Introduction

The public library’s role has outgrown the brick and mortar.

Continually emerging technologies provide libraries with tools and techniques to engage with patrons.

“Many librarians believe social technologies support the core missions of creating communities.” Smeaton and Davis

“That’s a real challenge for all libraries...to try and remember what the core values of a library are, the what we do is important, it’s just the how we do it that changes.” Smeaton & Davis

The public library’s presence depends on its sustainability during change.
Literature Review
Public Library Social Media

General Successful Use of Platforms and Social Media Tools
- Xu, 2017
- King, 2015
- Sakas & Sarlis, 2016

Best Practices, Global Perspective
- Shafawi & Hassan, 2014
- Islam & Habina, 2015
- Smeaton & Davis, 2014

National Research Specific to U.S. Libraries
- Nat'l Inst for Public Libraries, 2014

Practitioner Articles > Academic Journals
- China, US, Australia, UK
- US
- Malaysia
- Bangladesh
- Australia

Research Questions

RQ1 What are the needs of public library patrons?

RQ2 What are patrons’ priorities for social media, in general?

RQ3 How are public libraries meeting patrons’ needs through social media?

RQ4 What are the issues involved with maintaining a social media presence?

RQ4A What are public libraries’ priorities when determining staffing needs for curating social media?
Instruments

Survey Sampling

Survey Participants
- Librarians: 23.6%
- Managers: 14.8%
- Social Media Coord.: 18.7%
- Directors: 26.1%
- Other: 16.7%

Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Population Served / Top Platforms Used</th>
<th>Branches / Social Media Staff</th>
<th>Goals</th>
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</table>
| Charlotte Mecklenburg Libraries | 859,000 Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn | 20 branches, 3 FTE + 10-Person Support Team | - Grow active followers + program attendance  
- Increase followership  
- Market library as a knowledge source  
- Promote library as a knowledge source  
- Engage with followers |
| Wake County Public Libraries  | 1,072,000 Facebook, Instagram, Twitter | 22 branches, 1.5 FTE + WCPL Mgrs. | - Increase followership  
- Broaden point of view beyond staff  
- Enlist help of adult volunteers for posts  
- Engage with followers |
| Greensboro Public Libraries   | 300,000 Facebook, Instagram, YouTube  | 8 branches, 20 Online Support Person Team | - Increase healthy engagement  
- Be accurate, appropriate current, and reliable  
- Represent the city as a whole |
## Interviews

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Results

RQ1: What are the needs of public library patrons?
Results

RQ1: What are the needs of public library patrons?

Public Library Patrons' Highest Priority Access Needs
Percentage of All Needs Identified by Staff

- Digital Resources: 5.7%
- Physical Space: 8.0%
- Programs: 15.1%
- Staff Assistance: 15.3%
- Books: 20.3%
- Technology: 35.4%
Results

RQ2: What are patrons’ priorities for social media, in general?

Perceived Reasons Patrons Follow Public Library Social Media

Public Library Usage of Social Media Platforms
Results

RQ3: How are public libraries meeting patrons’ needs through social media?

Perceived Benefits Patrons Receive from Library Social Media

Percentage of All Benefits Identified by Staff

- Event Reminders: 30.1%
- Real-time Notifications: 19.9%
- Material/Service Info: 18.8%
- Engagement with Staff: 16.1%
- Community Info/History: 11.3%
- Humor/Entertainment: 3.8%
Results

RQ4: What are the issues involved with maintaining a social media presence?

Top Challenges for Library Social Media

- Time/Staff Availability
- Training and Expertise
- Lack of Promoting Social Media
- Budget

Number of Participant Responses
Results

RQ4A: What are public libraries’ priorities when determining staffing needs for curating social media?

"The simple allocation of resources is not necessarily a guarantee of success."
Greensboro Public Libraries
Results

RQ4A: What are public libraries’ priorities when determining staffing needs for curating social media?

Top Priorities for Improving Social Media

- Additional Staff Training
- Dedicate Staff to Oversee Accounts
- Give Staff Time to Perform the Job
- Post to Multiple Accounts
- Add Staff to Social Media Team
- Add Social Media Platforms
- Budget for More Staff/More Time
- Establish a Social Media Policy
- Schedule Posts
- Allow More Community Info
- Give Branches in Systems Autonomy
- Post Consistently Across Platforms
- Other

Number of Participant Responses
Public library patrons’ needs converge upon access.
  ○ Technology
  ○ Materials and services
  ○ Programs and entertainment
  ○ Space
  ○ Staff—the connection that can help patrons navigate all need-fulfilling factors

Library staff generally use social media to promote programming, events, services, and library awareness.

Library staff are aware their patronage goes beyond the building.

Smaller and rural libraries rely heavily on Facebook to connect with their patrons.
  ○ Fewer staff
  ○ Fewer resources
  ○ Lack of training

Libraries’ social media goals revolve around increasing awareness of the library.

Staff perceive the best ways to improve social media curation are through additional staff/hours and staff training on multiple platforms.
Recommendations

- Learn community needs through surveys and focus groups
- Adopt readily available and free/low-cost resources for tools and training
  - Scheduling tools such as Hootsuite or Later
  - Webinars
- Leverage time with connections outside the library.
  - Partner with other local government divisions to help with posts that can develop the library’s voice in the community
  - Partner with well-vetted community volunteers