

## **Survey Questionnaire Design**

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**Public Library Association**  
*A Division of the American Library Association*

**Social Media in Libraries Survey Request**

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Dear Participant,

With the popularity of social media, more libraries are opting to use different platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., to promote their services. The Public Library Association's task force on social media is conducting research with the goal of compiling guidelines for social media adoption in libraries. These guidelines will serve as tools for library professionals to use when deciding what social media platforms to use and how to use them successfully.

As part of the research, we invite you to participate in the following survey. The goal of this survey is to obtain information on how public libraries are using social media to promote library collections. Respondents have been randomly selected from the LibWeb directory. Involvement in this study is voluntary, and there are no anticipated risks by taking part. If you do not want to take part, you have the right to refuse, without penalty. If you decide to take part and wish to withdraw before the survey is complete, you have the right to do so at any time, without penalty.

This is an eight (8) question long survey that takes approximately ten (10) minutes to complete. Questions will ask you about the actual and/or desired use of social media in your library. Any identifying information about you, your library, or your patrons will be kept confidential. The survey will be available for three weeks through the survey.com service, and you will be able to access it via the link below:

[LINK to 'SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIBRARIES' SURVEY]

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact us at *socialmediataskforce@ala.org*. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or you wish to address someone other than the investigators, please contact the Public Library Association Institutional Review Board at 323-555-5555.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this survey. Your response will help us create better resources for libraries across the country!

Sincerely,

The Public Library Association Task Force on Social Media in Libraries.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Please list your job title: \_\_\_\_\_, and also define your position by choosing **one** of the categories below:

- Administration/Management
- Reference/Research
- Children/Youth Services
- Communications/Marketing
- Technical Services
- Other

2. Which of the following specific social media does your library use for any purposes, and which of the following would your library like to use? (Please check **all** that apply.)

<i>Library Currently Uses</i>	<i>Library Would Like to Use</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Facebook</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Twitter</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tumblr</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> YouTube</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vimeo</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Flickr</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instagram</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> del.icio.us</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> WordPress</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Blogger</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Google+</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Facebook</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Twitter</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tumblr</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> YouTube</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vimeo</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Flickr</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instagram</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> del.icio.us</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pinterest</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> WordPress</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Blogger</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Google+</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> None</li> </ul>

3. For what purposes does your library use social media? (Please check **all** that apply.)

<i>Current Purposes</i>	<i>Desired Purposes</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing events <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing book collections <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing non-book collections <input type="checkbox"/> Communicating with existing patrons <input type="checkbox"/> Online discussion groups, for books or other topics <input type="checkbox"/> Reaching out to new patrons <input type="checkbox"/> Within your library staff and/or other library professional groups <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  <input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing events <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing book collections <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing non-book collections <input type="checkbox"/> Communicating with existing patrons <input type="checkbox"/> Online discussion groups, for books or other topics <input type="checkbox"/> Reaching out to new patrons <input type="checkbox"/> Within your library staff and/or other library professional groups <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  <input type="checkbox"/> None

4. How frequently does your library update its social media? Please choose **one**. If different types of social media vary, choose the most frequently used one.

Hourly    Daily    Weekly    Bi-Monthly    Monthly    Less than Monthly    Never

5. What level of patron interaction does your library have on its social media channels? Please choose **one**.

<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Frequent
Patrons <i>cannot</i> comment, “like,” share, or otherwise offer feedback on <i>any</i> social media channels	Patrons are <i>allowed</i> to comment, “like,” share, or otherwise offer feedback on <i>some</i> social media channels	Patrons are <i>encouraged</i> to comment, “like,” share, and otherwise offer feedback on <i>all</i> social media channels



## Questionnaire Design Paper

Our survey was collectively designed by all four teammates, and we began by constructing several operational definitions to assure that everyone was on the same page. As stated in the assignment, a *public library* is any American, publicly-funded, collections-based institution recorded in the LibWeb directory. *Social media* refers to online applications or websites that allow users to creatively share information, collaborate, and increase the peer-to-peer functionality of the web (e.g. Facebook, Goodreads, YouTube, Pinterest, etc.). *Social media adoption* is the independent variable we are researching, and is measured by several facets: platforms, purposes, frequency, staffing, interaction, and perceived effectiveness. Finally, we are exploring the methods in which libraries have adopted social media to promote *library collections*, or the total items owned by a library regardless of media format.

We wrote one survey question for each of the six facets of social media adoption. Question #2 measures how many libraries are currently using social media, the current and desired social media platforms used by the respondent's library, and the gap between current and desired implementation of social media. In order to simplify what could easily become a complicated question, we decided to give respondents the same list of popular social media platforms twice, with check boxes next to each for them to use to indicate which platforms their library already uses and which their library would like to use. In order to prevent confusion and collect more accurate data, we included both "none" and "other" as options of both lists, allowing libraries who use/would like to use platforms not listed, or no platform at all, to tell us that information as well.

Question #3 measures the current and desired purposes of these platforms. The same format used in question 2 is repeated here, for the same reasons. These two questions are placed

at the beginning of the survey both because the component they measure is the primary one for the purposes of this survey, and the answers to both questions will be more honest if they are unencumbered by ideas about their available resources. Asking first whether they identify themselves as a volunteer, for example, might make them feel more limited in answering a question about what they hope to accomplish when it is clear that others have multiple staff members doing similar work. Since purposes may not be clearly defined in social media adoption, Question #2 was placed first because it is more easily answered.

Frequency refers to how often the library updates its social media, and this is queried in Question #4. This question is designed to capture how much the libraries use social media, with the possible answers focused on categorizing the respondents' answers into patterns of use rather than a scale or number of posts for a particular time frame. The question is more easily and immediately answered this way since the listed options are commonly used in social media to describe account activity levels.

In Question #5, we briefly ask the respondent to gauge the allowed user interaction with social media platforms. This was one of the more difficult questions to design. The extremely different natures of interactions, depending on the type of social media platforms being used, made it far more difficult to choose simple and easy-to-follow language for the body of the question. Also complicating the process is the tension between libraries' goals versus their reality - libraries may want individuals to interact with them, but that doesn't mean they do. We needed to be clear as to which of those two concepts we were asking about, and this time that problem was not as easily solved as it was in questions 2 and 3. After deliberating, we went with a simple and abbreviated scale in which each choice was defined for respondents using the unique vocabulary that the social media companies themselves employ (such as "like" and

“share”) and in which we emphasized the actions of the libraries through words such as “allowed” and “encouraged.” The final design achieves our goal of measuring the level of interaction that libraries are attempting to foster with members of their community. This question was intentionally placed next to the question about frequency. While they are clearly separate components to be measured for those that administer the survey, there is enough similarity and blurred lines with these ideas that placing them next to each other in the questionnaire emphasizes their differences, and clarifies the meaning of each for the respondent. This should help in obtaining more accurate measures for each one. Of the two, Question #4 is the more straightforward and familiar question, and so was placed ahead of Question #5. This placement also allows for wording in Question #4 that is more inclusive of more passive ways public libraries may use social media. Assuming that each time a library’s social media site is updated means new content is posted may exclude those that have simpler ways of promoting their collections that may correspond to fewer available resources. It is left more inclusive since Question #5 addresses interaction and defines it immediately afterward, making it clear that patron interaction is not considered an update. The balance between accommodating an individual’s method and thinking about social media - more inclusive terms - and defining general aspects that apply to all types of uses and social media sites - more specific terms - was achieved here by correct placement of the questions.

Question #7 is a subjective one on the respondent’s perceived effectiveness of the library’s existing social media. For this question we used a Likert Scale, as our goal is to measure the relative confidence that libraries have in their current use of social media and the scale makes coding and comparing answers easier. A scale aiming to measure such a broad assessment is best placed as close to the end of the questionnaire as possible, when the

respondent has been encouraged to think about their social media adoption as a whole by being questioned about the various aspects. It may also be most effective after a question about interaction, because in measuring perceived effectiveness that is very unlikely to be based on any numbers, the level of interaction the respondent has experienced in their efforts is very likely the element of social media adoption that will have the strongest influence in their answer.

The remaining survey questions—#1 and #8—measure the respondent's employment demographic and allow space for commentary, respectively. The purpose of the first question is collect information on the respondents in the case that questions arise regarding the data collected. Not necessarily in terms of contacting respondents later, but more in the event that certain patterns begin to emerge with regards to how technical staff versus management answer the survey. Also, while each question was crafted so that the respondents would be competent and willing to answer it, it always helps to begin with a question you know each respondent will feel particularly confident about.

The final open-ended question is meant to be a catch-all. Rather than asking another specific question, since this is an exploratory survey we wanted to give respondents a space to bring up topics that matter to them, but which we may not have had room for or thought of. Its placement at the end of the survey means that previous questions might trigger related thoughts, whereas placing this question at the beginning would likely leave most respondents with little to say. It was particularly important to place this final question immediately following one that forced the respondent to place a numerical value to the effectiveness of their use of social media, because any discomfort or lack of confidence in choosing a number on the Likert Scale can likely be repaired by a question that allows for any explanation they feel is necessary. It is hoped

this final question will leave the respondent feeling confident about all of their answers and glad they took the time to contribute.

The overarching challenge in designing this survey was finding the balance between the type of inclusiveness needed for an exploratory study and the specifics needed for meaningful measurements. This design aims to allow for increasing levels of analysis for the task force as it works through creating the guidelines. Initially, it might need general statistics on what public libraries are using and interested in using; then as the task force develops the guidelines further, it can compare answers of particular question sets to explore more in-depth. This type of analysis will allow the task force to ask the right questions in their goal of arriving at a set of guidelines that the respondents will find helpful despite the diverse and possibly unanticipated answers they may provide.

In order to complete this project, our group used a combination of collaborative and individual work. We brainstormed and designed the survey collaboratively, over Google chat and docs, because it was important to our team that the survey questions reflected all of our perspectives. For the cover letter and this design rationale we divided the work into individual components: Mara wrote the cover letter, Erica wrote about which questions answered which research variables, Jenny wrote about the types of survey questions we used, and Caroline wrote about the order we chose. Once we completed these individual tasks, everyone participated in editing each other's work, after which Mara formatted and turned in the final group document.