

Social Networking Policy for the Middletown Public Library

The Middletown Public Library reserves the right to sponsor social networking sites, staff blogs, wikis, photo sharing, video sharing, tagged websites, and any other sites using the Middletown Public Library name to further its mission to serving the changing needs of our community by providing access to free sources of knowledge, information, and entertainment both within and beyond our walls. Much of the content will relate to libraries, authors, books and the book-publishing industry, and to programs, events, photos and/or images, or special topics the Library is discussing or promoting. The Middletown Public Library's sponsored sites are also a place for the public to share opinions about Library-related subjects and issues. Comments are welcome and will be reviewed prior to publishing, when possible.

Social networking is defined as any website or application that allows users to share information online. Social networking tools can include, but are not limited to blogs, instant messaging, social networking sites, text messaging, and wikis.

Social Networking Acceptable Use

The goals of the Middletown Public Library sponsored social networking sites are:

- a. To increase the public's knowledge of Library events and use of Library services
- b. To promote the value and importance of the Library's services among the general public, governing officials, and civic leaders
- c. To maintain open, professional, and responsive communications with members of the public and the news media

Publicly posted information will be professional and reflect positively on the Middletown Public Library and its staff, volunteers, and services. Staff shall check facts, cite sources, present balanced views, acknowledge and correct errors, and check spelling and grammar before publishing any posts. The Middletown Public Library reserves the right not to publish any posting, to edit a posting, or to later on remove or hide a posting. The Middletown Public Library will only post information about events, services, and programs related to the Library, the Friends of the Library, or co-sponsored by the Library. Exceptions may be made by the Library Director or Assistant Director / Technology Coordinator in extreme circumstances.

The Library does not collect, maintain, or otherwise use the personal information stored on any third party site in any way other than to communicate with users on that site, unless granted permission by users for Library contact outside the site. The purpose for contact outside the site may include program promotion, volunteer opportunities, reference help, or other similar activities. Users may remove themselves at any time from the Library's "friends" or "followers" lists, or request that the Library remove them. Users should be aware that third party websites have their own privacy policies and should proceed accordingly.

The role and utility of the various social networking sites will be evaluated periodically by Library staff and may be terminated at any time without notice to subscribers.

Staff should take great care to avoid more personal interactions with patrons via social media. A professional manner should always be used, and unless the patron is known personally to the staff member outside of work, individual connections through personal accounts should be avoided in most cases. This is of greater importance when dealing with patrons who are minors. Such connections should never be used for personal benefit or commercial profit.

The Library's accounts may follow or join groups associated with: other public and academic libraries, special libraries such as the Library of Congress, librarians, publishers, bookstores, authors, neutral news sources such as CNN and The New York Times, official Town of Middletown sites and other government entities, official Rhode Island sites and other government entities, and local groups or pages that are neutral and of community importance. Guidelines for whom to follow will align with the philosophies found in the Library's collection development policy. The accounts will be monitored on a regular basis during normal hours of Library operation. If someone posts a message that is in violation of the Library's social networking policy, then Library staff will delete the comment.

Comments from the Public

Comments, posts, and messages are welcome on the Middletown Public Library social networking sites. While the Library recognizes and respects differences of opinion, all such interactions will be regularly monitored and reviewed for content and relevance.

Where moderation of comments is an available option, comments from the public will be moderated before posting by the Middletown Public Library designated staff editors. Library staff reserves the right to review all comments and postings and delete comments that are inconsistent with the content created by the Library staff. Library staff may block the person who posted inconsistent comments or postings from posting any further information to the Library's social networking sites.

Comments or postings that fall into one of the following categories will be deleted by Library staff:

- a. Obscene, sexist, or racist content
- b. Harassing Library staff or other social media users. Harassing comments or postings including profane or obscene statements or images, threatening physical harm toward another person, and engaging in behavior with the sole intent of annoying another person
- c. Libelous and slanderous statements
- d. Plagiarizing or posting copyrighted material without permission or authority
- e. Private, personal information of another person without appropriate consent or authority
- f. Comments, postings, and/or hyperlinks not related to the content created by the Library staff
- g. Advertisement and solicitation that are not related to the content created by the Library staff

- h. Commercial purposes
- i. Partisan political activity
- j. Photos, other images, or videos that fall into any of the above categories

All such comments or posts will be removed as they are found.

The Middletown Public Library is not obligated to take any such actions and will not be responsible or liable for content posted by any subscriber in any forum, message board, or other area within the service.

By posting a comment, individuals agree to indemnify the Middletown Public Library, the Board of Library Trustees, the Town of Middletown, library staff, and any library volunteers from and against all liabilities, judgments, damages, and costs (including attorney's fees) incurred by any of them which arise out of or are related to the content posted by patrons.

If an individual does not agree to these terms, the individual should not use the Middletown Public Library sponsored sites as a violation of these terms.

Social Networking Violations

The Library's pages and profiles will be monitored on a regular basis during normal hours of Library operation, via review of the site and/or through email notifications. If a follower posts content that is deemed in violation of the Library's social media policy, the Library will delete the content in violation. The follower whose comment(s) are removed will be sent a private alert message informing them that their comment(s) were removed due to violations with the Library social networking policy.

The message will restate the policy and direct them to contact the Library Director for further information/clarification. The message will also explain the consequences of the "three strike policy" for repeat violations. A follower whose comments are removed for a second violation of the Library Social Networking Policy will receive a second, similar private alert message, and be notified that upon receiving a third violation of policy, they will be removed as a follower/fan/friend of the Library account. Upon a third violation and removal of comment(s) the follower will receive a message informing them that they are being removed as a follower/fan/friend and they will be directed to the Library Director for further information/clarification.

Questions of interpretation will be referred to the Library Director. Final determination rests with the Board of Library Trustees.

Approved the Middletown Board of Library Trustees on Tuesday, September 17, 2024