

ANNUAL MEETING HANDOUT

Museum Educators and Social Media

This session looked at how three museum education departments have used social media to communicate directly with teachers to promote museum and mission-related resources. Presenters discussed the challenges and benefits of using social media in museum education, and offered tips on making meaningful connections with a teacher audience.

Presenters

- » **Leslie Doiron**, Associate Producer, Colonial Williamsburg
- » **Jacqueline Eyl**, Youth Education Director, International Spy Museum
- » **Jamie Loo**, former Online Resources Producer, McCormick Foundation Civics Program, Chicago, Ill.

Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo

As the museum field's premier professional development opportunity, the Alliance's Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo showcases the best thinking from practitioners and visionaries on major issues confronting museums and the communities they serve.

This session handout is from the 2013 Annual Meeting in Baltimore.

Social Media Tips for Museum Education Departments

Create a strategic plan-Create a general strategy for your social media. The strategy should include:

Voice: What does your social media voice sound like? Is it an institutional voice, (ie., “We”)? Will individual staff members take turns speaking through one account to the audience and make them aware of this? Will each staff member have his or her own Twitter handle tied to the museum? Is this voice fun and breezy? Or is it more formal and neutral?

Goals and objectives: What do you hope to accomplish through using social media? Start with qualitative goals and then set reasonable targets for the quantitative side.

Guidelines for posting: This falls in line with goals and objectives. What types of things will you post to your social media?

Management: How often are you posting and when? Who is responsible for maintaining the social media voice?

Damage control-How do you respond to negative posts? Where do you draw the line on deleting a comment versus responding? Create a general plan for how to handle different scenarios that may come up on your social media but be flexible as well. A general policy is helpful but since situations vary from day to day, it is not a cure all.

Manage your follow backs and likes-One of the challenges of social media is cutting through the noise to get useful information, especially on Twitter. To get the most out of using Twitter, consider creating guidelines for the types of people and organizations that you follow as a museum education department. Consider limiting your follow backs to educators, and people and organizations with the potential to offer information that is useful to your audience. This will help you tap into great resources and networks, and find people to re-tweet.

Community first, marketing second-Museum ed. departments should seek to build and be part of a community online with teachers. Think of the online space as a forum to learn, discuss and network with teachers around our educational missions. It’s OK to promote and market your institution’s resources but try to strike a good balance. As an outsider in a teacher social media network, particularly on Twitter, over-promoting can be seen as intrusive or spamming and you do not want your institution to get this reputation.

Be protective of your audience-Speaking of spamming, be protective of your audience especially internally. For example, if another social media voice at your institution wants you to re-tweet something that may not be relevant to your audience, do not be afraid to politely decline or re-tweet without the teacher hashtag. Be a good team player with other institutional social media voices but don’t be afraid to stick to your strategic plan and ask your colleagues to respect these boundaries.

Share, share, share!-As a museum education social media voice, part of your mission should be to serve teachers with any reliable educational resources related to your institution's educational mission. Retweet resources shared by those in your community and consider sharing resources from other museums. It's part of being in a learning community and supporting each other as museums in this space.

Cheer up, don't get discouraged!-If you're not getting direct reaction or response from teachers on social media, do not get discouraged. Remember the 90/9/1 principle of social media: 90 percent of people on the internet are lurkers who consume content but do not contribute; 9 percent contribute sometimes; and 1 percent of people are constant contributors. Non-participation doesn't mean your audience isn't listening or interested.