# Royal Historical Society
*Social Media Policy*

May 2019

## 1. Introduction: Our Position on Social Media

The Royal Historical Society aims to build relationships and work with historians to share information and opportunities. In doing so, the Royal Historical Society recognises numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers, but also that such a presence may present some issues.

The Royal Historical Society is committed to welcoming and supporting people of all backgrounds. As a Learned Society we will actively use social media to engage appropriately with our current and potential members, communicate research, increase public awareness of our activities, publish guidance, collect feedback on current issues, and enhance our profile within academic, museum, library, policy and research sectors and a historically-minded public more broadly.

A social media account provides a flexible delivery platform.  The Royal Historical Society will restrict use of official accounts to officially authorised officers and staff with the aim of furthering the delivery of our stated goals to:
- Represent history as a discipline and historians as a group;
- Promote the vitality of historical scholarship through support for research and publication;
- Advocate best practice in history teaching in universities and schools;
- Provide a forum for all historians to meet and exchange ideas;
- Support and encourage early career historians.

In order to provide clarity and consistency, this policy is designed to support authorised staff, Officers, Council Members and other people actively involved with the society to engage with our community, while providing additional guidance on best practice.

**This policy applies to:**
- Paid staff of the Royal Historical Society using official accounts;
- Officers, Council, Committee and Working Group members;
- Anyone using social media in relation to Royal Historical Society affiliated and/or sponsored events and activities. This includes research fellows, event organisers, grant/funding recipients and prize winners.

This social media policy is based on, and adapted from the JISC Social Media template and guidance (2014) available here: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/blog/social-media-top-tips-to-manage-legal-risk-30-jul-2014 (last accessed 8 March 2019).

## 2. Authorisation and review

**This Social Media Policy has been approved by the Royal Historical Society Council on 10 May 2019.**

The content, appropriateness and use of this policy will be monitored regularly to reflect changing online environment and technologies. The policy may also be amended where particular concerns are raised or where an incident has been recorded. Any questions relating to this policy should be addressed to the Society's Research and Communications Officer (hereafter RCO).  Contact details available here: https://royalhistsoc.org/about/contact/ .

**Next date for review: May 2021.**

## 3. Scope of the policy

For the purposes of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive communication tool or platform which encourages participation and exchange, including (but not limited to) Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. Currently, the Royal Historical Society uses Twitter, and this policy may also be relevant to items on the Historical Transactions blog. This policy applies to all communications which directly or indirectly represent the Royal Historical Society on a public social media platform. It applies to online communications posted at any time and from anywhere, whether to an individual, a limited group or the world.

The Royal Historical Society respects privacy and understands that its staff, officers, and members use social media forums in their private lives. However, professional responsibilities apply regardless of the medium being used. **Any personal or professional communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the institution's reputation are within the scope of this policy.**

- **Professional communications** are those made through official channels using the Royal Historical Society name.
- **Personal communications** are those made via a private social media account, such as a personal Twitter account or blog. In all cases, where a private account is used which clearly identifies the RHS it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the RHS. An appropriate disclaimer should be included, such as:*"the views expressed here are my own".*
- **Private communications** not representing the RHS are outside the scope of this policy.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

There are clear lines of responsibility for social media use within the Royal Historical Society.

**The Research and Communications Officer (hereafter RCO) and Honorary Director(s) of Communications (hereafter HDC)** are responsible for:
- Keeping up to date with technology developments;
- Reviewing and updating all relevant documentation;
- Providing guidance on social media;
- Taking a lead role in responding to and investigating any reported incidents;
- Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.

**Staff, Officers and Council Members** are responsible for:
- Knowing the contents of the policy and its procedures;
- Ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies;
- Having the appropriate skills and attending appropriate training;
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted via RHS accounts;
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the RHS;
- Reporting any incidents in line with **Section 10** below;
- Notifying the RCO in advance of the use of official RHS social media accounts at events.

**Council** are responsible for:
- Approving the most recent version of this policy;
- Addressing concerns or questions regarding posts or comments via official and personal accounts;
- Authorising posts, where designated / requested;
- Reporting outcomes of incidents to the RCO and/or HDC, or escalating to involve appropriate agencies;
- Ensuring compliance with relevant legal requirements.

## 5. Guidelines for Behaviour when using Social Media

Public discussions on social media can develop and escalate rapidly. In general, the Royal Historical Society aims to adopt an "observing" rather than "intervening" approach.

The Royal Historical Society asks that all staff, researchers and members using social media in any professional or personal capacity that involves the RHS, as outlined in Section 3 above, adhere to the standards of behaviour as set out in this policy.

**The following general guidelines apply to staff, officers and members posting content on official RHS Accounts:**
- staff, officers and members will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of colleagues or members of the public or make ill-considered comments or judgments about individuals or organizations;
- Material from third parties relevant to our audience can be shared but usually without substantive comment;
- Check with the RCO / HDC before publishing / sharing content that may have controversial implications for the institution;
- Use an appropriate and professional tone at all times. Opinions should be expressed in a balanced and measured manner, and all parties respected;
- Respect individual or group self-identities and use appropriate terminology and pronouns accordingly;
- Posts should be positive in tone and designed to boost the reputation and standing of the RHS and its constituency;
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation. Ensure you have permission to 'share' material and acknowledge the author(s) / creator(s), including images. **See also Section 7;**
- Think before responding to comments/ replies / direct messages and, when in doubt; get a second opinion;
- Seek advice and report any mistakes to the RCO or HDC;
- Don't publish confidential, sensitive or unpublished material;
- If you witness or receive inappropriate or offensive material, refer to Section 10 below.

**Royal Historical Society Official accounts should *not* be used to:**
- endorse party-political or religious positions or candidates;
- publicise job searches, events or publications that are not directly funded by, or related to, RHS activities;
- Post, share, or link to derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content;
- Make informal, flippant or polemical interventions in highly polarised, emotive or sensitive discussions.

**Guidelines for Personal Social Media Accounts:**
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views which may implicate the Royal Historical Society
- Make it clear who is posting content;
- Don't make comments, post content or link materials that will bring the Royal Historical Society into disrepute;
- Don't use the Royal Historical Society name or logos on personal accounts;
- Don't use social media to air internal or professional grievances.

## 6. Security and E-safety

The Royal Historical Society will do all that it reasonably can to ensure that working environments, including social media accounts and online forums, are safe for staff, members, researchers and affiliates. The Royal Historical Society will make every effort to keep security software up to date. Appropriate security measures

will include the use of enhanced filtering and protection of firewalls, servers, routers, work stations etc. to prevent accidental or malicious access of IT systems and social media accounts.

The RCO and HDC are responsible for ensuring that passwords and other access controls for RHS social media accounts are of adequate strength and kept secure.

- Passwords should be changed regularly, must not be shared with anyone without the agreement of the RCO.
- Passwords must not be shared by email or in any format that links account details and password;
- Passwords should be changed when account users leave the RHS;
- Staff should be familiar with privacy settings and ensure that these are appropriate for both content and intended audience.

## 7. Use of Third-Party Material

Sharing content such as images, photographs and video is extremely popular and easy to do via social media sites.  While this may have value, there is a real risk of breaching the rights of individuals who own the different media e.g. images rights, patents, copyright in a blog or publications, or rights associated with collaborative outputs.  All staff should ensure they have permission or other justification to share content in this way. Content is particularly risky where it is commercially valuable, confidential and/or sensitive.

- Users of RHS accounts will not post any images, photographs, videos, text etc. via social media sites without appropriate permission from the rights holders;
- Permissions attached to digital content must be checked prior to posting via social media;
- Where feedback from responses to material on RHS official accounts is used internally (e.g. to inform policy), this should be done so anonymously.
- Where a complaint is received about the use of third-party material on Royal Historical Society accounts, the RCO must be informed and the Royal Historical Society Takedown policy (available here: https://royalhistsoc.org/home/social-media-and-take-down-policies/) followed.

## 8. Personal information

Personal information is information about a particular living person.  Any personal information will only be used in line with the RHS Data Protection Policy (available on the website), and within legal requirements surrounding Data Protection.

- Authorised staff posting content or setting up accounts are responsible for ensuring appropriate informed consents are in place;
- Members of staff should include their name, RHS email and job title where possible, or direct readers to the RHS website Contact page;
- Where possible RHS affiliates should use an official event email account or an institutional email account.

## 9. Education and training

The RHS will provide staff with additional guidelines and information on e-safety and effective practice where necessary, and the RCO will answer any queries and address any comments.

Staff authorised to use RHS social media accounts, will be expected to read this policy before access is granted.  New, or temporary members of staff, will receive this policy as part of their induction process.

## 10. Procedures for Unacceptable Conduct and Offensive Material

Where a breach of this policy is reported to the Royal Historical Society, the Society will act immediately to prevent, as far as reasonably possible, any damage to an individual, their rights or the institution's reputation.

Any stakeholder or member of the public may report an incident to the institution. This should be directed immediately to RCO and/or Honorary Director of Communications, who will review what has happened and decide on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action.  Where the RCO or HDC considers the incident to be serious, this will also be reported to the President.

- If staff, members or affiliates are in receipt of offensive, unacceptable content via social media, this should be reported to the RCO immediately;
- Where questionable content has been received by the RHS, the RCO must be informed prior to any response being submitted;
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality) by staff, members or affiliates will be reported as soon as possible to the RCO and/or President and escalated where appropriate.  The RHS will take appropriate action when necessary;
- The Take Down policy should be followed in the event of potential breaches of copyright on Royal Historical Society social media accounts;
- Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the RHS will deal with the matter internally;
- Where conduct may be illegal, the RHS will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies;
- The RHS permits its staff reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.  However, where we suspect excessive use, and consider this use to be interfering with relevant duties, we may take disciplinary action.

## 11. Feedback and further information

The RHS welcomes all constructive feedback on this and any other policy.  If you would like further information on social media, or wish to send us your comments on our Social Media Policy, then please contact:

Email:  enquiries@royalhistsoc.org
Twitter: @royalhistsoc
Phone: +44 (0)20 7387 7532

Additional copies of this document can be accessed in .docx and .pdf formats on the RHS website here: https://royalhistsoc.org/home/social-media-and-take-down-policies/.

*Katherine Foxhall*
*Research and Communications Officer*
*May 2019*

# Additional Guidelines for use of Social Media at Royal Historical Society Official and Sponsored Events

*This single page of guidelines should be made available to organisers of events sponsored by the Royal Historical Society. It can also be used as a template for attendees with acknowledgment.*

The Royal Historical Society wants its events to be productive, stimulating and enjoyable. Social media is becoming an ever more significant element of the academic event experience, both for those directly involved, and as a way to include those who may not be able to attend in person. To this end, we expect organisers, speakers, respondees and attendees to engage in appropriate online behaviour at and in relation to events organised by and affiliated with the Royal Historical Society, as well as related social events.

## General guidelines:
- Organisers should decide in advance, and publicise, a conference hashtag;
- Use an appropriate and professional tone. Opinions regarding presentations should be expressed in a balanced and measured manner, and diverse viewpoints should be respected;
- Comments should only relate to a presenter's research and ideas, not their appearance, personal attributes or style of presentation;
- Criticisms should be constructive, fair and where possible backed with links to evidence;
- Do not post images of people at events unless they have been made expressly aware that photography/filming may occur and that images may be used in RHS promotional material;
- If an individual makes clear that they do not wish their image to be used, either verbally or in writing, this must be respected;

## When live-tweeting:
- Respect any request not to share any part of a speaker's material, whether spoken or visual;
- If unsure, refrain from posting slides or images;
- Be careful to accurately represent a speaker's presentation. This is particularly important as seminars, workshops and conferences can be seen as "closed door" settings where unpublished, preliminary or frank views may be expressed that are designed for the audience in the room, rather than a wider public;
- Each tweet must clearly identify who is speaking (by using their names and/or Twitter handles). This is particulary important for direct quotes;
- Each tweet should also use the agreed conference hashtag, and where appropriate panel ID information;
- Please do not "subtweet" during events.

*The RHS may archive social media posts and comments related to events and make them available in other formats as part of its normal promotional activities.*