

the effectiveness of SOCIAL MEDIA

Does it measure up?

By Karen Skinner

Many law libraries use social media to communicate with patrons. More and more law libraries are registering for Facebook and Twitter accounts every day. With the increasing amount of resources that libraries are committing to social media (time, manpower), how do we know the commitment is worth it? Just how effective is the use of social media?

Lucky for us, there are many metrics that law libraries can use to figure out the effectiveness of their Facebook and Twitter efforts.

Most social media metrics fall into two categories: reach and engagement. Reach involves how many people see your posts and the number of page likes or followers you have. Engagement is what makes Facebook and Twitter so interesting; engagement metrics look at how your customers interact with your organization online. Engagement measures how many times a post is marked as a favorite, shared, or commented on.

Facebook and Twitter Metrics

Both Facebook and Twitter provide a lot of information on measuring effectiveness, otherwise known as impact. Facebook advises how to track your results on its Measurements and Insights webpage (<https://www.facebook.com/business/products/measurement>). Your Facebook account will have its own Insights page. This page contains a wealth of information. Get data on your page likes: for instance, from where do your page likes usually come? Is it your library website, LibGuides page, or did people seek out your Facebook page on their own, say, from Google? This can help you figure out what is driving traffic to your Facebook page and help you understand where to amplify marketing.

Facebook also provides data on individual posts. The data includes information on how many people see your posts and whether they like or share posts. This can help you understand the types of posts that users are most interested in and what engages them to respond. Those are the types of posts you'll want more of in the future.

You can also examine what areas of Facebook, or tabs, get the most visits. Is it your photo page or your timeline? Take a look at your reviews as well. If you're getting low reviews, that can be an indication of something that needs to be examined more in-depth. You can also get basic information on the locations where your likes come from and users' primary language. For example, most of my library's likes come from the United States. But we also have had likes from Nigeria, Thailand, and Turkey, to name a few. The Facebook People page also compares your Facebook account to Facebook in its entirety. You can get this information for people reached, people engaged, and check-ins. Do you need to see how your library's Facebook page is doing compared with the Facebook pages of your peer organizations? Compare performance using Pages to Watch. You can select which organizations are used for comparison purposes.

Twitter suggests a number of metrics for analyzing your impact (<https://business.twitter.com/measure-your-impact>). Follower growth and quality and engagement measure the number of new followers and their interactions with your Twitter account. Reach measures follower retweets and favorites. You can determine how much traffic Twitter drives to your own library website. You can also examine conversion. How many followers signed up for your service or bought your product? For law libraries that could mean, for example, how many students attended a research workshop, signed up for a library newsletter, or viewed a research guide that was advertised on Twitter.

Twitter Analytics became available to all Twitter users in August. This analytics dashboard monitors tweets and followers. The Tweets dashboard measures impressions, engagement, and engagement rate. Impressions are the number of times someone saw your tweet. Engagement tells you how many times a user interacted with your tweet. This includes clicking anywhere on the tweet, retweets, replies, follows, and favorites. Engagement rate is the number of engagements divided by impressions. You can see these statistics for every tweet.

The Followers dashboard provides basic demographic information, like gender and location, and increases in followers. It also tracks follower interest by indicating the broad topics to which your followers respond. And it tells you the top 10 accounts that your followers also follow. This can help you identify the topics that grab your followers' attention.

SHARE

More Information on Social Media Metrics

As you can well imagine, there is much advice published in journals and online about how to measure social media impact. Even Wikipedia has a brief entry on social media measurements (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media_measurement). These publications and websites generally advise looking at reach (who saw your post) and engagement (who clicked on your post or otherwise shared it).

Helen Blowers, in her September 2012 article “Measuring Social Media and the Greater Digital Landscape,” published in *Computers in Libraries* magazine, states that impressions and exposure are useful metrics for social media.

They show your library’s influence. Retweets and likes show how involved your customers are. These engagement statistics are important because you want to be looking at actual interactions with customers. Vitality, meaning the percentage of people who saw the post and found it interesting enough to comment on it, is an important metric.

Chris Murdough, in his 2009 “Social Media Measurement: It’s Not Impossible,” provides an “analysis construct used for many social media programs.” He discusses three “pillars of social media measurement”: reach, discussions, and outcomes. For reach, look at both quantity and quality, specifically “quantity of mentions and quality of authors.” For discussions, look at topics and sentiments. And for outcomes, examine site traffic and purchase intent. The author characterizes these as “behavioral engagement indicators.”

Enrique Bonsón and Melinda Ratkai suggest measuring popularity, commitment, and virality in their 2012 article, “A Set of Metrics to Assess Stakeholder Engagement and Social Legitimacy on a Corporate Facebook Page.” The number of likes demonstrates popularity. For example, total likes divided by total number of posts provides you with one measurement of popularity. If you divide the number of posts that have been commented on by the total number of posts, you get the percentage of posts that have been commented on, which measures commitment. Use the total shares divided by total posts to get the average number of shares per post, a virality metric.

A number of authors characterize social media impact as return on investment, or ROI. Brian Solis, in his book *Engage: The Complete Guide Brands and Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure Success in the New Web*, says that in the new media world, ROI actually stands for several things: return on participation, engagement, involvement, and influence. Solis goes on to discuss the “social barometer,” which measures exposure, engagement,



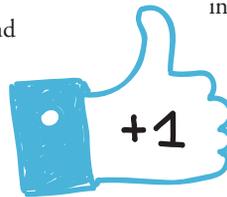
influence, and action. How does your social media exposure and customer engagement influence customers to take action?

Marketingthink.com takes social media metrics a step further (marketingthink.com/9-key-social-media-measurements-to-answer-9-key-strategic-questions). It examines what it calls “back-of-the-envelope social media measures” (in other words, calculations to determine success). How many people have unsubscribed from your social media pages? How many people are seeing your content? For example, to calculate whether people value your content, use this formula: Total Tweets/Total Retweets = Retweets by Tweet. To figure out what type of content you should be posting, take Total Facebook Post of One Type (e.g., video)/Total Engagement (e.g., views/shares) = Engagements by Post. These calculations help you to go beyond a basic understanding of how your social media page is performing. They also can help you determine a social media strategy.

Benefitting from Social Media Metrics

These days, more and more decisions are data-driven. To use social media terminology, big data is trending. Law libraries have been tracking a number of library statistics for decades. In an era of budget cuts and staff reductions, law librarians are continually striving to come up with new ways to prove their worth and to justify their existence. With ready-made data provided by Facebook and Twitter, libraries can include social media metrics in a variety of stakeholder reports. Consider including your total number of followers and likes. Share data on your reach and engagement. Consider supplying the most liked or retweeted posts. These numbers can help to complete the overall picture of library outreach and impact.

Measuring the impact of your library’s social media efforts is necessary to ensure you’re reaching your patrons in the way that works best for them and that they find engaging. This helps you target your messages and increase your interactivity with your patrons, thereby increasing their use of your services. The metrics of social media effectiveness discussed here are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many, many more examples of the statistics that can be gleaned from your social media. Keep in mind that there are third-party tools that, in addition to making your social media life easier, will also track social media data for you. Using social media successfully to promote your library includes measuring how effective the library is in its outreach efforts, and sites like Facebook and Twitter make it easy to monitor metrics. Check out your metrics today! ■



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