Using Tumblr to Promote Hidden Collections
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DDOT – A PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN COLLECTION

Founded in 2011, the DDOT Library is a special library with a historic collection including approximately 8,000 photos, 60+ linear feet of archival documents, a few dozen artifacts, and several hundred historical books. In 2013, library staff implemented a digitization project to preserve photographs in marginal condition. Tumblr has played a critical role in expanding the visibility of the Library within DDOT, and in bringing these collections to researchers outside the agency.

WHY TUMBLR?

Tumblr is a microblogging and social networking site where users can make posts using different mediums, including photos, gifs, text, videos, audio, quotes, and links to outside sources. This platform offers several unique features that can help information professionals increase the discoverability of hidden collections.

Reblogs: users can repost content on their own blogs, helping content to spread organically.

Tags: like Twitter, Tumblr uses “hashtags” that appear at the bottom of each post. Tumblr has active communities of users interested in particular subjects – like historic maps. These tags are searchable and provide easy access points for historic material.

Favorites: users can designate a post as a “favorite” – this instant feedback can help give librarians instant feedback about engagement and interest in the source material.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Tracking mentions of our content allows us to follow up with new connections and expand our reach. Bars, restaurants, professional associations, and real-estate developers have all engaged with our posts.

INTEGRATING TUMBLR ACROSS PLATFORMS

We’ve had success pushing Tumblr across various social media platforms. We coordinate our posts with content from the agency’s Communications department.

RESULTS

- Our Tumblr content has increased engagement with DDOT on Twitter and Facebook (our Tumblr image posts are among the agency’s most popular)
- Increased requests from outside researchers for DDOT reference services
- 140 followers, including DCPL, NARA, and the Smithsonian
- Media coverage: posts featured in Greater Greater Washington, and a visit from a Washington Post Express reporter