Leiden University and social media

We discover the world: the world discovers us.

Guidelines for the use of social media

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Social media: how does the world discover us?

We can no longer imagine our personal and working lives without social media. For many of us the way we communicate has changed completely: we share our lives with others on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram, and we find information on blogs and fora. With the advent of the smartphone, this revolution has gained new momentum. We literally have the world in our palms, and have become used to everything being accessible everywhere.

Social media has brought about significant change for Leiden University too. Not only are our staff active on the web, the University as an institution has hundreds of Twitter accounts and many pages and groups on Facebook and LinkedIn. This does not just mean that our contact with the outside world is more intensive but also that we, as an institution and as individuals, are more visible. Because if we share our lives on social media, work is often an element of this.

Each member of staff is a sort of ambassador for the University. Without them, the slogan 'Discover the world at Leiden University' is empty words, which is why Leiden University encourages its staff to be active on social media, both at work and in private. However, it is good to consider the flipside: how do I retain my privacy? Am I aware that the whole world can read what I have written? What if others are negative about me? As you may be somewhat fearful of social media, the University has drawn up guidelines to help you on your way.

Why social media?

Social media can be used for different purposes:
– Increasing visibility (as an academic, a faculty or a University)
– PR (demonstrating expertise, enhancing transparency, valorisation)
– Expressing opinions (demonstrating expertise, participating in social debate)
– Monitoring (what is said about a certain person or subject)
– Connecting (meeting others in an online community)
– Informing (making knowledge accessible to a wide public)
– Procuring (securing assignments)

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Getting started with social media

Many people are put off by the 'technical' aspect of setting up a social media account for their work. Where do you begin? How does it work? What can you do wrong? But this is actually the easiest part. The most difficult part actually precedes this and involves answering the following questions:

1. Why do I want a social media account?

Have a good think about what you want to achieve with this account. Who is your target group and what are you going to talk about? Think about whether your target group needs this. Investigate whether there is already another medium that does the same, and look at how it fits in with the social media account you are considering. Decide what you want to achieve and whether it is worth the effort. Also decide how you are going to measure this.

2. How much time can I devote to this?

Consider beforehand that social media takes time. Online interaction is key to social media. You must invest time in acquiring, keeping and interacting with followers. If you do not think you will manage this, try instead to join another account that would also allow you to achieve the goals that you defined in point There is no worse PR than an account that has clearly lain dormant for months on end.

3. What kind of social media account do I want?

If you know why you want to use social media, the next questions are: which channel corresponds best with the world of your target group? And what is the best way to get your message across?

Any questions?

If you are finding it difficult to answer the questions above or would like to chat to someone who can help you make your existing account more of a success, please contact your faculty contact person. You can find him or her at http://communicatie.leidenuniv.nl/social-media/contactpersonen.html

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Dos and don'ts of social media

Social media can be a fun way of interacting with others or keeping abreast of news and developments. It is an excellent platform for letting others know what you are currently up to and finding out what they are doing.

Ten golden tips

1. **Be proud of the University**
   But don't speak for the University. Don't use official logos for your private account, and don't post confidential information about Leiden University, its students, alumni or staff.

2. **Be precise and honest**
   Make sure that you have your facts right and cite your sources.

3. **Be authentic.**
   The online world is not separate from the real one, so make sure that you are the same person there as you are offline.

4. **Respect your audience**
   Before you put something online, think about whether it could embarrass you, your mother or the University.

5. **Be aware of the relationship between work and private life.**
   Have you stated where you work in your profile? Be aware that people may then see you as a University employee even in your free time.

6. **Learn from others**
   Look at how others (colleagues, for example) use social media. See what appeals to you and follow their example.

7. **Be aware of liability**
   Take copyright into account. Don't publish information about or photos of individuals without their permission.

8. **Rectify errors**
   If you make an error, be open about and make any necessary apologies.

9. **Moderate reactions**
   Check for responses each day and respond promptly to comments.

10. **But most importantly: have fun and experiment!**