Information Sheet: Online Tools for Museums

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There are many social media websites and online tools that can be used to share your collections and to promote your organisation's events and research. This information sheet provides a summary of a number of websites and apps, and how you might use them for your museum.

All of these resources are currently free to use, however it does take time to set things up and keep your content up-to-date and some services offer more features with a paid account. Keeping your online information current is very important and small museums should perhaps focus on one or two of these online tools rather than attempting to tackle them all.

With the increase in popularity of social media, it is no longer possible to expect that your audience will engage with you via your website. Increasing the visibility of your organisation across the web can increase access to your collection and promote your organisation to new audiences.

PLEASE NOTE: There are privacy and copyright issues associated with publishing photographs and information online. You should always obtain permission from the copyright holder for publication of their material in any form. See the Copyright Council guidelines for details.

We are aware that the online landscape is always changing and the examples given below represent a selection of the opportunities available at the time of writing. Please let us know if you have further suggestions specifically relevant to the sector.

ABC OPEN

ABC Open invites regional communities to create stories using photos, videos and audio and to share them on ABC websites, radio and TV. ABC Open has producers located in regional centres who assist in the production of content.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE
Museums hold objects and stories relating to local communities and ABC Open aims to promote regional stories. Museums could use ABC Open as an avenue to share their stories and collections. Find a producer in your area and follow their regular posts to see how others are getting involved and how you can join in through workshops and other events.

LINKS
About ABC Open: http://open.abc.net.au/about http://open.abc.net.au/projects
Example of how some museums have been involved: http://open.abc.net.au/posts/tags/museum

BLOGS

A blog is a website containing 'posts' or discrete entries, usually listed in reverse chronological order. Originally, blogs tended to offer a personal perspective on a particular topic, however it is now common for organisations to have blogs with multiple contributors. Blogs are usually made using a web-based content publishing service such as Blogger or Wordpress and Twitter is sometimes referred to as 'microblogging'.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE
Organisations can use blogs to let the public know what they have been up to, a blog could cover your progress through a project, or news about your museum or region. If you don't have a website a blog can be an easy first step to publishing online. Blog software such as Wordpress now offers many plug-in's to extend its capabilities beyond a series of blog posts, and can incorporate an events calendar, ecommerce and become an entire website solution.

LINKS
Wordpress: http://wordpress.com/ Blogger: http://blogger.com/
Example of collections related blog: http://cataloguingingippsland.blogspot.com.au/
Example of museum discussion blog: http://www.freshandnew.org/
SIMILAR/ALTERNATIVE SITES: Tumblr, Posterous or Weebly

CULTURE VICTORIA

Culture Victoria delivers access to Victorian cultural collections through stories that showcase the richness and diversity of our collections. The site has a collections search providing results from collecting organisations across Victoria, and an organisations page featuring information and links to over 700 collecting organisations. The website also has links to education resources, mapping of content to locations across Victoria and Indigenous language groups and linking of stories to Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
If you have uncovered interesting stories from items within your collection, you can share these stories on Culture Victoria. Organisations work with Culture Victoria staff to develop story content. Generally the stories contain a selection of photographs or videos alongside interpretation text. A good example of this is shown in *Drought Stories*, where nine small collecting organisations contributed stories, images and excerpts of audio interviews to demonstrate the resilience of communities in the face of drought.

LINKS
CV website: http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/
Example of Story: http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/drought-stories/

FACEBOOK
Millions of people use Facebook every day to stay in touch with friends, keep up with news from their favourite organisations, and to follow causes they support. Facebook organisation pages can be open to the public, so visitors can access them without a Facebook account. Facebook sites also rank highly on search engines, meaning your Facebook page is likely to show up in the first page of results which allows people to more easily find your organisation.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
Facebook has a large membership community, many of whom would also be your museum community. You can use Facebook to create a page for your organisation where you can promote exhibitions, events, fundraising activities, and to share images and video. Facebook users who 'Like' your page will automatically be updated with any information you post. Connections between your organisations and groups similar to you can broaden your audience to supporters affiliated with those organisations, and connections between your fans and their networks also promotes your organisation beyond your current contacts.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES
You can use Facebook apps to consolidate updates from other social media sites such as Flickr, YouTube, Twitter. For organisation pages, Facebook Insights provides valuable data about the

performance of your Facebook page, what stories are most popular and visitor demographics. Organisations with Facebook Insights can also use it to record statistics from their main website.

LINKS
To sign up: http://www.facebook.com
Example of organisation pages: http://www.facebook.com/Footscrayarts
http://www.facebook.com/pages/SurfWorld-Museum-Torquay/107174989307448
Example of a collection item with its own page: http://www.facebook.com/pharlapfanpage
SIMILAR/ALTERNATIVE SITES: Google+

FLICKR
Flickr is an image sharing site allowing users to upload photographs which can include valuable metadata such as title, tags, location, people. Flickr have free and paid accounts.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
Museums can use Flickr to share images about your organisation, exhibitions, events and collection items. Flickr also has large community of users who frequent the site and promote photography within certain themes. You could add your photos to these Flickr (theme) pools to increase your networks and reach new audiences. The site allows users to keep copyright on their own images and has a system for managing copyright associated with images using Creative Commons. Museums with no known copyright restricted material can add their images to Flickr Commons where users can provide additional collection data by tagging/commenting on photos and can allow artists to remix and repurpose images with into new art and apps.

LINKS
To join: http://www.flickr.com
Flickr Commons: http://www.flickr.com/commons
SIMILAR/ALTERNATIVE SITES: Picasa Web Albums or Instagram (mobile photo sharing app)

HISTORY PIN
Historypin is a website and mobile app for iPhone and Android devices designed to share historic photos and stories. Historypin.com is the main hub for the project allowing users to upload their historical content as images, movies, audio recordings and stories where they are geo-tagged on a map. Using the website you can search the map over time to see a digital history of a particular location. Historypin have recently setup an office in Sydney and 25 Australian collecting organisations have contributed content.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
The Historypin team have worked with schools and museums to create content, however all individuals and organisations are welcome to create content. Historypin provides a way to map your collection items to a specific place and time and provide access to your collection on a mobile platform.

LINKS
Historypin website: http://www.historypin.com
Information about Historypin Australia:
http://blog.historypin.com/category/australian-memory-project/

INSTAGRAM
Instagram is primarily a mobile application for use on smartphones and tablets. It is based around the idea of sharing images and short video based stories that generally last no longer

than 30 seconds. It is similar to both Facebook and Twitter, as it enables the user to comment and like shared images.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
Instagram can be used in a similar manner to Facebook and Twitter, and the three are often linked to post to each other. Instagram differs slightly as it showcases the image as the main content, whereas Facebook and Twitter feature the text first. You can use Instagram to promote events, showcase new collection items and inform your visitor base of general day to day workings at your institution.

LINKS
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/
Museum Victoria on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/museumsvictoria/
Duldig Studio on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/duldigstudio/

iTUNES U

iTunes U allows educational institutions to provide course information featuring audio, video, books, and other content via iPad, iPhone apps and via the web. Museums, libraries and other cultural institutions have joined schools and universities using iTunes U to make their educational content available to a broader audience.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
Cultural institutions can sign up with iTunes U and use the system to distribute education kits and educational support material for exhibitions and tours. Users can also subscribe to be kept up-to-date when new content becomes available. If your museum is looking for a way to distribute education content via a mobile app, this could be a cost effective solution.

LINKS
iTunes U overview: http://www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/

MA NEXUS

Museums Australia national office created MA Nexus as a hub to promote and facilitate communication across its networks. The site allows Museums Australia members to post events, news and to participate in discussions concerning the museum sector.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
Individuals can sign up to MA Nexus to post news and participate in discussions.

LINKS
MA Nexus: http://manexus.ning.com/
Museums Australia: http://museumsaustralia.org.au

TWITTER

Twitter allows users to stay in touch with the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news. Users on Twitter share information via 'tweeting'. A 'tweet' is a short message which is 140 characters long. On Twitter you can follow similar individuals and organisations to you, and your supporters/friends can follow your account.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE
A large number of Australian collecting organisations use Twitter so it is a good way to keep updated on news from the sector. It also provides a forum to promote your event and exhibitions

updates, and if your followers want to pass the news onto their networks, it is easy for them to 're-tweet' your information. Following region (such as #melbourne, #bendigo), event or theme based hashtags (such as #mavic2012 #collectionfishing) can keep you in touch with updates relevant to you. #collectionfishing is a hashtag followed by many museums in Australia. At the start of each week a theme is set for #collectionfishing and throughout the week various organisations tweet items from their collections relating to that theme.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES
You may wish to consider programs such as Tweetdeck or Hootsuite to combine your Twitter/ Facebook/Google+ accounts into the one interface to make the management of multiple social media accounts less daunting. This more advanced software also allows you to create timed tweets and automated responses.

LINKS
Twitter: http://www.twitter.com
#collectionfishing: https://twitter.com/search?q=%23collectionfishing&src=typd

Example of organisation feed: https://twitter.com/Library_Vic
Tweetdeck: http://www.tweetdeck.com/
Hootsuite: http://hootsuite.com/

YOUTUBE

YouTube allows people to discover, watch and share videos online.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE
Video is a powerful way to promote your organisations events and exhibitions. YouTube provides a free not-for-profit program which allows NFP organisations to have premium account benefits such as branding and increased upload capabilities. Hosting your video content on YouTube can broaden your audience by allowing people who are not familiar with your organisation to view the content. YouTube also gives the viewers the opportunity to engage with your content via comments, video responses and linked content. You can also embed YouTube content directly into your website, so the video runs seamlessly within your site. Another benefit is that YouTube pays for the bandwidth used to stream your videos, whereas if you had the video hosted directly on your webserver/hosting account, you would need to pay for that bandwidth.

LINKS
YouTube not-for-profit program: http://www.youtube.com/nonprofits
Tips for not-for-profit orgs: http://www.youtube.com/t/ngo_tips
Example of organisation channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/FILMAUSTRALIA
Resource for Museums using YouTube: https://sfmoma-prd.ixcsandbox.com/read/how-should-museums-use-their-youtube-channels/

SIMILAR/ALTERNATIVE SITES: Vimeo

VICTORIAN COLLECTIONS

Victorian Collections is a free online cataloguing system available to all types of collecting organisations throughout Victoria. It is based on the widely used Small Museums Cataloguing Manual. Victorian Collections also allows heritage collections to be shared online with fellow collecting organisations, researchers and the public. Victorian Collections has been developed by Museum Victoria and Museums Australia (Victoria). Due to a partnership from funding from Culture Victoria, Victorian Collections content will soon be made available on the collections and organisations pages on the Culture Victoria website.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
This online database will allow you to easily create text and image records for your collection, and to securely store these records online. The site requires you to make 20 items from your collection viewable by the public, however the rest of your collection items can remain private if required.

The website is useful for organisations who are moving from paper records to online cataloguing, or for organisations who are happy with their computer based cataloguing system but require a way to share their collection online. Unfortunately you cannot currently import your existing data directly to the site so each item does need to be individually catalogued. Victorian Collections also provides free training at selected locations throughout Victoria.

LINKS
Victorian Collections website: http://victoriancollections.net.au/
Victorian Collections workshops:
http://www.mavic.asn.au/services/victorian-collections/workshops

WIKIPEDIA
Wikipedia is a web-based free content encyclopaedia based on an openly editable model where anyone can contribute content. Wikipedia's articles provide links to guide visitors to related pages with additional information. Adding entries to Wikipedia is a way to get some site specific content onto mobile devices using Google Maps, Google Maps has a Wikipedia layer that can be turned on to provide reference information about buildings, statues and other places while using the map interface.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE
Museums with specific knowledge about particular topics, buildings, places or people can check the Wikipedia entries to see if you have anything to add. You could add entries for your museum, or if your museum is housed in an historic building, you could add an entry for that building, or other historic buildings in your town. Wikipedia prefers entries to be properly referenced which gives you a good opportunity to add links to your relevant publications. You can also add references for existing content, however references should be from the most authoritative sources. Note that no original research should be published straight to Wikipedia. It must be published elsewhere and then can be referenced on Wikipedia.

LINKS
Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/
GLAM (gallery, library, archives, museums) on Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM_getting_started
Example where Wikipedia and QR codes are used to document a small town:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/MonmouthpediA