Communication Policy

Effective communication is essential in order to provide good customer service and to fulfil the standards of service set by the Library. This communication policy aims to outline our commitment to effective communication by documenting the ways in which we communicate with our customers, our communication objectives and our on-going endeavour to listen to and respond to our customers through active consultation and feedback.

1. **Communication Purpose**

    We provide our customers with a range of information. Broadly speaking our communication approaches fall under the following categories:

    - To inform: we provide transparent information to our customers about our services (e.g. opening hours, loan entitlements), our policies (e.g. fines policy) and our procedures (e.g. ILL procedures).

    - To notify: we provide our customers with notification reminders when their books are reaching the due date, when their reserved books are available for collection and when their books have been recalled or are overdue.

    - To respond: we respond to queries we receive from customers face-to-face, by email and via social media outlets.

    - To consult and cross refer strategy for involving and communicating with customers.

2. **Methods of Communication**

    We communicate with our customers through a variety of appropriate channels and mechanisms, in ways which meet individual needs and preferences. These currently include:

Email	Screensavers
Facebook	SharePoint
General library webpages	Surveys
Guides, leaflets, flyers	Telephone calls
Letters	Text
Liaison meetings	Tours
Libguides	Training sessions
Library blog	Transaction desks
Notices	Twitter
Plasma screens	Videos

    These methods will be reviewed regularly and advances in communication technology will be adapted where appropriate.

3. **Communication Principles**

To ensure effective communication with our customers, we aim to embody the following principles:

-Our communication will be clear and concise in order to deliver our message succinctly.

-We aim to use plain English and develop an acceptable glossary of Library terms so our communication is easily understandable.

-We will deliver timely communication that is relevant to the user at their point of need and ensure that agreed standards of service are met

-We will reply promptly to all customer queries, ensuring that agreed standards of service are met

-We will adopt a flexible communication approach, delivering our messages in a variety of ways that meet customer needs and preferences.

-We endeavour to standardise our communication where possible in order to ensure customer clarity by creating templates for letters and emails.

4. **Internal Communication**

To deliver effective communication to our customers, we must ensure that our internal communication is effective. We will do this by:

-setting an Out of Office email to alert colleagues to our absence from work.

-recording an appropriate voicemail to allow colleagues to leave a message and also to redirect colleagues to an alternative colleague/department if we are unavailable

-encourage staff to offer feedback on our communication methods and information provision

5. **Policy Evaluation**

Our Communication Policy will be kept up to date with an annual review.

We will also review any of our policies that impact on our Communication Policy, for example our Social Media Policy (Appendix 1) and the Website Development Strategy (Appendix 2)

6. Evaluating our Communication

In order to ensure the effectiveness of our communication, we will regularly evaluate our communication approach by:

-seeking regular customer feedback (both formal and informal) on our communication and information provision

-listening to and responding to user suggestions regarding our communication and information provision

-making changes to our communication methods or principles where necessary

-reviewing and updating our Communication Policy accordingly

-regularly review and update all information content to ensure accuracy and currency

-gather and analyse statistics regarding the usage of our communication channels where possible. We will use these statistics to inform our policy and decision making regarding communication and information provision in the Library (table 1 summarises the channels and media we currently use to communicate with our users and, where possible, how we can gather evidence of use)

Table 1.

Medium	Channel	One to one	One to many	One- or two-way	How measured?	Mainly used for
email	electronic	✔	✔	two	manually	reliably reaching individuals or groups
facebook	social media	✔	✔	two	system	news and updates
library webpages	web		✔	two	system	Library services and contact details
guides, leaflets, flyers	print		✔	one	manually	subject, database and services information
letters	print	✔		two	manually	personal communication
liaison meetings	in person		✔	two	n/a	presenting Library updates
libguides	web		✔	two	system	subject-specific information
library blog	social media		✔	two	system	news about resources and events
notices	print		✔	one	n/a	current information
plasma screens	electronic		✔	one	n/a	current events and statuses
screensavers	electronic		✔	one	system	current events and statuses
SharePoint	electronic		✔	one	system	sharing files
surveys	electronic		✔	two	system	eliciting feedback
telephone calls	in person	✔		two	manually	providing help and advice
text	electronic	✔	✔	one	system	reliably reaching individuals or groups
tours	in person	✔	✔	two	manually	providing orientation
training sessions	in person	✔	✔	two	manually	giving instruction
transaction desks	in person	✔		two	manually	providing help and advice
twitter	social media	✔	✔	two	system	brief updates, urgent messages
youtube	web		✔	one	system	"how to" guides for new students

Appendix 1.

Social Media Strategy for the Library at Queen's

Introduction

The purpose of this document to record how social media is being exploited by the Library. It does not include information on the legal and acceptable use aspects of social media because there are institutional guides and policies on these issues at http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/SocialMedia.

The Library uses the following technologies:

- Facebook - http://www.facebook.com/QueensUniversityBelfastLibrary
- Google Places - http://goo.gl/maps/M6AHd
- Library Blog - http://blogs.qub.ac.uk/library
- Twitter - https://twitter.com/#!/LibraryatQUB
- YouTube - http://www.youtube.com/user/QUBLibrary

They are administered by the Social Media Group which consists of:

- Johnny Shongo (Chair)
- Sally Bridge
- Christine Carrothers
- Louisa Costelloe
- Diarmuid Kennedy
- Claire McCartan
- Kath Stevenson
- Louise Wasson

Rationale

The main reason for adopting social media is as a communication tool to:

- Inform customers about news and developments
- Promote services and resources
- Assist customers in using the Library
- Gather feedback about library services
- Engage with customers

Social media is particularly effective for this purpose because such a large number of students have Facebook and Twitter accounts and YouTube is extremely popular.

Communication Style

The social media group has adopted a persona to ensure that they communicate in a consistent manner, thus building up trust with customers and establishing a solid personality for the library. In

order to do this, we have created a persona document which guides all activity. This is modelled on our objectives and a well-known celebrity.

The persona will never be spoken of, but simply acts as a reference point that all members of staff can readily connect with. When creating content or managing conversations the question that the social media group will always ask themselves will be what would our persona do/ say?

The communication style adopted by staff when they post messages varies according to the service and the subject. For example, an informal style is appropriate when wishing students luck in their exams but a more serious tone is required when conveying information about library fines.

Content Topics

The social media group has developed mind maps as a resource to support content creation. These identify topics which match our persona and can help us achieve our objectives. When creating content the social media group consult the mind maps for suitable topics. Group development of the mind maps is ongoing so that more topics may be added and there is group consensus on suitable content. To maintain a corporate approach, for topics other than those agreed, the social media group follows the lead of the University's main social media account.

Integration

A number of steps have been taken to integrate social media with the Library's other forms of communication:

- Details about the Library's Twitter and Facebook accounts are included in staff email signatures
- Use of mind maps to integrate content with our services
- Tweets from the Library's Twitter account automatically feed into the Blog and LibGuides pages
- Induction documentation for new students includes details about the Library's Twitter and Facebook accounts
- Social media buttons in QCat Discover enable patrons to share information about the Library's books, journals and other content.

Management

A large group of staff is required to ensure that all areas of the Library are represented and that the accounts are covered during core hours.

All members of the Social Media Group post on Facebook and Twitter. Automated tweets, using TweetDeck (https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/) are posted on a regular basis. Ideas for automated tweets can be taken from the library calendar in SharePoint.

Members of the Social Media Group manage the service during the day. In the evenings, Facebook and Twitter are covered by either the member of the Social Media Group or the supervisor that is working late night.

The volume of comments that the Blog and YouTube receive are far less than Twitter and Facebook so they are only covered by one person.

Any queries about posting or responding to comments can be discussed by the Social Medial.

Metrics

The Social Media Group measures engagement with patrons in the following ways:

- Facebook – Total likes (the number of people that indicate they like the Library's page) and Average engaged users
- Twitter – Total Followers (the number of people that follow the Library's account), Tweet impressions, profile visits and mentions

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The KPIs set for 2016/17 have been achieved or exceeded. These were to:

- To increase the number of Facebook likes by 10% from 2,652. We exceeded this by 330 likes, with a figure of 2,982 in August 2017
- To increase the number of Twitter followers by 10% from 6,571. We achieved this by gaining 233 further followers, with a figure of 6,804 in August 2017

The KPIs for 2017/18 are to:

- To increase the number of Facebook likes by 10% from 2,982
- To increase the number of Twitter followers by 10% from 6,804

Appendix 2.

Website Development Strategy

The Library website is an important means of communicating to our wide ranging readership whereby a customer can and should be able to answer any question they might have concerning the services and resources provided by the Library as a whole. Any customer should be able to navigate the pages easily and quickly without unnecessary distractions or blocks.

To this end the Website Development Strategy covers the following areas:

1. Content
2. Character
3. Future

Library Digital Channel Group

The Library has set up a Digital Channel Group:

1. To coordinate the development of the Library's "Digital Channel", incorporating the Library website and other web-based applications, including LibGuides, LibAnswers and LibCal, while maintaining a strong presence for the QCat Library Catalogue, My Account and QCat Article Search, etc.
2. To review management of content and consider how duplication can be avoided.
3. To further develop features of the web based applications.

General Website Content

The content of the site, while considering CMS template restrictions, will cover the full range of services, e.g.:

- Services offered:
    a) Library catalogue including links to all electronic resources and with clear instructions on the various services associated with it
    b) The various libraries and collections included within QUB Library
    c) The purpose of the differing libraries and their locations
    d) Circulation services including borrowing, reserving, fines, short loans, interbranch services, interlibrary loan services
    e) Disability services
    f) Help and advice
    g) Contact details of relevant staff and service areas complete with individual expertise
    h) Research support details and contacts
    i) Library guides to all and every aspect of the Library service
    j) Feedback options
    k) Access to the Library's Standards and expectations of service
    l) News & updates

m) Access to their accounts for the Library's registered readers and the capacity for them to manage their accounts

n) Comprehensive 'Frequently asked Questions' with links to support the answers

Character

The website is dynamic, reliable and secure, offering an enjoyable visit to our readers with a seamless experience.

The character of the website encourages use by both our registered and potential readers and any such interested party who wishes to understand any part of the Library service. To this end the site uses Plain English and strives to be clear and concise in its approach. Content is provided in such a way that the meaning is clear to all and access to further information is available in an obvious manner.

Fonts and spacing are consistent and in the main regulated.

Items reported for updates by colleagues or following feedback from customers will be actioned within 5 working days.

Links will be monitored regularly and repaired or removed within 5 working days.

Warnings will be given, as best as possible, when planned maintenance and downtime occurs.

The upkeep of the site and all content will be reviewed on a regular basis throughout the year.

Future

The website, while relevant to the present time, is also flexible and can be easily amended and updated. New technologies can also be incorporated where appropriate. Technology advances at a great rate and the Library is prepared for this and set to react speedily to these changes.