Are You Pinning?
Why History Organizations Should Consider Pinterest

By Lae'l Hughes-Watkins,
University Archivist & Assistant
Professor, Kent State University,
Kent

Faceboook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Vine—the list of social media sites is endless. Every year there seems to be a new mode of communication that is termed the hottest new tool for businesses and organizations looking to increase their digital footprint. The process of trying to keep up with the constant barrage of social media platforms can make us want to pull our hair out. Many of us are left wondering what tool to use, how to use it and is it worth it if I'm competing with the likes of Justin Bieber? History organizations have the daunting task of trying to make Annie Oakley hip and the economic impact of the Cuyahoga River on the city of Kent relevant. So, what are we to do?

Well, are you pinning? While it's not feasible to expect Pinterest to get you lines out the door to your next museum exhibit or upcoming soiree at the historical society, Pinterest is a tool that can help further engage patrons and supporters, as well as potentially increasing awareness of the unique artifacts, documents, and events associated with your organization. Many reputable institutions already have a presence on Pinterest, ranging from New York's Historical Society, to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Kansas Historical Society, and the Andy Warhol Museum. Pinterest is listed in the top ten popular social media sites, so if your organization's holdings include some awesome photos and you want to showcase monthly events, then what are you waiting for, start pinning!

What is Pinterest?

Pinterest is an online pinboard, where users can upload or collect various "pins" also known as images or videos, and organize them into "boards"

highlighting specific themes. A user can upload their own images and videos or re-pin content from other users. In addition, this social media tool allows for the creation of boards on practically anything: destination locations, favorite athletes, recipes, historical landmarks, or Ohio's canals. The possibilities are endless. After an account is created, other Pinterest users can become a follower and "repin" your pins on their own boards, helping to spread your visual stories across the Pinterest community, which boast a total number of 40 million plus unique users.

If your answer is "yes" to most or all of the questions in the box below, then your organization should consider using Pinterest. The tool is free and you can create up to 500 boards with up to 200,000 pins! Pinterest is constantly updating its functionality—pins can include metadata with up to 500 characters and geographical location.

Are You Fit to Pin?

Here is a short list of questions that museums, historical societies, and other history-centered organizations might want to consider before venturing into Pinterest:

? *Do we have a bunch of high-quality images or video from a past event or exhibit that are just languishing on the hard drive?*

? *Do we have access to a scanner or camera to highlight popular exhibit material?*

? *Do we want to create an online exhibit but have little or no money to implement the infrastructure?*

? *Are we looking for a way to keep our community up-to-date on events and exhibits, yet have very little money to do that also?*

? *Do we have access or could gain access to a relatively tech-savvy person who loves social media, or at least is willing to learn?*

Analytics

Once you've created content, it's easy to check statistics with Pinterest's monthly updates. This includes demographic information, such as gender, language, and country, and data that tracks your users' interests, such as other social media sites they use, business brands, and subject matter.

Pinterest is one option for history organizations looking for a cost-effective way to communicate and spotlight what makes their institution a destination location for students, teachers, historians, tourists, and other key stakeholders.

Final Thoughts

If you're looking for a way to highlight scenes from your WWII re-enactment, create a Pinterest Board. If you want to tease an exhibit for potential local high school students with a few photos that will grab the imaginations of teachers and students—create a Pinterest Board. If you want to give a "shout out" to visitors and upload a video of a tour from a living history community—create a Pinterest Board!

Hopefully you're inspired to start pinning! For more information on Pinterest visit: https://www.pinterest.com

Sources: Pew Research Center: Internet, Science and Tech; Pinterest; Statista ■