

HCT Digital 2021 – Using Social Media

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The three main platforms

The three most-used social media platforms in the UK are Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Each works quite differently and suits different uses.

For the greatest reach and engagement, we suggest using a Facebook group and cross-posting content to Twitter and Instagram accounts if you have them. Facebook groups will suit most heritage communities very well.



How much do they cost?

Instagram, Twitter and Instagram are all free to use, although you can pay them to promote posts or to give you traffic reports that show how many users are interacting with your content. These paid functions can be useful for large organisations who are creating large, targeted campaigns but they have little benefit for medium or small heritage groups.

What do they do?

Social Media platforms allow you to send messages and post status updates to keep in touch with friends and family. You can also share different types of content, like photos and links. Sharing something on social media is a bit different from other types of online communication. The things you share on social media are more public than emails or private messaging which means they'll usually be seen by many other people, although you can set Facebook and Instagram posts to be completely private, or share them with a few chosen people.



What is Instagram?

Instagram is a Facebook-owned social media platform that emphasises photo and video sharing via its mobile app. Users can take, edit, and publish visual content for their 'followers' and other viewers to interact with through likes, comments, and shares.

According to Facebook there are one billion Instagram users, or roughly 1-in-6 of the world's population. The heavily under-35 demographic suggests that nearer 1-in-3 of the world's under-35s is an Instagram user.

It is a very visual platform based around the idea of taking 'instant photographs', a concept that deliberately looks back to the Polaroid era. Originally the platform only allowed square 1:1 photography and heavily encouraged the use of effects filters to simulate vintage/artistic photography.

To make posts on Instagram you'll need to log in with a Facebook account or create a new Instagram account. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are all free to register.

What is Instagram good for?

Instagram is perfect for people with an interest in taking and publishing pictures.

Each user's collection of posts is called a 'Feed'. A number of functions that allow users a huge amount of control over the visual design of their feed and popular Instagram Feeds are often highly visually-curated.

A 2019 audit suggested that Heritage institutions are under-represented on Instagram, partly because the under-35 demographic isn't a large part of the 'traditional' heritage audience.

However, traditions change and it's becoming increasingly apparent that venues offering weddings, baptisms and other family services are finding that Instagram helps them reach new audiences – and customers – far more easily. **LandmarkSocial's** Instagram feed ([click here to open](#)) promotes small heritage sites and is well worth a look.

Disadvantages of Instagram

The first disadvantage isn't really a disadvantage – the Instagram demographic is very young when compared to other platforms. Some older communities are terrified at the idea of engaging with these audiences but soon find that engagement brings new perspectives.

Users who don't like taking photographs or who aren't very happy with the photographs they can be put off by Instagram's photo-centric nature, while the linear nature of replies (similar to Twitter) can make it hard to browse conversations.



LandmarkSocial champions heritage projects of all sizes



What is Twitter?

Twitter is a 'microblogging' system that allows you to send and receive short posts called tweets. Tweets can be up to 280 characters long and can include links to relevant websites and resources. Twitter users follow other users. If you follow someone you can see their tweets in your twitter 'timeline', and you can choose to follow people and organisations with similar interests to you.

You can create your own tweets or you can retweet information that has been tweeted by others. Retweeting means that information can be shared quickly and efficiently with a large number of people.

You can view other people's tweets without registering but you'll need a user account to tweet your own content. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are all free to register.

What is Twitter good for?

Twitter has become increasingly popular in the heritage sphere, particularly with academic users, as well as students, policymakers, politicians and the general public. It has now become the social media platform of choice for many.

The short nature of tweets means that Twitter is widely used by smartphone users who don't want to read long content items on-screen.

Twitter lets you:

- Promote your hard work, for example by providing links to your blog stories, journal articles and news items
- reach a large number of people quickly through tweets and retweets
- follow the work of other groups with similar interests
- build relationships with experts and other followers
- keep up-to-date with the latest news and developments, and share it with others instantly
- reach new audiences
- seek feedback about your work and give feedback to others
- follow and contribute to discussions on events e.g. Heritage Open Days or #ChapelTalks
- express who you are as a community

Disadvantages of Twitter

The 'linear' style of Twitter is almost like a ticker-tape news feed. This can make it hard to browse the posts of any particular group and 'main' tweets can be buried in chains of additional comments and retweets. That makes it good for news feeds but less than ideal for community groups who want to create a browsable, engaging online presence.



What is Facebook?

Facebook is a social networking site that makes it easy for people to connect and share with family and friends online. Originally designed for college students, Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg while he was enrolled at Harvard University. By 2006, anyone over the age of 13 with a valid email address could join Facebook. Today, Facebook is the world's largest social network, with more than 1 billion users worldwide.

Facebook collates posts as personal or Group 'pages', and allows other users to interact with posts by commenting on them, by adding media, or by sharing them to their own pages

What is Facebook good for?

Facebook is a great platform for conversations and for sharing media. This style of interaction works particularly well in Local History groups. A number of HCT volunteers have already set up Facebook groups and are finding that they're getting lots of new engagement with local communities and, because numerous people can run a Facebook Group, a heritage asset can have a thriving Facebook page without one person having to do all the work.

Facebook lets you:

- Promote your hard work, for example by posting stories, journal articles and news items
- reach and engage with a large number of people quickly through posts and shares
- follow the work of other groups with similar interests
- build relationships with experts and other followers
- keep up-to-date with the latest news and developments, and share it with others instantly
- reach new audiences
- seek feedback about your work and give feedback to others
- contribute to discussions about events e.g., Heritage Open Days or #ChapelTalks
- express who you are as a community

Disadvantages of Facebook

Facebook allows you to use your login details to access other online services with whom they have an agreement. This includes Instagram, Photoshop Online (covered in another guide), and many more sites. This is very useful unless you want to delete your Facebook account later. If you *do* want to use your Facebook login in lots of places be aware that deleting your account will stop you being able to login to other sites with the same details.



Coanwood, Featherstone Lambley History Group (+Hartleyburn Eals Plenmeller)

Public group · 371 members



About Discussion Announcements Rooms Members Events Media Files

Create a public post...

Room Photo/Video Tag people

New activity

4 February at 15:35
FEATHERSTONE SCHOOL 1927. BOTTOM ROW, THIRD FROM RIGHT.



19 16 comments · 1 share

Like Comment Share

About

Local History page for Coanwood, Lambley and Featherstone, including Harleyburn, Park Village, Kellah, Eals and Plenmeller areas

- Public: Anyone can see who's in the group and what they post.
- Visible: Anyone can find this group.
- Coanwood · Featherstone, Northumberland
- General group

Recent media



See all

The Coanwood, Featherstone and Lambley History Group gets regular posts from members. These posts usually generate a lively chat and bring forth more memories. It's also common to see mini-reunions happening in these chats.

What should I post?

Look at similar groups on social media and see what kinds of things they post. What works well for them, and is it something you could try? Try some of the following ideas too:

Take a picture of your workspace	Audiences love to see 'behind the scenes', particularly with heritage sites. Show a view that visitors wouldn't normally see!
Post a quizzy question	Quiz your audience, can they identify Object X? What year do they think this photo was taken?
Answer an FAQ	Answer a frequently-asked-question
Introduce latest group members	Put faces to names, it grows interest and engagement, and brings more people to look at your posts.
Share something popular	If there's something that visitors always love then you should show it online, the chances are that your digital audience will be just as transfixed.
Interview a visitor	Ask people about their experience at your site, and share the good word.
Share something funny	The whole world loves something funny, and funny posts always do very well. It might be a cartoon that you and your group can relate to, or just a funny picture that brightened your day, but if it made you laugh then other readers will probably enjoy it too.
Share a community event	Events are the bread-and-butter of most heritage sites, so talk about what's coming up, and talk about how well something went. Show the preparations, or show pictures of it in action.
Share a story	Don't be afraid to write detailed articles – people <i>will</i> read them and engage with them, but be sure to have a good picture that can engage users who don't want to read as much.
Share someone else's content	If you see a good post, share it on your own feed. This can bring new readers to your pages and increases the likelihood of other groups sharing your content too.
Share a Throwback Thursday	#TBT, or Throwback Thursday, started as an Instagram tradition that saw nostalgic images posted on Thursday. Or sometimes Tuesday. Heritage groups might find less use for this given that much of their archive is 'throwback', but using the #TBT hashtag in your post will bring more readers.
Post something seasonal	Post seasonal greetings and perhaps talk about upcoming events at your own site. If you've got some photogenic snow then you should definitely post that.
Post something topical	Don't be afraid to post about current events and how they affect your group or your site. Just remember the golden rule: no politics .
Share a video of something you love	Short videos of events, artefacts, attractive views of your site, unusual views of your site, short explanations of features in your building... video engages very well. Try to keep it under 3 minutes, or if you make a longer video create a short 'teaser' that covers the main points.
If it works well... do it again!	It's obvious really, when you find out what kind of thing works well on your page... do more of it!

Difficult Conversations

We all know that there are people who like to be difficult or rude just for the sake of it, and the internet has given many of them a new place to practice their sport.

You're most likely to find trolls, to give them their modern internet name, in discussions about sport or politics, but they find their way into the furthest nooks and crannies of the internet.

Dealing with difficult people

If you come across somebody like this in your Group, or if they message you to complain about something... you are not on your own. If you're involved in an upsetting interaction you should reach out to somebody for help and support. Some exchanges can be quite distressing until somebody helps you to take a step back and gives you support.

If an online interaction is upsetting you then please ask for help from a friend, or a colleague, or get in touch with Viv (HCT Community Officer) or mike@frithheritage.org (Digital Consultant) to get help in dealing with the situation.

You are not on your own.

Prevention strategies

There's not much that can be done to stop horrible people from being horrible, but by having clear rules for your group you can set the tone for discussions and make it clear that negative behaviour isn't tolerated.

Set some simple rules, and post them publicly. For example:

- No shaming, politics or swearing
- Don't comment on bad grammar/spelling
- Keep everything polite and respectful

Getting Further Help

Viv Cooling is the HCT's Local Community Officer and PM of the HCT's Digital 2021 project. For help with digital activities please contact her at vcooling@theccct.org.uk, or contact the project Digital Consultant at mike@frithheritage.org.