

# Social Media Policy

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HOPKINTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

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### Definition and Purpose of Library Social Media

The Hopkinton Public Library maintains accounts on a variety of social media sites to further the Library’s mission of enhancing educational, cultural, social, and intellectual opportunities for the community, primarily by providing information about library and community programs, resources, and events, as well as other information that may be relevant to the community.

“Social media,” as the term is used in this policy, is an expansive term that means any content created using publishing technologies through and on the Internet. Library social media sites may include any online forum/site, web application, or account created and/or maintained by the Hopkinton Public Library and its staff, such as but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The types of content and examples of services to which this policy applies include, but are not limited to, media sharing, blogging or microblogging, social networking, document and data sharing repositories, social bookmarking, and widgets.

## **General Standards for Library Social Media Sites**

Library social media sites shall be archived in accordance with the requirements of the Massachusetts Public Records Law, including any content edited or removed by the library pursuant to this policy. Individuals' responses to the library's posts may also be archived.

Library social media content shall pertain only to library-related services, resources, and events. Library social media sites that provide for public input, comment, or discussion, shall be limited public forums for discussing 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 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 descriptions or user profiles for library social media sites and accounts shall state that each site or account is the "official [social media site/account] site/account for the Hopkinton (MA) Public Library." The library will maintain a list of all of its official social media sites and accounts on its website, [www.hopkintonlibrary.org](http://www.hopkintonlibrary.org).

## **User Responsibilities**

All persons using library social media ("Users") are subject to and must comply with the following responsibilities in addition to the General Standards set forth above.

Where authorized by the library or allowed by a specific social media provider, individuals may comment on, reply to, and otherwise interact with library social media sites and accounts, and may engage with the library on social media both through publicly visible posts and comments and through "direct messaging" or "private messaging" functions that may be provided by individual sites.

No user should have any expectation of privacy when interacting with library social media. The library and Town reserve the right to access, view, and act upon any information on their social media sites and accounts, computers, systems, or

other technology without notice. With the exception of direct or private messaging, content posted to these sites is usually publicly accessible by anyone on the Internet. Moreover, even “direct” or “private” messaging as may be described or offered by specific social media providers constitutes a public record and is therefore subject to disclosure pursuant to the Public Records Law with no expectation of privacy.

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:

- Content that constitutes or encourages illegal activity
- Obscenity or child pornography
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination and/or harassment on the basis of 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
- Personal attacks or profanity
- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Spam
- Commercial or charitable solicitations, or advertising or sale of merchandise or services unrelated to library or Town business
- Private information about an individual, except with that individual's consent
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other person

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 the Library Director.

In the interests of supporting free expression and 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 be in violation of this policy or any applicable federal, state, or local law, regulation, or policy. A copy of any content that is removed or hidden shall be retained by the library 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. The Library reserves the right to monitor posted content on any of its social media accounts before the content becomes publicly visible, and to remove any messages which violate this policy without approving them to appear publicly. Individuals who have concerns about their posted content having been removed from library social media may contact the Library Director.

Individuals may express concerns about content that other members of the public have posted on library social media by contacting the Library Director. The library will investigate those concerns and take any action it deems appropriate in response, but is not obligated to remove users' posts or comments solely on the basis of complaints by, 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. 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 the use of multiple accounts or fake accounts to circumvent bans or manufacture disagreements or controversy
- Repeatedly spamming or posting content that is not related to topics under discussion and not relevant to the library, particularly in the absence of other, appropriate contributions
- Inappropriate behavior on social media that constitutes a continuation of offline behavior the user has previously been told to cease by library staff or that has resulted in the user having been 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 those library employees<sup>1</sup> authorized by the Library Director to post to the library's social media should be actively participating on those sites during work hours. Those employees shall not express any personal views or concerns through such postings.

Library employees who post content to or are responsible for managing library social media shall post in a professional manner 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 that is shared by library staff on library social media should be selected with the intention of meeting 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 who are concerned about a library social media post may refer to the library's Reconsideration of Library Materials or Services Policy.

The library reserves the right to like, follow, and share content from other social media. In general, shared content will be from governmental bodies, educational or research institutions, publishers, authors, literary figures, or other individuals that promote topics such as local interests, education, books, reading, literacy, or content that otherwise aligns with the library's mission and goals.

Library staff are available to respond to comments and questions during library open 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 by phone or 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"). Personal social media use should occur during non-work hours and library staff

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this policy, the term "library employees" shall include any person performing official duties for the library, including but not limited to staff, contractors, or volunteers.

are expected to comply with the [Town of Hopkinton Technology Policy](#). Any content posted by library staff through personal social media shall reflect that person's individual opinions and not necessarily the views of the library or the Town.

Library employees are reminded that, as representatives of the library and Town, this policy must be taken into consideration when engaging in official or personal social media use, particularly when such an employee identifies as an employee of the library or Town or when context might lead to that conclusion. That may include expressly stating that certain posts do not reflect 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.

Should any library employee receive information about or become aware of a violation of this policy, the employee should report the violation to the Library Director as soon as possible. Non-compliance with this policy may result in any or all of the following: (i) limitation or revocation of rights to use or participate in Town-related social media; (ii) removal of posts or social media accounts; or (iii) corrective or disciplinary actions and sanctions.

### **Limits of Library Responsibility**

Social media sites or account providers may have their own 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 in accordance with its own internal policies.