

1-2018

Getting Social: Creating Social Media Posts on Preservation

Marie Taylor

National Archives at St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Taylor, Marie (2018) "Getting Social: Creating Social Media Posts on Preservation," *MAC Newsletter*: Vol. 45 : No. 3 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter/vol45/iss3/12>

This Preservation Essentials is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in MAC Newsletter by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Preservation Essentials

Assistant Editor: Sara Holmes, National Archives at St. Louis. Contact Sara at sara.holmes@nara.gov if you would like to guest author a column or have a good idea to share.

Getting Social: Creating Social Media Posts on Preservation

By Marie Taylor, National Archives at St. Louis

Preservation and conservation are sexy. We all know it! Any tour of an archives shows that. The “oohs” and “aahs” by visitors watching even simple surface cleaning treatments show that the visit is memorable for the general public. Of course, it follows that posting on social media about ways archives preserve and treat collections are eye-catching and even go viral. But what are some of the things you should consider in posting on social media about preservation and conservation activities on your archives’ social media?

“Don’t Do This at Home”

Multiple audiences on social media follow preservation postings. The first group comprises fellow trained colleagues who understand the technical aspects of the work and may be interested in seeing what equipment your institution is using. Next are the archivists, librarians, and other cultural resource professionals who have training and experience in basic treatments and/or wish to learn new treatments to use in their own work. The last audience (but probably the largest) are members of the general public who have an interest in history, but lack professional training.

Many treatments performed by conservators and archivists trained in basic conservation techniques can be done at home. Some of the best postings for the general public can be those stressing basic steps in preservation such as maintaining an appropriate environment and using proper housings.

It’s important to keep in mind that even though social media posts are short, they need to be complete and clear to the inexperienced. An example of this regards using polyester sleeves. Polyester sleeves are commonly used for fragile and damaged documents, but the sleeves look very much like those found at office supply stores which are not archival and will deteriorate over time. Clarity is imperative to ensure that those following your posts understand why specific materials or techniques are used and that deviating from suggested materials can result in damage.

For larger institutions, social media can be a way to show your audiences what equipment you have and what it is

used for. This type of information helps other organizations see what strategies and equipment other labs employ, which opens the dialogue around what works and what does not work in conservation treatment. For smaller organizations that follow these larger institutions, the posts can depict ideal situations that can be modified to fit more modest budgets. For the general public, conveying the expertise needed for more advanced treatments can make it clearer why some things should only be done by trained professionals.

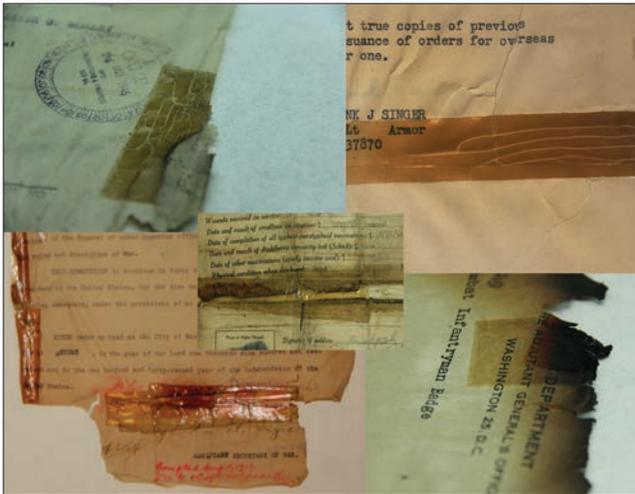
Follow through on Engagement

Deciding on posts, finding pictures, and writing text is the easy part. It’s extremely important to follow through and check on comments made. This step can allow you to address things not covered in the post, as well as clear up misconceptions the public may have about caring for collections. One major misconception is that all documents should be handled with cotton gloves. From misconceptions such as this, opportunities emerge that allow you to interact with people interested in your archives and to explain the professional principles you follow. Questions and comments can create future opportunities to discuss ideas and misconceptions in future posts. Using the example of the cotton gloves, the topic would be a perfect one to discuss in depth in a later post. When organizations follow through with their engagement, public response can often lead to better discussions down the road.

Know Your Limits

Using many social media platforms at once (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.) can often be a time-consuming process that doesn’t always pay off immediately. Know your limits and what you can handle for your organization.

Twitter can be great for live-tweeting events or telling a story about an exhibit or a particular subject, but everyday posts about specific items in your collection might best be represented in a format like Instagram. Blogs and vlogs allow you to spend more time telling the details of a collection’s history or a specific treatment. Facebook can be used as a tool to advertise upcoming exhibits and other events, or even just sharing an important post from another organization. Above all, stay with a format with



which you are comfortable and knowledgeable in using. Knowing the needs of your organization will help you know your limits and what platform you should invest the most time in. Social media is an excellent way to engage with a broader audience and efficiently distribute information, but be sure not to overwhelm yourself or your colleagues.

Have Fun!

The final lesson to take away from this is to have fun! Social media is a tool that can often be utilized in a lighthearted and playful way, which attracts people from all different backgrounds. Important information can be conveyed to your audience through these platforms, but at the end of the day, the best posts are the ones that make these complicated conservation practices accessible. Remember to have fun with your work and look at possibilities for this type of outreach.

A favorite social media post of Preservation Programs at the National Archives in St. Louis is this fun poem that combines information with humor:

Tape Is Evil

*Tape is evil, tape is bad
Tape makes Preservation staff really really mad.
Scotch, masking, duct or the blue one used by a painter,
None of these should be used; you'll thank us later.
Tape is made of two parts: a carrier and the glue.
One will degrade over time, the other too.
The carrier will dry out, crumble and crack,
The adhesive will seep out or lose its tack.
The glue could ooze onto the photos, you see,
Or it could fuse the papers, we won't get them free.
Normally tape would be used for attaching fragments
and closing rips.
But this is not the best archival practice, please take
these tips.
So what should be used instead, you ask?
We have a couple options, depending on the task.
First, we could mend it using a wheat starch paste,
Which is applied to an archival tissue, with ease, not
haste.
The tissue with paste is then laid over the fragment
or tear,
Providing stabilization for the paper from handling
and wear.
Second, if the page is torn or has fragments abound,
We place them in a Mylar sleeve, so later they can be
found.
The sleeve keeps the loose fragments together with the
original sheet,
Without all the pieces, this page would be incomplete.
The longevity of the papers and photos are what we
guarantee,
Here in the St. Louis Preservation Lab at the NPRC.*