2012 Survey Results

Social Media Use in Archives and Special Collections

The purpose of this survey is to understand what kinds of archives and special collections use social media, as well as how and why they use these online platforms.

The 2012 survey was conducted from July 18 to July 31, 2012. 185 responses were received from archives and special collections of all types and sizes. From the results, it is clear most archivists and special collections librarians are still trying to figure out whether social media works for their repository, and how best to use it. The survey will be sent out again in 2013 to see how the results might change. Please contact Rebecca Hopman (rchopman@gmail.com) for more information, or visit rebeccahopman.com/resources

Do repositories use social media?

Yes	116 // 63%
No	69 // 37%

How did repositories identify themselves?*

Academic	113 // 61%
Corporate	7 // 4%
Cultural	14 // 8%
Government	21 // 11%
Historical Society	3 // 2%
Local	12 // 6%
Museum	13 // 8%
Nonprofit	31 // 17%
Private	7 // 4%
Professional organization	1 // 0.5%
Public Library	20 // 11%
Regional	5 // 3%
Religious	9 // 5%
State	11 // 6%

49% of responding repositories contain less that 10,000 linear feet of material; 39% of repositories' annual operating budgets are less than $99K

7% of responding repositories contain more than 100,000 linear feet of material; 8% of repositories' annual operating budgets are more than $1M

51% of repositories employ 0-2 full-time staff members; 32% have 3-10 full-time staff members; 4% have more than 100 full time staff members

43% of repositories employ 0-2 part-time staff members, students, interns, or volunteers; 39% employ 3-10; 3% employ over 100

Would repositories that don't currently use social media use it in the future?

Yes	29 // 42%
No	22 // 32%
Maybe	18 // 26%

Why do some repositories not use social media?*

Lack of time	37 // 54%
Lack of staff	35 // 51%
Lack of interest	25 // 36%
Lack of training	18 // 26%
Lack of money	7 // 10%
Other (including "not appropriate for repository," "prevented/restricted by parent organization," "not a priority," and "security/privacy concerns"	17 // 27%

How many repositories have social media policies and/or guidelines?

Yes	37 // 32%
No	67 // 58%
Some	5 // 4%
Not sure	7 // 6%

What platforms do repositories use?*

Blogs	65 // 56%
Facebook	96 // 83%
Flickr	49 // 42%
Google+	8 // 7%
Pinterest	18 // 15%
Tumblr	13 // 11%
Twitter	63 // 54%
YouTube	37 // 32%
Other (including Historypin and Foursquare)	24 // 21%

When did repositories begin using social media?

2012	9 // 8%
2011	26 // 22%
2010	29 // 25%
2009	19 // 16%
2008	6 // 5%
2007	10 // 9%
2006	2 // 2%
2005	2 // 2%
Early 2000s	3 // 2%
Don't know	5 // 9%

19% of repositories spend under 10 hours on social media a year; 4% spend more than 500 hours on social media each year

12% of repositories reported spending $0 or minimal amounts of money on social media each year; 23% spend over $1000 a year (many cite staff hours or pro accounts)

Do repositories use content management systems like Hootsuite?

Yes	25 // 22%
No	80 // 69%
Don't know	11 // 9%

What do repositories use social media for?*

Building relationships with patrons	80 // 70%
Disseminating digital content	60 // 52%
Education	75 // 65%
Marketing	65 // 56%
Outreach	112 // 96%
Promotion	101 // 87%
Other (news, building relationships with other groups and institutions)	6 // 5%

Who primarily runs the social media program?

Full-time staff member	90 // 78%
Part-time staff member	5 // 4%
Student, intern, or volunteer	8 // 7%
A team of staff members	13 // 11%

Social media is a primary job duty for 9 (8%) of respondents and a component of a job for 106 (91%) of respondents.

How frequently do repositories use social media?

Daily	35 // 30%
Several times a week	5 // 4%
Weekly	54 // 46%
Monthly	16 // 14%
Several times a year	3 // 3%

What do repositories post on social media?*

Audio	26 // 22%
Images	110 // 95%
Links	99 // 85%
Text	105 // 90%
Videos	50 // 43%

Who do repositories interact with on social media?*

Colleagues in the parent institution	46 // 40%
Colleagues in the repository	32 // 28%
Members of the professional community	47 // 40%
No one, we just post material	24 // 21%
Repositories of institutions with similar subject matter or purpose	46 // 40%
Repository users	80 // 69%
Other (alumni, the public, etc.)	12 // 10%

Have respondents attended a social media presentation or workshop?

Yes	62 // 53%
No	53 // 46%

Do repositories have a metric to measure the success of their social media program?

Yes	26 // 22%
No	85 // 73%

Do repositories consider their social media program a success?

Yes	41 // 35%
No	14 // 12%
Too early to tell	57 // 49%

Do repositories archive their social media output?

Yes	24 // 21%
No	68 // 59%
Some	7 // 6%
Not sure	16 // 14%

*Respondents could choose more than one answer.

How do you define social media success?

Making digital archives records more easily available, raising awareness about the archives and its mission, giving our employees a platform for discussion and collaboration, and addressing questions and concerns of our patrons in a timely manner.

Getting the archives' name known among potential and actual patrons.

If a student says they've seen something and want to learn more about it.

I don't think success can be accurately measured using metrics and statistics. The majority of internet users remain passive in their consumption of information/materials.

Increased use of the collections and increased awareness of the archive.

Growth + interactions with community members + action as a result of social media, e.g. attendance at events.

Conversions - the number of instances we more someone from viewing or engaging with our social media to an action such as a donation, application for admission, or other show of support for the institution or archives.

[A very common answer was number of shares, likes, comments, site visits, etc.- "the number of times a piece of content is promoted by or actively engaged with by someone else."]

What is your most successful campaign?

We created a Women's Experiences at Dickinson blog as part of the 125th anniversary of the college's admittance of women. The blog grew into a physical exhibit in the Archives and fostered greater awareness of the anniversary and women's history at the college. The Archives also experienced greater visibility as a result. Faculty brought their students into the Archives to view the exhibit and learn about primary sources related to women. The Archives hosted the 125th anniversary kickoff event and a special dinner for donors. The Archives was featured in the Alumni magazine. More than a dozen students contributed to the project as interns and volunteers. The increased visibility and interactions with members of the Dickinson community are key factors in considering this venture a success.

Not exactly a "campaign," but we have cemented relationships with bloggers and journalists via Twitter, and now they write more stories about us as well as retweeting stuff to their (many influential) followers.

Special Collections Spotlight item-of-the-month blog. Generates a lot of positive feedback, easily found by patrons doing a Google search on a subject, sees a lot of traffic, easily used for teaching and reference and more outreach.

Who's Who - photo gallery of unidentified photographs in our collection. We consider it successful since so many of the images were identified after being posted on Facebook and many alums were involved.

Currently, the documentation of a major renovation of our historic building has gotten rave reviews. The project was started to let members know that the building was under construction and most of the materials that they use or view while here are packed away for the duration of the project. We are documenting the project in a way that showcases the historic preservation techniques and approach that we are using for the project.

Sharing videos - especially dating from the earliest days of the College - through a YouTube channel was especially well received by administration, alumnae, and students. The novelty factor of moving pictures and sound was clearly an advantage.

Conejo Through the Lens was successful in getting hundreds of images from local families, as well as professional photographers.

Do you consider your social media program a success?

Yes	Our social media program is active, timely, and relevant. It has introduced us to new patrons and keeps us in touch with interested people.
	I hear very often how people found our archive by using a simple Google search and finding our blog. It seems that more people access the blog than our official website.
	The best thing about our program is that it is a truly shared, cross-departmental effort that enables everyone, from archivists to curators to IT staff, to contribute and share their love of the collections in an easy, informal way. The burden of content creation is distributed, staff really enjoy participating and interacting, and we have gotten lots of positive feedback from our patrons.
	It engages current students and alumni and keeps them in touch with the College. It has also led to donations of archival material.

No	Because we are required to use social media according to the dictates of the parent organization, this is not always done in the way most beneficial or meaningful to us.
	Time spent versus attention received is out of balance. Have not attracted many followers in some platforms (and changes and limitations in the social media services are limiting in their usefulness).
	I'm not given enough time to really develop a strategy and use social media to the fullest. It's not a priority for my bosses.
	As of yet, most of our social media platforms . . . have not been given enough attention from staff to be a true success. Despite using various platforms for 1-2 years we are still in the development/experimental phase. Without staff members fully dedicated to social media, it has mostly been afterthought in terms of research/marketing.

Too early to tell	We continue to add new fans and followers, and we are building some interactions, but a lot of the time I feel we are operating in a vacuum, and it's hard to know if anyone is paying attention.
	It's hard for us to consistently manage it so sometimes there's a lot of radio silence on our end . . . we just don't have time to post.
	I'd say it was a success, but not a roaring success. It needs more support from others working in the repository to really take full flight.
	We are just getting it going. Know that we have all people in the department "on board" to build a program, we know that we have to be thoughtful and strategic about our social media program . . . just like we have a mission statement/collections development policy, our social media program needs direction, support, and metrics to measure our efforts.