

Date: May 1, 2015  
To: Dr. Kristi Larkin Havens  
University of Tennessee Knoxville  
From: Elizabeth Garrett  
Subject: Recommendation Report for Suggested Social Media Plan for Knox County  
Public Libraries

Attached is my report for “Suggested Social Media Techniques for Knox County Public Libraries.” I completed tasks described in my proposal from April 1, 2015: conducting primary and secondary research on effective social media usage, analyzing Knox County Public Libraries current social media activity, and creating a recommended plan of action for KCPL social media activity.

For my primary research, I extensively explored the social media of four other libraries of different sizes and situations: the Chattanooga Public Library, the Nashville Public Library, the Lawrence Public Library, and the New York Public Library. From this research, I determined statistics and audience interaction on each platform of social media used by each library. I then determined which campaigns are the most successful and why they are successful. From this research I also determined what makes a campaign less successful. For my secondary research, I studied journal articles on effective social media use and social media techniques for libraries found using the University of Tennessee’s OneSearch, including articles from the *Journal of Advertising Research* and *Harvard Business Review*.

My findings suggest that social media is more effective if organizations create specific goals, post frequently, engage with their audience, reach more audiences with a variety of social media platforms, create and post shareable, aesthetically pleasing content, gather content from their audience, and create social media campaigns instead of single posts. From this information, I created a suggested social media strategy to improve Knox County Public Libraries use of social media.

On the basis of these findings, I recommend that Knox County Public Libraries consider adopting my proposed suggestions in order to use social media more effectively, expand their audiences, and engage more effectively with these audiences.

I appreciate the opportunity to research a cause that I am interested in helping as well as a topic of great interest to me. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Elizabeth Garrett at [ctn494@vols.utk.edu](mailto:ctn494@vols.utk.edu) or at (615) 294-2899.

**Suggested Plan for Improved Knox County Public Libraries Public  
Social Media Usage:  
A Recommendation Report**

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Course: English 360 – Technical and Professional Writing

Date: May 1, 2015

## **Abstract**

### **Suggested Plan for Improved Knox County Public Libraries Social Media Usage: A Recommendation Report**

Prepared by: Elizabeth Garrett

On April 1, 2015, Dr. Kristi Larkin Havens approved my proposal to research effective social media usage and library social media usage, and to create a suggested plan for improving the social media usage of Knox County Public Libraries. To perform this research, I extensively explored the social media of four other libraries of different sizes and situations: the Chattanooga Public Library, the Nashville Public Library, the Lawrence Public Library, and the New York Public Library. I determined statistics and audience interaction on each platform of social media used by each library and then determined which campaigns are the most successful and why they are successful. I also used the University of Tennessee's OneSearch to find and study journal articles on effective social media usage and social media techniques for libraries. I found that social media is more effective if organizations create specific goals, post frequently, engage with their audience, reach more audiences with a variety of social media platforms, create and post shareable, aesthetically pleasing content, gather content from their audience, and create social media campaigns instead of single posts. From this information, I created a suggested social media strategy to improve Knox County Public Libraries use of social media. I recommend that Knox County Public Libraries take this research and suggested plan under consideration for adoption.

Keywords: social media, social media usage, social media marketing, library social media, effective social media.

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## **Executive Summary**

On April 1, 2015, I received permission from Dr. Kristi Larkin Havens, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to conduct research and analyze the social media activity of Knox County Public Libraries in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Knox County Public Libraries, or KCPL, is very active in the Knoxville community and is a tightly knit group of libraries that function independently but also lean on each other to create an even better experience for their patrons. However, despite their success as a chain of libraries, KCPL is not using social media to its utmost potential. Currently, KCPL is present only on Twitter and Facebook, and their activity on both is lacking. There is much that could be changed in order to boost KCPL's social media presence and consequently boost their patron support as well. If Knox County Public Libraries utilized social media to its utmost potential, I believe they could increase their followers as well as increase audience engagement.

I used primary and secondary sources to create my suggested social media plan of action. For my primary research, I conducted an extensive exploration of four other libraries of different sizes and situations: the Chattanooga Public Library, the Nashville Public Library, the Lawrence Public Library, and the New York Public Library. From this research, I determined statistics and audience interaction on each platform of social media used by each library. I then determined which campaigns are the most successful and why they are successful. From this research, I also determined what makes a campaign less successful. Aside from this first-hand research, I also studied journal articles on effective social media use and social media techniques for libraries.

My research showed that libraries using more than two social media platforms were generally more statistically successful. Similarly, I found that the libraries who posted the most frequently were also generally more statistically successful. Further, secondary research showed that posting questions and aesthetically pleasing content, such as pictures, results in more audience engagement. Creating content that will facilitate audience engagement is key to successful social media usage.

From this research I create a recommended plan of action for KCPL's social media activity. The first recommendation was to create specific goals: defining which audiences KCPL is trying to reach, brainstorming new audiences to expand to, determining how much KCPL wants to grow their social media in a given time, and increasing audience engagement. The second recommendation was to increase frequency of posts and increase engagement with audiences. The third recommendation was to increase social media presence by expanding to other social media platforms. The fourth recommendation was to create new, more sharable content as well as gather content from audiences. The final recommendation was to create social media campaigns, not simply single posts.

Based on my research and results, I recommend that Knox County Public Libraries consider and adopt my recommended plan of action for their social media activity.

## **Introduction**

Knox County Public Libraries, or KCPL, is very active in the Knoxville community and is a tightly knit group of libraries that function independently but also lean on each other to create an even better experience for their patrons. However, despite their success as a chain of libraries, KCPL is not using social media to its utmost potential. Currently, KCPL is present only on Twitter and Facebook, and their activity on both is lacking. There is much that could be changed in order to boost KCPL's social media presence and consequently boost their patron support as well.

When compared to similar libraries from similar towns, as well as larger libraries, there are certain strategies and techniques that these other libraries use successfully which Knox County Public Libraries could emulate. If Knox County Public Libraries utilized social media to its utmost potential, I believe they could increase their followers as well as increase audience engagement.

The purpose of this recommendation report is to create a suggested social media recommendation for Knox County Public Libraries in order to improve their social media presence and, as a result, enhance audience awareness, interactions, and relationships with KCPL.

I used primary and secondary sources to create my suggested social media plan of action. For my primary research, I conducted an extensive exploration of four other libraries' social media: the Chattanooga Public Library, the Nashville Public Library, the Lawrence Public Library, and the New York Public Library. From this research, I determined statistics and audience interaction on each platform of social media used by each library. I then determined which campaigns are the most successful and why they are successful. I also determined what makes a campaign less successful. Aside from this first-hand research, I also studied journal articles on effective social media use and social media techniques for libraries.

From this research, I determined several recommendations. The first recommendation is to create specific goals, defining which audiences KCPL is trying to reach, brainstorming new audiences to expand to, determining how much KCPL wants to grow their social media in a given time, and increasing audience engagement. The second recommendation is to increase frequency of posts and increase engagement with audiences. The third recommendation is to increase social media presence by expanding to other social media platforms. The fourth recommendation is to create new, more sharable content as well as gather content from audiences. The final recommendation is to create social media campaigns, not simply single posts.

## Research Methods

To create a social media recommendation for Knox County Public Libraries that would help them improve their social media presence, I divided my project into three tasks:

1. Conduct primary and secondary research on effective social media usage.
2. Analyze Knox County Public Libraries current social media activity.
3. Create a recommended plan of action for KCPL social media activity.

In the following discussion of how I performed my research and what my results were, I will explain the logic that led me to complete Task 3.

### **Task 1. Conduct primary and secondary research on effective social media usage.**

In order to best create a suggested plan for Knox County Public Libraries social media, I first conducted primary and secondary research.

For my primary research, I extensively explored the social media of four other libraries of different sizes and situations: the Chattanooga Public Library, the Nashville Public Library, the Lawrence Public Library, and the New York Public Library. From this research, I determined statistics and audience interaction on each platform of social media used by each library. I then determined which campaigns are the most successful and why they are successful. From this research I also determined what makes a campaign less successful.

Aside from this first-hand research, I also studied journal articles on effective social media use and social media techniques for libraries. I conducted my secondary research using the University of Tennessee's OneSearch using key phrases such as "social media," "social media AND libraries," and "effective social media." My searches yielded numerous articles from an array of databases. Journals that I consulted included *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Advertising Research* and *Library Philosophy and Practice*. For a list of articles referenced, please see the Works Cited page at the end of this report.

### **Task 2. Analyze Knox County Public Libraries current social media activity.**

After completing Task 1, I then compared the social media activity of Knox County Public Libraries to the social media activity of the other four libraries, as well as the suggested techniques I researched in the scholarly articles. This comparison helped me to craft a social media recommendation for KCPL.

### **Task 3. Create a recommended plan of action for KCPL social media activity.**

From my research and analysis, I then created a recommended plan of action for the Knox County Public Libraries. The results from this research are as follows.

## Results

In this section, I will present the results from my research. For each task I completed, I will present only the most relevant information.

### **Task 1. Conduct primary and secondary research on effective social media usage.**

In order to share my primary research, I will break down my findings by each library I studied. All statistical data was gathered on April 13, 2015.

1. **Knox County Public Libraries:** KCPL is located in Knoxville, TN, a college town home to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. KCPL only uses Facebook and Twitter to participate in with their audiences on social media. I will be sharing my research regarding their Twitter and Facebook usage.
  - a. **Facebook:** KCPL has 6,233 likes on Facebook and posts approximately two times a day. They have an identifiable, attractive profile picture and cover photo. Because KCPL is located in the town home to the flagship university of the state, KCPL communicates with an audience that is always changing, as well as always growing, regardless of any efforts put forth in regards to social media usage. This is why it is important to not simply look at the statistics. KCPL has a large number of likes, but this is not necessarily an accurate representation of KCPL's success in interacting with their audience.
  - b. **Twitter:** KCPL has 2,551 followers on Twitter. They have had an account since June 2009 and have shared 95 photos and videos. They tweet approximately five times a week. Compared to the other libraries, these statistics are relatively low. KCPL does not post very frequently, nor do they post content that is engaging and eye-catching, like photos and videos.
2. **Chattanooga Public Library:** CPL is located in Chattanooga, TN, a college town similar to Knoxville. The University of Tennessee Chattanooga is located here. CPL uses Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and Flickr to participate in with their audiences on social media. I will be sharing my research regarding their Twitter and Facebook usage.
  - a. **Facebook:** CPL has 2,266 likes on Facebook and posts approximately four times a day. They have an identifiable, attractive profile picture and cover photo. Despite their active posting, based on these statistics, CPL could be doing more to increase audience interaction.
  - b. **Twitter:** CPL has 2,771 followers on Twitter. They have had an account since June 2012 and have shared 140 photos and videos. They tweet approximately four times a day. CPL has more followers on Twitter than KCPL, even though they have had a Twitter account for a shorter period of time. Posting more frequently and posting more engaging content may boost the number of followers CPL has.
3. **Lawrence Public Library:** LPL is located in Lawrence, KA. Lawrence is a college town, home to the University of Kansas. LPL uses Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, and YouTube to participate in with their

audiences on social media. I will be sharing my research regarding their Twitter and Facebook usage.

**a. Facebook:** LPL has 8,768 likes on Facebook and posts approximately 3 times a day. They have an identifiable, attractive profile picture and cover photo. LPL creates and shares a large number of engaging posts that facilitate audience interaction.

**b. Twitter:** LPL has 6,074 followers on Twitter. They have had an account since March 2009 and have shared 654 photos and videos. They tweet approximately four times a day. LPL shares a large number of photos and videos – a strategy which seems to result in a larger amount of followers. They also share engaging posts that create audience interaction.

**4. Nashville Public Library:** NPL is located in Nashville, TN, the state's capital. NPL uses Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr, and YouTube to participate in with their audiences on social media. I will be sharing my research regarding their Twitter and Facebook usage.

**a. Facebook:** NPL has 8,044 likes on Facebook and posts approximately two times a day. They have an unattractive profile picture, but it does identify the library. Their cover photo is well chosen. Because NPL is the flagship library of the state, they automatically have a large following. They do not post frequently nor do they take full advantage of using an attractive profile picture to represent their library.

**b. Twitter:** NPL has 10,200 followers on Twitter. They have had an account since February 2009 and have shared 180 photos and videos. They tweet approximately four times a week. NPL has a lot of followers on Twitter for the same reason they have a lot of likes on Facebook – NPL is the library located in the state capital. They do not tweet frequently, nor do they share engaging content often.

**5. New York Public Library:** The NYPL is one of the most well-known libraries in the United States and is located in New York, NY. NYPL has many patrons and, consequently, a large social media following. NYPL uses Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Tumblr to participate in with their audiences on social media. I will be sharing my research regarding their Twitter and Facebook usage.

**a. Facebook:** NYPL has 210,354 likes on Facebook and posts approximately five times a day. They have an identifiable, attractive profile picture and cover photo. Their frequent posts stimulate audience interaction and encourage engagement.

**b. Twitter:** NYPL has 391,000 followers on Twitter. They have had an account since November 2008 and have shared 1,090 photos and videos. They tweet approximately ten times a day. NPL's frequent tweets create a large audience and help promote audience engagement. NPL also shares a large number of photos and videos, which also promotes audience engagement.

In order to share my secondary research, I will simply combine my findings into one section.

According to Dana Howard, a social media manager for Murray State University, social media should convey “messages that are consistent with the overall strategy” of an organization and should be “tailored to the specific target audiences” (657). This means two things: determining audience and creating specific goals to reach these audiences. Once the audience is determined, it is much simpler to create content that will result in more audience interaction (658).

Howard presents several goals and responsibilities for managing social media. The first is monitoring all platforms. Social media users must “know what’s being talked about” and “what’s not being talked about that [she] wants out there” (661). Being consistent with “branding” is another way social media must be monitored (661).

A second goal is to increase interaction and engagement with the audience. Being involved in the conversation is crucial to being able to respond to the audience. Social media is “a two-way conversation” and “engagement is the key” to successful social media usage (658).

A third goal is to create shareable, engaging content (661). Howard suggests asking several questions: “what is going to be engaging and what is going to work with the specific audience: what is going to catch their eye, what doesn’t matter to them, and what does matter to them” (661). Using strategy when creating content is very important. Howard states that another good way of gathering content is “crowdsourcing,” or using posts and photos other people have posted (661). Creating and searching hashtags are an effective way to crowdsource.

A final goal Howard suggests is analyzing and organizing findings and outcomes (661). Determining numbers and comparing them to statistics from previous months or previous years can reveal a lot about how effective an organization is using social media. After comparing data, results must be analyzed (661). Determining why results occur is necessary to improve and tweak social media techniques.

Howard’s final piece of advice is for organizations to “make campaigns, not posts. Campaigns work better than one-hit wonders” (664). To make a campaign, she suggests creating “a written plan with a variety of posts and promotions surrounding the theme that will last a longer amount of time” (664). Campaign components can include aspects such as “its own hashtag, a photo contest where [people send] content, or other marketing materials that align with the campaign” (664). Audience members can use the unique hashtag to share their own content, which then can be crowdsourced to create new content for the campaign. This cyclical process greatly increases audience engagement and interaction.

Marketing expert Efthymios Constantinides describes two approaches to social media usage in his article “Foundations of Social Media Marketing.” The first is what he terms a “passive approach,” in which the goal is to provide information about “market needs, customer experiences, and competitive trends” (45). This entails being informed about what audiences are saying, and from this determining what they want. The second approach is called the “active approach,” which involves using social media as a “tool of communication, direct sales, [and] customer acquisition and retention” (45). This method requires social media to play a much more dynamic role. Engaging with audiences will help determine their needs, draw new audience members, and retain current audience members.

Uzoamaka Igwesi states several suggested uses for library social media in his article “Using Social Media for Dynamic Library Service Delivery.” Igwesi points out that in social media, information can flow in “multi-faceted dimensions:” from “library to user, user to library, library to library, and user to user” rather than the traditional form of only library to user (2). Social media is “constantly expanding the world of participatory and collaborative scholarly communication and learning” and encouraging not just engagement, as Howard suggested, but also encouraging information sharing (2). Audience members do not simply participate – they also contribute. “With information and ideas flowing in both directions – from library to user and user to library – library services have the ability to evolve and improve on a constant and rapid basis” (2).

Focusing on “fostering a two-way communication pathway” that will provide “opportunity for more involvement,” Igwesi suggests using social media to provide patrons with information such as event news, links to resources, news about new book arrivals, and a list of services the library provides (2). He also points out that social media allows libraries and librarians to place themselves in the “social realm” to participate with users (3). Librarians can be active users who are able to address patron needs. Because the idea of a library as a physical place is changing, ways to communicate knowledge are also changing, and librarians must keep up with changing methods in order to be active users.

Twitter is one method that many libraries are using to create new types of communication. However, simply having a Twitter account and not strategizing tweets is not effective. Andre Paul discusses a study conducted in 2012 that researched the quality of 43,738 tweets. Of these tweets, participants’ responses showed that only 36% were considered “worth reading” (36). The study found that tweets were more likely to be considered worth reading if they “crowdsourced via questions” or they shared links accompanied with “a concise context around the link” (36). Tweets that engage the audience or provide the context for the links being shared are more likely to be read, retweeted, and responded to than tweets that simply state information or share links without context.

Twitter is a very popular social-networking website; however, according to Andrew Lipsman, et al. in their article “The Power of Like,” Facebook is still “the dominant social-networking site” (40). In 2012, Facebook accounted for “90% of all time spend on social-networking sites” (40). Lipsman and his colleagues point out that Facebook offers an organization the ability to analyze not only their followers but also the ability to analyze the friends of their followers. Correctly using Facebook can help expand audiences, provided that the information an organization posts is engaging and relevant to the current audience as well.

**Task 2. Analyze Knox County Public Libraries current social media activity.**

After I completed my primary and secondary research, I used this information to analyze Knox County Public Libraries’ use of social media.

Knox County Public Libraries makes good use of the visual aspects of their social media profiles. On both Twitter and Facebook, KCPL uses identifiable, aesthetically pleasing profile and cover photos.

Knox County Public Libraries is not using nearly as many social media platforms as the other four libraries I researched. KCPL is only using Facebook and Twitter, while the libraries researched are using at least two other platforms in addition to Facebook and Twitter, specifically Instagram and Pinterest. The Chattanooga Public Library is also using Flickr. The Nashville Public Library and Lawrence Public Library are using YouTube. Lawrence Public Library and the NY Public Library are using Tumblr.

In regards to using Facebook and Twitter, KCPL appears to be using both about as successfully as the Chattanooga Public Library, according to the statistics. The NY Public Library and the Nashville Public Library are more successful than KCPL statistically speaking, but a large part of this is because both NYPL and NPL are important flagship libraries in their respective states. Therefore, there is most likely little to be learned from NYPL and NPL in regards to improving social media usage – no matter what both libraries do, they will be successful because of their importance to their respective states.

The Lawrence Public Library is significantly more statistically successful than KCPL, despite the fact that the city of Lawrence has a population almost half the size of the city of Knoxville. In 2013, Knoxville’s population was 183,270, while Lawrence’s population was only 90,811 (“Knoxville;” “Lawrence”). Because LPL is more statistically successful despite their smaller size, there is most likely much to be learned from their social media usage.

For example, LPL posts more frequently than KCPL on both Twitter and Facebook. LPL posts on Facebook about three times a day; KCPL generally posts around two times a day. LPL tends to tweet close to four times daily; KCPL barely tweets five times a week. Not only does LPL post more frequently, but their posts are generally more engaging and eye-catching than KCPL’s posts. LPL has had a Twitter account for only three months

longer than KCPL, yet they have shared more than six times the number of photos and videos that KCPL has shared. LPL has shared 654 photos and videos; KCPL has shared only 95 photos and videos. The textual content LPL tweets is generally witty, advertises library events, asks questions, and consists of few retweets. The textual content KCPL tweets is generally dry announcements that provides little opportunity for audience interaction. KCPL also retweets more than they create original content. And, as already mentioned, KCPL is using only one-third the number of social media platforms compared to LCL.

**Task 3. Create a recommended plan of action for KCPL social media activity.**

After I completed my primary and secondary research and analyzed Knox County Public Libraries' use of social media, I took my findings and created a recommended plan of action for Knox County Public Libraries' social media activity.

1. *Create specific goals.*

In order to further public awareness and support for Knox County Public Libraries, KCPL should create specific goals. One of these goals should be to define which audiences KCPL is trying to reach and think of new audiences to expand to. Another goal should be to set how many followers KCPL would like to gain in a given time period. A final goal should be to not merely increase followers but also to increase audience engagement.

2. *Increase frequency of posts and increase engagement with audiences.*

As mentioned previously, Dana Howard points out that social media is “a two-way conversation” (658). Engagement is crucial to successful social media success. Increasing the amount of posts on each social media platform and changing content to encourage audience responses will increase the overall audience interaction with KCPL's social media.

3. *Increase social media presence by expanding to other social media platforms.*

Currently, Knox County Public Libraries only maintains a Facebook account and a Twitter account. One of the reasons Lawrence County Library is so successful, despite the fact that they are located in a relatively small city, is partly because they engage with their audiences on more social media platforms than just Facebook and Twitter; they also use Tumblr, Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram. Using multiple popular social media platforms will increase the size of the audience and the ways KCPL can communicate to their community.

4. *Create new, more sharable content as well as gather content from audiences.*

Knox County Public Libraries shares a lot of content, however, they do not always share the right kind of content. Images are more likely to be liked and retweeted than posts without images (Lipsman 40). Posts asking questions are more likely to be commented on (Howard 658). Content that is aesthetically pleasing is more likely to be shared than plain text. Posts that encourage audience participation are more effective than those that do not.

Dana Howard also suggests “crowdsourcing,” or gathering content from audience members using unique hashtags or photo contests (661). By retweeting and reposting pictures and posts created by audience members, KCPL would increase audience participation and engagement.

5. *Create campaigns, not simply single posts.*

As mentioned previously, Dana Howard states that “campaigns work better than one-hit wonders,” (664). This means creating written plans with a “variety of posts and promotions” surrounding the theme of the campaign; this will help promote ideas more effectively as well as create content that will last for a longer length of time (664). Creating a hashtag, starting a photo contest, and using similar marketing strategies that work with the campaign all help increase audience participation.

## **Conclusions**

In this section, I will present my conclusions based on my research and results on studying effective social media use.

### **1. Cost**

Whether or not the individual who handles Knox County Public Libraries ‘social media is a paid employee or a volunteer makes no difference on the cost. The changes I have suggested are not complicated or time consuming enough to require an additional volunteer or employee. The changes simply require a restrategization of social media use, not an addition of tasks.

### **2. Difficulty**

If the current employee and/or volunteer is able to manage KCPL’s Twitter and Facebook, there should be no difficulties for them to readjust their strategy to adopt my suggested tasks. Learning to use new social media platforms should not be difficult either.

## **Recommendation**

I recommend that KCPL use my research and analysis of effective social media usage and their own social media activity to make changes to their current social media strategies. The changes I have suggested are not expensive, nor are they complicated. Assuming the individual who currently manages KCPL's social media is savvy enough to make these changes, no additional individuals would need to either volunteer or be hired in order to adopt my proposed social media strategies.

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