

Groton MA Public Library Social Media Policy, 6/11/2024

PURPOSE

The Groton Public Library (“GPL” or “library”) selects carefully chosen social media tools as an important enhancement to communicate library news, events, and information to members of the Groton community.

Library social media offerings are intended to create a welcoming and inviting online space where users will find useful and occasionally entertaining information. In some forums, users may interact with library staff and other library users. Library social media sites include any online forum/site, web application, or account created and/or maintained by the Groton Public Library that permits users to communicate with others through postings. The social media policy applies to all users, whether or not registered with Groton Public Library.

GENERAL STANDARDS FOR LIBRARY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Library social media sites shall be archived per the Massachusetts Public Records Law requirements, including any content edited or removed by the library according to this policy. Individuals' responses to the library's posts may also be archived. Social media content shall pertain only to library-related services, resources, and events.

The library reserves the right to edit or remove the content of or terminate any library social media site or account at any time without notice, subject to retention requirements under the Public Records Law.

The descriptions or user profiles for official library social media sites and accounts shall state that each site or account is the official [social media platform] site/account for the Groton MA Public Library/Library Department and post GPL's official website, gpl.org. GPL will link to all its official social media sites and accounts on its website.

RIGHTS OF THE LIBRARY

The library's social media sites serve as “limited public forums.” The library respects diverse viewpoints and encourages thoughtful discussion but does not expressly or impliedly endorse or approve of the content in users' posts on library social media. The library reserves the right to monitor content before it is posted and remove any messages it deems abusive, defamatory, violating copyright, or otherwise inappropriate for the service. The library reserves the right to deny or remove any comments, tags, and/or images that violate the law, the rights of any third party, or library policies. The library is not responsible for the content on the pages of friends, fans, or library followers. The library does not endorse or review the content of third-party sites.

USER RESPONSIBILITY AND USE RESTRICTIONS

There is no expectation of privacy in postings on library-sponsored social media sites. Users consent to the library's right to access, monitor, and read any postings using these sites. Users of all ages are responsible for protecting their privacy and should not post personally identifying information such as last name, school, age, phone number, or address. By posting on the library's social media sites or tagging GPL on a post on their personal social media site(s), users

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give the library permission to use a user's name, profile picture, and the content of any posting made without compensation or liability on the part of the library. The library will not use social media platforms to collect information about library users but caution users that social media platforms adhere to their own privacy policies and procedures.

In general, users of library social media are expected to interact with the library and each other in a civil, respectful, and constructive manner. Users shall not post or share any of the following on library social media:

- Comments or hyperlinks unrelated to posted information
- Content that constitutes or encourages illegal activity
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other person
- Comments in support of or in opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination and/or harassment based on race, creed, color, age, gender, marital status, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, ancestry, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws
- Threats against the library, library staff, other users posting to library social media, or any other individual or organization
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public
- Personal attacks or profanity
- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Obscenity or child pornography
- Information/posts that are knowingly false
- Commercial or charitable solicitations, advertising or sale of merchandise or services unrelated to library or town business, or spam
- Private information about an individual, except with that individual's consent

The library may occasionally share information about events in the community that are not library-sponsored. To ensure that the library's social media remains manageable and appropriately focused, users are requested not to post or share advertisements for non-library events without the prior permission of a GPL Department Head, Assistant Director, or Director.

To support free expression and the exchange of ideas, the library will generally refrain from deleting or hiding content posted or shared by members of the public. However, the library reserves the right to restrict or remove content that is deemed to violate this policy or any applicable federal, state, or local law, regulation, or policy. Two senior library staff members will make this decision. The library shall retain a copy of any removed or hidden content along with a description of the reason(s) the specific content was deleted. The library may, but is not required to, notify the individual who posted the content of its removal and the rationale for its deletion. Individuals concerned about removed social media content can contact the Director or Assistant Director.

Individuals may express concerns about content other public members have posted on library social media by contacting the library. The Library Director, Assistant Director, or Department

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Head will investigate those concerns and take any action it deems appropriate in response but is not obligated to remove users' posts or comments solely based on complaints or feelings of personal offense on the part of other users if the content is not in violation of this or other library policies.

The library reserves the right to ban or restrict users from library social media, either temporarily or permanently. A decision to ban or restrict a user shall be made only with the approval of the Library Director in consultation with the Town Manager and the Library Board of Trustees. Upon request, that decision may be reviewed by the Library Board of Trustees during a regular meeting of that Board. All decisions by the Board of Trustees will be final and not subject to further review or appeal. Whenever possible, the library will inform a banned or restricted user of the library's decision. Users may be banned for repeatedly or significantly inappropriate interactions with library social media, including but not limited to:

- Repeatedly violating this policy or committing a serious one-time violation of this policy (e.g., seriously threatening others).
- Refusing to follow library staff instructions or requests.
- Sockpuppeting, or using multiple accounts or fake accounts to circumvent bans or manufacture disagreements or controversy.
- Repeatedly spamming or posting content unrelated to topics under discussion and irrelevant to the library, particularly in the absence of other appropriate contributions.
- Inappropriate behavior on social media that constitutes a continuation of offline behavior, such as the user has previously been told to cease by library staff or has resulted in the user being removed or banned from library premises.

LIBRARY STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Library staff are subject to and must comply with all General Standards and User Responsibilities set forth above and are additionally subject to and must comply with the following responsibilities. Only team members authorized by the Library Director, Assistant Director, or Department Head to post to the library's social media should be actively participating on those sites. Team members shall not express any personal views or concerns through such postings.

Library team members who post content to or are responsible for managing library social media shall post professionally, including, but not limited to, checking facts, citing sources, avoiding copyright infringement, and correcting errors before posting. As with any other content provided by the library, information shared by library staff on library social media should be selected to meet the diverse interests and needs of the community. The decision to share or post a particular item does not necessarily imply the Library's, the Board of Library Trustees, or the Town's expressed or implied approval or endorsement of its contents. Community members concerned about a library's social media posts may refer to the Reconsideration of Library Services Policy.

The library reserves the right to like, follow, and share content from other social media. Any shared content will generally be from other libraries, educational or research institutions,

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publishers, authors, literary figures, or others who promote topics such as local interests, education, books, reading, literacy, or content that closely aligns with the library's mission and goals.

Library staff are available to respond to comments and questions during work hours but cannot assure a timely response to questions and concerns via social media. The best way to contact the library for a time-sensitive need is in person, by phone, or by email.

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY LIBRARY STAFF

Library staff may maintain personal social media sites or accounts as private individuals for uses unaffiliated with the library and may utilize other social media sites or accounts, including those of the library, in a non-official, personal capacity ("personal social media use"). Any content posted by library team members through personal social media shall reflect that person's individual opinions and not necessarily the views of the library or the Town. Library employees should use discretion and common sense when employing social media to avoid inadvertently compromising professional, legal, or ethical standards.

LIMITS OF LIBRARY RESPONSIBILITY

Social media sites or account providers may have policies covering terms of service, privacy, and user behavior, which users may be additionally subject to when using library accounts on these sites. The library is not responsible for the independent actions of any social media site or account provider to restrict or ban a user, restrict or remove content, or otherwise manage the site per its internal policies.

DISCLAIMER

The comments expressed on library social media accounts do not reflect the views or positions of the library, its officers, or its employees. Social media users should exercise their own judgment about the quality and accuracy of any information presented through social media.

Senior library staff will periodically evaluate the role and utility of its online social networking sites, which may be terminated at any time without notice to subscribers.

We thank the Ludlow MA Hubbard Memorial Library for its social media policy, which forms the basis of this policy.