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Making the Most of Social Media

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Message from the LPSS Chair

Jeremy Darrington, Princeton University

With this edition, *LPSS News* is now in its 30th year of publication! My thanks and congratulations to our co-editors, Merrill Stein and Dennis Lambert, and to all the previous editors for their dedication and work in promoting LPSS through the newsletter. For decades, political science and law librarians have come to LPSS looking for training, professional development opportunities, and support. That's why I joined LPSS as a new political science librarian a few years ago, and LPSS has provided all those things for me. What I hadn't anticipated, though, was gaining such a supportive group of colleagues and friends, dedicated professionals who freely give of their time and expertise to support the section and each other. I know from talking to many of you that mine is not an isolated experience. As section chair and as a librarian who found a home in LPSS, my sincere thanks to all of you who make LPSS the wonderful community it is.

If you're new to LPSS, welcome! The key to getting the most from your LPSS membership is to do something with it—ask a question (or answer one!) on our listserv, [LPSS-L](#); connect with us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) (@LPSS_ACRL); volunteer for a [committee](#) or to help with other new

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Making the Most of Social Media

If you haven't noticed, many organizations are using social media, including the US government! [The President tweets](#), [NASA shares spacey images on Instagram](#), [ACRL regularly posts on Facebook](#), and the Open-World Leadership Center is [pinning things to Pinterest](#)! If you are part of the [72% of adults that use social media](#) you already know the motivations, but have you reflected on social media's limitations?

As an information professional, you likely depend on a reliable collection of information sources to serve the research needs of your population. Don't forget that using social media can clue you in to new and unique information streams. By connecting with like-minded accounts, you may discover events and resources you never knew about, or have a chance to monitor the discourse on current events or disciplinary interests. For LPSS members this might mean engaging with organizations such as

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the [American Political Science Association](#) on social media, joining Facebook groups of students studying political science at your institution, or even following government agencies and organizations that are related to our librarian work.

However, this landscape of like-minded social media connections might also be an echo chamber or create a [Filter Bubble](#), shutting out perspectives with which you don't agree or haven't considered. If this concerns you, you might be interested in [Balancer](#), a Chrome Browser plug-in that provides feedback about your online reading habits.

It is also important to remember that while social media can effectively communicate to community members who are engaged online and with their phones, not all community members are empowered to do so. So how can organizations use these communication channels responsibly, maximize their usefulness, and make up for social media's limitations? Certainly not all communications from organizations should come from social media. There still remain essential, more traditional means of communicating that are not owned or controlled by a third party company. Newsletters such as this one, listservs, and less ephemeral traditional publications remain important communication avenues for organizations.

You may have noticed that LPSS itself has a [Facebook page](#) and a [Twitter account](#) (@LPSS_ACRL). These accounts are meant to serve as community platforms for members of LPSS, where communication and information sharing can come from across the membership, or new discoveries and connections can be made. Of course, these aspirations can only be realized, and the communities made rich, through the participation of the membership. Facebook's algorithm, [EdgeRank](#), more frequently displays "popular" or highly accessed posts over those that get little traffic, essentially shutting down the voices of quieter and smaller communities. With Twitter, too, voices that aren't as loud or frequent may not be heard by followers. One way to lessen the impact of external algorithmic processes is manually check on a feed every so often. In Facebook you can look on the far-right menu (or look for the menu bar icon in mobile versions) and select "Law and Political Science Section (ACRL)" to see the entire feed. You can also click on the little gear icon to change your group settings or make the group one of your favorites, thus pushing it up in the EdgeRank system for your feed. On Twitter, you can do a search for LPSS_ACRL as an account name to view all tweets and conversations.

You may be thinking, "Why should I post on Facebook rather than sending a query to the LPSS mailing list?" Well, you could, of course - the addition of new modes of communication doesn't mean that old ones aren't useful. You may find, however, that Facebook offers a way to have a different sort of conversation - more casual and fluid, but also with more possibilities for give and take, and for sharing the broad range of experiences and resources that are relevant for law and political science librarianship (with the occasional funny meme thrown in for kicks). It also allows questions to be revisited over time, as posts aren't deleted the way we delete email from our overflowing in-boxes.

With this in mind, as LPSS continues to utilize social media, we ask that members engage to help us boost our content, and get it in front of more eyes. If you have a burning question, post it! If you find some great information, share it! If you like what someone says, hit the "Like" button, or even better, comment and help keep the conversation - and the information - flowing. We think we're a great section, and want others to know it!

By: Sara Arnold-Garza is LPSS's current Social Media Coordinator (@sarnoldgarza on Twitter); Lorena O'English is LPSS's immediate past Social Media Coordinator (@wsulorena on Twitter); Emily Ford is Chair of the LPSS Communication and Publications Committee (@femilyr on Twitter)