Case study

Maintaining successful profiles across multiple social media platforms

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The Horniman Museum and Gardens in London has a very visible and varied social media presence. Posting a wide variety of content to multiple platforms, it could be assumed that there is a huge operation behind the social media activity. In fact, there are only two people in the digital team, so how do they maintain this level of activity? Katie Moffat spoke to **Adrian Murphy***, the museum's Digital Media Manager, to find out.*

What does your role include and who else is in your team?

I am responsible for our overall digital strategy and implementation including digital marketing, the website and our social media activity. I work alongside a digital assistant and that's the extent of our specific digital team.

The Horniman is active on many different platforms, how do you ensure they are kept up to date?

We take the approach of encouraging and supporting other individuals at the Horniman to update some of our social profiles and we do this for a number of reasons. It makes more sense logistically for our colleagues to share updates about their work directly to the platforms than it does for them to be sending it to us and us doing it. In addition, this approach means we end up with much more interesting content. With Instagram for example, the photos come directly from five or six different individuals: some of these are staff based in our collections stores, some are working in our conservation and learning departments.

Of course, our team has an overall view of what exhibitions or events are coming up and how these fit into our social media activity but a good deal of the day-to-day updates on some platforms don't come from the digital team.

The content that is shared to your social profiles seems to be specific to each platform, how do you manage that?

It's partly planned and partly spontaneous. Certain types of content works better on each platform and it's about understanding those nuances.

For example, we set up a specific board on Pinterest dedicated to images of walruses (our most iconic images) or images around Horniman's Tea. This gives a great way to engage people who already love our walrus, maybe to learn a little more about walruses. Or the Tea Board gives an overview of the heritage of the Museum and Gardens' founder in a visual way. When you look at all these images together, they paint an interesting picture.

To many people, Tumblr still seems a fairly niche platform. Why did you decide to use it for the museum?

We use Tumblr mainly to showcase artifacts that are held in our stores and not on display. As our staff are going through the collections (during a collections review project), they find amazing, fascinating, unique objects. We wanted a way to showcase them, and Tumblr seemed like the right platform for unique, interesting (mainly) photographic content.

On a practical level Tumblr is very easy to update since it can be done on the phone via the mobile app. This means that it was relatively straightforward for the team to take a photo, add a description and upload it without too much additional work. Using a shared login also means that multiple people can feed into the same Tumblr blog.

We were fortunate that the blog was featured by Tumblr in their spotlight section, where they feature what they see as good Tumblrs. This helped us particularly in the early days, to attract an initial group of engaged followers.

Any advice for those arts and cultural organisations who want to be much more active in social media but don't know where to start?

It can be a good idea to start with a discrete project so that you can experiment and learn from it. Having an end date means you can then review the activity and demonstrate to others what worked. It's also important to try and find social media enthusiasts in your organisation, those that are already using social media in a personal capacity or who are generally positive about it. It's much easier to get things done when you have others within the organisation that are pro social media. I also think it's a good idea for organisations to relax a little bit when it comes to social media. Yes, you may need simple guidelines and a bit of training for staff but ultimately you have to trust people and let them get on with it.

http://www.horniman.ac.uk/

http://in-the-horniman.tumblr.com/

https://twitter.com/HornimanMuseum

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