REBRANDING YOUR LIBRARY’S BLOG: SEEKING CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE ARTS COMMUNITY

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IN BRIEF
- After four months of planning, the Hamon Arts Library retired its old blog and launched the new Blog of the Hamon Arts Library in January 2015
- After two months of planning and several revisions, a style guide was published and added to the submissions page in July 2015
- This poster reveals the process of taking a new blog from concept to planning to implementation.

IMPROVING ON THE OLD BLOG CONCEPT
- New distributed workflow
- Our style guide encourages uniformity in style, content, and formatting of contributions from multiple authors; drafting the guide aided us in creating our “brand”
- Emphasis on broader engagement with Meadows School of the Arts, the arts community and creating interest in Hamon’s collections and services
- Guest bloggers: we work with outside contributors, editing and enhancing their content with related Library collections and services; we want to be an outlet for people to be published

MISSION STATEMENT
THE BLOG OF THE HAMON ARTS LIBRARY IS A COMMUNITY BLOG THAT SUPPORTS SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY’S MEADOWS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS. OUR GOAL IS TO BROADEN THE LIBRARY’S CONNECTIONS TO THE MEADOWS AND DALLAS-FORT WORTH ART COMMUNITIES THROUGH HIGHLIGHTING ITS HOLDINGS, PEOPLE, PERFORMANCES, EVENTS, AND OTHER RELEVANT HAPPENINGS. WE INVITE ANYONE IN THE MEADOWS AND DFW ARTS COMMUNITY TO SUBMIT INTERVIEWS, REVIEWS, AND OTHER MATERIAL TO THE BLOG.

THE BACKSTORY
- Library’s established blog: Quarter Notes
- Inherited as a newsletter and retained the same style
- Staff contributions only
- Highlighted collections and Library news
- Low readership and inconsistent staff contributions

INSPIRATION:
- Ideas: wider audience engagement; co-creation of content; blog team with editors, and blogging guidelines

PLANNING & TESTING
- Formed blog team: two librarians + one graduate student worker
- Evaluated WordPress platform based upon the criteria of how we wanted the blog to look and function; considered two mockups
- Selected categories: exhibitions, interviews, events, news, reviews and recommendations
- Image for blog header from our special collections

SUCCESSES
- Another avenue for connecting Library users and the arts community with the Library
- Now, postings often begin with a topic of interest to our users, and then incorporate relevant Library collections and services
- Big increase in quality and quantity of Library staff contributions
- Exponential increase in user statistics compared to the old blog: views, likes, and followers
- New format enabled multimedia-intensive postings
  Example: recurring category “Pictorials” promoting events and collections are very popular!

DISTRIBUTED WORKFLOW
- Initial workflow: graduate student worker solicited content from bloggers, formatted drafts, and co-edited drafts with team member before publishing; team mainly provided feedback
- Current workflow: three staff share the responsibilities of the blog: Textual Content and Editing | Design and Web Content | Communications and Marketing
- Blog Team meets bi-monthly and keeps meeting notes
- More active participation by all team members has resulted in an increase in quantity and quality of postings

MARKETING
- Creation of blog email for submissions
- Blog business cards with submissions email
- Library staff as blog ambassadors; staff promote blog content to their constituents and seek out potential guest bloggers
- Much traffic comes from social media
- Our blog feeds into other University blogs

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED
- Maintaining a blog takes a lot of time and work
- Dividing responsibilities supports a successful and sustainable workflow: Textual Content and Editing | Design and Web Content | Communications and Marketing
- More time has been spent on soliciting postings and follow up with contributors than was expected
- Maintaining consistency of quality and quantity of postings is an ongoing challenge
- Timeliness of postings; it’s sometimes hard to get a posting out in a timely manner

MARKETING QUESTIONS:
- Are we finding our target audience?
- Is our marketing effective?
- We do our own marketing, but would like to get into other marketing streams

LOOKING FORWARD
- Expanded marketing plan
- See our content more widely promoted, especially by the Arts School
- Link blog to research guides
- Look for natural collaborations with the surrounding arts community
- Raise faculty and student awareness and interest in the blog
- Increase guest postings
- Library’s Hawn Gallery curatorial fellow (new position!) will contribute to the blog in conjunction with our exhibition program

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