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**Article:** Extending Our Reach: Effective Methods for Engaging Allied and Public Audiences with Photograph Preservation

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# **Extending Our Reach: Effective Methods for Engaging Allied and Public Audiences with Photograph Preservation**

**Heather Brown**

*Presented as a poster at the 2013 AIC & ICOM-CC Photographs Conservation Joint Meeting in Wellington, New Zealand.*

## **Abstract**

The *Extending Our Reach* poster offers tips for web-based outreach and advocacy methods that can be used to raise awareness about photograph preservation with collection caretakers and the public, both locally and globally. The poster is divided into four sections: traditional outreach methods-enhanced, media libraries, content-sharing services, and professional networks, with a bonus section on consolidation to help manage all of your social media sites.

## **Introduction**

While traditional outreach techniques, such as printed literature and live presentations, can be successful, this poster emphasizes new directions that conservators can take to engage allied and public audiences. With the help of social media, we can share information through a blog, collaborate on a project using a wiki, or comment on a question via a professional forum. To help measure the effectiveness of our efforts, many web-based platforms include analytic features to track the number and location of all participants.

The poster is divided into four sections: traditional outreach methods-enhanced, content-sharing services, professional networks, and media libraries, with a bonus section on consolidation. The traditional outreach methods section shows examples of websites that can creatively enhance powerpoint, image, and video presentations and increase interactivity. The content-sharing services section explores wikis, webinars, blogs, and microblogs, including Wordpress and Twitter. The professional networks section covers the various applications for Facebook and LinkedIn. Finally, the media libraries section describes sites that store video and audio materials, for example, YouTube and iTunes. Using a consolidation tool like IFTTT, you can aggregate many of your social media sites to expand your impact with a fraction of the effort.

## **Why use social media?**

Social media platforms offer new directions that photograph conservators can take to engage allied and public audiences, all from the comforts of home. Not only are these methods easy to use, they are also wide reaching, allowing knowledge to be distributed at a rapid pace.

These outreach methods broaden our knowledge and collaborative opportunities. They strengthen our impact and allow us to reach new audiences to teach about effective preservation strategies. Looking toward the future, it is important that conservators take advantage of all tools and technologies available to better ensure the long-term preservation of our photographic heritage.

**How do I start?**

All of the platforms below present unique and useful tools to engage audiences about photograph preservation. The best way to get started using social media is to choose one of the following goals: to enhance your current outreach materials, to share new research, to organize audio/visual media and make it available to the public, or to connect with other conservators and allied professionals. Now, choose one of the websites in that category below.

Once you feel comfortable with one social media site, you can start another, and another. You can even discover new web-based platforms on your own and adapt them to serve your purpose of conservation outreach.

**Tips**

1. Stay consistent with your tone and usage to build a regular audience.
2. If your site has analytical features, check them often to better understand your audience.
3. Gain permission before posting any materials that belong to someone else.
4. Make the best use of your time by implementing a consolidation tool (see IFTTT below).

**Traditional Outreach Methods – Enhanced****historypin**

[www.historypin.com](http://www.historypin.com)

In place of a printed leaflet, this site allows you to share photographic history by posting images onto a map in their original geographic location. All images are searchable by place, date, or subject, and organized into worldwide projects or personal collections.

 **slideshare**

[www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)

When you are unable to give a live presentation, SlideShare lets you distribute your materials electronically. You can add a script or voice recording to a presentation, conduct a live meeting, and adjust settings to private or public.



<https://plus.google.com/hangouts>

Using the new Broadcast feature, you can present a webinar to an unlimited number of viewers. Rather than holding a conservation clinic for a handful of people, this platform makes it possible to answer frequently asked preservation questions online.

 **iTunes**

[www.apple.com/itunes](http://www.apple.com/itunes)

Traditionally, museum labels were used to make conservation-related information available in a museum. Now, iTunes allows you to present a narrative, facts, interviews, and more as a podcast that is available through the visitor's personal electronic device.

**You Tube**

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

With YouTube, you can record a lab tour and make it available to millions of viewers online. Uploading videos to a channel (e.g. "conservation", or an institution) provides easy access for anyone interested in the topic. Viewer's can also ask questions through the comments feature.

**Media Libraries**

<http://conservationreel.org>

Conservation Reel was established in 2011 by the Balboa Art Conservation Center in San Diego. Use this public-accessible site to share videos about a conservation treatment or research project. All content can be organized by series, contributor, or tags.

**flickr**

[www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

This site, created by Yahoo!, allows you to upload all of your project or workshop images to one central location, and then share them through your own personal gallery, or by adding them to a public or private group.

**Content-Sharing Services****WIKIPEDIA**

The Free Encyclopedia

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

A Wikipedia entry is often the first source that appears when we search for a keyword online, so why not take advantage of the site's popularity, and enter accurate information about photographs and preservation? Other Wikimedia projects, such as Commons (images) and Wiktionary (terms) give the editor the power to control what viewers will associate with a particular topic.

**weebly**

[www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com)



<http://wordpress.com>

**tumblr**

[www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com)

Blogging software is becoming more advanced, allowing you to create a professional-looking website with no previous web-building skills. Whether posting text, images, audio or video—or a combination—blogs are surprisingly easy to create and go a long way in terms of sharing information.

**twitter**

[www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

While many social media platforms allow you to share information quickly, Twitter provides the means to share up to 140 characters *immediately*. Twitter followers can receive your tweets like text messages on their phones, making it possible to send up-to-date news from a conference or workshop.



[www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com)

Dropbox is a smart way to save and share files because they are automatically backed up onto an online server when they are saved. You can make teaching materials available to a class or collaborate on a project without having to email an updated draft each time a file is edited.

### Professional Networks



[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Facebook can be an easy way to connect with specific people or audiences, by either tagging friends in a post, or posting directly to a group's wall. As more people sign up for Facebook, it becomes a central hub for sharing information from the other social media sites.



[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

Where Facebook is considered a true "social" network, LinkedIn offers more professional connections that may help in meeting allied professionals. By joining a group (e.g. Conservator-Restorer), you can hold a conversation with members from around the world about a specific question or topic.

### Consolidation



<https://ifttt.com>

This site will help you multi-task with your social media outreach tools. Create custom recipes that will automatically publish to multiple sites when you add content to one.

### Conclusion

These outreach methods broaden our knowledge and collaborative opportunities. They strengthen our impact and allow us to reach new audiences to teach about effective preservation strategies. Looking toward the future, many of these websites will likely change, but it is important that conservators continue to take advantage of all tools and technologies available to better ensure the long-term preservation of our photographic heritage.

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