



THE MUSEUM
OF ENGLISH
RURAL LIFE

Social Media Policies and Guidelines

The point of this document is to:

- Be clear on who does what on social media
- Define our platforms
- Set our policy on style, voice and responses

Read this document alongside *The MERL Digital Content and Marketing Strategy*.

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1.0 Introduction

This document gives an overview of the underlying rules and guidelines around who uses social media, how we use it and what our limitations are. It should be reviewed annually to reflect the changing social media and organisational landscape.

For more information on why we use social media and what we are trying to achieve, read *The MERL Digital Content and Marketing Strategy*.

2.0 Platform Mix

The MERL is limited to social media platforms for which we can consistently provide high-quality content. Our platforms are chosen based on their popularity among our target audiences and their usefulness in achieving our objectives.

The MERL is currently most active on:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram

For more information on how we use these platforms, see *The MERL Digital Content and Marketing Strategy*.

2.1 Adopting new platforms

We do not jump onto any new social media platforms without a thorough examination of:

- Whether our target audiences use them, and in whether in great numbers
- Whether the platform is well-established or likely to be a passing fad
- Whether we have the capacity to regularly post on the platform

Proposals for new platforms are made in **Digital Content Workshops**.

3.0 Content

3.1 Who uses social media

Social media is an engagement tool that can be utilised by all members of staff.

Posting on our social media accounts requires training and needs to be organised through the Marketing Manager.

If a staffmember is uncomfortable using social media, they can contribute content to be posted by others by adding to the **Digital Campaigns** Trello board.

3.1.1 Personal social media accounts

Staff are encouraged to have their own social media accounts to discuss their professional work, particularly on Twitter. It is both an effective networking tool and a more authentic way of sharing the work of staff and partners than the brand account.

If your account is very obviously tied to the Museum and for the purpose of communicating your professional work, please include the line 'All views my own' in your biography.

Please take any grievances you have with the Museum or other colleagues to your line manager and do not discuss them using your professional social media account/s.

3.2 Voice and tone

Our Voice represents the Museum, and is how we want to present ourselves to the world. We are informal, fun, friendly and knowledgeable.

Each platform has its own individual tone that takes its lead from the institutional voice. See individual platform documents in the Appendices for direction on tone.

3.3 Style

We follow the University of Reading Style Guide, which covers:

- Abbreviations
- Bolds, italics and underlining
- Capitalisation
- Names and titles
- Numbers
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Social media, web terms and usages
- Writing for inclusion.

You may find the Style Guide here:

https://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/mce/University_of_Reading_Style_Guide_-_2018_edition.pdf

3.4 Content

3.4.1 Overview

The strategy, objectives and workflows of how we plan and produce content are covered in *The Digital Content and Marketing Strategy*.

3.4.2 Using collections online

Items from the collection are free to be shared online so long as they:

- Are not under any copyright restrictions
- Are treated in a respectful, ethical way unless cleared with the relevant curator, librarian or archivist

- Are not under any special conditions defined by their donor
- Are not damaged or placed in a situation where damage could occur
- Are cited correctly and a link supplied to the online database record or Collections A-Z link where possible.

3.5 Our tools

3.5.1 Data and insights

We currently do not subscribe to any social media data or insight service, and instead use the native tools:

- Facebook Insights
- Twitter Analytics
- Instagram Insights
- Google Analytics (website)

We download data and manually update the Social Media Statistics spreadsheet, kept on The MERL Sharepoint site. This data is assessed for insights into what is working and what is not, which is communicated to all staff monthly via email.

3.5.2 Creative Tools

The MERL has a subscription to the Adobe Creative Cloud, available to all staff on the iMac.

The Equipment cupboard in the Marketing Office is available for use by all staff. This includes a DSLR camera, filming equipment, audio equipment, 3D scanners and a smartphone with a data plan.

3.5.3 Scheduling and listening

The MERL does not subscribe to any scheduling or listening tools. We schedule on the native platforms, and use Tweetdeck for creating lists to track hashtags, mentions and lists of people.

3.6 Copyright

Never use an image for which we do not own the copyright, or that we do not have the express consent of the copyright-owner to use on social media.

When using images from the collection, ensure that they are no longer in copyright or that we as The Museum of English Rural Life own the copyright.

If you violate copyright, take down the content immediately. If a complainant takes a situation further than a Take Down notice, please inform the University of Reading Legal Department through your line manager.

4.0 Response guidelines

4.1 What requires a response

We always respond to:

- Complaints (see 4.4 below)
- Enquiries about services or information
- Object and research enquiries

We try to respond to:

- Positive comments
- Observations on our posts
- People mentioning us in their own posts

We do not have to respond to:

- Offensive/hate speech (see 4.5 below)
- Declarative comments (i.e. single emojis, 'Haha', 'Cool!')
- Comments on our posts but not directed at us

4.2 Response time

Our policy is to respond to comments, questions or complaints *that require a response* within 24 hours maximum. It's damaging to not reply, as it means people will be less likely to engage with us again and we may have lost the interest of a potential visitor/user.

We will monitor during working hours on weekdays, but resource is not available at present for evening or weekend cover except in emergencies.

4.3 Important public announcements

4.3.1 Communicating an event which poses a risk to staff and the public

First of all ensure:

- you have made it to a place of safety
- any relevant emergency services are aware of the situation
- the University Security Office are aware of the situation

Liaise with the University Communications team for how to handle the situation and how to communicate information to the public. Use this holding message until the University has taken the lead on the situation:

Due to an ongoing incident the Museum of English Rural Life is closed until further notice. Please do not attempt to visit. We will update you when we have more information.

4.3.2 Other important announcements

If there is an urgent message you need to communicate, such as changes to an event, broken facilities or anything else which the public needs to be aware of:

- Liaise with the MERL Marketing Manager on the wording of the announcement, and whether changes need to be made to the website
- If the Marketing Manager is not available, liaise with your closest line manager and organise a message to be posted with whoever has access to the social platforms.

4.4 Complaints

When somebody makes a complaint:

- a) **If you know the answer.** Respond directly, acknowledge their complaint, apologise and tell them how we are resolving their issue.
- b) **If you do not know the answer.** Respond directly, acknowledge their complaint and ask if you could continue dealing with the complaint in DMs. Once in DMs, try to move them onto email.
- c) **If you do not know the answer and the complaint is of immediate importance.** Respond directly, acknowledge the complaint and inform them you are finding a resolution to the issue as fast as possible and will keep them updated.

4.5 Offensive comments and hate speech

We do not tolerate offensive language or hate speech in any form, and reserve the right to remove such comments on our comment or directed at us where we have the power to do so.

The police and Crown Prosecution Service have agreed a common definition of hate incidents. They say something is a hate incident if the victim or anyone else think it was motivated by hostility or prejudice based on one of the following things:

- disability
- race
- religion
- transgender identity
- sexual orientation.¹

There are two options for dealing with offensive comments and hate speech:

Option A: users with very few followers

- Block and report user
- Delete or hide comment if possible
- If many other users are querying our lack of response, agree a response very quickly with the Marketing Manager

Option B: users with followers in the hundreds or thousands, are persistent and are attracting comments from other users

- Agree a response very quickly with the Marketing Manager, do not re-engage after initial response

¹ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/hate-crime/what-are-hate-incidents-and-hate-crime/>

4.6 Crisis Management

Crises can happen at any time. They can be caused by posting something inadvertently offensive, from others jumping on our content to start divisive debates, from something which has happened on our site or from something done or said by one of our staff or stakeholders.

Social media crises should always be dealt with by the Marketing Manager or MPR Digital Lead.

The best way of avoiding a crisis is to nip any possible crisis in the bud:

- If somebody has a complaint, refer to the Complaints procedure above
- If somebody has written a defamatory article or report on the museum, our activity or a staff-member, then a task group must be formed (see 4.6.1 below)
- If we have posted something which somebody finds offensive because it is derogatory, appropriates another culture or for whatever other reason, delete the original post and post an individual reply to the complainant stating that we hear their complaint, will be educating ourselves to be better, and that we have deleted the post

4.6.1 Task group

In the rare case of a social media crisis involving the museum, we will form a task group to decide on our messaging and tactics. The crisis should be acknowledged in an all-staff email and all colleagues and volunteers must be forbidden to communicate about the crisis in question.

Crisis task groups should involve:

- The line manager of the area or person involved
- The MERL Director
- The MERL Associate Directors
- The MERL Marketing Manager
- University of Reading Communications team representative

4.7 User agreement

The Museum of English Rural Life uses social media to explore contemporary and historic rural life with people from across the world, and we want to hear what you have to say. We want you to be involved in discovery and respectful debate using the collections we hold in trust for the public.

To ensure that everyone feels comfortable interacting with us and others, we respectfully ask that all posts and comments on our content are positive, courteous and do not cause offence. We reserve the right to delete any of the following content and block users who share such content:

- Hate speech as defined by the police and Crown Prosecution Service
- Comments that defame any person or organisation
- Repeated irrelevant comments by individual users
- Advertisements, solicitations or endorsements of any other organisation, website, contests or promotions
- Links to any illegal media and websites, including pornography, and/or any comments encouraging illegal activity