

Quick guide to using social media

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site where people can interact with each other, with brands that they like through their own profile (or wall, or timeline) or through groups. Facebook collects significantly more personal data than other sites, and the nature of the interactions that people have mean that they tend to connect with friends, rather than celebrities or people they don't know with similar interests. Brands and celebrities will often have pages or groups that people can join. Groups also exist for people with common interests.

Groups can open a page to inform members and non-members about ClfA's work and any group events or hold discussions about important issues.

Groups have members and administrators. Administrators can carry out management functions (adding new members, creating events, removing posts, making other members administrators, blocking problem members etc.) while members are able to post, and comment.

Administrators can add people to the group, without them asking to join, simply by typing their names in to the add friends to group box and people can also add themselves to the group, but requests to join need to be approved by an administrator. Anybody who is a member of the group can be made an administrator.

There are a number of different settings on groups. You can change all of them under the 'Edit group' function. The front page of this area covers the basic settings of the group. The 'About' tab shows the members, the 'events' tab shows events, the 'photos' tab shows photos and the 'files' tab shows any files that have been uploaded.

Twitter

Twitter is a social networking website which allows users to post 'microblogs'. These are updates about what you are doing, or a link or mention which cannot exceed 140 characters. Although this seems very restrictive, the range of URL shortening tools and the use of @mentions and #tags means that you can say quite a lot in only a few words.

For an organisation Twitter is a useful way of making links with other users in a similar business sphere, with its customers and also people who are generally interested in its work. It can be a really useful way of gaining insight and receiving information, as well as disseminating it. For the Groups it's a great way of getting our message out to more people, especially casual browsers of heritage. It can drive traffic to our website and allow us to engage with our members, potential members and stakeholders more quickly.

Twitter is a speedy, instant resource. The level of traffic on the site means that posts don't stay visible in an individual's stream for very long. For a message to last, it needs to be retweeted or become a #tag which is used by multiple users when they are talking about it, so that it starts 'trending'. Using a tag also makes something more easily searchable, so users looking for information on twitter can find it. The #tag has been used to good effect for campaigns such as #ilovethenhs. There are a number of twitter memes that users take part in regularly that use #tags, for example #followfriday, where users recommend other users to their followers as interesting people to follow.

Twitter is best used frequently. Ultimately the aim is to get lots of followers, be retweeted and develop the use of #tags for its campaigns. In order to do this, Groups need to make sure it's twitter feed is interesting, and build relationships with its followers.

How to ‘tweet’

An individual post on twitter is called a ‘tweet’. You can post your own tweets, you can also repost other people’s tweets (called ‘retweeting’), and reply to tweets from other people.

Posting a tweet is very easy. If you look at the homepage, you will see there is a box at the top of the screen where you can compose a tweet. Write what you wish to post in here and click ‘tweet’

When you start typing in the box, it gets bigger, and there is a counter underneath that shows you how many characters you have left. If you go over your character allowance, the tweet won’t post.

Shortening URL links

You might want to include a link to a URL (website link) in a tweet. These can be very long and can often take you over your character limits. If you want to post a URL it’s useful to use a URL shortening service. These are websites which will automatically generate a much shorter URL alias that you can post instead. Some commonly used shortening sites are below and there are many more out there.

TinyURL – <http://tinyurl.com>

bitly - <https://bitly.com/>

They all work in much the same way. You paste the full URL into a box on the website, and it will produce a shortened version for you. Use this version.

Using #tags

#tags are a way of tagging your tweets so that they are easier to find by other twitter users who may be looking for information about the subject you are tweeting about. Twitter gets 140 million tweets per day on average, so tweets can quite easily go unnoticed. Twitter has a search facility that allows users to search by key word, but with that level of traffic you may still not get what you need.

#tags are mostly used for campaigns, either advertising campaigns by brands/companies, awareness campaigns which are either run by advocacy groups or appear spontaneously on twitter in response to current affairs, or are used as part of twitter memes¹. If you want to post about something that already has an established #tag it is useful to use that tag somewhere within your post so that your post can get picked up and read by other people interested in that subject. You can post a #tag anywhere within a tweet, but it is important to make sure you don’t post a space between the # and the rest of the tag, or it won’t become a live link and won’t show in search results.

Retweeting & Replying

If somebody else posts something on twitter, that you find interesting, and which may be of interest to your followers, you can repost it. This is called retweeting it. The method for retweeting has changed significantly over the past few years, you used to have to do it manually, but now twitter have developed a handy retweet button. Replying works in exactly the same way as retweeting.

¹ a meme is a ‘unit of cultural transference’. It’s a term that was coined by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* as a means of explaining how an idea, style or behaviour can transfer from one person to another within a culture, in a similar manner to genes being passed on through inheritance. Nowadays the term is mostly used to describe online ‘fun’ postings that people engage in on social networking sites, like doing quizzes to find out what type of muppet they are, sharing a viral photograph (for example ‘lolcats’ or ‘everybody hates a Tory’) which can be funny or serious, or posting chain letter style instructions to their friends or followers to undertake certain behaviours, for example to comment, in order to be assigned a colour that the poster associates with them.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional based social networking site. In some respects it is similar to sites like Facebook, but the focus is on what people's professional lives are about, not what their personal lives are about. People make connections with other people who they have a professional connection with, and update details that relate to their skills, past employment and career objectives. As a result people are more likely to make connections with people who they don't 'know', because those connections may be useful for their career.

Like Facebook, there are options to join groups too. CfA has a group on LinkedIn, which is only open to CfA members and group members can post discussions here.

Storify

Storify is a website that lets you create a full story that is publishable from otherwise transient postings on a variety of social media websites. It is in effect a publishing platform for online content.

Once you are logged in, click on 'create story' at the top of the page, and you will be taken to the creation page. The left-hand side of the screen is where you arrange your content, while you use the right hand side of the screen to find elements to add.

Start by giving the story a title and description, and then using the icons on the top right hand side of the screen, select what type of media you are looking for by clicking on the icon and then using the search function to find the content (the search results will be displayed underneath the icons and search box). Once you have found the content you would like to use, drag it to the left hand side of the screen. You can arrange your content in any way you like, and add in text as well as items from other websites.

Once you are happy with it, click 'Publish'.

Flickr

Flickr is a photo hosting and sharing site. It is one of the larger providers out there, and is used by a lot of professional, and semi-professional photographers as a way of showcasing their work. A number of organisations also use Flickr. It crosses over between a hosting tool and a social media platform. Unlike the other social media tools we use, Flickr has a paid account option.

As well as having individual accounts, there are also groups on Flickr where users with common interests can share photographs and discuss issues around them.

You can organise photos in different ways on Flickr. Your photo stream will be chronological, which isn't always the most useful way of sorting them. Flickr also allows you to create sets and collections. There are restrictions on how many of these you can have with a free account, but with a paid account you can have an unlimited number.

Sets are groups of photos with a common theme which the user decides. Collections are groups of photo sets which have a wider common theme, again that the user decides. You can organise sets into collections, but you need to have a pro account to be able to do this. If you have a pro account the buttons to create a collection will be available, and you can create a new set, give it a title and description in the same way that you create a set.