

Results for the Social Media Museum Research Survey  
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The purpose of this exploratory study was to advance understanding of how American museums are currently using social media. More specifically the study used an online survey to question museum practitioner's on current social media practices by looking at tools used, purposes, importance, effectiveness, measurement, satisfaction and success. The following is a bullet point summary of the findings.

#### General

- There was a total **315 fully completed surveys**.
- Of those who completed the survey, **90.2% currently use social media** at their museum.
- Results indicate that use of social media does **differ by museum size**.
- 10.5% of respondents represented small museums, **64.4% represented medium museums**, 24.1% represented large museums and 1% of respondents did not answer the question.<sup>1</sup>
- 34% of respondents indicated that they had discussed **legal** implications prior to social media implementation.
- The majority of museums are using **1-2 staff members** to work on their social media efforts for an average of **45 minutes a day** and targeting both new and current visitors equally but **concentrating on young professionals and families** more specifically.
- Those who describe their social media efforts as **successful** or very successful, are more likely to **spend over 30 minutes** a day on social media.
- **Time, staff and an understanding of key publics** online are seen as **needed** most to work towards social media **effectives** among respondents.
- **29%** of respondents are **somewhat satisfied** with their current use of social media, while 42% are somewhat unsatisfied to very unsatisfied with current efforts.

#### Uses

- In general American museums using social media believe that **it is important** to do so and that using social media **is improving the speed of communication** with museum publics.
- Respondents answered as using social media most often for **event listings or posting reminder notices (66.4%)**, **to reach larger or new audiences (50 %)** and to post online **promotions or announcements (47.3)**.
- Practitioners also believe that **ease of user navigation** and **branding** are **important** elements of the medium.
- **Facebook** is seen as being **most effective** regardless of museum size among respondents.

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this study, respondents were grouped into representing small, medium and large museums. The divisions follow that small museums are considered those with budgets of under \$350,000, medium museums with budgets between \$350,000 and \$5M, and large museums with budgets over \$5M.

- **Twitter** is seen as **second** most effective.
- MySpace was rated as the most **ineffective** social media site, regardless of museums size.
- Scribd, Second Life, Digg, Picasa, and Delicious are being **used the least**.

#### Perceived success and tactics

- **50%** of respondents answered that they believed their current efforts were “**somewhat successful**.” 29% responded that their current social media efforts are “successful” or “very successful.”
- Those who describe their social media efforts as **successful** or very successful, tend to **use social media for more dialogic efforts** than respondents with less social media success.
- A majority of those describing their current efforts as successful or higher rated **number of comments** and **tone** as either **important or extremely important**.
- Tactics more influential in encouraging dialogic engagement online are believed to be **quality of content** and **type of social media site** used.
- Those that use social media more frequently for dialogic engagement tend to rate **direct calls for fan participation** as more **motivational** than those who use social media in that capacity less frequently.
- Practitioners believe that social media only **somewhat influences visitor behaviors**. However, the greater the perceived success of current social media efforts, the more museum practitioners believe the use of social media influences visitor behaviors.

#### Measurement

- **Google Analytics, Google Alerts, and Facebook Stats** are the top three social media measuring tools used most often.
- **Only 35%** of respondents answered as having set social media **goals** or objectives but of those who do, **89% measure or evaluate those goals** or objectives.
- There is no correlation with whether or not a museum set goals or is using a measurement tool and how successful they perceive their social media efforts are.
- Of those who take measurements, **40%** of respondents answered as taking **measurements monthly** and 25% answered as taking measurements quarterly.

Results indicate that American museums believe becoming involved with social media is important but are not using it for high levels of dialogic engagement. For the moment, museums are mostly involved with one-way communication strategies using mostly Facebook and Twitter to focus on event listing, reminders, reaching larger or newer audiences, and promotional messaging. However there does seem to be some evidence to suggest that museums are trying to increase their use of social media for more two-way and multi-way communication strategies. There are also some major limitations to the study. The sample may not be representative all American museums using social media as there is currently no formal list of all American museums using social media available. Also, questions from the current study focused often on practitioners’ attitudes and perceptions. Many answers are subjective in nature and are a matter of personal opinion. There was not a way either to examine the effects over time of use.

Thank you so much again for your participation!