

# **Getting started with social media:**

## **A brief guide for Friends of Library Groups**

These are just some suggestions. There is also a guide for Friends' groups to send content to Bristol Libraries to post on our social media accounts, on the Friends' webpage:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries-archives/friends-groups-of-our-libraries>

## **Facebook**

### **What is it useful for?**

- A Facebook Page can work in place of a website: it can be a go-to place for people to see who you are and what you're up to
- It's useful for promoting events
- If you only use one Social Media platform, Facebook is the best place to start

### **What you will need to set up an account?**

- Everyone who would like to contribute sets up an individual account in your own name. You will need basic info e.g. email address.
- Then one of those people sets up a Page in the name of the Friends group as the editor, and invites the others to be administrators

### **What sort of thing do you post on there?**

- Events (set up as an Event, rather than just a normal post)
- Upcoming activities you would like to promote; achievements you would like to celebrate (+ ideally content that you think would be entertaining or of interest to your audience, or reposting content from friendly organisations)
- Promote your upcoming events on other Pages that might be read by your audience, such as "Free Things to Do With Kids In & Around Bristol" or "The Mead BS10"

### **General tips**

- Always aim to post both a picture and words, to make it appealing and accessible. If you are using pictures from the Internet, make sure they are high-quality, so the pictures don't appear blurry
- Facebook Messenger can be a way to contact people
- Invite, Follow etc. to build your readership
- Aim to post at least monthly, preferably more
- Use the 'Schedule Post' tool to set up several posts at once, ahead of time

# Instagram

## What is it useful for?

- Posting intriguing or pleasing images that promote or celebrate the group. You should add a text caption, which will show underneath the image
- Note that, unlike Facebook, Instagram is designed for use on handheld devices, rather than on PCs or laptops. It's not generally designed for scheduling posts, it's more of an 'out and about' platform. However, if you set up a "Professional" or "Business" account, you can use <https://business.facebook.com/> to schedule posts.
- As well as Posts, you can also post 'Stories', which are generally a picture with some text over it only last a day/24 hours (unless you 'Pin' them)

## What you will need to set up an account

- Set up one account for your group

## What sort of thing do you post on there?

- Promote upcoming activities
- Photos from activities
- Photos of attractive things e.g. book displays or hanging baskets

## General tips

- Use #hashtags and @handles to reach more people
- Unlike Facebook, you can't repost
- Try to keep a cohesive aesthetic
- It's good etiquette to follow, like & comment on other people's posts
- Aim to post weekly, or even more

## General tips for all social media:

- Think about accessibility. For example, use Alt Text to describe images for those with a screenreader, and don't use text in an image without repeating it in the content of the post. There is further guidance here: [Planning, creating and publishing accessible social media campaigns - GCS](#)
- Look at what others are doing well and copy it (other community groups, other friends groups, other libraries)
- Piggyback on local and national events, holidays or topical content, for example, #librariesweek that CILIP run during October or national reading weeks, etc. The Libraries Connected Universal Offers Calendar is a useful resource for this: <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/universal-library-offers-calendar>

## Choosing images for designs and social media:

- If possible, always reference the photographer. Check the creative commons licence
- If you want a photo to use on something that you'll be selling or distributing physically (e.g., T-shirts, mugs, or posters), you will likely need a commercial license. Royalty-free images aren't for putting on T-shirts to sell. Double check the usage conditions before you print and sell anything.
- Get out your thesaurus (or your favourite dictionary app), and make a list of synonyms for your key search terms. Photosites aren't catalogued as well as libraries, and the way a photo of a book is tagged on one site may have little to do with how a similar (or even the exact same) photo is tagged on another site.
- When selecting stock photos for a project, think beyond images that are directly representational. It's OK to use more artsy shots.
- Some places to find royalty free images:
  - <https://unsplash.com>
  - <https://pixabay.com>
  - <https://freepotos.cc>
  - <https://www.agewithoutlimits.org/image-library>

## Other online tools that may be useful to the group

- **Twitter/X and Bluesky** – We are no longer using Twitter/X as a library service. Bluesky is an alternative platform which works in a similar way, or similar platforms such as Mastodon or Threads are also available.
- **Canva** – a very useful website with hundreds of templates in different shapes, for designing posters or social media images. You will need to set up an account.
- **Eventbrite** – a useful website for promoting events. While it's designed as a ticket selling platform, you can also use it for free events. You will need to set up a group account. It has a handy feature where you can put an event on here and it will create a Facebook Event for you that links through. Other events platforms are available.
- **WhatsApp** – if enough people in the group have smart phones, this can be a good way to communicate between meetings. You just use your phone number. Other apps are available, such as Signal.
- **Nextdoor** – an app for promoting activities locally:
  - Good for setting up events and choosing which community to show it to (just your area, or wider Bristol).
  - Like Facebook, people can say they are coming to an event and it appears in their diary. Good to post about library activity in your neighbourhood - put a call out for volunteers or ideas
- **Meetup** – we have found this a useful tool for promoting groups such as book clubs and tabletop role-playing groups
- **Email newsletter services** – we used to use Mailchimp, but currently use Email Blaster. Other services exist

- **Listing websites**– Bristol has various listings websites, such as WellAware and Headfirst Bristol, and hyperlocal ones such as The Mead.
- **Offline** – Of course, there are many ways to promote offline. Most neighbourhoods have local print newsletters, such as the local Voice newsletters. Many areas have public noticeboards, often looked after by the BCC Community Development Team. Local radio stations include Ujima, BCFM and BBC Radio Bristol.

**Bristol Libraries Reader Engagement Team, July 2026**

