Chapter 7

Diversity and Inclusion: How to Avoid Bias and Social Media Blunders

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ABSTRACT

The academic library profession has discussed the importance of diversity and inclusion, but has yet to explore their intersection with social media marketing. Given changing demographics and an increase in activism on college campuses, libraries must produce social media content that resonates with underrepresented groups. This chapter introduces strategies for effectively incorporating diversity and inclusion into social media and advice on avoiding mistakes. The author examines social media use at her library and lessons learned from a campaign that received criticism. The chapter concludes with challenges to practicing diversity in social media, including recruiting diverse staff and discrimination that emerges from new social media technologies.

INTRODUCTION

There has been no shortage of social media mishaps related to implicit bias. In October 2017, the soap company Dove posted an online video ad on Facebook showing a Black woman turning into a White woman. A few months later, the clothing retailer H&M featured an image on its website of a Black child wearing a hooded sweatshirt with the text “coolest monkey in the jungle.” Both incidents resulted in a viral backlash against the companies online and in stores. Although academic library social media may not have the audience of multinational companies, the potential negative virality of online content requires the staff responsible for social media content to be racially sensitive.

As college campuses become more diverse, library social media managers must be intentional not only in posting engaging content that encourages people to use the library, but also in creating content which resonates with people representing different social identities and backgrounds. Photos, graphic design, videos, and messages should empower underrepresented groups, not oppress them. By reinforcing social injustice, social media can lead to a communications disaster and repercussions for the library, as well as the academic institution.

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Libraries have long had a central role in serving diverse populations. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, religion, socioeconomic status, and national origin. When working with groups who currently suffer from injustices, or historically have been suppressed, it is essential to practice inclusion: the act of valuing them, respecting them, and making them feel welcome. Since the 2016 presidential election, diversity and inclusion have become prominent topics within the library discourse. There have been webinars on serving immigrants and refugees, conference presentations on neutrality, topical LibGuides, and strategic plans incorporating diversity. From collection development to staff recruitment and retention, librarians and library staff are critiquing and trying to remove systemic bias and inequities. Amid these efforts, the impact of marketing, especially social media, cannot be taken lightly. Social media is public-facing, and consequently it provides the first impression of the library that many students, parents, donors, and alumni see. In a time of increased budget pressures and accountability to the parent institution, public perception can work to the benefit or detriment of the library.

Although existing literature on library social media marketing includes case studies, discussion of best practices, and a number of surveys of how different organizations have used these platforms, discussion of diversity regarding content creation is lacking. This chapter argues for embedding diversity and inclusion in social media marketing, a critical practice in times of increasing political unrest, socioeconomic uncertainty, and a change in the demographic makeup and attitudes of users.

Attempting an intersectional perspective of identity, the author presents strategies for incorporating diversity and inclusion into social media, as well as tips on avoiding mistakes. She also presents an examination of social media use at her library and the criticism received when sharing historical photos of the university. The chapter concludes with challenges staff may face while championing diversity in social media, including discrimination emerging from new social media technologies such as targeted advertising and chatbots. A lack of staff resources, including diverse members, may also pose a problem when creating diverse and inclusive content.

BACKGROUND

Since Donald Trump was elected president and took office in January 2017, higher education has been impacted by: changes in immigration policy (Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017); a growing presence of white supremacist on college and university campuses (The Anti-Defamation League, 2018; Vasquez, 2018); harassment and intimidation of professors (Levy, 2018); and legislative efforts to hinder academic freedom (H.B. 2120, 2017). The academic library is often said to be the heart of campus, and thus, not immune from these threats to the community it serves.

Students and faculty of color have been especially affected by the changes in the political climate. The Muslim Ban has instilled fear and anxiety in immigrants from the countries it targets (Ayoub & Beydoun, 2017). The rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has left many students wondering if they will be deported. Amplifying these concerns is a rise in racism on college campuses. In 2016, there were 25% more hate crimes at 6,506 institutions compared to the year before (United States Department of Education, n.d.). At the time of writing, the Trump administration is rescinding guidance documents which encourage universities to consider race when admitting students to recruit a more diverse student population (United States Department of Education, 2018).
Discrimination affecting campus communities of color is not limited to federal measures and criminal attacks on individuals. White supremacist groups, such as Identity Evropa and Patriot Front, are disseminating flyers, posters, and stickers to recruit students (The Anti-Defamation League, 2018). During the 2017-18 school year, there was a 77% increase in this propaganda at 287 universities compared to the year before (The Anti-Defamation League, 2018). The conservative, non-profit organization, Turning Point USA, has spent $2,206,000 to influence student government elections around the country (Vasquez, 2018). The group was founded by Charlie Kirk, who Trump (2018) called “a great warrior” at a White House conference on Millennial leaders. Turning Point USA also operates the Professor Watchlist website whose mission is “to expose and document college professors who discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom” (Turning Point USA, n.d.).

Free speech and academic freedom are being tested by both legislatures and university administrators. In Arizona, the author’s state, a bill was introduced to prohibit “courses, classes, events, and activities” which “promote . . . social justice toward a race, gender, religion, political affiliation, social class or other class of people” or “advocate ethnic solidarity or isolation based on ethnicity, race, religion, gender or social class” (H.B. 2120, 2017).

In August 2017, the University of Tampa fired adjunct professor Kenneth L. Storey over his Twitter post suggesting that Texas deserved Hurricane Harvey’s destruction (Robertson, 2017). Then in October, Drexel University, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, put professor George Ciccariello-Maher on administrative leave after he posted a series of controversial tweets, including a call for “white genocide” (Jaschik, 2017). These incidents involved incendiary language and raised the question of First Amendment protection outside the classroom. They also illustrate the power of one social media post. Publishing the disclaimer, “views are my own,” in the Twitter bio is no longer enough to protect one’s job.

Despite the chilling effect faculty may feel online or in their classrooms, a growing resistance can be found within academia’s largest population: students. Milkman (2017) observed that the post-2008 wave of activism, which includes the campus movement against sexual assault, undocumented Dreamers/DACA, and Black Lives Matter, has been led by Millennials and powered by social media. The youngest activists, responding to the February 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, are propelling the #NeverAgain movement for gun control and are among this year’s incoming freshmen (Ducharme, 2018).

Academic libraries have also had to choose how, or when, to react to threats to those they serve. The violence at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 caused libraries to reconsider their role in intellectual freedom, disaster preparedness, and communications. The American Library Association (ALA), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), and Society of American Archivists (SAA) released statements denouncing the violence at the rally. Although the role of professional associations is to advocate on behalf of libraries and librarians, threats to people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, and other marginalized groups pressure libraries to respond in both their physical and virtual spaces. A lack of response can be interpreted as tacit approval.

Furthermore, there is pressure for organizations and companies to voice their political beliefs. In July 2017, the family, personal and household care product company Procter & Gamble posted a YouTube video titled, “The Talk,” which showed scenes with Black parents telling their children about the bias they will encounter while growing up (Procter & Gamble, 2017). The 2017 Super Bowl commercials, seen on television and social media, addressed immigration, equality, and gender roles (Lopez-Medel, 2017). More companies are engaging with contentious issues in their promotional content, correlating...
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with a change in public expectation. In a survey of 1,400 respondents from 14 countries, the marketing firm Edelman (2017) found that 53% of consumers buy from or boycott brands because of their stance on a social or political issue. Similarly, when surveying 1,000 Americans from different demographics, Cone Communications (2017) noted that 87% would purchase a product because its company advocated for an issue they cared about. When studying Black Millennials, Google/Ipsos Connect learned that 70% of participants were more likely to buy from a brand that takes a stand on race-related issues (King, 2017). Although the academic library is not a for-profit company, it still has a brand and public image to manage, and its social media does not exist within a vacuum. Users scroll through their feeds where the latest news from the White House is juxtaposed with a post from the library.

However, having an overtly political position is problematic for the academic library. Communications may need to align with the parent institution, and, for the public university, its governing board. The views of donors or other stakeholders may also need to be considered. How library leadership interprets the much-debated concept of neutrality will impact social media. It is arguable whether this entails commenting on an issue, releasing a statement offering support and services to students, or staying silent.

Despite these precautions, library staff and social media managers must remember that diversity is a core value of ALA. Many libraries include diversity or inclusion among their institution’s values and strategic plans. The library can support marginalized groups by creating diverse and inclusive social media content. Some libraries already practice this, but not all of them do. That is not to say librarians are not engaged with topics like diversity, inclusion, and equity on social media.

In 2016, the ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS) created the hashtag #LibrariesRespond and encouraged libraries to share how they respond to current events on social media (Granger, 2017). They also created a section on their website featuring resources about the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) protests, and immigrant, refugee, and transgender student rights (American Library Association, 2018). Public libraries have used #LibrariesRespond when posting artwork with inclusive messaging, such as “Everyone is Welcome Here” (Granger, 2017) and “Libraries Are for Everyone” (Fialkoff et al., 2018). The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois Library and ALA jointly created Project Welcome, an initiative that produced recommendations and resources on how libraries can serve refugees and asylum seekers (Project Welcome, 2018). One of the project hashtags is #LibrariesRespond. At the University of New Mexico, education librarian Sarah Kostelecky wanted to support the movement against DAPL and circulated her LibGuide listing relevant resources (Granger, 2017). Besides these examples, academic library adoption of the hashtag is less widespread, possibly due to the precautions previously mentioned.

While it may be difficult for academic libraries, individual librarians have engaged in discussions relating to current events on social media. Columbia University rare book cataloguer Matthew Haugen created the hashtag #LibrariesResist for librarians opposed to the Trump administration and shared resources on topics including civic engagement, fake news, and privacy (Flock, 2017). In response to ALA publishing a press release that conveyed it was ready to collaborate with the Trump administration, librarians used the hashtag #NotMyALA to voice their concerns (Flock, 2017). Since 2014, librarians have used #critlib to organize Twitter chats on how social justice intersects with the profession. Previous chats have addressed tribal libraries, library staff with disabilities, and homeless patrons (Critlib, 2018). In 2015, Jessica Olin and Michelle Millet started the #libleadgender hashtag to have Twitter discussions relating to gender expectations in library administration positions (Olin & Millet, 2015). These online conversations about serving and advocating for diverse communities are valuable for their participants.
They should also continue offline with all staff of the academic library, including social media managers, the marketing and communications teams, and library leadership.

The growing body of literature regarding social media marketing in academic libraries has yet to examine diversity and inclusion. Since social media became mainstream in the late 2000s and early 2010s, libraries have adopted multiple platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat (Collins & Quan-Haase, 2014; Robinson, Peacemaker, & Hurst, 2018). Librarians have also surveyed students on what kinds of content they want to see. Findings have included library resources and events, research tips, and updates about operations (Brookbank, 2015; Howard, Huber, Carter, & Moore, 2018; Stvilia & Gibradze, 2017). Libraries have learned more about their users and developed content strategies. Subsequently, there have been numerous case studies and books on best practices. However, social media imposes a challenge on researchers. Services regularly change their features, and new platforms emerge, resulting in literature which quickly loses its currency. Thus, this chapter focuses exclusively on the importance and benefits of creating diverse and inclusive content regardless of the platform.

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE: WHY CREATE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE CONTENT?**

**Increasing Diversity**

The latest United States Census projections predict that by 2045, people of color will outnumber the White population, and that by 2020, there will be more of the former than the latter who are 18 years old and younger (Frey, 2018). While demographics continue to shift, so will the racial attitudes of Americans. The Pew Research Center (2016) found that 61% of Americans agreed that the country needed to make changes for racial equality between Blacks and Whites. In a survey of 4,000 Americans from different generational groups, market research firm Collaborata found that Gen Z, the generation born between 1998 and 2016, were more open-minded to having friends or romantic partners of other races than Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers (Kane, 2017).

The changing racial landscape has already influenced higher education marketing. The increasing cost of tuition has resulted in admissions offices putting increased focus on recruiting more students. Hence, depicting racial diversity in promotional materials has become a necessary and competitive recruitment strategy (Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013). Although diversity is used to attract both people of color and Whites, Ihme & Stürmer (2018) found that the former perceives it as “a signal of respect and tolerance, and the latter more because they perceive such cues as a signal of intellectual stimulation and variety” (p. 67). In their study, participants were shown mock-ups of fictitious university websites and preferred the ones that emphasized diversity. Even though university marketing has become more inclusive, Pippert et al. (2013) observed that diversity was depicted by skin color—so that more Blacks were included—and that Latinx and Native Americans were still underrepresented.

Marketing has a substantial role in reinforcing stereotypes (Davis, 2018; Kendrick, Fullerton, & Kim, 2013). Historically, people of color have been invisible or discriminated against in visual media and marketing (Davis, 2018). Native Americans appear as brand mascots, Asian Americans are seen as the model minority in technical careers, Blacks are depicted as athletic or modern-day mammies, and Latinx are portrayed as sexualized. Therefore, library social media managers must be cognizant of the power of images and where their content is positioned relative to the historical legacy of bias in visual representation.
Appealing to people of color is growing in importance in the advertising industry (James, Lee, Zhang, & Williams, 2017). Some companies work with agencies that specialize in marketing to specific ethnic groups. For example, Toyota’s 2018 Camry campaign was developed by four advertising agencies where three focused on Black, Asian American, and Latinx consumers respectively (Maheshwari, 2017). The growing presence of people of color in marketing content is slow, but may help establish the expectations of social media users.

It is uncertain whether audiences prefer to see marketing featuring their ethnic group or a mix of ethnicities. Studies exploring race and ethnicity have indicated that people who strongly identify with an ethnic group have responded favorably to advertisements where they are represented (Cui, 1997; Green, 1999; Torres & Briggs, 2007; Whittler & Spira, 2002). However, Torres and Briggs (2007) also found that when viewing advertisements for luxury products, even those who highly identified with their ethnicity exhibited more positive attitudes towards advertisements with White models. Since the 1960s, marketing researchers have tried to assess the attitudes of White audiences towards advertisements featuring people of color. In one study, White participants exhibited less favorable attitudes towards advertisements with Black models than advertisements with White models, regardless of prejudice (Whittler, 1991).

One reason for these inconsistencies is that racism is difficult to define or operationalize in advertising research (Morris & Kahlor, 2014). Changing generational attitudes may also impact these kinds of studies. Cooley, Brice, Becerra, and Chapa (2015) claimed young adults have become more accepting of diversity as they encounter it in schools, neighborhoods, and the workplace; subsequently, they have preferred seeing diversity in an advertisement, as opposed to advertisements designed for and targeted to specific ethnicities. When more marketing and visual content is consumed on the internet and social media, researchers need to explore how this digital medium impacts viewer perceptions of race.

Who “Likes” Your Library?

The academic library has a broad audience on social media: students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and the public. Social media is vital for maintaining relationships with alumni and other stakeholders (Kaplan, 2017). In 2018, 68% of U.S. adults reported being on Facebook (Pew Research Center, 2018). Despite the Cambridge Analytica data breach and its resulting public outcry, Americans continue to use Facebook. In a Reuters/Ipsos poll of 2,194 adults, half of them had not changed their Facebook usage, a quarter increased usage, and the remaining quarter had stopped using it (Kahn & Ingram, 2018). Therefore, it can be assumed that libraries will continue to find their audience on social media, whether that is on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, or a new platform that future teenagers embrace. Even though social media metrics provide data on the age, gender, and location of users, the type of relationship each user has with the library is unknown. A survey of followers could be insightful but would be limited by the number of respondents. Owing to this uncertainty, social media managers who do not post inclusive content may alienate their existing and potential followers. They may also risk a public challenge to the library and the institution’s reputation. Public image and branding must be considered when universities struggle to fund and recruit both researchers and students.

Today’s prospective students and their parents are no longer limited to on-site campus visits. When applying to schools, virtual tours and social media aid in their decision-making process. Incoming students use social media to see what life is like on campus, to learn about events, and to read reviews by current students (Galan, Lawley, & Clements, 2015). To stay informed and engaged with the campus community, current students may follow multiple social media accounts belonging to an institution.
According to Clark, Fine, and Scheuer (2017), the higher the number of accounts a student followed, the better their relationship was with their school. Given its role in serving all students, the academic library should aspire to have social media that these students want to follow.

With increasing online offerings and electronic resources, not all patrons will visit the library in person. Neither will all the members of its social media audience, such as prospective international students, alumni, or retired employees. For these reasons, creating social media content appealing to a diverse audience is crucial. Besides the subject matter being relevant to the service and resource needs of students, faculty, and researchers, the imagery and messages should incorporate and reflect diversity and inclusion as a regular and best practice.

**SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**How to Create Diverse and Inclusive Content**

**Diverse Photography**

Social media users scroll through a massive amount of information on any given day, and much is conveyed in a matter of seconds through photography. Thus, photos taken in the library should feature students who represent different ethnicities, genders, ages, physical abilities, and religious identities. If the library does not have a photographer, staff can purchase stock photos or download free Creative Commons-licensed images. However, the author recommends that stock photos be used sparingly and only within promotional collateral. Stock photos can mislead library visitors by creating a false impression. For example, they may expect the library to have a particular study area or piece of technology. Savvy viewers may prefer authentic photos taken in the library, even if they are taken on a smartphone.

When organizing a photo shoot, the marketing staff should be aware that diversity is not about numbers. Asking the one staff member of color to be in every photo shoot places a burden on them. Likewise, identifying one student of color to appear in a photo of White students reduces that student to being a prop. In discussing global marketing, Borgerson and Schroeder (2002) explained that including an underrepresented group could result in a stereotypical depiction or tokenism. Consequently, the group becomes more invisible. Library marketing staff should make marginalized people feel respected because they are giving their time to participate in a photo shoot, and the final images should not look superficial.

Recruiting people of color to appear in photos while not succumbing to tokenism can feel more challenging for academic library staff who are located in an area with low diversity. Pippert et al. (2013) discovered that some universities misrepresent their diversity and that “admissions personnel understand that since it takes diversity to recruit diversity, presenting an image of what you would like to become is important” (p. 276). Racial demographics are changing, and libraries must decide whether their images are aspirational with regard to diversity or homogeneous. The former presents a more welcoming image, whereas the latter may send the wrong message.

**User-Generated Content (UGC)**

One strategy for curating social media material which advances diversity and inclusion is to share user-generated content (UGC). In the author’s library, located at the University of Arizona in Tucson,
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Arizona, students often take selfies and photos of Starbucks-fueled study sessions, sunsets taken from the top library floors, 3D prints, and whiteboard drawings. There have even been graduation portraits and photos of yoga poses in the stacks. Unlike recruiting students of different backgrounds to appear in library photos, sharing UGC is a more organic way to incorporate diversity into library marketing. It shows followers a less staged look of the library and its visitors. In a survey of 4,578 social media users in six countries, 76% of respondents reported that they trust UGC more than traditional forms of advertising (Olapic, 2016). Additionally, showcasing posts from social media followers empowers them and strengthens their relationship with the library.

Social media managers can identify UGC highlighting the library by monitoring library-related hashtags that students self-select or posts geotagged at the library. The author always asks users for permission to share their content and has received approval for every request. This practice is particularly useful for libraries lacking full-time marketing staff or the resources for taking photos. UGC also provides insight into the most popular services or spaces.

Resources and Services Reflecting Diversity

Library resources that are promoted on social media should interest different communities. The creation of a diversity calendar may be a useful starting point for social media managers. The library can show solidarity with underrepresented groups by sharing relevant collections or databases during months celebrating or raising awareness of diverse groups; observances of different religions; and days commemorating historical events. The author also advocates going beyond the calendar and sharing a variety of diverse materials throughout the year. Staff may wish to consult ALA ethnic affiliates for resource recommendations. The affiliates include: American Indian Library Association (AILA); Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA); Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA); Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA); and National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking (REFORMA).

Social media posts can give visibility to underrepresented groups and still relate to library services. For example, to recognize a past Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the author shared a link to a downloadable 3D model of King and reminded users about the library’s 3D printing service. During Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, the author posted a list of streaming database films that feature Asian Americans.

Inclusive Language

Diverse and inclusive content is not limited to images, nor is it limited to visible identities. The copy—the words that accompany the images or graphic design—can empower or dehumanize different identities (Kapitan, 2017). For example, when writing about people with different abilities, people-first language is recommended. The phrase “people who are visually impaired” is preferable to “the blind” because it emphasizes the person and not the disability.

When writing about different gender identities, staff should be conscientious of a person’s preferred pronouns. There is already an increasing awareness of gender pronouns and their importance on college campuses. When registering, students can indicate which pronouns they use (Binkley, 2015), and instructors address pronoun usage in class syllabi (Pettway, 2017). Gender pronouns should be honored when writing about a specific person, and binary gender pronouns (“he” or “she”) should be avoided.
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when writing about general users. Marketing staff should adopt and use other gender-neutral terms, such as “Latinx,” which are being normalized by media outlets like National Public Radio.

Diction may ultimately be determined by the library’s parent institution and their writing style guide. For example, university communications may not permit the singular usage of the gender pronoun “they.” Thus, marketing staff must be acquainted with and help other library staff understand how the library’s editorial style guide is affected.

Accessibility

Social media content should be accessible to people with different abilities. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Justice determined that the University of California, Berkeley had violated the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 by not providing captioning for publicly available audio and video recordings. As a consequence, the university had to remove 20,000 multimedia files (Straumsheim, 2017). Public, and even private, universities are affected by the ADA, so academic libraries should upload subtitle files for videos on social media. Multiple publishers have reported that 85% of Facebook videos are viewed without sound (Patel, 2016), so in addition to being ADA-compliant, captioned videos may be watched by more users.

When designing graphics, there are best practices for ensuring that the content is accessible to those with deficient color vision or other visual impairments. These include: a hierarchy of text and images to guide eye movement; having enough contrast between text and background color; typographic legibility, which depends on typeface weight and scale; and typographic readability, which depends on the width of a paragraph and space between letters (The Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario, 2010). The author recognizes that not all libraries have a graphic designer or professional design software. In this situation, staff can use online graphic design tools that have limited functionalities to help keep content accessible.

In larger academic libraries, the social media manager may not be involved in event or workshop planning, or creating website content, but can advocate for more inclusive practices. When promoting events, the copy should include the offer of disability-related accommodations, such as ASL interpreting. Maps should identify accessible parking and entrances with the active wheelchair symbol. If links to a website or PDF file are provided, they should be accessible to individuals who use assistive technology like screen readers. If there is a disability resource center on campus, they may offer captioning services or interpreters at no cost to the library.

Producing social media content which is inclusive and mirrors the country’s population is not necessarily easy. Libraries can begin by asking who is missing in a photo or excluded by the writing or multimedia. These recommendations are not exhaustive. However, the author’s impetus is to inspire library staff to make changes and to be open to learning from mistakes. Refer to the additional readings at the end of this chapter for resources pertaining to Creative Commons-licensed images, accessible graphic design, inclusive language, and other recommendations mentioned above.

Unfollows, Trolls, and Fails

In early March 2018, Heineken ran a commercial with the tagline: “Sometimes, lighter is better” (Chokshi, 2018). In the advertisement, a bartender opens a beer bottle and slides it down the bar, passing two Black women and a Black man, before reaching a light-skinned woman. After social media users, including
celebrities, criticized the commercial for being racist, the company stopped running it on March 26 and apologized in an email to The Independent:

For decades, Heineken has developed diverse marketing that shows there’s more that unites us than divides us. While we feel the ad is referencing our Heineken Light beer—we missed the mark, are taking the feedback to heart and will use this to influence future campaigns. (Zatat, 2018)

This Heineken advertisement offers lessons to all marketers who seek to diversify their content without resorting to tokenism or appearing biased. Even though the commercial aired on television, the video was watched online, and the criticism quickly spread on social media. This kind of viral content can also result in a loss of followers and severed relationships. In a survey of 1,000 users, Sprout Social (2017) found that 6.5% of Millennials, 17.8% of Generation X, and 9.2% of Baby Boomers would unfollow a brand’s social media due to offensive content.

Libraries are not immune from controversies; they are public spaces serving various patrons. Staff must be prepared for online communications disasters that arise from both born-digital and tangible content. These have included: exhibitions of artwork that are culturally insensitive (Kandiuk, 2017); the closure of the library during a right-wing rally on campus (University of Washington Libraries, n.d.); and a pornographic video filmed in the library (Sung & Sutton, 2015).

Be Prepared

Libraries need to be familiar with online reputation management which “involves knowing how to evaluate and react to any commentary on the Web about your library” (Solomon, 2014, p. 92). Staff should monitor social media for any library-related commentary and know how to respond to different kinds of negative feedback, whether it is merited and based on something the library has done, or unmerited and from trolls. Buckels, Trapnell and Paulhus (2014) defined trolling as “the practice of behaving in a deceptive, destructive, or disruptive manner in a social setting on the internet with no apparent instrumental purpose” (p. 97). Solomon explained that trolling is “almost always an attempt to bait your library into a pointless argument” and that it is best not to respond (2014, p. 101).

When negative comments are warranted, Solomon (2014) proposed that libraries take responsibility for their mistakes and not be defensive. In the case of Heineken, their apology lacked empathy and began with a defense of their past achievements before showing accountability.

Akin to having policies for collections development, donations, meeting spaces, or artwork displayed, libraries can prepare for negative responses by having an up-to-date social media policy and crisis communications plan. It should address negative feedback, how to respond, a timeline for responding—such as within 24 hours—and define the criteria for inappropriate posts that will be removed.

#WildcatTBT

At the University of Arizona Libraries in Tucson, Arizona, the author participates in the social media trend Throwback Thursday (TBT). This campaign entails sharing historical photographs of the university from the library’s Special Collections almost weekly. Photographs depict student life as well as exterior views of campus. The University of Arizona (UA) mascot is the wildcat, so in collaboration with the university’s central social media manager, the author established the branded hashtag #WildcatTBT.
This hashtag helps make these posts discoverable to those wanting to learn more about UA history and to marketing staff wanting to assess the performance of the #WildcatTBT campaign. The UA’s central social media accounts have shared #WildcatTBT posts, other departments have adopted the hashtag, and the posts have received many Likes and comments. However, they have also received criticism. An Instagram user left negative comments on #WildcatTBT photographs taken in the early 20th century depicting White students. Additionally, the author received the following email from that user:

Please stop posting these ol [sic] #MakeAmericaGreatAgain white supremacist #tbt ‘s under the UA library Instagram account. It’s embarrassing that my school doesn’t understand the white narrative racist history you are constructing. You should be embarrassed and ashamed of these all white old pics. Do you know where we were in 1909? Getting raped my [sic] these white men who owned us on plantations. Getting shot by these white people taking our lands. Post about that? (personal communication, February 28, 2017)

Featuring history without unintentionally celebrating whiteness is a challenge. In the 21st century, each incoming class of freshman has had more people of color (The University of Arizona, 2014), and in 2017-18, students of color accounted for about half of the campus population (The University of Arizona, 2018). However, the university has historically had a predominantly White student body. Thus, photographs of students of color in the early 20th century are limited in quantity. The author responded to the email by providing links to previous #WildcatTBT posts featuring students of color and explaining that the library marketing team strives to show diversity. Essentially, she made the same mistake as Heineken, and the user called the author’s response inappropriate.

As the first social media manager hired by UA Libraries, the author has written social media guidelines. However, at the time these #WildcatTBT comments were received, there was no documentation, and the library had never received user feedback relating to unconscious bias. Solomon (2014) recommended that libraries respond publicly to negative feedback, even if private communication has taken place; if there is no public response, other users may assume the library is ignoring the situation. However, the Instagram user had also emailed librarians, and the author was advised not to engage the individual further. A member of the library administration attempted to reach out to the user to address the concerns, but the comments remain on #WildcatTBT posts.

After receiving these criticisms, the author has endeavored to find historical photographs with students of color. The UA is a Research I institution that was founded in 1885, drawing students and faculty from around the world. Many viewers lack historical context for the university and Tucson. While the author does not want to distort the past racial makeup of the university, #WildcatTBT posts only showing White students may further make students of color invisible. Whereas the intention behind tokenism is to include people of color to make the organization appear equitable, the author’s intention in posting diverse #WildcatTBT photographs is to ensure that stories about students of color are told. The lack of diversity in #WildcatTBT also calls attention to the invisibility of underrepresented groups in archives and the historical record. The author is collaborating with the archivists and librarians in Special Collections to ensure more photographs showing diversity are identified and digitized.

Over time, academic libraries generate a copious amount of content on social media. Staff should know how to make social media work for the library and not against it. Even so, a communications crisis
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may be inevitable, regardless of whether it relates to bias. By actively creating diverse and inclusive content and knowing how to mitigate crises, the library can establish a reputation as being an ally and supporter of diverse groups.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Technology and Discrimination

Social media platforms frequently adjust their news feed algorithms, causing a decline in the organic reach and engagement of posts. As a result, it is difficult for libraries to be seen on social media. Under these conditions, libraries will feel the need to buy social media advertising, if they do not already.

Social media advertising enables marketers to leverage user data to create relevant, targeted posts. It is more cost-effective to target a specific audience than a general one. For example, the library may seek to reach alumni or users in its city. Thus, social media platforms encourage advertisers to create segmented audiences. They can even upload customer email lists or target users who visited and clicked on their website. Using Facebook Ads Manager (2018), advertisers can currently target users on the basis of their age, gender, language, and interests relating to religion. They can also select users according to Multicultural Affinity, which is determined by the user’s Facebook behavior rather than self-selected information. Multicultural Affinity categories include African American, Asian American, and Hispanic. Previously, advertisers were able to exclude one of these groups, and in doing so, may have violated laws like the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act. Consequently, Facebook signed an agreement requiring the company to remove the ability to exclude groups by ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation (Statt, 2018).

James et al. (2017) observed the lack of legislative efforts to regulate internet marketing to different ethnic groups, and advocated for policies such as curbing the promotion of fast food to populations with high rates of diet-related illnesses. Unlike food, housing, credit products, or jobs, library services or events may not be affected by future legislation pertaining to internet advertising. However, through the lens of diversity and inclusion, picking select groups is as discriminatory as excluding others. In this environment of information asymmetry, marketers must be wary of discrimination.

Another emerging technology that will shape the future of libraries and social media is artificial intelligence (AI). Airlines, banks, retail, and other companies employ Facebook Messenger and Twitter Direct Message chatbots as a customer service tool, and there are over 100,000 chatbots on the former (Pasquarelli & Wohl, 2017). These chatbots augment the human experience, are task-oriented, and cannot have meaningful conversations. Despite their limitations, they are convenient to both social media users and organizations wanting to relieve employees from time-consuming tasks. Social media chatbots are becoming ubiquitous.

Libraries have already used chatbots for virtual reference. For example, in 2009 Mentor Public Library in Ohio developed Emma the Catbot—an animated cat—in response to state budget cuts (Vincze, 2017). Over three years, Emma answered routine reference questions online and averaged a correct response rate of 90%. Libraries who currently use social media for reference transactions may become early adopters of the next generation of social media chatbots. Subsequently, they should become familiar with the ethical issues that have arisen with AI and their algorithms.
The Microsoft chatbot, Tay, is a well-known experiment that shows how artificial intelligence can backfire against an organization. Designed to learn human speech patterns, developers deployed Tay on Twitter in March 2016 (Wolf, Miller, & Grodzinsky, 2017). Within a day, Tay echoed the racist and sexist tweets that users tweeted at it, and Microsoft took the chatbot offline. Wolf et al. (2017) maintained that Tay’s behavior was not just a programming error, but demonstrates a failure of developers to take ethical responsibility for unpredictable and experimental software. Without thorough testing, including a check for biases, libraries can find themselves implicated in the intersection of prejudice and technology.

**Staff Diversity and Resources**

Producing diverse and inclusive content is not without its challenges. Ultimately, diversity starts with the voices in the room. Therefore, insufficient staff diversity is a barrier to having social media that welcomes different social identities. Davis (2018) asserted that people of color are needed in marketing positions to help improve representation, reduce racism, and to avoid gaffes. However, merely hiring diverse staff is not the solution to creating diverse and inclusive marketing. In a survey of 750 professionals in the creative industry, Adobe revealed that the challenges associated with diversity extend beyond representation (Myrold, 2017). Sixty-three percent of people of color, compared to 55% of Whites, experienced barriers to success and felt less valued at work. Insufficient staff diversity is not unique to the creative industry. In Ithaka S+R’s last survey, 71% of employees at Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions were White (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2017). Libraries should foster an inclusive environment to recruit, retain, and combat the attrition of employees from underprivileged groups.

Because many staff members may influence social media, diverse content depends on recruiting staff from underserved populations. In a survey of 98 academic libraries, 43% used a committee to manage social media, with members representing different library positions (Robinson et al., 2018). While 47% reported having one manager who oversees all social media, 83% reported having multiple staff who could post to the same platform. If the entire staff is not committed to diversity, then even inclusive marketing may be deemed insincere. Further work could explore this relationship between library staff diversity and marketing content.

Limited staff capacity is another challenge to creating diverse and inclusive content. Academic libraries often delegate social media to multiple staff members and student interns (Robinson et al., 2018). However, a full-time employee who focuses on marketing or outreach is recommended to manage social media successfully. Dedicated time is critical to create and curate content, assess the performance of campaigns, monitor user comments, and stay apprised of constant changes and new features.

**CONCLUSION**

It is imperative that academic libraries strive for diverse and inclusive social media, not only because their public image is at stake, but because to do so is to serve the students, faculty, and the campus community well. Overlooking diversity in social media content is a missed opportunity. As evidenced in this chapter, changing national demographics, the political climate, and expectations of social media users necessitate content that does not oppress marginalized groups.
Social media is a newer responsibility for libraries. It requires a willingness to learn, and not just about the latest post image dimensions or character count. No matter who makes the posts, staff need to recognize that change comes from within the organization. Striving for inclusive copywriting, photography, and graphic design is a group undertaking. It also requires humility and the ability to learn from mistakes.

Libraries can be leading exemplars of producing diverse and inclusive marketing. By showing different faces, and promoting different voices, the library upholds intellectual freedom, serves a broader community, and maybe even stops the user’s thumb scroll.

REFERENCES


Diversity and Inclusion


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