Adapting to COVID-19: Resources for Natural History Collections in a New Virtual World

Using social media to support and promote natural history collections

Sadie Mills, Florida Museum of Natural History
Gabriel Santos, Alf Museum of Paleontology
Mariana Di Giacomo, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections
“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world.”

-Robert McKee
Recommend “Science Storytelling” Workshop by Sara El Shafie.
https://www.sara-elshafie.com/workshopsx
Abstract

The present theoretical paper presents a case for the use of narrative (i.e., fictional written text) in science education as a way of making science meaningful, relevant, and accessible to the public. Grounded in literature pointing to the value of narrative in supporting learning and the need to explore new modes of communicating science, this paper explores the potential of narrative in science education. More specifically, in this paper we explore the question: What is narrative and why might it be of value to science education? In answering this question we propose a view of narrative and its necessary components, which permits narrative a role in science education. and is, in fact, the main contribution of this paper. Also.
What story do you want to tell?

- Fact sharing vs science communication vs storytelling
- Every fossil is worth 1000 stories
- Center people, places, and events to connect audiences
- Are you the main character or the narrator?
What story do you want to tell?

- Connecting stories: accessibility, relatability, and perspectives
- Cultural
- Ecological
- Contemporary
STAR WARS
SCIENCE MONTH

“HOW DO TAUNTAUNS SURVIVE THE COLD?”

#AskTheSciCommunity
Broadening Perspectives & Connections

- Local, regional, global, universal
- Deep time and audience’s “Moment of Time”
- Call-to-Action
- cultural, political, economic, historical, geological, ecological

- Recommend: National Geographic Education Framework & Storytelling Courses
What Platform is best for your story?

Do feel like you have to use every platform. Find the one that is best for your story.

- Long format videos: YouTube, IGTV
- Short format videos: Insta Stories, TikTok
- Photo stories: Instagram
- Fact sharing: Twitter
NEVADA HAS DINOSAURS?!

Featuring - Joshua Bonde, PhD., Nevada Science Center

LIVE 01/29/21
10AM PT
MONSTER HUNTIN’ WITH PALEONTOLOGISTS!

Featuring guest paleontologist Dr. Andrew McDonald & Billie Guerrero

LIVE 02/19/21 10AM PT
Who is your audience, and how do you reach them?

• **Twitter**: academics, scientists, teachers, professionals, celebrities
• **Facebook**: teachers, middle aged and older lifelong learners
• **Instagram**: teachers, younger adult lifelong learners
• **Tik Tok**: youngest learners!
• **YouTube**: everyone! Teachers/students, hobbyists.
• Be open to new platforms and watch trends:
  – Twitch.TV, Discord
  – Clubhouse, Hive
How to tell your story.

• Visuals + Words
  – Graphic Design ≠ art, keep it simple
  – 7 principles of graphic design
    - Sometimes a simple, clean photo is best
  - Video, audio, animation
    - *Always have an inclusive mindset*
  - ALWAYS CREDIT YOUR SOURCES!!!!!!!

Want to connect?
paleoparadox.carrd.co
Tools for Social Media Design and Scheduling

Graphic Design:
- Canva

Video:
- Adobe Spark, iMovie, YouTube Studio

Post Scheduling:
- Hootsuite
- Later
- Buffer
- Countless more!

www.canva.com
Working with Undergraduates (& Volunteers)

- Consider diverse majors/backgrounds: marketing, communications, journalism, education, etc.

- Promote them and their work on your socials/website!
Working with Undergraduates (& volunteers)

- Develop and use a protocol to set expectations for content.
- Always have final review before anything gets posted!
Strategic Communications Ecosystem

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Md-PHJ5EokYTjiT280TLuHsieJeBrhbDA9alhXGMnuk/edit?usp=sharing

- Organic vs Paid growth
- Likes vs Engagement
- Influencer vs Storyteller
Measuring Success

• How will you know your social media efforts were worth the time and resources?
Measuring Success

- All social platforms provide basic analytics.
- Some key terms:
  - **Reach** (FB, Instagram)/**Impressions** (Twitter): the number of unique accounts that saw your content.
  - **Engagement**: the number of interactions with your content. Usually likes, comments, shares.
  - **Engagement Rate**: Engagement/Reach. This allows you to compare content and see what your audience likes best.
## Measuring Success

### Engagement Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Targeting</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Join @alfmuseum and @WesternCenter on 12/11 for a</td>
<td>📚</td>
<td>🌐</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>8 27</td>
<td>Boost Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join @TampaBayFossilClub for a talk by Dr. Richard Hulbert and UF</td>
<td>📚</td>
<td>🌐</td>
<td>1.1K</td>
<td>19 32</td>
<td>Boost Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join @alfpaleo and @westernsciencecenter on 11/20</td>
<td>📚</td>
<td>🌐</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>9 24</td>
<td>Boost Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join @alfpaleo and @westernsciencecenter for a</td>
<td>📚</td>
<td>🌐</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>3 16</td>
<td>Boost Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There's another #FossilFridayChats tomorrow with</td>
<td>📚</td>
<td>🌐</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>8 10</td>
<td>Boost Post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Engagement Rate**
  - 6.5%
  - 4.6%
  - 5.6%
  - 3.8%
  - 4.1%
Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- **Work to make social content accessible:**
  - Use plain, understandable language
  - Use Camel Case for hashtags (#NaturalHistory vs. #naturalhistory)
  - Provide alt-text for images
  - Use captions on videos
    - Webcaptioner.com

- **Universal design**
  - [http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/](http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/)
Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

• **Work to make social content diverse & inclusive:**
  – Promote the work/experiences of historically excluded people
  – Incorporate untold perspectives and details
  – Don’t shy away from uncomfortable history
  – Connect to the story
Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility - Example 1

Promote the work/experiences of historically excluded people
Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility - Example 2

Incorporate untold perspectives and details
Don’t shy away from uncomfortable history
Overwhelmed? Try some backwards planning!

1. **Decide on your audience and story.**
   Who do you want to reach with social media (audience), and what do you want to tell them (story)?

2. **Decide on your platform(s) and frequency.**
   How much time do you have for social media each week? What is a reasonable amount that you can produce? Which platform can help you accomplish your goals considering your time limitations?

3. **See what’s already out there!**
   Lurk on the social platform you’re interested in, and see what’s already popular related to your topic.

4. **Find your niche and dive in!**
   What’s missing from the existing social media chatter? Get creative and share your message.
What if you’re tasked with promoting a conference?

- This is a very different setting than your everyday posts
- Focus on the conference but tie it to your goals
- Use a hashtag to identify the posts
- Use the voice of the presenters for content and yours for announcements
- Include your sponsors!
What did we do for #SPNHC2020?

- Form a team of volunteers!
- Assign tasks and roles, and communicate
- Harvest tags from authors and institutions
- Post talks on YouTube (with permission)
- Take first slides of talks and posters
  - Facebook: create albums with sessions
  - Twitter: live tweet
- Engage, interact, connect
  - Capture new audiences!
- Be respectful and mindful
How did we perform?

Post Reach

The number of people who saw any of your posts at least once. This metric is estimated.
How did we perform?

Your Tweets earned **84.7K impressions** over this **5 day** period.

During this 5 day period, you earned **16.9K impressions** per day.
How did we perform?

In June, people watched your videos 4,877 times

- Views: 4.9K
- Watch time (hours): 945.2
- Subscribers: +321

Realtime
- Updating live

376
- Subscribers

23
- Views · Last 48 hours

Top videos: SPNHC/ICOM NATHIST virt... Views: 10
Top videos: SPNHC 2020 Thursday Sessi... Views: 2

SEE MORE
What did this mean for the Society?

Erika Anderson
@andersonmineral

A #MineralMonday in honour of attending the virtual @SPNHC conference: an Elba pyrite specimen my talented volunteer cleaned and repaired to see how it fares further from pyrite disease. It had expanded from the center due to the disease. 1/3

#MuseumMonday #MuseumFromHome
Now what? #SPNHC2021

We get to do this all over again…

And we hope you join the conversation!
Webinar series survey:

https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8nQeWXm6636Tqo6