

Revision Date:	April 2025	Policy Type:	Public Service
Approval Level:	CEO	Distribution:	All Employees
Review Schedule:	5 years (or as required)		

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Markham Public Library (the “Library”, or “MPL”) supports the use of social media to communicate, interact and engage with the public, and to provide information about its services, programs, initiatives and events. MPL uses social media channels to extend its welcoming and supportive service environment online in a manner that is consistent with the Library’s mission, vision and service values.

This Policy outlines requirements applicable to the use of social media to ensure that employees understand their professional and personal responsibilities in an online environment. It applies to all Library staff and authorized external contributors. Employees should seek clarity from the appropriate director or manager should they encounter situations not anticipated or fully or explicitly addressed by this Policy.

2. DEFINITIONS

Social Media – Online media and web applications that are used to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives. This can include sites or accounts created and maintained by the Library which facilitate an environment for staff and Library users to engage and/or share opinions and information about Library-related subjects or community issues. MPL recognizes and respects differences in opinion.

Social media can take many different forms, including internet forums, websites (including the MPL website), mobile sites, applications (apps), web logs (blogs), social blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, rating and bookmarking. Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, email, eNewsletters, instant messaging, music-sharing, and crowd-sourcing, to name a few.

Personal Information - Recorded information about an identifiable individual. Personal information does not include the name, title, contact information or designation of an individual in a business, professional or official capacity.

User-Generated Content - Original content created by a user of Library social media channels, and uploaded to the Library's online and social media channels, including, but not limited to, stories, poems, videos, graphic novels and drawings.

Authorized external contributor - Individuals not employed by the Library who are engaged by the Library to contribute to MPL's programs, services or events, including but not limited to, writers-in-residence, authors, and entrepreneurs.

Confidential Information: Includes information obtained through employment with MPL that is not available to the public. Confidential Information is secret or private information that is intended solely for carrying out an employee's duties and responsibilities. Confidential Information includes, but is not limited to:

- documents, licensed products, computer passwords, human resources records, or other information concerning the Library's financial information, business information, data technical information, strategy, political knowledge, and any other information, document, material, or communication of MPL that is of a proprietary or confidential nature, regardless of whether it is identified as proprietary or confidential or not.
- documents, records or other information concerning taxpayers, employees, clients, vendors and contractors of the Library including personal information, employment status, vendor/contractor status, personnel records, performance information, compensation information and job history;
- privileged information, including advice received from professional advisors such as legal counsel and financial advisors;
- all work-related information and communications including letters, memoranda, presentations, emails and all other documents, whether hard copy or electronic, even if such information has not been labeled or identified as confidential.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The Library regards social media in the same way as its other communications and service delivery channels. The same standards, policies and guidelines apply to online and social media as all other forms of Library communication. Library staff will strive to create a social media presence that is consistent with the Library's public service goals.

The Library uses social media for the following purposes:

- sharing of information that is relevant to the community;
- 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.

Social media provides a forum for promoting the free exchange of ideas, which the Library encourages. The Library makes all its posts open for comments as a means of engaging the community, and to encourage meaningful dialogue and the sharing of ideas and opinions. However, the presence of externally generated posts or comments on MPL's social media channels does not constitute an endorsement by the Library of the words, ideas or opinions expressed therein.

Being followed by the Library on any social media platform or content posted by other parties on Library social media channels does not imply the Library's endorsement. Use of Library social media channels is conditional on the user's agreement to observe this Policy. By continuing to engage on the Library's social media, the user indicates agreement to all requirements of this Policy.

The Library reserves the right to delete any posted comments as it deems appropriate. Comments, posts, and messages will be deleted if they infringe on the rights and privacy of others or contravenes the [Criminal Code of Canada](#), the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), or the Library's *Unacceptable Conduct Policy*. In addition, the following types of comments will be deleted:

- statements that are libelous or potentially libelous;
- personal attacks or insults;
- threatening, abusive or bullying language;
- private, personal information about an individual or staff member;
- disclosure of the Library's Confidential Information; and
- commercial promotions or spam.

Continued failure to communicate respectfully may result in an individual being banned from posting and/or loss of Library privileges, including access to Library branches.

As with more traditional resources, the Library does not act in place of or in the absence of a parent. The Library is not responsible for enforcing any restrictions which a parent or guardian may place on a minor's use of social media.

The Library will not use information shared through its social media for commercial purposes nor will it share this information with third parties unless required by law. By posting content, the user agrees to indemnify Markham Public Library and its officers and employees from and against all liabilities, judgments, damages and costs (including legal fees) incurred by any of them which may arise out of or are related to the posted content. Forums and messaging may not be used for commercial purposes or for organized political activity.

If any user does not agree to the above terms, they are not to use the service, as violation of the terms can lead to legal liability.

All content contributed by, or on behalf of, the Library to its social media channels, remains the property of the Library.

4.0 ACCESSIBILITY

The Markham Public Library is committed to creating an accessible service and providing accessible information and communications to the public, in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and its regulations.

While the Library does not control the accessibility of third-party social media platforms, it will ensure that content posted to official Library social media accounts is as accessible as technically possible through the platform. This includes, but is not limited to, providing alternative text for images, captions for videos, and informing the public about the availability of communication supports, as appropriate.

5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 MPL Staff

Through their presence in MPL's online communities, Library employees facilitate communication, provide information services, and offer other customer services. MPL recognizes that employees are committed to high standards of ethical and professional communication and expect this behaviour in the online environment.

Online communication should always be considered public and permanent. Online communities are not private; postings may be accessed by a wider audience than intended or copied by others and posted elsewhere without the author's permission or knowledge.

Social media is an extension of the Library's traditional channels and MPL's service values therefore apply. Postings, comments, and all online content should reflect the Library's mission, guidelines, and best practices. An employee who becomes aware of an online incident or any content on an MPL channel that contravenes this, or any other Library policy, must report it to the appropriate Director or Manager in a timely fashion.

Use of the Library's technology resources to access social media is governed by the *Staff Use of Information Technology Policy*, referenced in section 9.0 of this Policy.

When using social media, Library employees must not comment on, post, or share Confidential Information about the Library or personal information, in accordance with applicable legislation, e.g. the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*, as well as the Library policies outlined in section 9.0.

Should an employee fail to adhere to the requirements outlined above or otherwise act inappropriately with respect to social media communications, the Library may respond by taking appropriate disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal and/or legal action.

5.1.1 Social Media Use for Work

Social media content created by an employee as part of their employment responsibilities is the property of the Library and not the employee. When using social media for official Library business purposes, employees should conduct themselves as they would in any other work situation and protect and support the Library's image and reputation. With this goal in mind, employees shall not share the Library's Confidential Information to social media.

When using social media for official Library purposes, employees must ensure that they are the appropriate content and subject matter experts or have had their content approved by subject matter experts, and only post about their program areas.

5.1.2 Personal Social Media Use

Staff are encouraged to promote MPL on personal social media accounts as appropriate. However, staff are not required to use personal social media accounts for work-related purposes and activities.

When using social media for personal use and when identifiable as a Library employee, staff must be aware of their role in the organization and the potential impact of their communications on the brand, reputation, and service values of the Library and act appropriately and with good judgment.

If an employee is using social media during non-working hours on their own personal computing equipment, its content must not negatively affect the Library's reputation in any way. Published materials that are insulting, demeaning, or offensive to MPL, its subsidiaries, suppliers and related and affiliated entities, or that damages MPL's reputation in any way will not be tolerated.

MPL prohibits the use of its logos, trademarks, or images on any employee's personal Web page or other social media site without the express written permission of the Library.

Employees must also ensure that their personal views are not presented as or could be construed as being those of MPL.

Employees should ensure that they do not engage in harassment, unfounded accusations or remarks that contravene any of MPL's policies or procedures. Employees must not disclose any Confidential Information, including and not limited to trade secrets or proprietary information of MPL or its affiliated and related companies, clients, partners, suppliers, or competitors.

Information that you disclose through social media about your actions/behaviours at work that do not comply with our policies or that reference your work habits can be used in discussions with you about your work performance and may lead to disciplinary measures being taken.

It is important to understand that your actions outside the workplace can affect your relationship with MPL if such off-duty behaviours bring MPL's reputation into disrepute or otherwise affects our employment relationship.

Any employee found to be making statements that are defamatory, reflect negatively on MPL or that are in breach of any laws, or this policy, will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination of employment.

When using social media platforms other than those belonging to MPL for work-related purposes, employees are expected to comply with all applicable terms and conditions of use.

5.2 Members of the Public

MPL encourages all members of the public to contribute to the vibrant, dynamic, and interactive spirit of MPL's social media channels and communities. Comments, posts, messages and creative content are welcome, provided that they are in keeping with the Library's mission, vision, service values and policies. Contributions must comply with the Library's *Public Technology Use Policy* and the *Unacceptable Conduct Policy*.

User-generated content, including user-created stories, videos, graphic novels and artwork, is welcome on social media channels affiliated with the Library unless inconsistent with the format or requirements of the particular channel or with Library policies. The Library may solicit specific types of user content to showcase online and may determine, in its sole and unfettered discretion, which of such content will be showcased.

All content provided by users for inclusion on MPL's website or social media channels may be used and reproduced as the Library sees fit. By contributing content, users agree that the Library has the right to use, reproduce and modify such content without making payments to the contributor. It is the responsibility of contributors to ensure that they have the right to contribute the material, and they will bear full responsibility if they infringe the rights of anyone else in such material.

5.3 Authorized External Contributors

Authorized external contributors who are invited to participate in MPL's social media channels on its behalf have an important role in maintaining a welcoming and supportive environment on the Library's online and social media channels, which can be accomplished by adhering to MPL's "Terms of Use" and Library guidelines.

6.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

Social media channels are dynamic and interactive with inherent opportunities and risks. Online messages are permanent and have the potential to harm the Library's image and brand. This Policy, along with guidelines and training for staff, is intended to prevent incidents or problems that may occur when communicating via social media.

The Library engages in best practices for managing social media channels, including:

- requiring approval for establishing channels;
- creating governance structures, guidelines and best practices to guide employees in the effective and appropriate use of channels;
- regularly monitoring channels to assess relevance and adherence to guidelines;
- designating appropriate staff resources to manage channels;
- training staff prior to use of MPL's official channels;
- creating, posting, and enforcing the Library's policies;
- evaluation of the success and sustainability of channels.

The Library has created risk management protocols and procedures in the event of an online and social media incident. Should an incident or issue occur, MPL will respond appropriately in a timely manner. This includes an investigation into the matter and appropriate action taken, which may include one or more of the following:

- issuing a response, correction or apology;
- deleting a comment or post;
- investigating similar or related incidents to prevent repeat incidents;
- pursuing legal advice and/or action;
- applying the *Unacceptable Conduct Policy* in order to exclude customers from use of Library facilities, depending on the seriousness of the incident;
- applying human resources procedures, including disciplinary action up to and including dismissal;
- reviewing incidents after the fact to determine if preventive measures or the Library's response could be improved.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CEO / Directors shall:

- Ensure that they and their employees understand and comply with this Policy.

Managers / Supervisors shall:

- Ensure that they and their employees understand and comply with this Policy;
- Enforce this Policy.

Library Administration shall:

- Develop and distribute this Policy; and,
- Update this Policy per the Review Schedule.

Employees shall:

- Ensure compliance with this Policy and all related policies and legislation.

8. RELATED LEGISLATION

- **Federal Legislation:**
 - *Copyright Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-42) as amended.
- **Provincial Legislation:**
 - [*Ontario Human Rights Code* \(R.S.O. 1990\), c. H. 19, s. 5 \(1\) as amended.](#)
 - [*Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 56 as amended.](#)
 - [*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11*](#)
 - [*Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessible Standards*](#)
 - [*Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, S.O. 2004, c.3, Sched. A*](#)

9. RELATED MARKHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICIES

- *Confidentiality of Personal Information Policy* (POL-HR)
- *Customers First Policy* (POL-Pub Serv)
- *Privacy Policy* (POL-Admin)
- *Public Technology Use Policy* (POL-Pub Serv)
- *Respect in the Workplace Policy* (Harassment and Violence) (POL-HR)
- *Staff Use of Information Technology Policy* (POL-HR)
- *Unacceptable Conduct Policy* (POL-Pub Serv)