



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR MUSEUMS

This policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media by employees of [YOUR ORGANIZATION]. For the purposes of this policy, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wiki's, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. This policy is in addition to and complements any existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail, and the internet.

[Your organization's] employees are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy. Employees are subject to this policy to the extent they identify themselves as an employee (other than as an incidental mention of place of employment in a personal blog on topics unrelated to SITES).

Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary.

All uses of social media must follow the same ethical standards that the organizations employees must otherwise follow.

Request for Social Media Use

Social media identities, logon IDs and user names may not use [Your Organization's] name without prior approval from the social media designee. If you would like to be added as a user of specific account, submit your credentials to the social media designee.

Requests for setting up social media accounts and their settings can be obtained from [Your Organization's] social media designee.

Goals of Social Media

The purpose of [Your Organization's] social media is to [sample goals listed hereafter]

- build community
- develop brand awareness
- highlight collaborator excellence
- drive users to myriad digital assets where they can further engage with deeper-dive content.

Sample Platform Goals

Facebook

[Here are our goals for all of our social media channels. Your goals may differ, but it's a good idea to articulate exactly what the purpose of your organization's use of these platforms is.]

Our primary goal is to bring attention to the richness and depth of content in the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service's (SITES) "portfolio," both past and present. Wherever possible, SITES attempts to cite and connect traveling exhibitions with



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current events and happenings as well as referencing host venues and collaborators involved with that topic. Yet another goal of this platform is to highlight great programming happening across the SITES network, including events (digital or physical) occurring across the National Mall with our Smithsonian colleagues. Focused on community-building, the Museum on Main Street (MoMS) Facebook presence strives to bring attention to the richness and depth of Smithsonian and local exhibitions, highlighting events and activities within host communities, as well as disseminating capacity-building information.

Twitter

The goals of the SITES' and MoMS Twitter accounts are to create connections with like-minded individuals and organizations across the globe, via well-crafted, rich content. Initiating and developing relationships is a primary goal as is the dissemination of educational content to followers interested in the humanities, arts, sciences, etc. A secondary goal of this platform is to inform followers of programming opportunities at SITES' venues.

Instagram

The purpose of SITES' Instagram account is to tell compelling stories via fantastic photography—either taken by social media managers or culled from the archives at SITES. This is a platform where behind-the-scenes is readily shared.

Flickr

The purpose of SITES' Flickr account is similar to that of Instagram. This platform contains the best of SITES photography, primarily events, behind-the-scenes and installation or gallery images. Copyright here requires photographs to be our own, unless we've been given clear permission from a host venue to post imagery. Images are shared under the Attribution-Non-Commercial creative commons license. Photos provided host venues are shared as All Rights Reserved.

Pinterest

The goal of SITES' Pinterest account is to bring together diverse and unique items and collections in unexpected ways. The platform contains boards of "digital collections" as well and does not categorize assets purely by exhibition. The thrust of the platform is to be appeal to "collectors" and users interested in do-it-yourself.

YouTube

The purpose of SITES' YouTube account is offer deep-dive insight into SITES traveling exhibitions and the processes required to build them. The account allows us to curate video content related to our traveling exhibitions, not only created by Smithsonian but also by collaborators and other trusted sources. The purpose of the Museum on Main Street YouTube page is also to open a window for the general public onto exhibitions, behind-the-scenes activities such as installations, special features on communities, and oral histories



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from communities, particularly those associated with Youth Access Grant initiatives.

Blog

The purpose of SITES' blog is to offer a repository for more fully explored content such as original research, new findings, behind-the-scenes with staff and more.

Storify

The purpose of SITES' Storify is to logically pull together social media from multiple users into a single, storytelling thread. This platform is used to collect social media about various exhibitions or to document specific social media campaigns.

General Rules of the Road

Don't Tell Secrets

It's perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it's not okay to publish confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about our software, certain details of current projects, financial information, research, and trade secrets. We must respect the wishes of our collaborators and lenders regarding confidentiality of certain elements of current projects. We must also be mindful of the competitiveness of our industry.

Protect your own privacy

Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the website. Other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal should be set to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.

Be Honest

Do not blog anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. We believe in transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are. Nothing gains you notice in social media more than honesty - or dishonesty. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.

Tone and Voice

We maintain an open and friendly tone of voice on social media. Leave the academic speak in the dissertations and formal papers. That being said, we do attempt to use proper English (no slang) and maintain a high standard of accuracy in content.

Respect copyright laws



It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others, including own copyrights and brands. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.

Respect your audience, SITES, and your coworkers

The public in general, and [your organization's] employees, exhibitors, collaborators, lenders, and sponsors reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't say anything contradictory or in conflict with your organizational goals. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion. Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of the organization.

Protect exhibitors, collaborators, lenders, sponsors, and suppliers

Exhibitors, collaborators, lenders, sponsors, and suppliers should be respected and their privacy protected. Never discuss confidential details of customer engagement. It is acceptable to discuss general details about kinds of projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for a customer (e.g., Customer 123) so long as the information provided does not violate any non-disclosure agreements that may be in place with the customer or make it easy for someone to identify the customer. Your blog is not the place to "conduct business" with a customer.

Controversial Issues and Advocacy

If you see misrepresentations made about your organizations in the media, you may point that out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct.

Some museum employees, in an official work capacity, are not permitted to advocate for causes via social media—regardless of whether or not they are “good or bad.” Such causes include advocating for the humanities, for environmental protection, etc.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes

If you make an error, be up front about your mistake, and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly - better to remove it immediately to lessen the possibility of a legal action.

Think About Consequences

For example, consider what might happen if an employee is in a meeting with a customer or prospect, and someone on the customer's side pulls out a print-out of your blog and says "This person at your organization says that product is inferior."



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Saying "Product X needs to have an easier learning curve for the first-time user" is fine; saying "Product X sucks" is risky, unsubtle and amateurish.

Once again, it's all about judgment: using your blog to trash or embarrass your organization, our customers, or your co-workers, is dangerous and ill-advised.

Disclaimers

Where practical, you must use a disclaimer saying that while you work for [X organization], anything you publish is your personal opinion, and not necessarily the opinions of your organization.

The Director or her designee can provide you with applicable disclaimer language and assist with determining where and how to use that.

Enforcement

Blatant and unreasonable policy violations will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for cause.