

For the purpose of this policy, Forbush Memorial Library defines social media as any social networking platform, including a personal or third party's website, to which the library staff, employees, officials, and volunteers ("library staff") post content. The primary purpose of the use of such social media websites is to publicize library services, resources, programs, events, and news in accordance with the library's mission. While library staff have the right to participate as private citizens in public fora and in discussions on social media platforms on matters of public concern, that right is balanced against the legitimate interests of the library in promoting professionalism and accountability, responsible and mature judgment, confidence and trust among constituents in the fairness of government, and in the efficiency of the public services it performs. The goal of this policy is to ensure that the use of social media advances, rather than impedes, the operation of the library.

To that end, this policy establishes guidelines for library staff's use of social media for library-related purposes. Employees whose employment is governed by law are subject only to those provisions of this policy not specifically regulated by law or agreement.

General standards

Content shared on the library's social media accounts is either originally created messages, graphics, photos, videos, and audio, or content from other sources vetted by the staff that aligns with the library's mission and goals. The library will comply with copyright laws regarding its social media content. Sharing or linking to content online does not mean that the library endorses or is affiliated with the content or content creator.

Forbush Memorial Library social media accounts are intended to constitute governmental speech designed to convey only the library's official policies and sentiments. The library's social media accounts are intended to support and discuss library-related services, resources, events, and news.

The library is a municipal department, and any content maintained in the library's social media accounts is public record and will be archived in accordance with the Massachusetts Public Records Law and municipal records retention schedule. The library is responsible for responding to any public records request for social media content completely and accurately. Content includes anything that is edited or removed by the library pursuant to this policy.

Content created for social media is the intellectual property of the library and may be shared or promoted to other social media accounts from library accounts by sharing or liking as appropriate to each social networking platform.

Community members who have a concern about a library social media post can submit a written complaint to the library director, who will make a decision on whether constitutional principles and compliance with this policy would permit removal or revision of the post. Upon request, the library director's decision may be reviewed by the Library Board of Trustees during a regular meeting. All decisions by the Library Board of Trustees will be final. Whenever possible, the library will inform the complainant of the library's decision.

Library staff responsibilities

Library employees who are responsible for managing library social media and posting content shall post in a professional manner including, but not limited to, checking facts, citing sources, avoiding copyright infringement, and correcting errors before and, when necessary, after posting. Social media content is typically written using language like “we” and “our”, as the content is from the library and not from any particular staff member. Staff members are prohibited from using library social media content to express personal opinions. They are not prohibited from participating as private citizens on matters of public concern.

As with any other content provided by the library, information that is shared by library staff on library social media is selected with the intention of meeting the diverse interests and needs of patrons and the community. However, the decision to share or post a particular item does not necessarily indicate the library's, the Library Board Trustees', or the Town of Westminster's expressed or implied approval or endorsement of its contents.

The library reserves the right to like and follow other social media accounts such as other libraries, industry commissions/associations/consortiums, publishers, authors, literary figures, Town of Westminster departments, governmental bodies, or content that otherwise aligns with the library's mission and goals.

Social media messaging

When allowed by a specific social media provider, public users may interact with the library through a platform's direct or private messaging function. No user should have any expectation of privacy when interacting with library social media as even direct and private messages constitute a public record and will be archived in accordance with the Massachusetts Public Records Law.

Other considerations

A related consideration is staff and volunteers' personal use of social media. If staff or volunteers mention a connection to the library on their personal social media accounts, anything on the personal account reflects on the library. Staff and volunteers have a right to speech and privacy, but they also have a responsibility to uphold the library's mission and values and to exercise good judgment.