

social media <http://bit.ly/13v2q03>

further reading

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Hall, H. (2011) Relationship and Role Transformations in Social Media Environments. *The Electronic Library*. 29 (4) 421-428.

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what are the challenges?

Institutions face a number of challenges related to social media.

The most basic institutional challenges centre on simple decisions such as which networks to join, what tone to take, how frequently to post, etc. However, institutions also face more complicated challenges such as time commitment, useful audience relations, and relevant content gathering.

As such, an institutional social media strategy is imperative to resolve key issues and implement thoughtful solutions.

The integration of a successful social media strategy really depends on a consistent understanding of social media as a tool, and the user as an audience. It is important to understand that a successful social media presence cannot simply be about basic broadcast and casual conversation—the challenge is to have the ability to be aware of the library and its community as a whole and to harness the capacity to triage questions and needs in useful ways.

Essentially, the library becomes the ultimate, personalized and engaging help desk.

where is it going?

Where will social media go? What device will they conquer? Which network will gain popularity next? There are no definitive answers to these questions but it is safe to say that social media will remain steady elements of daily social life.

Interest in social media trends, techniques, and uses is growing in the academic library setting, but a disparity between active users and non-users still exists, particularly in a library setting. Planning and communications become challenging when user expectations of social media are so disparate, and are further complicated by organizational apathy towards the tool and its significance.

To move academic library staff from observers of social media trends to committed and engaged participants within social media, further discourse and the inevitable demonstration of tangible value will be essential.

what are the implications for libraries?

Social media offer libraries the opportunity to gain unique insights into and have dialogues with users—interactions that were impossible on such a large, public and personalized scale before. In addition, a thoughtful and curated social media presence allows libraries to reimagine and reinforce their branding and marketing daily through a public demonstration of services, initiatives, and attitudes.

While the reach and influence afforded by social media participation is innovative, the adoption of social media as institutional tools requires resources, plus careful consideration of the goals, needs, and expectations of the participating library.

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