

## CHAPTER 5

# Using Scheduling Apps to Streamline a Social Media Workflow

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a lot of research done on the use of social media in academic libraries. Social media is designed to be easy to use and, from a personal standpoint, it can be easy to create content. However, when managing social media for a business, institution, or academic library, it can be a little more challenging especially while maintaining a brand and projecting a personality that is both professional and personable. While one has the flexibility to play fast and loose with content on personal social media accounts, for an academic library, content needs to be more carefully crafted and curated. Combined with a need to post regular content, the academic library social media workflow needs a strategic plan. Implementing an editorial calendar can be one way to create content appropriate for an institutional platform (Solomon, 2016, p. 46; see also Lawrimore, 2017). Editorial calendars can help you create a detailed “planning document” that is visual and strategic (Solomon, 2016, p. 46).

Once the content is created, the next step is posting it. With a personal social media account, this can be easy as there is only one cook in the kitchen and you have the ability to post content directly from your smartphone or computer to your own social media account in real time. Depending on your academic library and your workflow, this is not always an option for an academic librarian or an academic library social media team. As suggested by Peacemaker, Robinson, and Hurst (2016), “it is important to develop management practices that facilitate collaboration and flexibility to support all of the voices in an academic library. This requires a coordinated approach that includes content strategies, writing style guidelines, an editor or team for each platform, and editors

managing platforms on a day-to-day basis” (p. 105). This is where a scheduling app can come into play.

Scheduling apps or more broadly, social media management tools, can be a useful addition to any social media strategic plan. Most social media platforms can easily be managed with a third-party application (Twitter) or within the social media platform itself (Facebook), but some popular social media platforms (Instagram) have limitations as far as integrating third-party applications. Instagram’s terms of use (ToU) and design limits the functionality of third-party applications to post to your Instagram. This can have its benefits from a security standpoint. But when managing a social media platform like Instagram for an academic library, especially when working in a team or implementing an editorial calendar, this can have its drawbacks and requires a few extra steps. However, there are applications that can make managing an academic library’s Instagram easier, even with these extra steps. In this chapter, we will share our impressions of some of the more popular third-party scheduling apps on the market, as well as how we used a project management application, Trello, at Odum Library to reproduce some of the functionality of social media management applications.

### 5.1.1 Summary

- Strategic plans are essential for any social media platform.
- Editorial calendars and social media management tools can help individuals or teams create, visualize, and schedule posts consistent with the academic library or institution’s brand or image.

## 5.2 HOW WE PICKED THE APPS TO REVIEW

We researched online to see what social media management tools were cited as the best or appeared to be the most prevalent in libraries or the public relations field ([Clutch, 2017](#); [Maurya, 2015](#); [Zeevi, 2015](#)). Some factors that informed selecting an app to review were:

- Popularity
- Price
- Instagram integration.

We thought Instagram integration was an important factor when selecting a social media management tool because while the social media platforms frequently used by libraries are Facebook and Twitter ([Peacemaker](#)

et al., 2016, p. 103), Instagram is another important platform that can reach users with different kinds of content. We think finding an app that can handle both these common social media platforms and Instagram is very helpful in the long run. When we had a short list, we selected nine applications to examine in more detail. You will note that we only review six apps in the following section. Three apps were eliminated from the running. One app boasted Instagram functionality, but we could not find evidence of it in the app itself. Complications with requesting demos eliminated two other apps from consideration, which, in addition, were cost prohibitive for an academic library. For one week, we used the various apps to post to our personal Instagram accounts. Odum Library already uses a social media management tool to schedule Twitter and Facebook posts, so we were interested in testing the Instagram functionality.

### 5.3 COMMON THEMES AND TRENDS

Of the nine apps that we selected to test Instagram scheduling, most of them had a mobile app presence. We think that the presence of a mobile app is critically important for a social media management tool, especially when it comes to Instagram functionality. Since Instagram does not offer a way to post content outside of its mobile app, working entirely within a mobile ecosystem for creating and posting content is convenient.

Generally, the first step was to download the app. One application, Autogrammer, had no mobile app available and required you to use a browser to schedule posts.

Next up was using the application right out of the gate or creating a login/password, then the application must be authorized to access your library's Instagram account. We found this to be the most disconcerting part from a security point of view. With relatively low stakes of using our personal Instagram accounts, one application, Autogrammer, triggered a rash of suspicious activities alerts that could only be solved by juggling between the Instagram app and desktop version, and eventually revoking that product's access (and changing the password for the Instagram account).

Once you authorize the account to access your Instagram, you can expect the ability to create your post, attach your picture, and schedule your time for publishing within the social media management tool. Most of the apps will then notify you when it is time to post to Instagram. When you get that notification, you open the app and start the publishing process. This publishing process, when done right will include a reminder

to check that you are currently logged in to the intended Instagram account. Most apps indicate that they are copying the text from your scheduled post, then all you have to do is paste it into Instagram. Sometimes the picture also migrates over, or you may have to select it from the album created by the social media management tool. Some of the apps that we tested have introduced direct publishing to Instagram; however, these features are available only with an Instagram Business account.

Many of the apps that we examined included basic metrics and many had expanded analytics only available at higher pricing tiers. This feature can be especially important for academic libraries that want to assess their social media efforts.

All pricing provided in the next section is from September 2017.

## **5.4 APP REVIEWS**

### **5.4.1 Name of App: AgoraPulse**

#### **5.4.1.1 Price/Subscription Model**

Price varies based on number of users and social media profiles: \$49 a month (three profiles, one user, and limited data storage); \$299 a month (40 profiles, 12 users, expanded data storage).

Pricing plans can be found at: <https://www.agorapulse.com/pricing>

#### **5.4.1.2 Supported Platforms**

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google +

#### **5.4.1.3 Features/Benefits**

- Excellent analytics data.
- Mobile app that integrates well with Instagram.
- Ability to track and respond to comments.

#### **5.4.1.4 Why We Tested It**

Frequently mentioned in literature as being a powerful tool that supports a number of social media platforms, including Instagram.

#### **5.4.1.5 Our Impressions**

- Somewhat expensive, especially as you add social media profiles or users.
- Mobile app does not check to make sure your posts are going to the right profile.
- Comment responding and tracking can be slow to push through to the app.
- Some analytics features not available at lower price points.

### **5.4.2 Name of App: Buffer**

#### **5.4.2.1 Price/Subscription Model**

Price varies based on social media platform, user, analytics, and post limits: Free (one platform, one user with no analytics, and a limit of 10 scheduled posts) to \$399 a month (25 users, up to 150 platforms, a limit of 2000 scheduled posts, and analytics).

Pricing plans can be found at: <https://buffer.com/>

#### **5.4.2.2 Supported Platforms**

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+ , Pinterest (not offered at free tier)

#### **5.4.2.3 Features/Benefits**

- Excellent mobile app for working with Instagram.
- Multiple pricing tiers (including a forever free) that allows for cost-effective right-sizing.
- Reminds users with multiple Instagram accounts to make sure they are posting to the correct account.
- Offers direct publishing with Instagram Business account.

#### **5.4.2.4 Why We Tested It**

It was popular, had a forever free pricing plan, and supported posting to Instagram.

#### **5.4.2.5 Our Impressions**

- Notifications inconsistent at times.
- User-friendly design.
- Posting to Instagram was easy via the mobile app.
- A favorite among the applications we reviewed.

### **5.4.3 Name of App: Hootsuite**

#### **5.4.3.1 Price/Subscription Model**

Price varies based on user, social media profiles, analytics, and other features. Free basic plan available. Professional-level pricing starts at \$19 a month (1 user, 10 profiles, and analytics); \$99 a month (3 users, 20 profiles, team workflows, and one-on-one training). Expanded plans available for business, \$499, and enterprise, price unlisted.

Pricing plans can be found at: <https://hootsuite.com/plans>

### **5.4.3.2 Supported Platforms**

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+

### **5.4.3.3 Features/Benefits**

- Widely adopted by social media marketers.
- Powerful analytics.
- Ability to run social sweepstakes.
- Offers direct publishing with Instagram Business account.

### **5.4.3.4 Why We Tested It**

It is the most widely used social media manager in use today.

### **5.4.3.5 Our Impressions**

- App user interface was not intuitive.
- Posting to Instagram was clunky.
- Better platform for managing Facebook and Twitter.

## **5.4.4 Name of App: Sendible**

### **5.4.4.1 Price/Subscription Model**

Price varies based on users and services. Three plans: \$49 a month for 1 user and up to 20 services; \$199 a month for 4 users and 100 services; \$499 a month for 10 users and 300 services.

Pricing plans can be found at: <https://sendible.com/pricing>

### **5.4.4.2 Features/Benefits**

- Easy-to-use app that works well with Instagram.
- Excellent monitoring and analytics features.
- Priority inbox for responding to comments.

### **5.4.4.3 Supported Platforms**

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+

### **5.4.4.4 Why We Tested It**

It was listed in an article on social media management tools ([Clutch, 2017](#)) and it supported Instagram.

### **5.4.4.5 Our Impressions**

- Notifications were consistent and came to e-mail as well.
- Two-hour refresh rate hinders ability to respond to comments.

- Features and pricing not as competitive with comparable social media management platforms.

### **5.4.5 Name of App: Autogrammer**

#### **5.4.5.1 Price/Subscription Model**

Price varies based on social media profiles. Five tiers from \$19 a month for one Instagram profile, five Facebook profiles, and five Twitter profiles to \$179 a month for 25 Twitter profiles, 25 Facebook profiles, and 20 Instagram profiles.

Pricing plans can be found at: <http://autogrammer.com/>

#### **5.4.5.2 Supported Platforms**

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

#### **5.4.5.3 Features/Benefits**

- Affordable.
- All pricing tiers offer unlimited post scheduling.
- Bulk photo uploading is available for managing multiple Instagram accounts.

#### **5.4.5.4 Why We Tested It**

We wanted to try an app that emphasized Instagram.

#### **5.4.5.5 Our Impressions**

- Instagram is a very mobile-centric platform, yet Autogrammer has no app.
- The web user interface was clunky and made scheduling posts difficult.
- Signing up for the trial triggered security warnings on Instagram accounts.
- If you are managing an Instagram account, we recommend that Autogrammer be avoided.

### **5.4.6 Name of App: Schedugram**

#### **5.4.6.1 Price/Subscription Model**

Price varies by account and followers. Starts at \$20 a month per account for up to 10,000 followers; \$100 a month per account for 1–2 million followers.

Pricing plans can be found at: <https://schedugr.am/pricing/>

### **5.4.6.2 Supported Platforms**

Instagram

#### **5.4.6.3 Features/Benefits**

- It directly posts to Instagram via a bank of mobile phones.
- The app is easy to use.
- All tiers are designed for teams.
- Photo editing is part of the app.

#### **5.4.6.4 Why We Tested It**

We wanted to include the one app on the market that actually schedules Instagram posts and will then post them automatically without having an Instagram business account.

#### **5.4.6.5 Our Impressions**

- Platform worked exactly as advertised and posts went up on time with no problems.
- Powerful scheduling tools, but no analytics.
- May be a violation of Instagram's ToU.
- Affordable if scheduling and auto-posting to Instagram is a priority.

### **5.4.7 Summary**

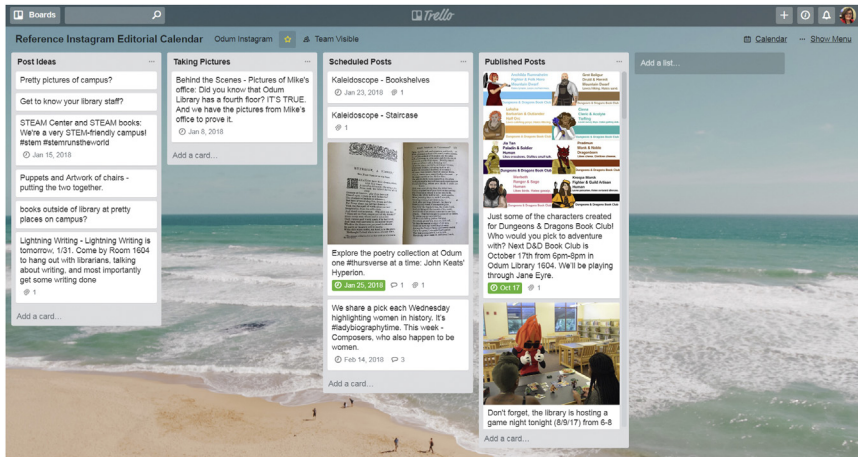
- It is important to right-size social media management tools to your team and workflow, but the price will likely increase.
- Trialing a social media management program is important. Popularity is not a reliable indicator of fit with your academic library's social media plan.
- Overall, we were impressed with Buffer. We were not impressed with Autogrammer.

## **5.5 TRELLO CASE STUDY**

We originally adopted Trello, a project management app, to help with a LibGuides overhaul. We appreciated its flexibility and determined that we could try adding this product to our social media workflow. Trello works with a board, list, and card system ([Fig. 5.1](#)).

Boards can be created to organize to-do items or projects. Each board is eligible for one free "power-up." Power-ups allow you to integrate additional features or other applications like Google Hangouts, Evernote,





**Figure 5.1** Odum Library Reference Instagram Editorial Calendar in Trello.

or Dropbox ([Power-ups, n.d.](#)). On each board, you can create several lists that can have descriptive titles. You then add cards to each list. Cards can be created in batches by pasting text or individually. If members of a board are enabled as an admin, they are able to drag cards between lists. This can be a great way to illustrate progress on tasks. Cards can be assigned to members. Cards can be a great way to coordinate efforts. Members of the board can communicate via comments. They can assign due dates. You can even create checklists. After using the service and appreciating its ease of use for our LibGuides project, we decided that it could help us manage our Instagram. Our social media team has been able to cobble together a content creation plan for our Twitter and Facebook using a Google Docs file and an expensive social media tool, Oracle Social Relationship Management (SRM). However, even with this expensive product, we still did not have a good way to manage our Instagram, a social media platform that we would like to promote more. As stated earlier in this chapter, Instagram poses its own challenges as far as its current design and ToU that limits content creation in advance. With Trello, our social media team was able to use our same Google document to identify tweets that we could transform to appropriate Instagram posts. We created several lists on our Odum Library Instagram board, *Reference Instagram Editorial Calendar*.

- **Post Ideas.** This list is used to brainstorm ideas for Instagram posts, including the captions and hashtags.

- **Taking Pictures.** Cards from post ideas are transferred to this list to indicate this process. Pictures, short videos, and GIFs can be attached to the card.
- **Scheduled Posts.** Cards from Taking Pictures are transferred to this list. A due date is assigned. Trello allows one free power-up to be enabled. We always enable the Calendar. Due dates are reflected on the calendar, which allows for easy visualization of content.
- **Published Posts.** Once a member of our social media team has saved the attachment to their phone and copied the caption, they visit Instagram and post. Cards are moved from Scheduled Posts to Published Posts and marked as complete.

Trello offers a lot of flexibility. The ability to access Trello via their website and their app allows for easier content creation especially for brainstorming sessions accomplished via Google Docs. The Trello app allows us to replicate, albeit crudely, the functionality of the third-party scheduling or social media management apps explored earlier in the chapter. Trello can mimic the content creation and scheduling found in many social media management tools, but falls short in the areas of assessment and social media monitoring. We find it easier to monitor Instagram through the app or Instagram website. However, larger academic libraries with more active followers might struggle with this limitation.

### 5.5.1 Assessment

Social media management apps are created to allow users to track posts, see metrics, etc. [Waddell, Barnes, and Khan-Kernahan \(2012\)](#) state that “libraries that lack systematic metrics for measuring success can find themselves pouring precious resources into social media upkeep without knowing if they are promoting their strategic vision” (p. 1). Trello was not designed with this functionality and therefore lacks these features, but the ease of use and flexibility of it may be a worthwhile tradeoff. At Odum Library, we are able to access our Instagram statistics via Oracle SRM, an expensive social media tool provided by the university’s public relations department. For institutions who are looking for both scheduling and assessment as part of their social media management solution, Trello might not be a workable alternative without a separate analytics product. Several of the third-party scheduling apps we reviewed incorporate analytics and might be a better option for institutions needing both.

### 5.5.2 Pricing

Currently, Trello is a cost-friendly option. The functionality described in this case study is provided in the basic, free version. Trello does offer multiple tiers that have corresponding upgrades, benefits, and cost. For example, Trello Gold allows for 250 MB-sized attachments as well as additional power-ups. For the purposes of creating social media posts for an academic library, we do not believe upgrades are necessary. However, if your institution already provides access to an upgraded version of Trello, embrace it. The basic version of Trello provides a lot of great features. Upgrading to Trello Gold might be beneficial for the increased attachment size limit, but Odum Library has been able to successfully post videos to Instagram with the current basic version.

### 5.5.3 Why Trello Works for Us

Overall, using Trello at Odum Library has helped us organize both our LibGuides updates and Instagram efforts. The shared nature of the platform as well as the cards system has been helpful in allowing our social media team to visualize the entire workflow in order to create a post for Instagram. Since we started using the product to schedule posts, we have been posting more regularly. Although, it is not a traditional app for social media management, Trello has met our needs both as an editorial calendar and workflow manager for our Instagram account. Our use of Trello emphasizes the importance of choosing a social media management tool that fits with the goals and objectives of your academic library's social media platform. Sometimes, you do not need all the bells and whistles to get the job done.

### 5.5.4 Summary

- Odum Library's social media team uses Trello, a project management tool, to brainstorm ideas, organize the workflow, and create an editorial calendar for Instagram.
- Although it lacks metrics and social media monitoring, Trello can be a good way to mimic social media management tools at a fraction of the cost.
- Do not feel pressured to commit to a pricey social media management tool since low-cost and no-cost alternatives do exist.
- Connect with your institution's public relations department and inquire about their social media management tools and potential to share.

## 5.6 CONCLUSIONS

A social media management tool or scheduling app can be a useful addition to an academic library's social media toolbox. However, adopting tools marketed toward public relations and corporate customers can be difficult, especially on a higher education budget. This should not deter you from incorporating a scheduling app into your social media plan. In addition, many of the scheduling apps we reviewed offer tiered pricing plans, including free or basic plans, that can accommodate almost all academic library social media budgets.

Of the apps that we reviewed, we were the most impressed with Buffer. With its user friendliness and reasonable price tag, it may be a good option for academic libraries that are new to the social media management arena. Its free plan, albeit with a limited post allowance, could be an option for smaller academic libraries and smaller budgets. In addition, Buffer's pricing is pretty generous compared to other apps examined. Their "Awesome" plan, at \$10 per month, is definitely affordable and comes with nearly all of the features Buffer offers, with the exception of analytics tools.

Alternatively, with the limited efficiency of the majority of social media management tools and Instagram, there is some room for creativity. At Odum Library, we have incorporated Trello into our social media plan to help us with Instagram. So even if incorporating a dedicated social media management tool is not the right fit for your social media workflow or budget, there are some creative ways to mimic the functionality.

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