Social Media Policy
Normal Public Library

Purpose:
Normal Public Library ("Library") welcomes conversation and engagement on its social media platforms. Social media is often the easiest way for public to stay informed about Library business or to receive urgent alerts and updates.

The Library uses external social media as a public service to:
- share news and information about services, programming and events;
- learn about the community's needs and concerns;
- reach a broader audience and further enhance communications with various stakeholder organizations in support of Library goals and objectives;
- increase engagement through creation of a stronger virtual community; and
- contribute to relevant conversations and address questions/concerns efficiently.

Library staff publish information, facilitate discussions, promote events and activities, answer questions and communicate information through various media related to conducting Library business. Social media facilitates further discussion of Library issues, operations and services by providing members of the public the opportunity to participate. Social media platforms permit multi-directional exchange of information, allowing for questions and concerns to be quickly addressed, contributing to an increased level of customer service to all residents.

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to provide uniform guidelines by which information regarding Library activities, issues, initiatives and policies will be disseminated using social media tools and to provide guidance for employees' use of social media.

Scope:
All employees are subject to the terms of this policy.

Definitions:
Social Media – Web platforms providing a means for various forms of discussion and information-sharing, including features such as social networks, blogs, video sharing, podcasts, wikis, message boards and news media comment sharing/blogging. Examples of social media platforms and to what capacity the Library may use these include, but are not limited to:

A. **Facebook** (social networking) – Facebook should be used to create social interaction, increase citizen engagement and create a stronger community. Library social media content should be a multi-directional exchange of information to members of the group, allowing residents to post comments, ask questions, share photos, discuss issues, etc. Normal Public Library Facebook pages will be established when there is an abundance of content to share with the public, especially when it may change frequently, and when it would be advantageous to quickly disperse information and minimize questions received via email and phone. Examples of content posted:

- Public Relation Stories – awards received, speaking engagements, national recognition

- Events and Activities – parades, expos, children's activities, festivals, programs
- Services – hours, holidays, locations

B. **Twitter** (social networking and microblogging) – Twitter can also be used to create two-way dialogue between the Library and residents. As of this date, this platform is the least-preferred by Normal Public Library audiences, so it best used as a supplement to content posted on Facebook and other social media platforms. Twitter content should be repurposed from other platforms, reinforcing information posted on the Library website.

C. **LinkedIn** (business networking) – LinkedIn is a networking site for business professionals, so Normal Public Library will use this less frequently. Information distributed through LinkedIn will be more business-focused, such as media releases and news stories. Additionally, LinkedIn is used by many for career searching, so details regarding job openings are also applicable. Normal Public Library will only have one LinkedIn account due to the platform's requirements.

D. **YouTube** (video sharing) – YouTube is used to share videos of all lengths. Users can comment on the videos posted, but typically this medium is for pushing out content. The Library uses YouTube to post educational and promotional videos. The Library has one YouTube channel.

E. **Instagram** (social networking and photo/video sharing) – Instagram provides two-way communication via content posts, photos and short videos. This platform works best for self-contained visual media, as it is not easy to link out from this platform to other sites. The Library uses Instagram to share photos and information about activities, events and programs. This content is typically also shared on Facebook.

F. **TikTok** (social networking and photo/video sharing) – TikTok provides two-way communication via content posts, photos and short videos. This platform works best for self-contained visual media. The Library uses TikTok to share photos and videos conveying information about activities, events and programs. This content is typically also shared on Facebook and Instagram.

G. **Emerging platforms** – As additional platforms emerge and grow (e.g., Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc.), the Library Director will determine if/when to create a Normal Public Library identity on these platforms.

Social Networking Activities – Activities undertaken to make and maintain connections and engage with business and/or social contacts, which include making connections through clubs, organizations, phone contacts, written correspondence or through internet-based websites, applications and services. The Library may use a variety of web-based groups, technology or applications for the purpose of social networking activities. Examples of social networking activities that may be utilized by the Library include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, e-mail newsletters and sending text, SMS or MMS messages to mobile devices.

Responsibility:
A. The Library Director serves as the Library's official spokesperson and oversees the Library's online identity via social media accounts, social networking activities and website communications.

B. Those wishing to create a new social media presence will vet requests through the Library Director. The Library Director has sole authority for approval of new social media pages.

C. If a social media presence is approved, the Library Director will determine employee(s) responsible for posting to, maintaining and monitoring any new social media pages and the level of access granted.

Policies:
Social Media

A. Prior to creating and maintaining Library-related social media, the request will be vetted through the Library Director. Requests must include specific rationale for the following:
   a. Why is this platform an appropriate outreach tool for the target audience?
   b. Who will be responsible for developing and monitoring content?
   c. What will the official name of the social media presence be?
   d. What type of content will be included? How does it differ from content already being shared on existing platforms?
   e. What is an estimate of time per week to be dedicated to the presence?
   f. How will time be allocated to maintain the presence?
   g. How will the presence be monitored after hours, during weekends, over holidays and during crisis events?
   h. What frequency of posts is anticipated?
   i. How will links back to the official website be provided?

B. If approved, the Library Director will review each social media account/platform. Social media not meeting the Library's intended goals and objectives may be removed at any time at the sole discretion of the Library Director.

C. Library social media must include an introductory statement clearly specifying its purpose, intended audience and topical scope. Social media should link back to Normal Public Library web pages for forms, documents and other information.

D. The use of social media presents an evolving legal landscape, particularly regarding the First Amendment free speech rights of members of the public. Some courts have held interactive social media pages operated by public bodies constitute designated public forums. This means when members of the public comment on a social media page operated by a public body, those commenters may be entitled to First Amendment protections. As a result, administrators of Library-established online and social media accounts should confer with the Library Director prior to deleting any public comments or "posts" that have public comments attached.

Employee Expectations

A. To minimize public confusion, content should be posted/published on Normal Public Library social media account's respective official username and profile (i.e., employee social administrators post Normal Public Library, not by their personal names).

B. Employees representing Normal Public Library via social media or social networking activities must always conduct themselves as representatives of the Library and in accordance with all relevant policies including the following.
   a. Employees posting content must follow these guiding principles:

i. Write and post content that has been accurately verified.
  ii. Keep postings factual.
  iii. Post meaningful, respectful and on-topic content.
  iv. Refrain from posting inaccurate or inappropriate information (see item b). Social media content is widely accessible and not easily retractable.
  v. Ensure the content does not violate any privacy and confidentiality rules or policies and complies with legal guidelines for external communication. If an employee is uncertain of compliance, contact the Library Director who may discuss with the Legal Department.

b. Employees must respect the laws regarding copyrights, trademarks, rights of publicity and other third-party rights. To minimize the risk of a copyright violation, reference the source(s) of information used and accurately cite copyrighted works identified in online communications. Employees should confirm they have the legal right to publish all materials, including photos and articles. Further, employees shall abide by all brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, disclosure of processes and methodologies, confidentiality and financial disclosure laws. Include appropriate attributions when using material from copyright-free sources. If permission from a copyright holder may not be available, non-infringing use can potentially be had under the "fair use" standard. Section 107 of the Copyright Act states "fair use" includes purposes such as "criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, [and] research." Employees with questions about whether sharing constitutes "fair use" should confer with the Library Director.

c. Employees may not post inappropriate content which may include, but is not limited to:
  i. Commentary or personal opinions.
  ii. Photographs, music, video, graphics or other content unless you have first obtained the written permission of the copyright holder or proof of being royalty-free.
  iii. Content in support of or opposition to political campaigns, candidates or ballot measures.
  iv. Content promoting or perpetuating discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or matriculation.
  v. Information which may compromise the safety or security of the public, public systems or public services.
  vi. Content violating a legal ownership interest of any other party.
  vii. Content violating any Library policy or directive.
  viii. Information related to legal matters, litigation or any parties with whom the Library may be involved in litigation.
  ix. Content violating any applicable law or encouraging the violation of any applicable law.
  x. Personal attacks, insults or threatening language.
  xi. Private or personal material published without consent.
  xii. Profane language or obscene content.

d. See Appendix A "Social Media Dos and Don'ts" and Appendix B "Social Media Response Chart for Social Media Administrators" to understand typical guidelines for Normal Public Library social media responses.

C. Library employees are ambassadors for the organization, and the Library encourages staff and employees to share content and posts **from** Library-established social media throughout their

personal social media networks to further reinforce messages and distribute information throughout the community. Likewise, employees may wish to post from their personal social media **onto** Library-established social media. When this occurs, such personal accounts shall be subject to all requirements of this policy.

General Policies

A. All Library social media shall adhere to applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and policies including all applicable Library policies.

B. Freedom of Information Act laws and policies apply to social media and therefore content must be able to be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with these laws.

C. All social media and entries shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.

D. The Library reserves the right to restrict or remove any content.

E. All social media shall clearly indicate they are maintained by Normal Public Library and shall have Normal Public Library contact information prominently displayed.

F. Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Appendix A
Social Media Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- Present informative, fact-based material in a professional tone.
- Be authentic and transparent in the purpose of communication.
- Establish a dialogue, engaging in two-way virtual conversations; listen and respond to commentators, when appropriate (see Appendix B "Social Media Response Chart for Social Media Administrators" to understand typical guidelines for Normal Public Library social media responses).
- Ignore extremists and their comments.
- Avoid emotionally charged language.
- Regularly post fresh content.
- Repurpose content to save time and stay consistent.
- Manage the conversation by proactively reaching out to people in ways made possible by communications options (e.g., take conversations to private channels when appropriate).
- Provide customer service and transparency by addressing issues raised by residents.
- Abide by all brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, disclosure of processes and methodologies, confidentiality and financial disclosure laws.
- Confirm you have permission before sharing copyrighted material, or be sure distribution qualifies as "fair use."
- Include appropriate attributions when using material from copyright-free sources.

Don't:

- Provide misleading information intended to pursue a hidden agenda.
- Share personal opinions or overly personal information in profiles.
- Post too frequently and provide too much information all at once.
- Criticize detractors or get defensive.
- Take personal offense at anything posted in the comments section.
- Allow outdated information to linger.
- Like your own posts.
- Post on social media without an approved plan.

Also refer to Social Media Response Chart for Social Media Administrators – Appendix B

Appendix B
Social Media Response Chart for Social Media Administrators

If the Comment / Post is …	It is recognizable because it …	Consider this possible action…
Legitimate Complainer Needs help or wants to warn others	Raises legitimate issues; may use strong language; seems open to reason	**Respond using approved language** (acknowledge comment; alert appropriate department, provide assistance, if available) and encourage them to contact us to discuss the issue
Misguided Misinformation or erroneous statement(s)	Includes information that is blatantly wrong or misstated; may link to the wrong sources	**Respond using approved language** (correct information in a reply; link to appropriate information, if available) and encourage them to contact us to discuss the issue
Constant Critic Dedicated to bashing the Library, trolling	Complains continually and cannot be satisfied; may use profane language	**Do not respond** other than a potential holding statement; alert the Library Director to the post
Engaged Critic Thinks they can make things better; provides advice	Makes suggestions, not just complaints; responds intelligently to responses from community	**No Response** – monitor only; forward any posts generating momentum
Open Question(s) Posed	An open question soliciting advice of feedback before making an opinion	**Encourage them to contact us to discuss details**
Legal Posting or Solicitation	Mentions legal matters, pending cases, new cases, etc.	**No Response** – monitor only; Alert the Library Director to the post
Associate Complaining about personal issue or piles onto complaints from others	Mentions specific grievance or chimes in on complaint sympathizing with others, might pose an additional question	**Respond using approved language** (acknowledge comment; alert appropriate department, provide assistance, if available) and encourage them to contact us to discuss the issue

Source: modified from content provided through public information officer training and various other social media response recommendations.

Approved by the Board of Trustees of Normal Public Library, December 18, 2024.

All employees must agree and sign the following statement, which will remain on file with Normal Public Library.

> **"I have received a written copy of the Social Media Policy. I fully understand the terms of this policy and agree to abide by them. I understand that any violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination."**

_____

Printed Name

_____

Signed   Date

_____

Supervisor   Date

Normal Public Library has a right to amend this policy at any time.