TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Online and Social Media Policy

Date:	December 9, 2013
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Toronto Public Library Board approve the Online and Social Media Policy and Terms of Use, summarized in this report and appended (Attachment 1).

Toronto Public Library (TPL) uses online and social media to address a number of goals:

- engaging in promotion, outreach, awareness raising and branding;
- delivering information and other Library services;
- improving and supporting customer service excellence;
- supporting media and public relations activities;
- promoting accessibility for all.

The objective of the proposed policy is to extend the Library's welcoming and supportive service environment online by providing expectations for the staff and public engaging on online and social media channels, and deliver service in a manner that is consistent with the Library's mission, vision and service values. The policy addresses the unique considerations of social media and its associated risks. It aligns and complements other policies including the Library's Rules of Conduct for the public and the Human Rights and Harassment Policy for staff. The proposed policy will support the use of online and social media effectively to address service goals and engage diverse audiences in a manner which is consistent with the Library's mission, vision and service values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1.   approves the Online and Social Media Policy and Terms of Use as outlined in Attachment 1.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to the 2013 operating budget resulting from this report.

The Director Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

TPL is committed to engaging with online communities. Staff regularly communicate, engage, promote, listen and share online via the TPL website, blogs, e-newsletters and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Pinterest.

Toronto Public Library's use of social media reflects the experience of many large public service organizations. Staff use of social media was initially piloted to understand the potential for customer engagement and its use has evolved to be an integral part of the Library's communication and service delivery. When social media was first introduced, staff were supported through a flexible internal policy and guidelines. With the growth of social media as a standard communication channel, public expectations for organizational behaviour have evolved and a formal policy is required to outline these expectations and to mitigate risk. Existing policies such as the Rules of Conduct and the Employee Code of Ethics continue to apply to online and social media but do not cover all of the specific challenges and opportunities of the online environment.

COMMENTS

The proposed policy and accompanying Terms of Use are intended to provide guidance for the staff and public engaging on online and social media. Existing and new metrics will be developed and used to assess the effectiveness of online and social media channels in meeting targets and stated objectives.

Environmental Scan

To develop the policy, staff undertook a review of relevant legislation, policies of the City of Toronto and other large public service organizations, and Canadian and North American public library systems. Existing TPL policies related to social media were also reviewed.

The proposed Library Policy includes essential elements including:
* outlining best practices to use social media effectively;
* expectations for public and staff behaviour;
* monitoring social media to achieve organization goals, and the assess the efficiency and the effectiveness of the channels; and
* establishing a protocol for responding to issues and incidents.

Toronto Public Library's Proposed Policy

The proposed policy and Terms of Use outline requirements for the effective use of social media to further organizational goals and set out expectations for TPL employees, authorized external contributors and the public engaging in social media activities at TPL.

The policy is intended to:
- foster the effective and efficient use of online and social media to support excellence in customer service;
- outline the expectations for members of the public, staff, and authorized external contributors for participation in online and social media channels;
- minimize risks by setting out guidelines for use and participation.

The policy and the Terms of Use have undergone legal review.

Roles and Responsibilities

Employees
Employees play an essential role in creating the welcoming and supportive environment of Toronto Public Library. The proposed policy and Terms of Use outline the roles and responsibilities and support staff in their personal and professional use of online and social media, including:
- providing requirements for the content, style and quality of the communications they produce and publish on behalf of TPL;
- monitoring and evaluating the official online presence of staff to help them to:
  - transition their service delivery to the online environment;
  - understand and manage the risks related to the release of information;
  - speak as a representative of the Library;
  - use metrics to assess effectiveness in:
    - achieving goals;
    - adhering to the guidelines;
    - reaching target audiences;
    - meeting the needs of Toronto's diverse populations.

Members of the Public & Authorized External Contributors
The policy highlights the importance of the role of the broader community in creating a thriving online community. In order to ensure that TPL's online and social media channels are able to be a rewarding experience for all users, statements with links to TPL's Terms of Use will be posted on channels to inform all participants of TPL's expectations for conduct.

User-generated content such as stories, videos, graphic novels and artwork has the potential to allow individuals to create, collaborate and share their work online, turning them from the consumers of content to the creators of content. To ensure that user generated content is selected to highlight the creativity of Torontonians, the Library will consider several factors including the target audience of the channel, the context of the submission, and the Terms of Use.

In an informational role, the Library may invite external contributors such as authors and entrepreneurs to engage with Torontonians through TPL's online and social media channels to collaborate and create knowledge. The policy includes requirements for these contributions with the statement that the views of external contributors are not necessarily those of the Library.

Risk Management

With the growing use of online and social media at the Library, the prominence of staff blogs on the website and increased media scrutiny, the risk of serious issues arising increases, and has the potential to become amplified. The online environment is inherently vulnerable, and misunderstandings, incidents and issues can easily occur.

Online interactions happen in a changing context and in real-time and the immediacy and reach of social media is an inherent risk. Incidents may be difficult to predict, therefore a risk management plan is required.

TPL must be transparent and accountable in its risk management procedures. Incidents must be handled carefully, as online messages are permanent and have the potential to be amplified and can harm the image and brand of the Library. The ability to respond in a short timeframe is critical, as a fast response is more important than a polished answer in an online world.

A risk management strategy includes both preventative action and a protocol for responding to incidents. Preventative risk management strategies in the policy include: regularly monitoring channels, establishing a governance structure and guidelines, training programs and approval processes for staff prior to official use of the Library's channels and accounts.

If a communication is posted that is not in accordance with the policy and terms of reference, the policy outlines steps that the Library will take to minimize risk. The policy provides the Library with the right to remove any content that is not consistent with the Library's mission, vision, or service values. Other actions may include issuing a statement, depending on the circumstances, staff discipline, and potentially pursuing legal action or other action as appropriate. All instances that occur will be reviewed after the fact to determine if preventative steps and/or TPL's response could be strengthened.

Terms of Use

TPL seeks to develop a thriving and engaging online community, and a diverse range of participants. In order to ensure that the dialogue is a respectful, engaging and rewarding experience for all, Terms of Use have been created to support the policy (Attachment 2). A short statement will be posted on Toronto Public Library's online and social media channels to inform participants of the Library's expectations for conduct and a link will be provided to Toronto Public Library's Terms of Use and Online and Social Media Policy (See Attachment 3).

The Terms of Use outline expectations for acceptable communications on TPL channels, including compliance with existing policies and procedures, and outlines the potential recourse that TPL could pursue if the Terms of Use are not followed. The Terms of Use applies to staff, authorized external contributors and the public, and notes that all participants are responsible for the content that they contribute and ensuring that they comply with the Terms of Use, the Rules of Conduct, and all relevant legislation, such as the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

The online environment is dynamic, and shaped by its users. As a result, the proposed policy and Terms of Use will be monitored and amended as needed to ensure it supports evolving social media channels in achieving service excellence and outreach for Toronto Public Library's diverse users and communities.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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Jane Pyper
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Online and Social Media Policy
Attachment 2: Online and Social Media Policy – Terms of Use
Attachment 3: Statement to be placed on all TPL's Online and Social Media channels