

The Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland Communications Policy

Effective communication is essential in order to provide good customer service and to fulfil the standards of service set by the Library. This communication policy aims to outline our commitment to effective communication by documenting the ways in which we communicate with our customers, our communication objectives and our on-going endeavour to listen to and respond to our customers through active consultation and feedback.

1. Communication Purpose

We provide our customers with a range of information. Broadly speaking our communication approaches fall under the following categories:

- To inform: we provide transparent information to our customers about our services (e.g. opening hours, loan entitlements), our policies (e.g. fines policy) and our procedures (e.g. ILL procedures).
- To notify: we provide our customers with notification reminders when their books are reaching the due date, when their reserved books are available for collection and when their books have been recalled or are overdue.
- To respond: we respond to queries we receive from customers face-to-face, by email and via social media outlets.
- To consult and cross refer strategy for involving and communicating with customers.

2. Methods of Communication

We communicate with our customers through a variety of appropriate channels and mechanisms, in ways which meet individual needs and preferences. These currently include:

Email	Notices
Facebook (static page)	Plasma screens
General library webpages	Screensavers
Guides, leaflets, flyers	Surveys
Letters	Telephone calls
Liaison meetings	Text
Libguides	Tours
Library blog	Training sessions
Livechat	Transaction desks
Microsoft Teams	X (previously Twitter)

These methods will be reviewed regularly and advances in communication technology will be adapted where appropriate.

3. Communication Principles

To ensure effective communication with our customers, we aim to embody the following principles:

- Our communication will be clear and concise in order to deliver our message succinctly.
- We aim to use plain English so our communication is easily understandable.
- We will deliver timely communication that is relevant to the user at their point of need and ensure that agreed standards of service are met
- We will reply promptly to all customer queries, ensuring that agreed standards of service are met
- We will adopt a flexible communication approach, delivering our messages in a variety of ways that meet customer needs and preferences.
- We endeavour to standardise our communication where possible in order to ensure customer clarity by creating templates for letters and emails.

4. Internal Communication

To deliver effective communication to our customers, we must ensure that our internal communication is effective. We will do this by:

- setting an Out of Office email to alert colleagues to our absence from work.
- recording an appropriate voicemail to allow colleagues to leave a message and also to redirect colleagues to an alternative colleague/department if we are unavailable
- encourage staff to offer feedback on our communication methods and information provision

5. Policy Evaluation

Our Communication Policy will be kept up to date with an annual review.

We will also review any of our policies that impact on our Communication Policy, for example our Social Media Policy (Appendix 1) and the Website Development Strategy (Appendix 2)

6. Evaluating our Communication

In order to ensure the effectiveness of our communication, we will regularly evaluate our communication approach by:

- seeking regular customer feedback (both formal and informal) on our communication and information provision
- listening to and responding to user suggestions regarding our communication and information provision
- making changes to our communication methods or principles where necessary

- reviewing and updating our Communication Policy accordingly

- regularly review and update all information content to ensure accuracy and currency

- gather and analyse statistics regarding the usage of our communication channels where possible. We will use these statistics to inform our policy and decision making regarding communication and information provision in the Library (table 1 summarises the channels and media we currently use to communicate with our users and, where possible, how we can gather evidence of use)

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Table 1.

Medium	Channel	One to one	One to many	One- or two-way	How measured?	Mainly used for
email	electronic	✓	✓	two	manually	reliably reaching individuals or groups
facebook	social media	✓	✓	two	system	Static page for information
library webpages	web		✓	two	system	Library services and contact details
guides, leaflets, flyers	print		✓	one	manually	subject, database and services information
letters	print	✓		two	manually	personal communication
liaison meetings	in person		✓	two	n/a	presenting Library updates
libguides	web		✓	two	system	profession-specific information
library blog	social media		✓	two	system	news about resources and events
Livechat	electronic	✓		two	system	providing help and advice
notices	print		✓	one	n/a	current information
Microsoft Teams	electronic	✓	✓	two	manual	communication tool
plasma screens	electronic		✓	one	n/a	current events and statuses
screensavers	electronic		✓	one	system	current events and statuses
surveys	electronic		✓	two	system	eliciting feedback
telephone calls	in person	✓		two	manually	providing help and advice
text	electronic	✓	✓	one	system	reliably reaching individuals or groups
tours	in person	✓	✓	two	manually	providing orientation
training sessions	in person	✓	✓	two	manually	giving instruction
transaction desks	in person	✓		two	manually	providing help and advice
X (previously Twitter)	social media	✓	✓	two	system	brief updates, urgent messages

Appendix 1.

Social Media Strategy for the Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to record how social media is being exploited by the Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland. It does not include information on the legal and acceptable use aspects of social media.

The Library uses the following technologies:

Facebook (static page) - <https://www.facebook.com/healthcarelib>

Google Places - <https://goo.gl/maps/dL3yGTsABRQ2>

Library Blog - <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/healthcarelibrary/topic/headlines/>

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/healthcarelib>

They are administered by the Social Media Group which consists of:

- Clare McQuaid (Co-Chair)
- Michelle McMeekin (Co-Chair)
- Stephen Brown
- Richard Fallis
- Anne Marsh
- Alison Moore
- Bernie O'Neill
- Dawn Aston

Rationale

The main reason for adopting social media is as a communication tool to:

- Inform customers about news and developments
- Promote services and resources
- Assist customers in using the Library
- Gather feedback about library services
- Engage with customers
- Increase membership
- Increase usage of resources

Social media tools have a large and diverse user group and may help the Healthcare Library reach individuals who might not be accessible by other means.

Communication Style

The communication style adopted by staff when they post messages is typically informal but can vary according to the service and the subject. A more serious tone may be required, for example, when

conveying information about library charges.

Content Topics

To maintain a corporate approach, for controversial topics, the accounts of the Healthcare Library follow the lead of Queen's University's official social media accounts.

Integration

A number of steps have been taken to integrate social media with the Healthcare Library's other forms of communication:

- Details about the Healthcare Library's Twitter account are included in staff email signatures
- A 'Connect' link to the Healthcare Library's Twitter account is included on the Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland website
- Induction documentation for new Healthcare Library members includes details about the Library's Twitter account
- Social media buttons in the Healthcare Library catalogue enable users to share information about the Library's books, journals and other content.

Management

Staff from various functional areas are involved to ensure that the Healthcare Library's social media presence encompasses all aspects of the service and that the accounts are covered during core hours. All Healthcare Library staff are encouraged to contribute to content creation and post on Twitter. Automated tweets and facebook posts are scheduled using scheduling tools like Hootsuite and Buffer.

Ideas for automated tweets can be taken from the Medical and Healthcare Library social media calendar in SharePoint. One member of staff monitors Twitter messages.

The blog was established some years ago and receives few comments. Staff send content to the Medical Library Systems Team who administer the blog.

Any queries about posting or responding to comments can be discussed by the Healthcare Library Social Media Group.

Metrics

The Healthcare Library Social Media Group measures engagement with users in the following ways:

- Twitter – Total Followers (the number of people that follow the Healthcare Library account), and Tweet impressions

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Appendix 2.

Website Development Strategy

The Healthcare Library of Northern Ireland website is an important means of communicating to our wide ranging readership whereby a customer can and should be able to answer any question they might have concerning the services and resources provided by the Library as a whole. Any customer should be able to navigate the pages easily and quickly without unnecessary distractions or blocks.

To this end the Website Development Strategy covers the following areas:

1. Content
2. Character
3. Future

Library Digital Channel Group

The Healthcare Library has set up a Digital Channel Group:

1. To coordinate the development of the Healthcare Library's "Digital Channel", incorporating the Healthcare Library [website](#) and other web-based applications, including LibGuides, LibAnswers and LibCal, while maintaining a strong presence for the Healthcare Library Catalogue, My Account etc.
2. To review management of content and consider how duplication can be avoided.
3. To further develop features of the web based applications.

General Website Content

The content of the site, while considering CMS template restrictions, will cover the full range of services, e.g.:

- Services offered:
 - a) Library catalogue including links to all electronic resources and with clear instructions on the various services associated with it
 - b) The various libraries and collections included within the Healthcare Library
 - c) The purpose of the differing libraries and their locations
 - d) Circulation services including borrowing, reserving, fines, short loans, interbranch services, interlibrary loan services
 - e) Disability services
 - f) Help and advice
 - g) Contact details of relevant staff and service areas complete with individual expertise
 - h) Research support details and contacts
 - i) Library guides to all and every aspect of the Library service
 - j) Feedback options
 - k) Access to the Library's Standards and expectations of service
 - l) News & updates
 - m) Access to their accounts for the Library's registered readers and the capacity for them to manage their accounts
 - n) Comprehensive 'Frequently asked Questions' with links to support the answers

Character

The website is dynamic, reliable and secure, offering an enjoyable visit to our readers with a seamless experience.

The character of the website encourages use by both our registered and potential readers and any such interested party who wishes to understand any part of the Library service. To this end the site uses Plain English and strives to be clear and concise in its approach. Content is provided in such a way that the meaning is clear to all and access to further information is available in an obvious manner.

Fonts and spacing are consistent and in the main regulated.

Items reported for updates by colleagues or following feedback from customers will be actioned within 5 working days.

Links will be monitored regularly and repaired or removed within 5 working days.

Warnings will be given, as best as possible, when planned maintenance and downtime occurs.

The upkeep of the site and all content will be reviewed on a regular basis throughout the year.

Future

The website, while relevant to the present time, is also flexible and can be easily amended and updated. New technologies can also be incorporated where appropriate. Technology advances at a great rate and the Library is prepared for this and set to react speedily to these changes.

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