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Social Media Technology

Currently, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine (NMCWM) uses an Instagram account to share photos from the collection. Though Instagram is a powerful tool, and the NMCWM uses this tool effectively, Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/>) may be worth adding into their social media artillery. Flickr is a tool for creating photo and video galleries. Users can create an account, upload and curate photos and videos, and collaborate in creating photo albums. One of the greatest draws to Flickr is that account holders can grant other users permission to tag and make notes on photos. This makes the online curatorial process collaborative. Additionally, Flickr users can upload a nearly unlimited number of photos.



A screenshot of the NMCWM's Instagram account.

The developers of this site appear very social media-friendly. Just a few sharing elements of this site include “guest passes”, sharing photos on other websites, Flickr groups, and easy website searching. The “guest pass” feature of the site allows users to share private photo albums with select individuals. This may be a good way to review an album before making it accessible to the public. Flickr also offers groups, which are user created and moderated. A great way to

engage NMCWM enthusiasts, and photographers interested in history would be to create a NMCWM group and moderate online discussions. And, finally, the developers of Flickr have made a concerted effort to make sharing and searching images as simple as possible. The reason for this is most likely because a lot of freelance photographers use this site and, thus, want to be able to easily promote their work.

Flickr provides an excellent opportunity for the NMCWM to become more participatory. A participatory institution is one that embraces the use of social media and encourages technological interaction between the museum and its patrons (Freeman, Adams Becker, Cummins, McKelroy, Giesinger, and Yuhnke, 2016). This tool could be used at the NMCWM as an addition to the virtual tour offered on Google Maps. Currently, the tour offered on Google Maps excludes several portions of the museum and some of the signage in the museum is difficult to read. Flickr would provide a platform for high-quality images of exhibits to be displayed online. This would make the museum more accessible via social media and the internet. The use of Flickr at the NMCWM would be in a similar vein as that of the Google Cultural Institute. The Google Cultural Institute is an online tool that gives users access to millions of high-quality digitized images of art pieces (Google Cultural Institute, 2015). Flickr would allow the NMCWM to create a similar type of online exhibit.

Two potential audiences for this exhibit would be college students and adults that do not live near the NMCWM. Both college students and adults with a basic competency in using the internet would be the ideal target for this exhibit. These two groups would benefit from this exhibit by being able to access the museum and its collections without having to travel. Additionally, these two groups, being of ages in which they are more likely to engage in academic research, will benefit most from this tool. High-quality images of exhibits and online

curation will aid in personal and academic research. This type of an in-depth look at the museum and its collection is currently not available online. Ultimately, the use of Flickr has several benefits which should be considered in future social media usage by the NMCWM.

References

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