

MIDLOTHIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The Midlothian Public Library (“The Library”) uses social media to increase awareness of and accessibility to its programs, events (including those co-sponsored with other organizations), educational opportunities, resources and services in order to serve its mission. The purpose of this policy is to address use of social media activities including but not limited to blogs, social networks, online communications, online catalogs, websites, and mobile applications by the Library and its employees, volunteers, elected officials, and patrons. The Library’s social media sites are not intended to be designated public forums for the general exchange of ideas and viewpoints, but a limited public forum for discussing Library programs, events, materials, and services. The Library does not make its social media accounts available for general public discourse, but rather reserves and limits the topics that may be discussed on social media accounts.

II. LIBRARY-SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA

Only those staff members authorized by the Library Director to be responsible for the Library’s social media sites should be actively monitoring and participating on those sites during work hours. Staff should keep in mind the following best practices when posting on the Library’s social media accounts on behalf of the Library:

- A. Social media accounts will not be monitored 24/7. Questions and comments will be responded to within 1-2 business days, and during the normal business hours of the Library.
- B. Staff engaged in social networking activities, as representatives of the Library, shall act and conduct themselves according to the highest possible ethical and professional standards when communicating via the Library’s social media accounts. Staff who contribute to the Library’s social media accounts should present content in a professional manner and should check facts, cite sources, avoid copyright infringement, acknowledge and correct errors and check grammar and spelling before posting.
- C. Library staff should not discuss confidential, work-related matters through social media.
- D. Content that is posted on Library-sponsored social media sites is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and records retention requirements.
- E. Content posted on the Library’s social media accounts may be conversational in nature but must remain professional, particularly if responding to a comment. Staff using the Library’s social media accounts shall respect and accept opinions of those interacting with the Library’s social media accounts, regardless of whether such opinions are positive or negative, provided the opinions are on topic and not offensive, denigrating or completely out of context.
- F. Disputes between a Library spokesperson and commenter on the Library’s social media accounts shall be avoided.
- G. Comments or responses on Library social media accounts should be limited. The Library’s social media designee should limit their response to (1) providing a factual response to a question posed; (2) providing the information for the appropriate department of the Library that would be most helpful; or (3) encouraging or directing persons interacting with the Library’s social media accounts to use appropriate resources

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to request a Library service. The Library Director or his/her designee should work to develop standard responses to public questions and comments.

- H. Employees using the Library's social media accounts shall obey all privacy protection laws (e.g., HIPPA) and protect sensitive and confidential Library information at all times.

III. STAFF PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Library staff have the same right to self-expression enjoyed by members of the community as a whole when discussing matters of public concern. As public employees, Library staff are cautioned that speech made pursuant to official duties is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed a violation of any policy of the Library. Staff should keep in mind the following best practices when posting content about Library-related subjects and issues on personal time:

- A. Library staff shall make it clear that the views expressed are their personal views and do not represent the view of the Library.
- B. Respect the Library's confidential and proprietary information. Do not post information that is still in draft form or is confidential.
- C. No comments with any kind of negative, mocking, condescending, or similar offensive or critical viewpoint should be made about patrons, Library staff, or Library trustees in general, about specific questions from patrons, or about patron behavior on the Library's websites and/or social media sites.
- D. The Library does not endorse, monitor or review the content of personal, non-Library related social media activity of its staff.
- E. Staff use of personal social media is not permitted during working hours except for work-related purposes such as professional development or Library-related social media outlets.
- F. No Library staff member should comment on litigation involving the Library on the Library's social media accounts, or any personal social media accounts, without prior approval from the Library's Attorney.

IV. LIBRARY TRUSTEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Library trustees have the same right to self-expression enjoyed by members of the community as a whole when discussing matters of public concern. Trustees should keep in mind the following best practices when posting content about Library-related subjects on social media:

- A. Library trustees shall make it clear that the views expressed are their personal views and do not represent the views of the Library or other trustees.
- B. Respect the Library's confidential and proprietary information. Do not post information that is still in draft form or is confidential.
- C. No comments with any kind of negative, mocking, condescending, or similar offensive or critical viewpoint should be made about Library patrons or staff in general, about specific questions from patrons, about interactions with staff of the Library, or about patron behavior on the Library's websites and/or social media sites.

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- D. No Library trustee should comment on litigation involving the Library on the Library's social media accounts, or any personal social media accounts, without prior approval from the Library's Attorney.
- E. Library trustees should be mindful of the provisions of the Open Meetings Act, in order to avoid discussions regarding Library business by multiple members of the Board on social media, so as not to violate the Act's provisions regarding these types of communications.
- F. Library trustees using social media for public purposes (i.e., to inform constituents about matters pertaining to the Library as opposed to posting in a personal, family account), they should be cognizant of the First Amendment.

V. POSTING BY THE PUBLIC ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND RESTRICTIONS

- A. The Library permits patrons and other members of the public to comment on Library posts and patrons are invited to share opinions about Library-related subjects, resources and programs. Postings by the public on the Library's social media sites does not indicate Library endorsement of the ideas, issues, or opinions expressed in these posts.
- B. The purpose of the Library's social media sites is to inform Library users about educational opportunities, library programs, events (including those co-sponsored with other organizations) materials, services, and to encourage dialogue and the exchange of information and knowledge between users and Library staff about these programs, events, materials, and services. The Library reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed to be in violation of this policy or any applicable law. Content that is deemed not suitable for posting by the Library because it is not topically related to the particular subject being commented on, or is deemed prohibited based on the criteria defined below, shall be retained pursuant to the Library's records retention schedule along with a description of the reason(s) the specific content was deleted. If a member of the public violates the Library's social media comment policy guidelines, the Library may, but is not obligated, to take any or all of the following steps:
 - 1. Remove the content;
 - 2. Report visitor(s) to the applicable social media site provider.
- C. Users and visitors to the Library's social media accounts shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication of Library news, services and events and that it is a limited public forum. The policy regarding comment removal shall also be included. This notice shall be posted in a conspicuous location on the Library's social media account and should be posted in a consistent location on all of the Library's social media accounts.
- D. Content and comments on the Library's social media accounts containing any of the following forms of content and postings shall not be allowed:
 - 1. Profane language or content.
 - 2. Abusive, threatening, or obscene language.

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3. Comments not topically related to the particular subject, site or blog article shared by the library.
4. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, socioeconomic or public assistance status, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.
5. Sexual content or links to sexual content.
6. Solicitations of commerce.
7. Personally identifiable information, such as an address, phone number, social security number or other sensitive information.
8. Comments that represent a person other than the one posting the comment.
9. Charitable solicitations or political campaigning.
10. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
11. Content that violates a legal ownership of any other party.
12. Copyright and trademark violations.
13. Duplicate posts from the same individual.
14. Gratuitous links to sites that are viewed as spam.

VI. PATRON PARTICIPATION

By joining, utilizing and/or posting on the Library's social media sites, patrons and the public agree to comply with this Policy, and the Library's Internet and Computer Use Policy, as applicable. The Library's Social Media Policy applies whether or not a patron chooses to post comments using a computer at the Library or when posting from any other computer/mobile device to any Library website or social media site. While the Library encourages dialogue, it respectfully requests that commenters be mindful that its websites and social media sites are open to the public and that commenters be courteous and civil toward one another.

Patrons are personally responsible for their commentary. Patrons should be aware that they may be held personally liable for commentary that is defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libelous by any offended party, not just the Library.

VII. DISCLAIMER

All content posted on Library social media sites is subject to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the State of Illinois record retention laws. Therefore, all Library social media sites shall clearly indicate that any articles and content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.

By posting on the Library's websites and social media sites, patrons and the public give the Library permission to use their name, profile picture, and the content of any posting they make without compensation to them or liability on the part of the Library. Users should be aware that third party websites have their own privacy policies and should proceed accordingly.

The Library reserves the right to edit and modify Library-authored posts for space and content, while retaining the intent of the original post.

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The Library, its employees, agents and officials assume no responsibility for any damages, direct or indirect, arising from participation in Library-sponsored social media. Violations of this policy by staff may result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

By joining, utilizing and/or posting on the Library's social media sites, patrons and the public agree to comply with this Policy, the Library's Patron Behavior Policy, and the Library's Internet and Computer Use Policy, as applicable.

VIII. VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

Postings that the Library Director or his/her designee deems to have violated this Policy may be removed in whole or in part by the Library Director or designee. The Library will retain a record of removed posts for the designated period of time required by the records retention act.

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