

Introduction

“Social media is all about people connecting with other people; it’s not about the technology or specific platform used to do so. People interacting with other people use social media platforms as a means of connecting more frequently, more powerfully, and more meaningfully with other like-minded people—wherever they happen to be” (Matthews, 2018, p. 307).

Social media is used daily in today’s world, especially with teens, ages thirteen to eighteen. Social media is a medium used to stay connected with people around the globe. Social media is a continually changing and evolving means of communication. As such, libraries need to be aware of current trends and be willing and able to adapt to reach their community.

Identifying the problem

The Fountaindale Public Library is in Bolingbrook, Illinois, and yet, with social media, it can be viewed and interacted with people around the world. However, the purpose of this evaluation is to specifically focus on teens, ages thirteen to eighteen, that the library desires to interact with via social media. The social media sites focused on in this evaluation will be ones that most teens personally participate in their daily lives. These would be Instagram and TikTok. Although the Fountaindale Library has an Instagram account, there is no specific teen-focused account, nor does the library have a TikTok account. The library needs to have other social media accounts, such as Facebook and Twitter, however. Those are ones that are not as highly used by today’s teens. Therefore, for this evaluation, the focus will be on Instagram and TikTok to reach the teen community of the Fountaindale Library.

This evaluation will investigate the impact of creating both an Instagram and TikTok account for the teen department of the Fountaindale Library. It will attempt to gather information

and data to answer the following questions. What are the best practices of peer libraries with successful (high interaction) teen social media accounts? How will the Fountaindale Public Library engage the teen community through Instagram and TikTok?

Literature Review

Social media has become a research topic as people try to understand its impact on society, business, and organizations. This research can inform and direct how they operate their social media accounts to reach a wider audience for libraries. However, it has remained an “untapped strength” for libraries to use (Young and Rossman, 2015, p. 21). Social media has become so prevalent in every facet of people’s lives that it is vital to reflect everything done within the physical library to reach its virtual audience (Matthews, 2018, p. 307). It is essential to understand what research there is concerning social media and libraries, particularly with teens.

In a 2018 study conducted by Monica Anderson and Jingjing Jiang, they found that “nearly half of teens say they at least sometimes spend time in online groups or forums” (Anderson, p. 3). Their research discovered that the most popular groups focus on a specific hobby or humor (p. 3). These online groups allowed teens to meet new people, help them through tough times, and help them feel accepted (p. 3). Online groups that focus on a specific niche create a space for teens to interact with one another, allowing for higher positive ratings about social media. Anderson and Jiang found that “81% of teens feel more connected to friends, 69% believe they are able to interact with a more diverse group of people, and 68% feel that they have people who will support them through tough times (p. 2).”

Social media can seem daunting and overwhelming to master and maintain. However, David Lee King writes that simple social media posts work when they are on-brand and talking to book lovers. If a library wants to engage with its patrons, most likely book lovers, then asking

a simple question such as “What are you reading?” will gain a large amount of interaction (King, 2020, p. 1). In *Fostering Brand Community Through Social Media*, communicating with consumers online allows for two-way communications between both parties. It creates a sense of connection and “we-ness” (Humphrey, 2015, p. 3). The authors continue by stating that to create an online community; there must be brand identification. The brand must be recognizable to the audience and be one that the audience will want to interact with and identify with (p. 40).

In *One Million Followers*, Brendan Kane argues that those who desire to grow and expand their online presence must test and tweak how they interact on those social media platforms (Kane, 2018, p. 79). He states that “the testing process is a marathon, not a race” and that “it’s one thing to record analytics and data and quite another to actually learn from them. Observe how and why people engage with your content” (p. 94). In King’s book *Managing Your Libraries Social Media Channels*, there are several tips for those who want to grow their online presence. He uses the example of Lloyd Sealy Library, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, whose posts on Instagram immediately lets its viewers know about its specialization on criminal justice due to the focus on its posts (King, 2015, p. 14). He states that there are several ideas that a library should think about when it comes time to post. Those are: “what I’m doing,” “tips and tricks,” “photos and videos,” “entertainment and fun content,” and “networking and connection (p. 13).” Including a variety of ideas will allow the library’s online presence to be one that its viewers will not only enjoy but will allow them to learn more about the library and cause them to interact with social media accounts (p. 12).

In *Teens, Libraries, and Social Media: Myths and Reality*, it was found that teens still held antiquated views concerning the library and its relationship with technology. This belief meant that teens did not see the library as being useful when it came in terms of accessing online

information. The researchers also found that adults' misconception was that teens waste time on social media was untrue as they discovered that 77% reported using social media to ask school-based questions (Agosto, 2015, p. 321). Libraries can begin changing this antiquated view through their social media posts and videos. Andy Woodworth argues that adding memes onto the library's social media is staying a part of the current trends, allows for information to be spread, and has the potential to go viral, thus opening up the library to a broader audience (Woodworth, 2018, p. 89). The Invercargill City Libraries utilizes this form of posting to create content that both their patrons and a wider audience will enjoy. Through their Kardashian parody photo, they have had twelve hundred comments, five thousand shares, as well as press mentions and media coverage (p. 89).

However, there has to be administrator buy-in before a social media presence in The Librarian's Nitty-Gritty Guide to Social Media. If there is not, then it does not matter how social media savvy a librarian is because, without buy-in from the administration and board, the social media account will fail (Solomon, 2012, p. 10). The administration and board need to agree and clearly state what is and cannot build and maintain the various social media accounts. There has to be agreement on how much time and energy is on online presence and in-person tasks and responsibilities. For a librarian who desires to create and maintain social media accounts, there are ways to create buy-in with the administration and board members that this platform is a viable plan. One way to create buy-in is to help alleviate fears that social media may bring to administration and board members. For example, there is the fear that social media will cause libraries to be displaced, such as newspapers (Sin, 2017, p. 169). However, in Sin and Kwon's research, they found that social media usage was complementary for libraries (p. 174).

Social media usage continues to rise, and libraries have been making changes to their online presence to stay current. The University of California Santa Barbara has taken the approach of “including students in the planning and content creation phases.” (Steiner, 2012, p. 22). In Strategic planning for social media in libraries, the argument presented that social media platforms are a part of the library’s strategic planning meeting (p. 21). However, since it is also a faster-evolving platform, it must involve flexibility and creativity on the library’s part (p. 23). The American Librarian Association has stipulated social media guidelines for public and academic libraries to follow. These guidelines will be the basis for all social media accounts for the libraries. As such, those responsible for the library’s social media accounts understand and follow these guidelines and their individual library’s views (ALA, 2019, para.12).

Project Scope

This evaluation will assess the impact of creating a teen-focused Instagram and TikTok account for the Fountaindale Public Library. This evaluation will include planning, creating, and implementing both accounts and covering six months of pulling data. For both Instagram and TikTok accounts, it takes time to build the following and engagement. There would be a review with the library’s teen librarians, administration, and board members at the end of six months. This review would include the data discovered over the proposed period and any changes and plans moving forward.

At the beginning of the planning stage, there will be an agreement on the parameters and engagement levels at the end of six months. This agreement will allow the administration, board members, and teen librarians to understand the parameters on what is successful for the Instagram and TikTok accounts. Several interviews will occur with peer libraries and local teens who frequent the Fountaindale Public Library. There will be the formation of a teen focus group

involved throughout the creation and implementation of both accounts. The frequency data will be conducted and analyzed in the following sections to show how the implementation of both a teen-focused Instagram and TikTok account will impact the Fountaindale Public Library. There will also be regular research conducted into other libraries and their best practices to engage with their teen population.

Stakeholders

Social media is a global reaching medium that allows the library stakeholders to be a far more encompassing demographic than in previous years before social media. However, individual stakeholders have specific tasks and responsibilities regarding teen social media accounts for the Fountaindale Public Library.

The stakeholders responsible for the accounts' updates, posts, and the content will be the teen librarians at the Fountaindale Library. The teen librarians will have to balance their library responsibilities and create content for social media accounts. The library's administration and board members will also be stakeholders as the accounts must reflect the library's mission and values as an institution.

The other stakeholders will be the teens both within the Bolingbrook community and the greater teen community who participate in Instagram and TikTok. Parents of teens in the Bolingbrook community and parents who participate in Instagram and TikTok are also stakeholders in this endeavor. The stakeholders also include the Bolingbrook community because the library focuses on serving this city's inhabitants. Nevertheless, when focusing on social media, the stakeholder reaches not only the Bolingbrook community but also the Instagram and TikTok community.

Potential Roadblocks

There are potential roadblocks to the creation and maintenance of Fountaindale Library's teen Instagram and TikTok accounts. Libraries have a history of being slow to change their branding and keeping up with social media's rapid changes. (Matthews, 307). This propensity to not adapt as quickly as social media requires to keep up to date can negatively impact the library's reach and success in engagement with its stakeholders. A roadblock that can occur is the teen librarians' willingness to effectively and successfully create posts, reels, videos, and TikToks to appeal to the teen community. However, a more considerable roadblock will involve the library's administration and board members. This roadblock involves whether they believe and will support the creation and maintenance of both social media accounts.

Another roadblock involves the teens that the library is trying to engage with via the new Instagram and TikTok accounts. What is current today does not mean that it will be current tomorrow with youth. Therefore, this involves the teen librarian to understand the teen population that they are trying to reach. This roadblock will mean staying on top of the trends and updates that occur on both social media sites. It will also mean understanding the various algorithms that Instagram and TikTok employ to ensure that the posts are not lost or not shown to those following the account and discoverable to new users.

Determining the Analysis

In determining the analysis, one of the first methods of collecting the data would be interviewing other libraries who are successfully engaging with their teen populations. In these interviews, there would be questions about the specific posting methods, what posts, reels, and videos have the most engagement, the staff time spent per day in maintaining these accounts, and what content they have found to have failed. Another set of interviews would occur with the current teen patrons who regularly visit (once a week) on what interests them in social media

content. There would be questions involving what they would like to see on a teen-focused library account. A focus group would be formed by teens who frequent the library and are willing to create and maintain the accounts. This focus group would include the teens brainstorming ideas, acting out the ideas in posted videos, reels, and photos, and assisting the teen librarian in creating content and advertising. Those who participate in both the interview and the focus group will require parental permission. Although the focus group would be involved in the accounts, the teen librarian would be the only one with the account information to post and comment.

Once the accounts are running, there will be data on the type of engagement that occurs. The engagement for the accounts will include: likes, shares, saved, comments, and views and are available on the specific social media platforms. As time progresses, this data will build, and the accounts' changes can reflect the data received. These changes include the time posted, type of content, how often, and the level of staff time needed to communicate with the audience.

The data and its analysis

By interviewing other libraries that are successfully engaging with their teens via Instagram and TikTok, this will provide the information asked by the research question regarding best practices by peer libraries. Through these interviews, a trend can be found on what works and does not work on both platforms. These interviews will allow the Fountaindale Public Library the opportunity to avoid pitfalls that those peer libraries found through their research. These best practices can then be evaluated in terms of Fountaindale's teen population and through the metrics provided by both Instagram and TikTok. After the data is sorted and evaluated from these librarian interviews, it would then be compared to the interviews and focus

group of Fountaindale's teen population. Based on these interviews and the focus group, the teen librarian will have the data to begin these two accounts.

Instagram and TikTok have metrics to measure the amount of interaction and impact that a post or video has to the intended audience and the broader audience. However, these metrics involve regular posting to gather an overall trend. Daily analytics for each post are available and useful, but they will be compared over more extended periods to impact significantly. These analytics include likes, shares, saved, views, what amount of reach occurred within followers, and the reach on those who discovered the account's post. The frequency data analysis and the insights gained from the interviews and focus group will impact how the Fountaindale Public Library will engage with its teen population on Instagram and TikTok.

Works Cited

- Agosto, D. E., Purcell, M., Magee, R. M., & Forte, A. (2015). Teens, Libraries, and Social Media: Myths and Reality. *Public Library Quarterly*, 34(4), 318–327. <https://doi-org.dom.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/01616846.2015.1106892>
- Anderson, M., & Jiang, J. (2020, August 28). Teens' Social Media Habits and Experiences. Retrieved October 25, 2020, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/11/28/teens-social-media-habits-and-experiences/>
- Humphrey, Jr., William F., et al. *Fostering Brand Community Through Social Media*, Business Expert Press, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dom/detail.action?docID=4406927>.
- Kane, B. M. (2018). *One million followers: How I built a massive social following in 30 days: Growth hacks for your business, your message, and your brand from the world's greatest minds*. Dallas, TX: BenBella Books.
- King, D. (2015). Chapter 2: Landscape of social media for libraries.(Managing Your Library's Social Media Channels). *Library Technology Reports*, 51(1), 10–15.
- King, D. L. (2020, October 07). Social media. Retrieved October 25, 2020, from <https://davidleeking.com/tag/social-media/>
- Matthews, Joseph R. (2018). *The Evaluation and Measurement of Library Services*
- Sin, S., & Kwon, N. (2017). Displacement or complementarity? Assessing the relationship between social media and public library usage in the U.S., South Korea, and Singapore. *Library & Information Science Research*, 39(3), 169–179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2017.07.002>
- Social Media Guidelines for Public and Academic Libraries. (2019, July 03). Retrieved October 25, 2020, from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/socialmediaguidelines>
- Solomon, Laura, and Negro, Janice M Del. *The Librarian's Nitty-Gritty Guide to Social Media*, American Library Association, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dom/detail.action?docID=1224555>.
- Steiner, S. (2012). *Strategic planning for social media in libraries*. ALA TechSource.
- Woodworth, A. (2018). My Body is Ready: Best Practices for Using Memes on Library Social Media. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 58(2), 87–90.
- Young, S., & Rossmann, D. (2015). Building Library Community Through Social Media. *Information Technology and Libraries*, 34(1), 20–37. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ital.v34i1.5625>