# Manage Your Social Media in 5 Minutes a Day

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*This article describes the social media content management strategy used at Red Deer College Library (Alberta, Canada), which includes an evolving and adaptable social media calendar, targeted timing of social media posts, using a social media management tool, and scheduling content in advance. The author also discusses creating content that is relevant to your users and evaluating your social media activities to constantly improve.*

An effective content management strategy can streamline your social media work, saving time and ensuring you don't miss engagement opportunities. With some upfront work and a cycle of constant assessment, your library's social media presence will be fresh and relevant to your users.

Red Deer College (RDC) is a community college located in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. Program offerings include undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, certificates, diplomas, apprenticeships, and university-transfer programs. RDC Library serves the campus community of over 8,000 full and part-time students and about 1,471 faculty and staff, as well as the wider community of Red Deer and Central Alberta.

RDC Library has managed Facebook and Twitter accounts for several years. We added Instagram a couple of years ago, and this fall launched a Snapchat account.

This column will describe the elements of the social media content management strategy used at RDC Library, provide some tricks to save time when you're too busy to be on social media, and consider the use of analytics to evaluate your social media practice.

## SET UP A SOCIAL MEDIA CALENDAR

A social media calendar is a planning tool that allows you to visualize your social media strategy. It helps you organize your content to ensure that you maintain a consistent social media presence. A social media calendar can take many forms, from an old-fashioned print calendar on your wall to a multi-page online spreadsheet. Regardless of the format, a social media calendar provides an "all-in-one" or "at-a-glance" view of all of your content and all of your social media channels.

At RDC Library, we use a multi-column, multi-page online spreadsheet, adapted from Ashley Chassé's shared Google Sheet, affectionately known as "The Super Awesome Social Media Content Calendar" (2016).

In addition to providing an all-in-one view, some of the other advantages of using an online social media calendar are:
1. It's easily adaptable to your needs as they change over time (for example, if you add a new social media channel, it's easy to add a new column).
2. It's shareable, and anyone with permission can access it and update it anytime, anywhere.

3. Since it's arranged by date, it's simple to add more rows if you have more than one message or piece of content to publish on one day.

Our social media calendar is set up by date and includes columns representing each social media channel, a column for the message, a column where we can indicate which type of image to use, and a column where we can include a link to our related content.

## CONSIDER THE TIMING OF YOUR CONTENT

Once you have your social media calendar set up, you can begin populating it. Pre-planning ensures that content is delivered when it is most relevant to your audience.

As an academic library, our year begins in September. We first look holistically at the year and populate important dates such as when fall term starts and ends, when exams start and end, and where holiday closures fall.

Next we consider one term at a time and ask ourselves the question, "What does a student need to know during the first week of school?" The answers to this question form the basis for our social media content strategy for the first week of term. For example, on our campus during the first week of classes, students are mostly concerned with finding out their username and password to log onto the computers, figuring out how to access their courses in our learning management system, and finding their classes. Those are the messages we promote during that time period.

We go through the same process week by week for the fall term. Once the fall term has been plotted out on the social media calendar, the work is mostly done. The winter and spring terms follow much the same pattern, so the content just needs to be duplicated, perhaps tweaked, and slotted into the appropriate week.

The third step in populating our social media calendar is to add in all our workshops and events. Working backward from the date of the event, we figure out when to send a "save the date" message, then plan more specific and more frequent content as we get closer to the actual date of the event.

It is important to repeat those messages that are really key to our students' success. It is not enough to post the log-on instructions in September and never revisit that information. We gain new followers all the time, so they will not have seen the older content. Also, a user may not have seen the content the first time it was posted. Key messages should appear more than once in your calendar; the actual wording of the content, and the accompanying image, may be different, but the key concept is the same.

At this point, the calendar is pretty much set. This content forms the backbone of our social media posts; we then supplement with real-time and in-the-moment posts, showing things that are happening at any given time in our library.

## USE A SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT TOOL

So you've developed your calendar in a format that works for you, and you've put some thought into the key messages you want to share with your audience and the timing around that. At this point, using your social media calendar, you can easily stay on top of your social media in five minutes a day.

But what happens when you get really busy, or go to a conference, or take a vacation? Do you neglect your social media channels because you can't be everywhere at once? A social media management tool can prove indispensable in these situations.

Several social media management tools are available, both free and paid. At RDC Library, we currently use Hootsuite. Tweetdeck and Sprout Social are two other commonly used tools.

The advantages of using a social media management tool include:
• It's easy to add multiple accounts and multiple social media platforms. For example, my instance of Hootsuite includes my personal Facebook and Twitter as well as the Library's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Each separate account and platform has its own tab within the tool.
• When you log into the social media management tool, you're logged into all the associated social media accounts at once; no need to visit each account separately.
• You choose the content you want to view by customizing your dashboard so that the content most relevant to you is displayed first.
• Your dashboard includes multiple columns on one tab, so you can view all the important content for that social media platform at one time.
• Scheduling content is simple.

**SCHEDULE CONTENT IN ADVANCE**

In addition to using a social media management tool to see and post to all your accounts from one place, scheduling your content in advance can also be a real timesaver and ensures that you maintain a consistent social media presence even when you're busy. When we anticipate a particularly busy week at RDC Library, we look ahead on our content calendar and set up some scheduled, or automated, content for that week.

Facebook has this feature built right into their Pages; just choose the drop-down arrow beside the "publish" button to access the scheduling tool, then select the date and time you want that content to be published. Twitter also has this feature, but it is buried in your account's Twitter Ads section and requires a credit card to be on file, even for scheduled organic tweets. Hootsuite and other social media management tools have this functionality built in, and it works really well for scheduling Twitter and Facebook posts.

While scheduling has advantages, there are potential hazards:
• If you change or cancel an event, you must remember to delete the scheduled posts; failure to do so will result in confusion among your followers, leading to a negative experience.
• If your followers engage with your content by asking a question or commenting, you will miss the opportunity to quickly respond to, and therefore please, your followers if you are not actively monitoring your accounts at that time.

These potential pitfalls can be easily managed if you are aware of them in advance.

Social media is at its best when the content is fresh, so don't overdo your scheduled content. When you use scheduled content, try to still intersperse live content to remain engaging and relevant.

**CREATE RELEVANT CONTENT**

So you have your content calendar built, you've populated it with content ideas, and you're saving time by using a social media management tool and strategically scheduling content. Now, where do you get your actual content to publish?

At RDC Library, we have already created and curated content for use in our Libguides and on our website. So, when we're looking for content on time management or study skills or research skills, our own sources are our starting point.

Here's an example of creating social media posts around study skills. The posts will link to content our library has already created; further, we are going to encourage students to book an appointment with our Learning Skills Strategist by including that link in our post.

A message such as "Check out our study tips" with a link is pretty boring and will not result in much engagement. Instead, consider the message from the point of view of our followers: as a student, why would they care about this? In other words, what's in it for them? Looking instead through that lens, a more engaging message might be: "Good study skills will improve your grades, help you remember what you're learning, and help you use your time more effectively."

To increase engagement even further, we'll include an image (since we know that posts with images receive much more engagement than those consisting of just text or even text with a link) and a link to the guide where appointments can be booked.

Once we have the basic elements of the message, we're going to then tailor it for each social media platform:
• Facebook: use the wording described above; add the link and an image.
• Twitter: shorten the message to fit within Twitter's character limit; use a link shortener when adding the URL; include an image; include relevant hashtags.
• Instagram: the image is the primary vehicle for delivering the message; briefly describe the message in your caption and use relevant hashtags.
• Snapchat: create a short video (up to 10 seconds) of our Learning Skills Strategist saying the message, followed by a screen with the shortened URL for the appointment booking page.

These types of messages form our basic social media strategy, but we don't stop there. We reinforce our key messages by posting additional content from other sources, such as blogs, articles, other Facebook pages and Twitter accounts, or news sites.

We also watch other academic libraries that are doing a great job at social media. There's no shame in taking inspiration from another library; we're in the business of sharing, after all.

**EVALUATE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES**

Fostering an environment of constant evaluation will help you stay on top of your social media game. Make it a part of your regular work habit to check the statistics or analytics for your social media platforms. Evaluate the data and use it to inform your practice going forward.

Each of the four platforms used by RDC Library, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, has its own analytics.

*Facebook*
Once a month, we record the total number of posts we've created in the past month, the reach of each post, the number of likes (which is Facebook's measure of engagement) per post, and the total number of page likes. These statistics help us visualize the growth of our Facebook account over time and also allow us to gain an understanding of what types of posts resonate most with our users.

If you delve further into Facebook's analytics section, Facebook Insights, you can learn about the specific demographics of your fans and what time and days they are online. This can help you schedule your content to have maximum impact. You can also learn which posts were more engaging or less engaging. This data can help inform future practice.

*Twitter*
Twitter Analytics provides a monthly summary that includes how many tweets were sent, what the reach was (Twitter calls it impressions), how many mentions your account received, how many followers you gained (or lost), and how many people directly visited your profile. These measures allow us to reflect on past practice in order to improve.

*Instagram*
Instagram recently introduced Business accounts, which include an analytics component called Insights. Instagram Insights are provided weekly and include information on impressions (the total number of times your posts have been seen), reach (the number of unique accounts that have seen your posts), and profile views. You can also see your top posts for that week and find out some basic demographic information about your followers such as gender, age range, location, and what days and times they are active on Instagram.

*Snapchat*
Snapchat does not include an analytics feature, but there are still a couple of things you can find out. If you post your content to your Snapchat story, each discrete section of your story is active for 24 hours. During that 24-hour window, you can check at any time to see how many people have viewed your content. However, once the 24 hours are up, the content is gone and so is your assessment opportunity.

One other piece of usage information you can glean comes with Snapchat's paid on-demand geofilters, typically created for events. If you create and purchase an on-demand geofilter, you can find out how many people apply it to their snap and how many times a Snapchatter watched a snap with your geofilter applied.

**CONCLUSION**

Investing time in the planning process can pay big dividends throughout the year. Developing and using a social media calendar will simplify the ongoing management of your social media accounts. Carefully considering the timing of your key messages will increase engagement with users, as will examining the analytics for each social media platform to discover the types of posts and the timing that resonates with your users. Using a social media management tool and scheduling content will help you maintain a consistent social media presence.

If you take the time to create a strategy and plan ahead, you can sit back, reap the benefits, and manage your social media in 5 minutes a day. Want to see our strategy in place? Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/rdclibrary and follow us at @rdclibrary on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.

# REFERENCE

Chassé, A. (2016). The super awesome social media content calendar. Retrieved from:
http://ashleychasse.com/the-super-awsome-social-media-content-calendar/