

## Facebook for Libraries

### It's easy to use social media's most popular tool to connect with your community

May 27, 2011

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Today, I spent part of the day connecting with people. I complained about a silly election video, chatted with a college friend about a band, and put some finishing touches on plans for a conference

taking place at the library.

I did all this through Facebook. These days, it seems like everyone has a Facebook account. Quite a few of my professional colleagues and most of my family have Facebook accounts. Nationally, I'm a bit ahead of the curve: Approximately 41% of the U.S. population has a personal Facebook profile, according to a 2010 study from Edison Research ([PDF file](#))

([http://images.publicaster.com/ImageLibrary/account2782/documents/Twitter Usage In America 2010.pdf](http://images.publicaster.com/ImageLibrary/account2782/documents/Twitter_Usage_In_America_2010.pdf)).

According to Wikipedia, 50% of those Facebook users actually log into their Facebook accounts every day. Total Facebook population? Globally, over 600 million of us currently use Facebook, [MSNBC](#) ([http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/40929239/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-tech\\_and\\_gadgets/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/40929239/ns/technology_and_science-tech_and_gadgets/)) reported in January, and most of them interact every day with an average of 130 Facebook friends and acquaintances.

Think about that for a second. What library wouldn't love to have a direct, free line to potentially 41% of your community's ear? Keep in mind, these people could be connected to another 130 people in your community. That's a lot of free communication!

So, stake a claim in this digital land and create a Facebook Page for your library. Here's how to set up a Facebook account, and how to use it to connect with your community.

## Latest Library Links

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15h

The **ALA Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table** has opened nominations for the new **Best Graphic Novels for Adults Reading List**. The **inaugural** year of the reading list will highlight the best graphic novels for adults published in **late 2019 and throughout 2020**, increase awareness of graphic novels, showcase the voices of **diverse comics creators**, and aid library staff in developing graphic novel collections. The first list will be announced at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in **January 2021**. List selection will be determined by a committee of GNCRT members with a background in graphic novel selection and use for adults.



**Nominations** can be made **online** (<http://www.ala.org/rt/gncrt/awards-and-reading-lists/best-graphic-novels-adults-reading-list-nomination-form>).

[Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table, Jan. 2](#)

15h



## AL Live



(<http://americanlibrarieslive.org/>)



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## Setting it up

First things first: If you are one of the 59% of Americans who have not yet opened a personal Facebook account, I recommend that you create a personal Facebook profile for yourself before setting up an organizational Facebook Page for your library. Think of it as your entrance ticket to all things Facebook. That Facebook profile can be real or fake (although, if you set up a fake profile, and Facebook discovers it, your account will be deleted). It's best to set up a real, live, personal account of your very own; you'll find it useful for other things than just setting up a Facebook Page for your library.

Once you've created a Facebook profile for yourself, you can start working on an organizational Facebook Page. This part is easy—simply go to [www.facebook.com/pages/](http://www.facebook.com/pages/) (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/>) and click the “Create Page” button. Voila! You have a new Facebook Page.

Actually, it's not quite that easy. There is some information you have to add first. You have to provide the name of your organization and pick an organization “type.” Facebook doesn't provide many choices here. Your best bets are “government” or “nonprofit” which are both located in the “company, organization, or institution” pull-down menu. Make sure to check the box marked “I'm the official representative of this person, business, band, or product and have permission to create this Page.”

After you have gathered 25 fans, you can create a unique username and shortened URL for your library's Facebook Page. Most likely, you'll want to shorten your library's name. For example, my library's official name is Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. We frequently shorten that online to TopekaLibrary. So, our Facebook Page URL is [www.facebook.com/topekalibrary](http://www.facebook.com/topekalibrary) (<http://www.facebook.com/topekalibrary>)—short and simple.

After you've filled out all the introductory information, like your address, phone number, hours, etc., then stop. Before you do much more to your fledgling Facebook Page, you need to figure out a couple of things:

- Who will do the work of the Page, like posting updates?
- Who will answer questions?
- Will you use the Events section of the account? If so, who will post events?
- How often will you post updates? Who keeps track of user names and passwords?

Figure out those practical details, and also create some one-year goals for your Facebook presence. Goals can include how many status updates you plan to post per day/week or how many fans



<http://americanlibrariesbuyersguide.com/>

you want. You can also discuss more difficult issues, like what types of content you will post and which specific audience will be your focus.

## Next steps

Once your library's Facebook Page is created, you can start thinking about how you might customize the library's Facebook presence for your customers. First, gather your Facebook team. It's a good idea to have more than one person manage your Facebook Page. Why? The goal with a Facebook Page is to start and continue conversations about your staff and your stuff—and conversations require responses. Monitoring conversations and creating responses when needed is best handled by more than one person, so you can adequately cover the day's interactions. On another level, it allows you to spread out the work . . . and the fun.

Once your Facebook team is established, they can look at those one-year goals and figure out the best way to meet them. Maybe you decided you want pictures and videos of library events on the Page. Great! There's an easy way to connect your library's Flickr and YouTube accounts to your Facebook Page via status updates. That way, when you post a new video in YouTube, a link also appears on your Facebook wall and gets sent to all your Facebook followers.

This can be done with pretty much any type of content that has an RSS feed: your library's blog, Twitter account, etc. The hard part isn't setting up automatic posting updates; it's figuring out what to share and what *not* to share.

For example, ask yourself questions such as: "Do I want to send all my library's tweets to Facebook, or just some of them?" Both are easy to do—it really depends on who your Facebook users are.

Same thing with events. If your library doesn't already have an events calendar, Facebook Events can fill that need. If you already have a way to share events on your website, you might decide to pick and choose, and only post some to Facebook Events.

Here is the great thing about sharing content like blog posts, videos, or upcoming events via Facebook: Your Facebook followers can share that content, which will let all *their* Facebook friends see that update and read about it if they're interested.

I asked some of my Twitter followers what works on their library's Facebook Page. Jamie Hollier of the Colorado State Library [says \(http://twitter.com/#!/ValentineLuLu/status/29408179996\)](http://twitter.com/#!/ValentineLuLu/status/29408179996) that during her directorship of the Delta County (Colo.) Libraries, "Using Facebook to post events brought new users to events by making our users the advocates." It works like this: Let's say you post an upcoming event in Facebook as a status update. Five of

your “fans” share the event. If they each have 130 Facebook friends, that information was just, in essence, forwarded to 650 more Facebook users—most of whom are likely to live in or near your community. When your library’s Facebook followers share the library’s content, they are acting as a type of advocate for the library by helping spread its message.

You can also focus on specific audiences. Facebook Pages have Facebook Insights—daily, weekly, and monthly statistics that provide a snapshot of your Facebook audience. This information can be used to find out just who your audience is. For example, at my library’s Facebook Page, 71% of visitors are female (over 40% are ages 25–44). That tells me that we can focus on adult females and customize our content for that user group. (Maybe we already are!)

By using the power of Facebook, your library just increased its reach . . . for free. Not bad!

### Connecting with people

In Facebook, conversation is a huge draw—it’s a primary activity of most Facebook users. Rochelle Hartman, information services coordinator at La Crosse (Wis.) Public Library, agrees. At LCPL, staff members “post things designed to invite conversation. It’s been a lot more successful than [our] website,” Hartman tweeted. The status update box is your main point of connection to your local Facebook crowd. Keeping your library’s status updated is real work, and it takes time to do right. Toby Greenwalt of Skokie (Ill.) Public Library says (<http://twitter.com/#!/theanalogdivide/status/29407518510>). “daily engagement—keeping up a steady flow of content and conversation—is key.” To keep up that steady flow of content, you have to devote staff to adding content to your Facebook Page.

You also need to work on being personable online. Make sure your status updates read like something you’d say out loud. Sometimes, it helps to actually say your status updates aloud. If it’s not phrased like something you would say in conversation, edit away. The more conversational you sound, the more opportunities for conversation you’ll have.

Once you have figured out how to approach conversation, start asking questions. Nicole Pagowsky of the Dallas County (Tex.) Community College District’s El Centro Library agrees. Colleagues in her workplace find that “asking questions [is] more successful than just making announcements,” she says (<http://twitter.com/#!/pumpedlibrarian/status/29408644114>).

Be witty. Share really interesting stuff about your library and the information found there. For example, at TopekaLibrary, asking about books really encourages comments. People *love* sharing their

favorite authors, or which books they'd want if they were shipwrecked on a desert island (the Bible and a book on building a sailboat from scratch were popular choices).

Give your Facebook community the content they want, and they will become your fans. Even more importantly, they'll start interacting. My guess? Get that interaction going, and your customers—the ones wanting to interact with you in Facebook Pages—will become advocates for you and your library—not only online, but in person, too.

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