



A Museum's Guide to Internet Marketing

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IT & Collections Management Advisory Committee

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I. Frequently Asked

1. Who developed this document?

The IT & Collections Management Advisory Committee (ITCMAC) developed this document. ITCMAC is a working committee that exists to provide a broad vision, expertise, and guidance to ANSM concerning its IT and collections management services. Its duties include the provision of technical expertise in all areas of IT, and expanding the scale and scope of IT services to ANSM members.

This report was carefully researched by ANSM staff and includes input from many museums and heritage workers. ANSM staff participated in several internet marketing workshops, and the following books were especially helpful in the creation of this report: Tim Collins' *The Little Book of Twitter*, Seth Godin's *Meatball Marketing: Is Your Marketing out of Sync?*, and Mitch Joel's *Six Pixels of Separation – Everyone is Connected. Connect your Business to Everyone*.

2. What is the purpose of this document?

The primary purpose of this document is to provide museums with an overview of social media and online marketing possibilities so that they can make sound decisions, focus efforts, and maximize effectiveness should they elect to participate. This aligns with the ANSM Training Committee's recent decision that internet marketing and revenue generation be a training priority for ANSM. It is not expected that museums will adopt each of the opportunities outlined in this document.

3. Who should use this document?

This document is intended to be used by museum board members, staff, and/or volunteers who are responsible for making marketing and communications decisions, as well as the persons responsible for carrying out these tasks. While summer staff may assist in internet marketing efforts, this document was written for permanent and long-term staff/volunteers.

4. Why do I contact if I have questions about this document?

If you have any questions regarding information contained in this document, please contact Karin Kierstead, the ANSM Collections Coordinator. She can be reached by phone at 902-423-4677, 1-800-355-6873, or 902-402-3433. She can also be reached by email at support@ansm.ns.ca.

II. Introduction

As Vincent Joyal, Heritage Marketing Co-ordinator for the city of Grande Prairie states: “to many people, the Internet and social media are their only connection to the real world. They do not watch television or listen to the radio (unless they are on the net), so if we are not on the web, we are not on the map.”¹

Over the past several years, museums have increasingly moved online to market themselves. They are especially interested in using social media to strengthen and build community, to facilitate discussion, and to determine audience wants and needs. In Nova Scotia, all museums have a listing in the heritage directory and the majority also have a basic website. Some have also begun to experiment with activities such as Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and YouTube. Studies indicate that Canadians in general and Nova Scotians specifically are very active in social media.²

Used appropriately, social media can enable a museum to position itself as a community hub and increase its level of community support leading to greater sustainability. Conversely, a museum could conceivably end up alienating its online audience if these efforts are not properly planned.

Users are already discussing museums in online forums, often without the museums’ knowledge or participation. People like to share their opinions and experiences. Studies show that:

- 25% of search results for the world’s top 20 brands are links to user-generated content.
- 34% of bloggers post opinions about products and brands.
- 78% of people trust peer reviews.
- 14% of people trust advertisements³.

Trust is key in online marketing. In the past, businesses simply marketed a brand and sold it to the world. Now, personal opinions expressed through social media have a great impact on the business world. The same can be said for museums. They once presented objects and expected people to come. Now the public expects that their experience will be interactive. They want intellectual access to the museums’ holdings; they want to enter into discussion about the objects and understand their significance. The public trusts museums to present and protect collections and museums must reciprocate this trust or they are nothing more than storage space.

¹ Joyall, Vincent. “I was not born on the Edson Trail...” INFOrm Winter 2009. Alberta Museums Association.

² Swick, Rob. Internet Marketing for Tourism Operators Workshop. AlphaSearch Internet Marketing Inc. May 2010.

³ Social Media Revolution 2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfZ0z5Fm-Ng>

III. Creating an Internet Marketing Plan

Some experts suggest learning about social media by just diving right in. This can be risky however, especially with limited time and resources. It is far better to research and plan. While it takes time, creating a plan helps to uncover opportunities that almost always improve results and often saves money. Efforts are focused and then growth can occur naturally. Ask what is working well for the museum and what makes it unique. What knowledge or expertise can the museum staff/volunteers share with the online community and what is the best method of doing so? Why do people keep coming back to the museum, why are they supportive of its work, and conversely why do some people never visit? Once it is determined why people like the museum, it will be much easier to create a plan for online marketing.

In creating an internet marketing plan, the following considerations should be made:

1. Determine which methods of online marketing are best suited for the museum and its activities, ranking them by priority. The following sections (V through XIV) review some basic tools and the most commonly used social media sites. Pick and choose carefully those that will best suit the museum's needs as well as the abilities of staff/volunteers. Once comfort and success is realized in one platform, a second or third platform could be considered.
2. Decide how often the information should be updated. For websites, this will be on an as-needed basis. For social media, think about updating it every few days depending on how many followers you have. If the museum ends up getting a lot of attention and gathering an active group of followers, consider daily updates. Remember – it is not only important to post new information but to reply to audience comments and questions as well. Discussion is a key component to successful online marketing.
3. Decide who will be responsible for keeping information current. It is important to remember that this is a real (and very visible) part of the museum's outreach and communication. Language, spelling, grammar, style, and content are very important so carefully choose who will do this work. Be sure that they have the necessary skills, abilities, and content knowledge.

Sometimes it is easier if more than one person is involved - duties can be shared. Perhaps one person is technical and one is a content person. Or perhaps they update different aspects of your information and respond to questions. Or maybe you decide to have one person per platform if you are using more than one medium. You may also want to come up with a schedule for monitoring online activity. This could be a platform for new volunteer positions.

4. Think ahead. Use a calendar to map out dates for upcoming activities, historic events, etc. Create a list of interesting stories, photographs, and artifacts and where possible attach these to calendar dates. Do not limit yourself to museum or society activities but think about including other activities in the community. All of this helps to create a buzz that stimulates discussion, generates ideas and new topics from the public that may be useful for future work.

IV. Top 10 Tips

1. Information must be updated on a regular basis. Accounts cannot be left dormant over the winter months just because the museum is closed. Nothing looks worse than promoting out-of-date information.
2. Social media is about personal discussions, not corporate dictation. The audience wants to know that they are connecting with a real person. Avoid issuing mini media releases.
3. Be sure to respond in a timely manner to questions and comments left by visitors. If someone is critical of the museum or its activities, always take the high road when responding.
4. Be open to feedback and ideas from the audience. They will likely be thinking “outside the box” and could come up with innovative exhibit themes, fundraising projects and community events. By responding to the visitors’ wants and needs the museum will be encouraging repeat visitation and community engagement.
5. People are very visually-oriented, so be sure to include interesting pictures and videos that will spark discussion. Encourage the audience to upload their own as well.
6. Be careful in how the museum is represented. The facility should not appear larger or the society more active than it really is. If visitors cannot experience on-site what is shown online, it is better not to show it.
7. Follow the museum’s style guide in order to provide a consistent look and feel to online activities.
8. Connect all of the museum’s online activities. Provide links that will allow users to quickly and easily move from the website to Facebook to Twitter to YouTube, etc.
9. Connect with other museums, heritage organizations, businesses and people. Participating in their forums will portray the museum as a true member of the online community.
10. Connecting with an online community should serve to bridge the gap between the online world and the real world. Look for ways to bridge the two, such as by hosting a special get together for online fans.

Online Activities

V. Website

The first place that people look for information now is on the internet. It is expected that every museum will have its own website that will allow the visitor to learn about the museum and its activities. This is the museum's front line, so the site needs to be professional and of high-quality. That does not mean the museum needs to spend tens of thousands of dollars in building the site. There are many tools such as Wordpress, Joomla or Drupal that can be used to help create a great website. Connection to Google Analytics will enable the monitoring of user statistics.

In designing the website, try to keep it clean (free of unnecessary clutter) and easy to navigate. It is also important that the site be compatible with mobile devices. Information should be easy to update without having to constantly call a webmaster or technical consultant. Also remember that while a society may operate the museum, visitors think primarily of the museum as its own organization. A separate section can explain about the governing society. The website visitor should be guided to the museum and called to some sort of action, even if it is simply subscribing to a newsletter. If the museum lacks the resources to create its own website, consider approaching a college or university with an IT department, or submit a funding proposal to the Strategic Development Initiative. As content is compiled and developed, it can be used on social media websites as well.

A museum's website should include:

1. Hours of operation
2. Contact information – phone, email, address
3. Accessibility information – aids available for visually or hearing impaired, wheelchair access, etc.
4. Directions to the museum, including an interactive Google map
5. Membership information, including benefits and how to join. Link to a downloadable application form.
6. Volunteer information, including the required steps for becoming a volunteer, such as the need for a criminal record check. Include a list or description of tasks that volunteers are working on and a description of current needs. Link to a downloadable application form.
7. Photos of the building, exhibits, and special events to portray the museum as a busy and fun place. Remember to obtain permission from people whose image you wish to post on the website. Multimedia files could also be available for download as mp3 files, such as audio tours or lectures. These files can be embedded from social media sites like YouTube instead of taking up valuable space on the website itself.

8. A 'subscribe now' button, allowing visitors to immediately subscribe to the museum or society's electronic newsletter (see section IX).
9. A separate page about the governing society, its mandate, a list of board members (with photos if possible), etc. This tells the community who is working on its behalf.

Not everything has to be on the museum's website. Links should be made to Artefacts Canada, Community Memories, the Nova Scotia Heritage Directory, social media sites, neighbouring museums and organizations, and funders/sponsors. Not only will this increase the level of authority of the website, but it is also a great way to show broader community involvement.

Case Study: Cape Breton Miners' Museum

Check out the Cape Breton Miners' Museum website (www.minersmuseum.com) as an example of a great museum website. Notice how clean and fresh the site is, and that the visitor is prompted to plan a visit, view the new exhibit area, and peruse the exhibit showcase. Information is easy to read, and the few menu options at the top of the page provide links to any information the visitor may require.

VI. Google Places

Google Places is the new Google Local Business, and allows users to create a business entry (in this case the museum) including hours and offerings, and also attach an interactive map so that people can easily find you. Since this is a Google application, the entry is given priority by the search engine, meaning that when someone looks for the museum online, this will be the first thing they see. The information contained in the entry is very similar to the various heritage directories in the province, so there is no need to be creative or come up with new information. As creating an entry is a very basic task, it can be quickly created by a volunteer or summer student.

VII. Artefacts Canada & the Virtual Museum of Canada

The museum collection is the core of its operation, and sharing images and information about the collection is an excellent way to garner attention and fulfill the museum's educational mandate. Included in Canadian Heritage Information Network's (CHIN) free membership is the ability to contribute collection records to Artefacts Canada and the Virtual Museum of Canada. Sensitive information such as donor names, acquisition mode, and other administrative fields are not shown online. Once a record is uploaded, the information is searchable by Google, increasing the museum's online visibility. If the record has no image, it only appears in Artefacts Canada for professional reference. Records with images are automatically shared in the Virtual Museum of Canada.

Methods of uploading are dependent on the collections management system used by the museum. If the museum is using the ANSM's collections management database, instructions on uploading can be found in the user manual on the ANSM website. For

other systems, museums should contact CHIN to determine how to share their records online.

Case Study: Little White Schoolhouse Museum

Prior to uploading to Artefacts Canada, this small museum's online presence included a basic website and entry in the provincial heritage directory. Following their uploading of 20 artifact records, they were contacted by two groups who were very excited to learn of their existence. The first group was an association of one-room schoolhouse museums who work together to promote one-room educational heritage. Based in the U.S., this group is interested in visiting the museum and expanding their organization in Canada. The second contact was made by an author who had written a book about a carriage race. The museum had uploaded a record and image of a model carriage that had been used in this race. The author was very excited to learn that they had information about the race, and wanted to visit the museum to see the model. He also sent the museum his book to add to their information about this object.

VIII. Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a free encyclopedic website built entirely by users. Recent studies have shown that many entries are in fact more reliable than literary sources. Create a Wikipedia page for the museum, and if applicable, a separate one for the historical society. This is not meant to be a mirror of the museum's website, nor should it be used instead of a website. This is where you can share more of the background and history of the museum and/or society as a complement to the museum's website. Remember that you can embed links within the text to other websites or Wikipedia pages.

Museum page could include:

1. Location, hours of operation, and link to website.
2. Date opened.
3. Museum mission, mandate, and governance structure.
4. For historic buildings that had previous uses, include information on each stage of the building's life.
5. Make note of architectural styles or features and the names of designers, builders, etc.
6. Explain the significance of the building and/or site.
7. Include photos from the life of the museum, showing how it has changed over time.
8. Affiliations – partner organizations, funders, etc.

Society page could include:

1. Location of office, link to website.
2. Mission, mandate, and governance structure.
3. Date founded.
4. Information on the original purpose and intentions of the society if different from the present goals and objectives.
5. Overview of each of the society's areas of activity, with hyperlinks to any other Wikipedia pages.

IX. Email Marketing

Traditional mail outs are very time and resource-consuming. While a limited number of museum members may prefer or require a physical newsletter or correspondence, many people prefer to receive information by email. This positions the museum as being eco-friendly and also saves money on printing, postage, etc. In the event of people moving or traveling, it increases the possibility of information reaching the recipient.

Email marketing may sound very involved, but it can be a simple, effective way to correspond. Using an email service provider (ESP) helps to simplify the process and provides reports on the effectiveness of your efforts. Community museums could consider using a service such as MailChimp. It is free so long as the recipient list is less than 500 addresses, and not more than 3000 emails are sent per month. The email template can also be personalized to match the museum's visual identity.

Member newsletters are the most common reason for corresponding, updating people on the various museum activities of the month, quarter, or year. Special events should be promoted and members solicited for assistance (volunteers, information, and financial support) on an as-needed basis. When soliciting, the benefits of participation must be clearly stated and volunteering or giving should always be promoted as positive opportunities. If subscribers think that you are only emailing them to ask for money or volunteer hours, they will unsubscribe.

Case Study: Association of Nova Scotia Museums

On average, how much time does it take to monitor the system and prepare an e-newsletter for circulation?

This is very new to us. I probably spend about an hour looking at settings and reviewing to make sure everything is right. It takes about two hours to prepare and send out the e-newsletter, but I am sure this will improve as I get more used to the system.

How often do you send out emails through the ESP?

Currently it's on an as-needed basis, but it used to be on a bi-weekly basis.

How are you measuring the success of the ESP?

We mainly measure success in how it ties back into the website. We monitor website statistics and can see visitor spikes as a direct response to something that has been sent out in the e-newsletter.

Do you see using the Email Service Provider as helpful to your work?

Yes, it helps us monitor who is receiving the e-newsletters within the province and outside of the province. It helps us control who is getting the newsletter. We have registration for the system tied into the website, so in theory it is less administrative work.

When you began using this system were you surprised at the resources required for the initial setup?

I wasn't surprised, but was talked through the process by a technical consultant. After the initial walk-through, I've been able to do the newsletters on my own. It's still a learning curve to figure out things like graphics.

X. Facebook

Facebook is arguably the most popular social media website in existence, and is the 4th most popular online activity. Within nine months of its launch it had 100 million users. Currently there are currently over 300 million users, 16.8 million of which are Canadian. Teenagers and young adults were quick to join and continue to do so at a steady rate, but statistics now show that the fastest growing demographic is 55-65 year old women⁴. These users are looking for ways to connect and enrich their lives prior to and after retirement.

For many Facebook users, museum groups or fan pages are becoming a way for people to reconnect with their hometown, discussing everything from genealogy to how the community has changed over the years. Users are uploading their own photos of the community and sharing stories from their childhood and family lore. While these activities are not solely focused on the museum, it is a way to keep the community aware of and invested in the museum as the facilitator of the discussions. It is also an excellent way for museums to learn more about their collections and community history. By asking questions of the audience, museums are able to fill in historical blanks.

Rural museums should create fanpages for the museum with the goal of it becoming the community's fanpage (if one is not already in existence). As museums position themselves as cornerstones in their communities, they should be celebrating past and present achievements and be promoting local events. For museums in urban centres, the focus could be on how the museum is involved in the greater community in order to broaden appeal.

⁴ Social Media Revolution 2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FZ0z5Fm-Ng>

While the discussion component is a key piece of Facebook, it is important to make the page as visual as possible. As a word of caution though, when photographs are uploaded, the user relinquishes copyright, so be wary of sharing artworks. If you want to use photos that have people as the main subject, make sure you get the person/people to sign a release form that lets you use their image on social media sites. This should be a simple one page document used exclusively as a social media release form (see sample on ANSM's website). If it is later decided to use the image in other capacities, you can reconnect with the subject and ask them to sign a more extensive image release form. At large events a sign can be posted saying that images will be shared on social networks. If possible, video and photos should be added at least once a week.

Facebook activities could include:

1. Promotion of events using the events feature, allowing people to RSVP and invite guests from their own contact list.
2. Photos of artifacts, exhibits, events, gift shop, programming, facilities, etc. Consider playing a guessing game with your online audience, asking them to identify artifacts or explain how an object was used.
3. Solicitation of favorite museum and community milestone/event memories, information about family history, artifacts (i.e. What is it? How was it used?). Ask fans to upload their own video, audio or image files.
4. Discussions around upcoming exhibits (i.e. What should next year's summer display be about?). Polls can be used to gather information anonymously.
5. Link to Artefacts Canada.

Case Study: Ross Farm Museum

Has the use of Facebook encouraged people to come to your museum or website and to discuss your collection?

From getting feedback from visitors visiting the museum it seems that our Facebook fan page has been an excellent draw to both our website and to the museum. In talks with visitors they mentioned how they checked the Facebook fan page regularly to get updates on the museum, as well to browse new photo's taken during events that have been uploaded to the page. From the feedback we have been getting it seems that using Facebook has drawn people out to the museum since it gives them more of an idea of what goes on at the museum on a regular basis. Our plan is to give a window into what takes place at Ross Farm on a day to day basis such as a new calf being born, a new litter of piglets, new breeds of animals brought to the farm, special projects taking place in some of our buildings etc... the kind of information you can't get to visitors with traditional advertising. We started getting into social media only a few months ago and already we have close to 1,100 Facebook fans and growing daily. Social media acts as a portal to our website where the bulk of the information about Ross Farm is located. So generally when we make a post there is a link that will take them to the homepage of

our website or specific page on the site.

Do you see Facebook as being helpful to your work?

In being able to advertise quicker, easier and cheaper it is really helpful and gives us the ability to reach a very large market without using a great amount of resources.

Facebook also provides a wealth of information on the demographics of the visitors that are interacting with the page which in turn can help us advertise toward our target market. Facebook gives us the ability to let people know if we are closed due to a storm or for some other reason.

Who in the museum keeps the social media tools up to date, monitors responses and answers posts?

I [Webmaster and Farmhand] have been the one that has been looking after the social media for the museum since we first started using it as a means of advertising.

When you began using Facebook were you surprised at the resources required after the initial setup, to continually monitor and interact with your audiences?

We were aware of the amount of resources that was going to be needed prior to us getting involved in social media. The cost of Facebook is free so the only real cost would be time and labor and in our situation we had someone that was already working at the museum to manage it. The thing with social media is if you don't allow for enough resources and time and you stop posting it will quickly go stale and people will stop checking your pages for updates, so making new posts often with news, information and media related to your organization is key.

On average, how much time per day do you spend updating your online information?

I can't really put a number on it since I also work as an interpreter some days through the week. I work a few days in the office during the week and those days I generally spend time on social media, our website and other work. I try to prioritize the work so that if we have an event coming up I spend maybe a half a day or more posting, creating video's, putting up image galleries etc... I would say I probably 4 -8hrs a week maybe more depending on the week and whats taking place at the museum. Now I also use some time to go up on site to take pictures and video since I find posting galleries of events and other things around the farm creates more interactions on Facebook. Content such as images and videos really helps to draw people back to the page and ultimately to our website and our museum. It really does vary from week to week in how much time I spend posting and it's not something I feel has to be done everyday but as long as the page is kept alive and interesting people will keep coming back to it.

How often do you update your online information?

Again it really depends, I may jump on the computer for a few minutes in the morning before I head up on site just to make a quick post or two. If I need to post a gallery of images that were taken during an event I will try to spend the time posting those pictures up in the first few days following that event. I think it's good to make at least a couple of posts per week since people are more likely to start forgetting about your page if nothing has been posted for an extended period of time. If we have an event

coming up I like to have a post up at least 3 or 4 days in advance in order to give people time to plan. I usually try to post about an event as soon as the last one has ended and then sometimes a follow up post the day leading up to the event.

How are you measuring the success of your online activities?

We are planning on surveying some of our visitors this year in order to see how much of an effect the social media is having on our attendance. Our front-line staff have been receiving many comments from visitors about how much they love the Facebook page and how they keep checking it regularly which is a great sign that it's working. We have heard many comments from visitors that they chose to come out to the museum because of something that was posted on the Facebook page. We think that Facebook and social media in general have been excellent in allowing us to advertise daily activities happening at the farm as well helping with our attendance numbers.

XI. Flickr

For many museums, they may have a Flickr presence and not even know it. There are over four million photos on Flickr, posted by users who want to share their vacation and travel photos, tagging where and when they visited. By having an account and asking visitors to tag the museum, the organization will not have to worry as much about capturing images to populate a photo album.

To some people, museums are stuffy old buildings filled with dusty antiques. Their perception is that museums are static, unchanging. Using Flickr, museums can easily provide visual evidence that they have indeed evolved and welcome new ideas and change. They can show that many people are involved in heritage-related activities and that they are community based by cross-linking with communities, events, and other museums. The photographs should speak for themselves and get people excited about the museum's activities. If you are including people in your photos, be sure to obtain permission to show their image online, especially when dealing with children. Images can be tagged with key terms, allowing cross-linking between museums, communities and events.

Flickr photo album should include:

1. Permanent and temporary exhibits, interactive and multimedia displays. These should not be static shots of artifacts as this is already shared on Artefacts Canada. Instead try to show candid shots of people enjoying the displays.
2. Events such as society meetings, guest lectures, workshops, re-enactments, teas and socials.
3. Programming.
4. Museum grounds (in different seasons) and community landmarks.

Case Study: Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum

Do you see Flickr as being helpful to your work?

In terms of Flickr, we put it up there two years ago, but really haven't done anything with it. I plan to change that this year. We will be providing more regular updates. I see that it has potential, especially with image searches on-line, giving potential visitors a better sense of the product we offer.

Who in the museum keeps the social media tools up to date, monitors responses and answers posts?

We have not been managing the site well at all. We will be changing that this summer. *When you began using these types of media tools were you surprised at the resources required after the initial setup, to continually monitor and interact with your audiences?*

As with all social media, I expect some HR commitment. I don't think that Flickr requires more than any other social media platform.

On average, how much time per day do you spend updating your online information?

For facebook or our website we spend a few minutes a day as required.

How often do you update your online information?

For Facebook and our website, we update daily or weekly as required.

How are you measuring the success of your online activities?

As I mentioned above, we really have not been managing the account like we should.

XII. Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging site. In 140 characters or less, users share thoughts, stories, photos, interesting links, etc. Statistics show that Twitter has been steadily growing since its launch. For those adults who are active online, 20% of 18-34 year-olds use it, 10% of 35-44 year-olds use it, and 5% of 45-54 year-olds use it. 80% of Twitter activity is done on mobile devices, which means that as museum visitors are commenting on their experience, good or bad, in real time. Twitter allows users to quickly broadcast information to followers. If a follower shares (re-tweets) a post, all of their contacts will see it as well, providing the museum with some free marketing in the process. 51% of Twitter users use the site to follow brands⁵. You can also follow key terms such as museums, Nova Scotia, or heritage. If you are using other social media sites such as Facebook, you can use tools like Tweetdeck, www.co-tweet.com or www.hootsuite.com to allow for cross-promotions and multiple users on one account.

Twitter works by building connections. Once an account is created, users can follow other groups, people and associations, and make friends with comparable businesses. When first starting to work with Twitter, consider issuing a challenge or having a contest to build followers, with real rewards for re-tweets. Twitter can be used to get bits of information out to the public which otherwise may not warrant an email,

⁵ Social Media Revolution 2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FZ0z5Fm-Ng>

blog post, or other method of circulation. Tweets (posted information on Twitter) are automatically and instantly shared with your followers. Twitter is very interactive, so if someone chooses to follow you it is because they are interested, and they will likely respond to your Tweets.

Twitter should not be used as a quick way of reminding people to visit the museum. Tweets should be unique so that followers feel they are getting special information – information that will stimulate their interest in the museum and its activities. This will not work if you simply repeat information from your website or other public records.

Twitter topics could include:

1. New acquisitions.
2. Historical information about notable community members.
3. Invitations to events.
4. “This day in history” and other fun facts.
5. Links to the museum’s website and other social media activities.

Case Study: Nova Scotia Archives & Records Management

Has the use of this media encouraged people to come to their museums or websites and to discuss their collections?

The use of social media has driven a considerable amount of traffic to the NSARM website and has raised awareness about the archives' collections, and Nova Scotian history in general. Both Twitter and Facebook have grown to have a good number of followers. @NS_Archives has over 2100 followers and was voted the most popular Twitter account in Halifax for 2009. [Twitter has] allowed us to reach a new audience; people who wouldn't necessarily come into the building to research, but are interested in learning about history and exploring our holdings in a new way. Many people have commented that before Twitter and Facebook efforts, they didn't know the archives existed and weren't aware of what it had to offer. Social media has allowed the Nova Scotia Archives to break down the "old and musty" archives stereotype and share our province's history far beyond the reach of a typical press release or brochure.

Do you see Twitter as being helpful to your work?

Social media has become integral to my work. Social media gave the archives an opportunity to highlight specific items in our holdings on a daily basis and reach a completely new audience. Starting with Twitter (www.twitter.com/ns_archives/) in early 2009, I began to choose photos and documents from our website to tweet on a daily basis. Often I share these items based on a "this day in history" fact. Significant events in Nova Scotian history (like the Halifax Explosion) are covered with more detail, exploring at length the corresponding web exhibit while giving a time-line of events for Twitter followers. These in-depth look at events like that have been very well

received and garner many questions, comments, and re-tweets (passing on our messages to others).

Who in the museum keeps the social media tools up to date, monitors responses and answers posts?

I'm the only one who updates/monitors/interacts on Twitter. I provide communications support for the archives.

When you began using these types of media tools were you surprised at the resources required after the initial setup, to continually monitor and interact with your audiences?

I was an "early adopter" of Twitter, Facebook, etc., so I was prepared with the knowledge and tools to successfully use social media tools. Use of Twitter as a promotional tool requires that you tweet at least several times per day, and preferably more in order to be visible. Twitter is about starting a conversation with your followers, not just sending out links, so I am mindful of replying to followers quickly and engaging in conversation about our holdings.

On average, how much time per day do you spend updating Twitter?

I always have a client running on my desktop, like Tweetdeck, but may be moving towards using a website called Threadsy that links together Facebook, Twitter, etc. in a seamless, easy-to-use tool. The actual time it takes to post or reply on Twitter is minimal, only a few minutes, but I do engage in ongoing monitoring throughout the workday. While I'm not engaged in other tasks, I may take a few moments to check my Twitter stream, see if there is anything I can contribute, and either post or minimize the window and check back later. I often say that Twitter takes no time at all, and yet I'm checking it all day.

How often do you update your Twitter account?

At minimum I try to post 3-4 times a day. Based on the number of replies I get or queries that are posted, that can go up to 10-15 on average. During a day of historical significance, like the Halifax Explosion, I may tweet dozens of times to fully explore a topic.

How are you measuring the success of Twitter?

While you can measure success by the number of clicks your link gets (I use bit.ly and ow.ly), the number of followers, or the number of times an image is viewed (Web Stats and twitpic), I base our success on the level of engagement with our followers and the meaningful dialogue created using Twitter. If I help one person find what they're looking for and they are pleased with the service, then that is better than spending my time trying to figure out how to have the most followers or hits to the website. What I appreciate the most is when people pass on to their own followers a positive experience they've had with the archives on Twitter.

XIII. YouTube

YouTube is a website where people can upload and share videos. Content is as varied as the imagination, and the site is now the 2nd largest search engine in the world. 71 million users share information through YouTube, and the site has the 6th largest online audience⁶. Videos do not have to be of high level quality or professionalism, and in many cases the most popular videos are very raw. They should not exceed five minutes in length. Once a video is posted, users can provide feedback through text or other video. You can also embed videos on your own website, giving a simple site the illusion of complexity. As with all social media, the key is to be interesting and unique. Museums could either create their own channel or forward information to ANSM to be included in the ANSM channel (see ANSM opportunities below).

Video topics could include:

1. Tour of selected parts of the museum and grounds that acts as a teaser for visitors to come explore the rest of the site on their own.
2. Special events such as concerts, re-enactments, tea socials, programming, etc.
3. Interviews with staff, volunteers, board members, etc., showing how things operate behind-the-scenes. Work with a script and do practice takes as much as necessary.
4. Walking tours or hiking trails in the community.

XIV. Blogging

Blogs are a way to share more in-depth information in a narrative way. For people who enjoy writing, this may be a very simple and fulfilling task, but for others it may require a lot of time and effort to create a posting. In terms of content, the blog could either focus on a specific theme (such as Aunt Fanny's recipe book from 1860) or share the variety of museum life. Whichever route you choose, the content of the blog should be reflected in the blog name. The blog should be updated at least once every two weeks (postings can be written and stockpiled for future publication). As people start to subscribe to and follow the blog, the update schedule should be reviewed to determine whether or not it needs revision. If there is no one at the museum or society interested in writing on a regular basis, blogging should not be pursued.

Contrary to other social media, blogs are searchable and available to the online public, without the requirement of a login. Be sure to use proper names instead of local terms or shortened titles so that search engines will accurately pick up the information. Being open to the public also means readers can leave comments. Settings can be adjusted so that the blog administrator moderates comments, selecting which ones to publish and which ones to ignore. Negative comments that are valid should not be ignored, especially since the author will know you ignored their comment. Post the comment and then address it in a reply.

⁶ Social Media Revolution 2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FZ0z5Fm-Ng>

Blog post topics are only limited by one's imagination. So look around and see what demands attention, because there is a strong chance that it will grab someone else's attention as well.

Ideas for topics include:

1. Interesting artifacts, photographs or collections.
2. Stories connected to the building or community.
3. Changing of seasons, including wildlife sightings.
4. Community and museum events.
5. Museum/society projects and initiatives.
6. Summer student experiences.
7. Book or resource reviews.

Case Study: Annapolis Heritage Society

Has the use of social media encouraged people to come to their museums or websites and to discuss their collections?

The use of social media has indeed encouraged people to come to the museums and participate in programming. There seems to be a different audience for the different platforms. While the blog gets read in a wide variety of places, I find that it is more effective for our local audience than Twitter. On the other hand, I know that we will have specific visitors from away this summer directly from Twitter.

Do you see blogging as being helpful to your work?

Social Media helps the communications, interpretation and marketing aspects of museum work. I can't say that it helps much with exhibit design, conservation or cleaning the washrooms. I am reluctant to do too much crowd sourcing of exhibits until this is a bit more tested. In terms of having an additional platform to put out a message social media is useful. The other benefit is that the message is unfiltered from the institution (ie. no newspaper editors in the way). Simply put, this is where productive marketing is happening at this point. If we can add interpretive content to the marketing we are more liable to draw an audience.

Who in the museum keeps the blog up to date, monitors responses and answers posts?

I [Executive Director] am responsible for all of the Social Media activity for the Society. I do not think that I am a great role model though. It has been my choice to become involved in social media rather than being pushed by an outside force. I get something out of the blog. I enjoy writing, working with the camera and it allows me to "park the historical baggage" I pick up in running a museum. It is a useful outlet for maintaining my fragile sanity. I would not be as productive or as interested if I were being directed by someone else. I should say that the board has been very supportive of the work on the blog.

You really need someone in a senior position so that they have an idea of what is going on in the museum. Having access to archival material and collections allows me to develop a broader on line product. I also know which special events are coming and how I would like them covered. You will have also seen that I do not always confine myself to the museum and its activities. I am writing about community heritage in many different ways. Finally, I do most of my blogging on my own time at home. I just cannot get enough time to think coherent thoughts at work. Like other forms of marketing / communications / interpretation Social Media is an investment. The investment in this case is on the human side rather than the monetary side.

When you began blogging were you surprised at the resources required after the initial setup, to continually monitor and interact with your audiences?

I wasn't surprised at the time required but I did my research before jumping in. If social media is going to be useful, it needs to be social. If you are just going to start something and let it sit, you may as well just have a website. People are wanting to connect with the voice on the other end of the computer. Museums are venues where we can offer real experience in what can be a vapid world. For this style of marketing / interpretation there is simply more need for interaction.

On average, how much time per day do you spend updating your blog?

On average I probably spend 45 minutes in the evening on social media stuff. I can multi-task and check twitter while writing blog entries.

How often do you update your blog?

I tend to check twitter when I check my email. As for blog entries, I personally aim for something new two out of every three days. This is not always the case, but I seem to end up with 17 - 20 posts most months.

How are you measuring the success of your blog?

I track the blog with Google Analytics. This allows me to track hits, topics, location of origin, who is linking, what sort of computer they use, etc. Twitter is harder to track.