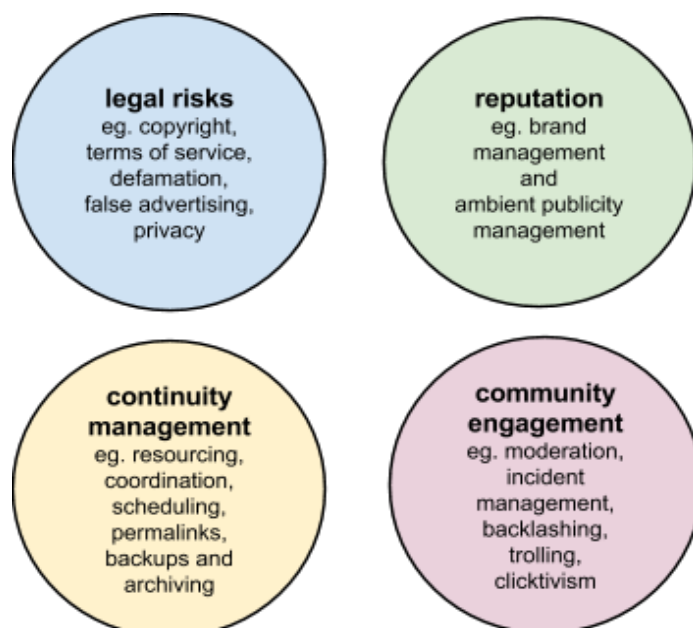
These key skills in a social media enabled library environment can be adapted from and built upon the existing skills, knowledge and awareness library staff have, including most crucially the ability to research and evaluate information, check sources and respond to client needs.

Risks can seldom be eliminated, but in many cases on social media they can be controlled and mitigated. It is easy to assume that not engaging with social media could be a valid strategy, however it is important to note that although there are risks for organisations and businesses engaging in social media the “conversations are taking place whether or not companies are participating in them”. (Thoring, 2011) Library staff need to be able to a) estimate the risk exposure the library may face, this is calculated by the impact x likelihood of an incident occurring and b) determine what types of control activities are needed.

Even carefully planned, evidence based decisions can pose a risk for negative community reaction as demonstrated by the backlash to the Brooklyn Museum’s decision to delete their Flickr Commons account (Bernstein, 2014) which highlighted from the wider community’s perspective a range engagement, digital scholarship, discovery and community access issues (Summers, 2014).

What are the areas of risk to recognise and manage?

The risks to be considered in implementing social media for delivering library services appear to fall into four main areas: legal, reputation, community engagement and continuity management.



Depending on the type of library, the client group served and the type of information handled there may be additional risks, for example the Australian Stock Exchange includes social media in the Continuous Disclosure guidelines (Quilter, 2013) while health libraries may have additional duty of care responsibilities in delivering evidence based services.

Legal risks

This workshop does not seek to provide legal advice, but rather to highlight some potential risk areas that should be investigated in the local context by library staff. The longevity of social media content and the development of a variety of search tools that can retrieve social media posts across a range of forums make the content that may be time sensitive and seem completely ephemeral of longer term consequence. The risks can include amongst others:

- copyright and intellectual property
- privacy
- user liability
- defamation
- injurious falsehood and
- false advertising.(Holland, Crossley & Yap, 2013)

Reputation and brand management risks

Library administrators and staff are conscious of the reputations of their institutions, constantly struggling against the ubiquitous stereotype of book repository (Carroll & Reynolds, 2014) and continuously adopting new technologies, representing the library reputation and brand translates into the use of social media. In exploring the potential of social media for delivering library services and participating in online conversations, the unique characteristics of social media channels require brand and reputation management strategies for libraries which are developed with an awareness of the need for “ambient publicity management” which has the perspective that “reputation should be comprehended as interpretations among stakeholders: their stories, anecdotes, and other discursive elements about organizations”.(Aula, 2010) As Nitins and Burgess (2014) point out the “qualities and meanings attached to a brand—that is, the very value of the brand itself—become vulnerable to constant renegotiation”.

Community engagement risks

The features of social media that make it so popular and effective, including “easy searching, open participation, a minimal publishing threshold, dialogue, community, networking, and the rapid and broad spread of information and other content via a wide range of feedback and linking systems ... mean less corporate control over stakeholder relations and easy communications between stakeholder groups.”(Aula, 2010)

Some risks in community engagement can include:

- managing complaints and responding to compliments
- training staff in the relevant community guidelines, terms of service and etiquette for the tools they use
- optimising the use of hashtags and
- managing negative behaviours including trolling and thread-jacking.

Continuity management risks

Although social media tools are generally free, creating content and interacting with communities requires staff resourcing. There are a number of areas of continuity management that can pose risks including:

- coordination: planning (Richardson & Visser, 2013), aggregation and cross pollination across social media tools, moderation of community created content, integration into workflows, automation of postings
- training: tools can be “easy to use” but mistakes can be impossible to recall or correct
- archiving: capturing and storing relevant content and business records
- evaluation: determining which tools are generating the most traffic to library destinations and about relevant topics; cost of staff time

State Library of New South Wales social media channels

Primary accounts:

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Flickr Commons](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Pinterest](#) | [Historypin](#) | [Wikimedia Commons](#) | [Tumblr](#) | [Wikipedia](#) | [Vimeo](#)

The Library also has a number of official social media accounts that target niche audiences and deliver specific services, including:

Learning Services: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

Find legal answers: [Facebook](#) | [Pinterest](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Tumblr](#) | [YouTube](#)

drug info @ your library: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Pinterest](#)

Public Library Services: [Flickr](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Pinterest](#) | [Tumblr \(for 75th Anniversary of the Library Act\)](#)

Multicultural Unit: [Twitter](#) | [Pinterest](#)

NSW.net: [Twitter](#)

Digital Library (ICT Services): [Twitter](#)

Family History: [Tumblr](#)

Maps: [Tumblr](#)

Indigenous Unit: [Flickr](#) | [Tumblr](#)

Conclusion

One of the most challenging aspects of digital engagement is keeping in mind that a library joins social media channels as a participant rather than playing the more familiar role of host on library owned online spaces. Library staff and collections are actors in these social media ecosystems. Digital engagement skills for library staff and effectiveness for libraries require staff to be familiar with library policies and to have access to well documented standard operating and incident response procedures as well as encouragement to exercise judgement and discretion when creating content and engaging with the online community.

Training for library staff should include considering the different types of risks that are inherent to the social media environment and to specific tools. It is also important to encourage library staff to become quite familiar with the features of the tools and the communities who use them including appropriate etiquette through investigation, observation and training. Methods to coordinate activities across social media within organisations are also crucial in managing the inherent risks.

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