

# Hopkins County-Madisonville Public Library

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING AND ONLINE ACCOUNTS FOR THE LIBRARY**

Adopted: 12/15/2022

The Library strives to connect with users in multiple environments, both in person and online. A prevalent communication channel is social media. For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media sites typically have their own terms of service, privacy, acceptable behavior, and stated consequences for violating those terms of service. The Library will make a good faith effort to understand these terms, especially as it might impact patron privacy.

Hopkins County-Madisonville Public Library creates accounts on these sites for the express purpose of representing its mission online and providing a forum to discuss issues included in its mission, including collections, programs, and spaces. The intended audience for this forum are those who reside in our official service area.

The ever-changing nature of the Internet requires the Library and its employees to adopt a healthy mix of availability and caution, as some social media tools have the possibility to reach a wide array of patrons while putting our actions under a very visible (and sometimes harsh) light. Additionally, current court cases make a strong argument that opening social media for public comment creates a designated public forum, as it does in the analogous situation where a governmental entity opens a meeting room or exhibit space for public use. As such, First Amendment principles apply to HCMPL's social media platforms.

This policy focuses on the use of social networking tools maintained by employees for personal reasons when engaged in work-related activities or through which the employee could be seen as representing the Library in an official capacity. The policy also includes other online accounts that may be used by an employee for work-related purposes. Representation of the Library includes two scenarios:

- Employee activity on a platform bearing the Library's name or branding.
- An employee's use of the Library's name or her/his position with the Library as a possible indication that the Library's approval and authority rest with the statements that he or she makes in a platform not bearing the Library's name or branding.

### **Approval of Online Presences**

The Administration or its designees must approve any and all representations of the Library on the Internet. No Library employee may set up a social networking account or any other online account of any kind that represents the Library without this approval. Failure to receive approval before securing any type of online account and/or failure to receive approval to represent the official stance of the Library in any manner in an Internet comment, blog post, or

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any other social media platform will be considered a very serious offense and could result in termination of employment.

HCMPL has a designated team of social media administrators who are responsible for monitoring and responding to public comments, posts, and questions. Library staff and representatives are to remain neutral in library-related posts and in response to questions – offering resources for information that help people make informed decisions. Any questions that cannot be answered by social media administrators should be referred to the Director or investigated further with a more detailed response to follow an initial acknowledgement of inquiry.

### **Approved Uses of Social Media**

The Library will use social networking to:

- Announce programs
- Post news such as special events, holiday hours, weather-related closings, exhibits, and new item arrivals
- Update resources
- Remind users of important resources
- Announce new services
- Serve as a public relations/marketing tool
- Share public service announcements from local, apolitical, nonprofit organizations and official local, state, and federal governmental agencies. If there are questions about sharing any particular public service announcement, then consult with the Director.

The types of content that will not be posted are those not protected by the strictures of the First Amendment, as well as content that is not related to the Library's mission:

- Fighting words, graphic or gratuitous violence, vulgar language, profanity, nudity, obscene or indecent language or sexual or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libelous statements
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Comments totally unrelated to the content of the forum
- Hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Misrepresentations of the commenter's identity or affiliation
- Postings/comments in violation of the copyright, trademark right, or other intellectual property right of any third party

Content, including comments, posted to the Library's social media pages will be monitored and must comply with this policy and social media site service agreements, privacy, and acceptable

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behavior policies. The Library reserves the right to report any violation of the social media platforms terms of use to the social media platform. The Library may also take actions to enforce this policy, including removing, muting, or hiding inappropriate contact or blocking users. The Library's response to inappropriate activity will be driven by the values expressed in its mission. This policy will be implemented in a viewpoint-neutral, non-discriminatory manner. The Library does not hide or delete comments or block users based on viewpoint, and they do not block users for isolated violations of the policy. Repeated violations of this policy may result in the inability of the author to comment on future posts for a limited period of time.

### **Reconsideration**

In the event that the Library removes content, mutes, or bans a user from a social media platform for some period of time, the user will be notified via message in the platform. Within 30 days of the Library's action, the user may appeal the decision in writing. The written appeal will be reviewed by a professional staff committee to determine whether to uphold the Library's action. The committee will have 30 days to respond in writing to the appellant.

No posts will be removed without review from the said professional staff committee, and no content will be removed upon the authority of a single staff member or administrator.

### **Personal Accounts and Activities**

Staff should not use personal accounts to represent the library even if they are an approved social media administrator. The Library assumes no responsibility for personal accounts that are maintained by its staff members. If a staff member (both approved social media administrators and unapproved social media administrators) include HCMPL as the subject of content on their personal pages and social media accounts, then they are encouraged to clearly state that they are not speaking on behalf of the Library and are encouraged to always be honest and accurate when posting. Participation on a professional and library-related blog or listserv does not require approval. The Library encourages its staff members to use and participate in these venues. The personal views and opinions of staff members using these tools, however, should not be considered the opinion or endorsement of the Library. If HCMPL is the subject of the content that Library staff create in these venues, Library staff are encouraged to state that they are not speaking on behalf of the Library and are encouraged to always be honest and accurate when posting.