



CCAHA specializes in the treatment of art and historic artifacts on paper and provides preservation education, training, and consultation. Established in 1977, CCAHA is the largest nonprofit conservation lab in the country.

New Opportunities in Social Media **by Lee Price, Director of Development, CCAHA**

Just ten years ago, most of the communications of cultural organizations were one-way. We mailed out newsletters, sent out press releases to newspapers and magazines, and solicited through annual appeals. The museum told its audience what it was up to. The audience was supposed to attentively listen—and then write a check.

Ten years is a long time in this new digital age. Social media is in the process of transforming nonprofit fundraising, a tectonic shift that is still underway. No one can pretend to predict what the landscape will look like ten years further down the road. But it's safe to say that communications will never be predominately one-way again. We've entered a new age of audience engagement.

Cultural organizations should be carefully studying the social media landscape, looking for opportunities to take maximum advantage of the new technologies. While most organizations lack the time and energy to participate in a broad range of social media activities, targeted involvement in a few social media channels can generate real results. You just have to be smart and judicious about where to invest your time.

Here are some key components of the social media landscape, along with a few suggestions on how best to engage with them:

Websites: While most nonprofits have websites at this point, many of these unimaginatively use their website for the same type of one-way communication that was the norm in the past. While websites should provide the essential background information, they should also point the visitor toward opportunities for engagement. Include links to Facebook or Twitter if you use these, and add a prominently-placed donation button for streamlined and secure giving via credit card.

Facebook: Currently, Facebook is one of those super-popular places that everyone loves to hate. Don't let the negativity overwhelm you. Facebook remains the most cost-effective way to build a friendly audience of engaged supporters. Assign responsibilities for keeping your Facebook page current and interesting. Don't write about your organization all the time. Identify the broad subjects that would be of common interest to your supporters and write about them. Build that base of friends. When the time comes to ask for support, your friends will be ready.

Blogs: In the early days, most blogs were personal diaries. Things changed rapidly and many blogs are now more corporate in nature, but they are still expected to be "personal," reflecting the personalities of their writers even more than the missions of their institutions. Therefore, when writing for a blog always err on the side of informality. Most of the worst nonprofit blogs suffer from heavy-handed administrative oversight. The new world of social media thrives on spontaneity. Don't crush the spirit. Blogs can link directly to fundraising, either with a simple link on a side column or through more dedicated efforts. My personal blogs have participated in two installments of *For the Love of Film: The*

Film Preservation Blogathon, contributing to efforts that have raised more than \$30,000 for film conservation projects. Opportunities like this—where a community of volunteer bloggers coalesce around a single issue for a short period of time to raise funds—showcase the growing power of social media.

YouTube, Vimeo, etc.: Your goal should be to never send people over to YouTube to watch a video, even if the video is yours. You want them to watch that video embedded on *your* website, blog, or crowdfunding page. Granted, you'll need to use YouTube, Vimeo or some other video sharing site to do that, but the most important viewing area should be designed and controlled by your organization. Consider a membership in Google for Nonprofits, which offers a variety of social media tools to qualified nonprofit organizations, including a Google checkout "Donate" button to accompany your YouTube video.

Wikipedia: Even if you disapprove of Wikipedia, you can't deny its formidable existence. The volume of traffic there is incredible. So harness that power by assigning a staff member or volunteer to serve as your Wikipedia editor, keeping a bead on the Wikipedia entries that pertain to your collection, making sure all published information is accurate, and maybe even getting some links into their "External Links" section.

Twitter: Most social media experts swear that smart use of Twitter can significantly boost visitation to your main sites (website, blog, crowdfunding page). As with Facebook, Twitter requires a significant investment of time. You'll have to develop a presence and attract followers to make it work. The payoff is the possibility of someday having a project that goes viral. More than any other social media channel, Twitter has the infrastructure for spreading a message quickly to vast numbers of people.

Foursquare: A location-based social networking site for mobile phone users, Foursquare has been creatively used by some cultural institutions to build enthusiasm for special events and exhibitions, as well as general visitation.

Tumblr, Pinterest, Flickr, Instagram, etc.: These are just a few of the social media sharing platforms for sharing photos, images, music, text, and links. If your organization is interested in sharing digital images with the general public, determine which of these sites seems most attuned to your main audience.

Crowdfunding: For a development person like me, all of these other social media channels are simply tools for driving audiences toward the main event: the giving opportunity. Crowdfunding refers to the new breed of websites that host pages where you can actively solicit money for your projects. Some of these crowdfunding platforms have been wildly successful already and continue to show robust growth.

The most well known of the crowdfunding platforms is Kickstarter. It's a fantastic venue for private individuals to raise money for their special projects, but (as presently configured) it doesn't play well with nonprofits. Kickstarter doesn't offer tax incentives for your contributors and it requires that you have to succeed in fully raising your goal in order to receive any of the contributions. For these reasons, it's not a good environment for nonprofits.

But Kickstarter's not the only game in town. Indiegogo is the second largest crowdfunding platform after Kickstarter and it's become very nonprofit-friendly. Another platform, Crowdrise, has been built

specifically for nonprofit projects. The Knight Foundation has pioneered a number of small locale-based crowdfunding platforms called Power2Give. To date, they've set them up at 12 locations in 7 states (none in the Mid-Atlantic yet though). Yet another crowdfunding platform, Razoo, is built for the long haul, organizing the ongoing contribution streams of nonprofits rather than the showy projects that you see on Kickstarter, Indiegogo, and Crowdrise.

Social media is here to stay. Now is the time to figure out how to make it work for you.

Sites mentioned:

Facebook: www.facebook.com

Google for Nonprofits: www.google.com/nonprofits/

YouTube: www.youtube.com

Vimeo: vimeo.com

Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Twitter: twitter.com

Foursquare: foursquare.com

Tumblr: www.tumblr.com

Pinterest: pinterest.com

Flickr: www.flickr.com

Instagram: instagram.com

Kickstarter: www.kickstarter.com

Indiegogo: www.indiegogo.com

Crowdrise: www.crowdrise.com

Power2Give: power2give.org

Razoo: www.razoo.com