

# How to Make Friends and Influence Students

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## Abstract

Given the widespread adoption of social media on the University of San Diego's (USD) campus, Copley Library formed a Social Media Committee to manage the library's social media presence with a mission to promote the library's services and events. To determine which social media platforms undergraduates were using the committee designed and administered a survey in the fall of 2013. The survey confirmed that USD undergraduates were still using Facebook and showed 56% use multiple social media sites. The conference session discussed Copley Library's implementation of four social networking platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter.

## Introduction

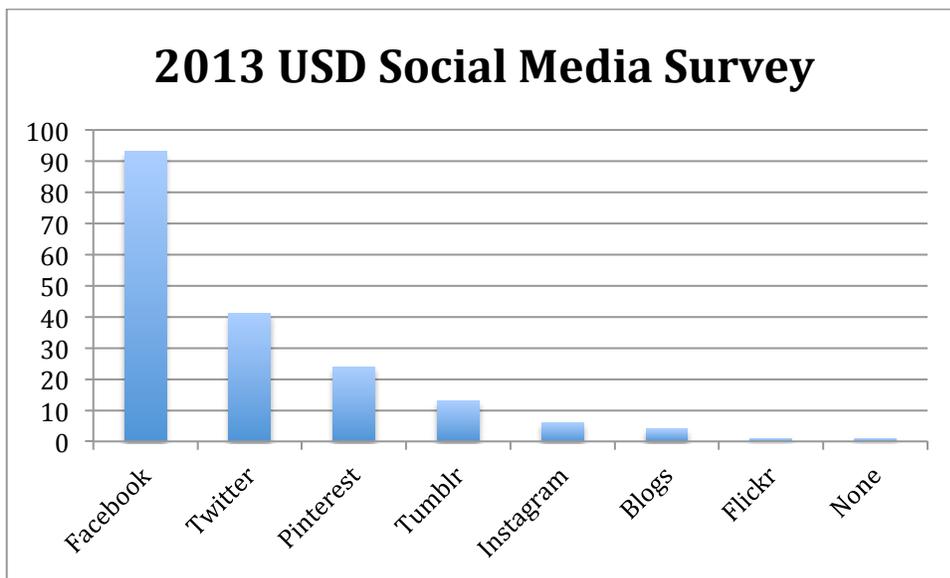
Academic librarians are striving to build audiences on multiple social media sites by creating engaging content and assessing their social media presence. To effectively reach users, librarians need to understand which sites students are using. The current PEW Research Internet Project *Social Media Update* and *Social Media Fact Sheet* provide an overview of the demographics of social media users. PEW's *Social Media Fact Sheet* showed 90% of online 18-29 year olds use social media (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Students use social media in their personal and academic lives. Two-thirds of faculty incorporate social media into their courses requiring students read, view, comment, or post on social media sites (Moran et al, 2011). A survey at two Long Island universities, found using social media was the second most common behavior in libraries (Paretta & Catalona, 2013).

Facebook is the most widely used site with 71% of online adults using it in 2013 (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Four of the most heavily used sites in addition to Facebook include: LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, and Instagram. Each site attracts a different user base. Facebook, established in 2004, continues to attract new users primarily older adults, while younger users are looking for sites where they will not bump into their grandparents (Saul, 2014). Pinterest, a visual site based on images allows users to create boards based on topics such as vacation destinations, wedding planning, recipes, craft projects, and more. Pinterest's user base is primarily women, with higher income, and a college education (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Twitter, a microblogging site, limits users to 140 character messages known as "tweets." Instagram, another visually based platform allows users to share pictures from their smart phones. Twitter and Instagram are both rapidly growing. The demographics for these two sites overlap and include 18-29 year-olds, minorities, and urban dwellers (Duggan & Smith, 2013).

In fall 2013 the Copley Library Social Media Committee (SMC) created a four-question survey to determine which social media sites students were using (see Appendix 1). The survey

was distributed at campus-wide event, Alcala Bazaar, to ensure a wide base of results. The committee distributed 100 surveys and obtained a 100% survey completion rate. Reviewing the results the committee discovered students overwhelmingly participate on Facebook and 56% of students participate on multiple social networks (See Graph 1). Students responded they were most interested in event information, followed by leisure, and educational material. Seventy-one percent indicated an interest in participating in contests. The committee viewed the survey as a success to connect directly with undergraduate students and confirm the most widely used social media platforms by USD students.

Graph 1



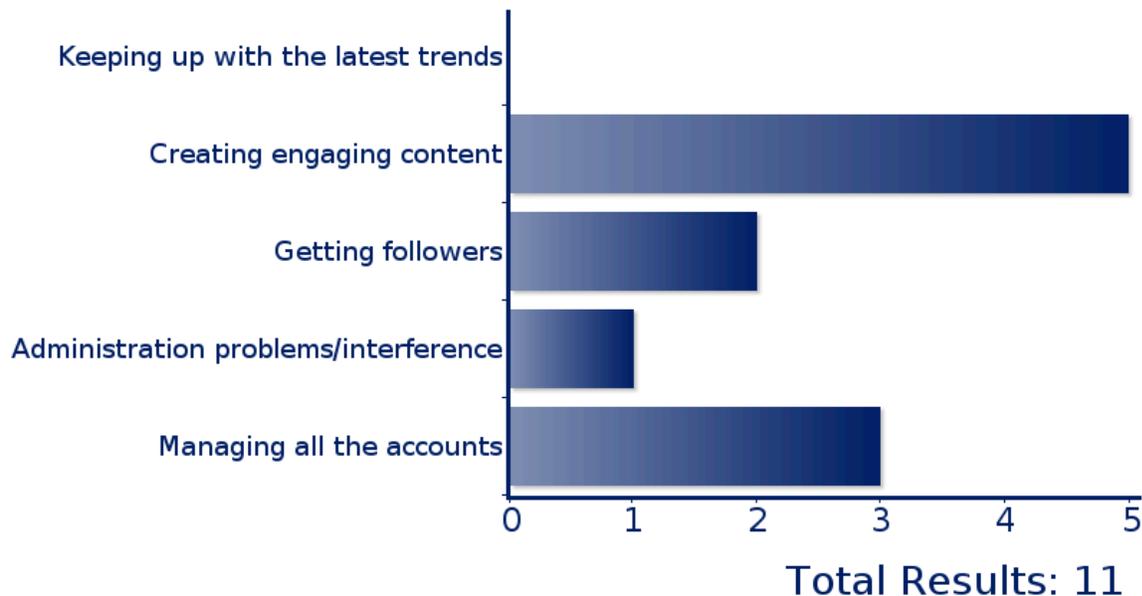
## Description

Academic librarians are using social media to market library services and communicate with their users. The interactive discussion session utilized face-to-face small group discussions with the integration of Twitter and Poll Everywhere to lead attendees through communicating their challenges with social media, to successful outreach efforts, implementation of new sites, and concluding with solutions to common problems. Using Poll Everywhere participants were able to respond to questions by texting, tweeting, or answering the poll question online. “What is your greatest challenge with Social Media?” was the starting point for the discussion (see Graph 2). Forty-five percent of attendees stated that “creating engaging content” was the most challenging for their library. Twenty-seven percent mentioned, “managing all the accounts.” Other attendees had challenges with obtaining followers (18 percent).

Graph 2

## What is your greatest challenge with using social media?

**i** Start this poll to accept responses



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Live Audience Polling

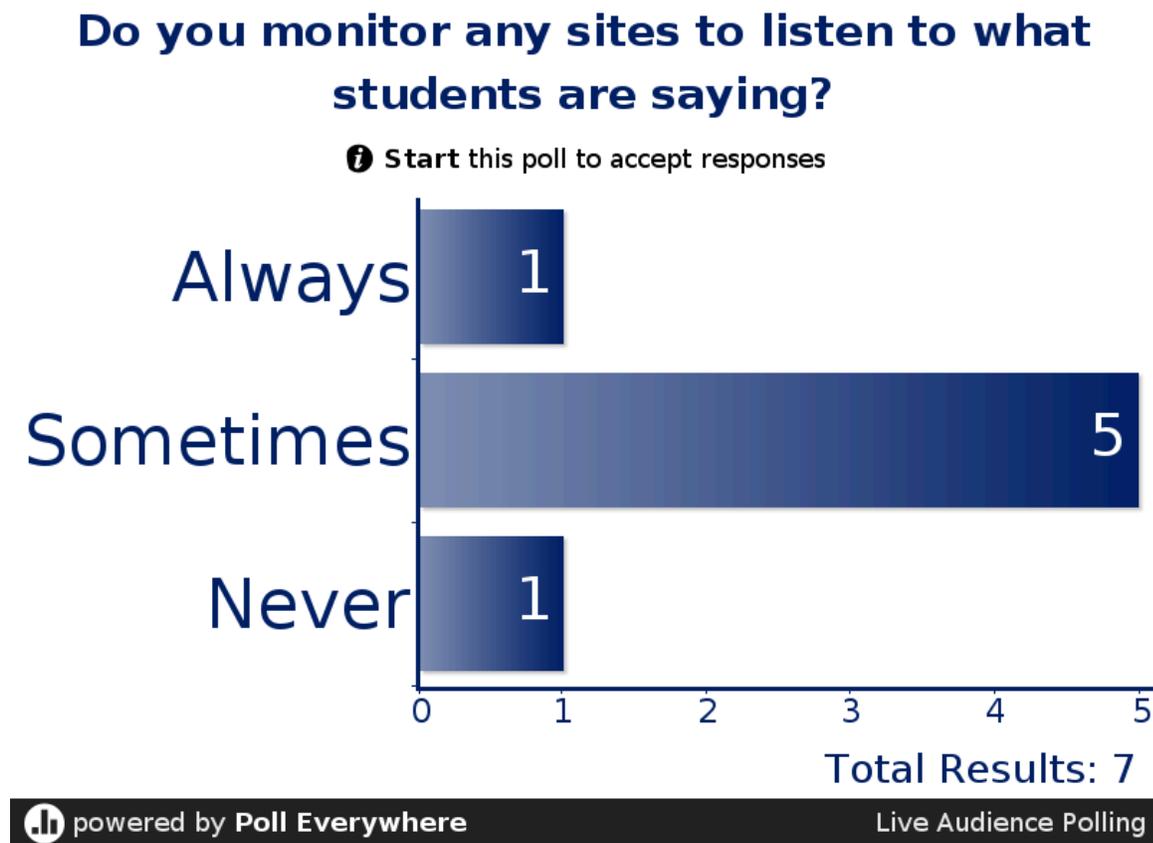
Social Media requires a commitment; it is not something that just happens when there are a few extra minutes. The literature on social media provides many practical strategies for building and maintaining a social media profile. Commitment, consistency, and a more casual tone are essential to a successful social media marketing strategy (Malczewski, 2013; Arruda, 2013). Ramsay's (2010) advice includes: having a communications strategy, developing a style, varying the strategy based on the channel, and updating content frequently.

Many librarians shared they were overwhelmed with being solely responsible for content and did not have time to dedicate to social media. Other issues discussed included the difficulty of gaining followers. Copley Library's SMC dealt with these common issues by creating a committee to share the workload, having a rotating schedule for posting, and following/liking campus organizations. To attract followers, it is important to keep content fresh, leverage relationships with campus partners, and widely publicize the library's social media presence. The group moved from sharing their challenges with social media to openly sharing successful posting ideas including contests, programs, promoting campus events, and shelfies (students taking pictures of themselves in the stacks or with their favorite books).

After the discussion on Pinterest and Instagram, participants shared whether they would be venturing into additional social media platforms. Many participants were considering joining new sites or had recently created an account with a new site. Besides posting content it is critical

to realize social media is a conversation and not a one-sided platform to distribute information. Students complain, praise, and document their experiences in a very public forum. The second Poll Everywhere asked if librarians monitored sites to listen to their users (See Graph 3). Surprisingly, 71% admitted sometimes monitoring sites. At the end of the session participants walked away with practical advice on using new sites, building, and maintaining a social media presence.

Graph 3



### Key Points

#### *Facebook*

With the advent of social media, Facebook has been the most popular platform in the last decade. Facebook is a great way to interact with a vibrant community, including university students. The platform offers users to “friend” anyone and everyone. It is an opportunity for many to catch up with old friends without having to pick up the telephone. Users are able to upload pictures, add status updates, like organizations, and comment and like pictures posted by

their friends. Many departments at USD have a Facebook page, including Copley Library. The committee researched other USD Facebook pages and liked them in order to become more visible to the entire USD community.

The Social Media Committee has heavily relied on the use of Facebook analytics. Besides the survey that was distributed to students, Facebook analytics helped the committee determine the best times to post and what students were really interested in. Glazer suggests that not all posts on Facebook should be related to the library. He says not to “think in terms of what news your library wants to disseminate. Think about your fans’ interests” (Glazer, 2012).

In addition to the 30-day Facebook campaign and Facebook contests, Copley Library is maintains the page by scheduling each member to post to the Facebook page for two weeks each semester. Each member is responsible for posting at least three times during their scheduled week. They are also responsible for monitoring any comments or messages that come through the page.

### *Pinterest*

As one of the top five highly used social media platforms, Pinterest has made its way into libraries. It is commonly recognized as a one-stop shop for people to save all of their favorite images and websites into one location. Pinterest is proving to be a great platform for many libraries to promote their resources, events, and services to its community. USD’s Copley Library has been dabbling with Pinterest and looking for ideas to be able to add content that is useful, yet will compel Pinterest users to add those pins to one of their boards.

With the flexibility that Pinterest offers, the pressure of adding pins on a timely schedule is not necessary. Unlike Facebook and Twitter, there is no time stamp. Copley Library’s SMC often pins several pins at once to create cohesive boards. “The most significant, and perhaps most often used, form of interaction is the “repin,” which is similar in concept to the “retweet” on Twitter, the “reblog” on Tumblr, and the “share” on Facebook” (Wilkinson, 2013, 3). With others “repinning” pins created by the library, it is a form of marketing because it becomes more widely visible to others.

### *Instagram*

Instagram is a picture sharing mobile app characterized by filters and hashtags. Originally it was an app available only to iPhone users, but once it became available to android devices, its popularity grew. According to Instagram, they currently have over 150 million users. Various departments at USD, including Copley Library, are still new to the mobile app. As it is becoming increasingly popular with the USD community, it is essential that departments jump on board. Copley Library started an Instagram account with a goal of posting 3 images a week to gain more followers. UCLA Powell Library was successful using Instagram. They started by investigating pictures taken of their library through their Twitter feed (Salomon, 2013). With permission from students who were taking these images of the library, they would repost them using a third-party app, as a way to interact with their student community.

Hashtags are a key component of organizing photos and finding photos with similar topics. Libraries can create their own institution-specific hashtags, but to build a following, it can be helpful to use popular ones like #flashbackfriday or #booklust. Before creating new hashtags, it is important to research hashtags that may have already been used by students. Many USD students were using #usdlibrary and #copleylibrary. Copley Library decided to continue with #usdlibrary and venture into other hashtags that would relate to Copley Library. Hashtags are

also utilized for contests. Followers can add an image to their account for a library Instagram contest and use the correct hashtag and their image is automatically entered. Hashtags are hyperlinked and searchable and the winner can be chosen at random or by votes from the Social Media Committee.

### *Twitter*

Twitter is an online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read short messages, called "tweets." 500 million tweets are sent per day by 255 million active twitter users according to Twitter, Inc. Fact Sheet (2014). Messages limited to 140 characters demand creativity and are quick and to the point. Twitter is widely used on the USD campus. The committee found that over 50 departments, deans, organizations, and sports teams have official Twitter accounts. The SMC creates short posts, using link shorteners such as Bitly or Tinyurl, and tweeting information for the benefit our students. The committee provides links to the library website for further information or registration to events. Social media accounts are linked to generate the same content on multiple platforms. The goal is to maintain a professional, yet engaging tone, to attract followers and keep them.

Twitter is one site that is important to monitor what is being public stated about your library. Bell (2012) wrote about the significance of connecting with users on Twitter even if the library does not tweet. By searching variations of #usdlibrary #copleylibrary it was simple to see student's comments about the library. Tweets about Copley Library ranged from the physical condition of the building (noise, temperature) to thanking librarians for workshops.

### *Conclusion*

New forms of social media will continue to appear and users will shift to new platforms. Librarians need to be aware of different sites, experiment, and be prepared to move to sites that students are using. Students are still using Facebook, but are also using Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter. Librarians need to provide consistent updates with an approachable, casual tone, and listen to their users on the social media sites.

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Appendix 1

**Social Media Usage Survey**

Are you a:

Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior    Graduate Student

Which of the following social media do you use? (Circle all that apply):

Facebook    Twitter    Tumblr    Pinterest    Flickr    Blogs    Other (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

What would you like to see most on the library's social media pages? (Circle one):

Leisure (Graphics, quotes, etc.)    Educational Material    Event Information    Resource Links

Would you be interested in participating in contests on the library's social media pages?

Yes    No