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Social Media Guidelines for ALA Members, Chapters and Leadership

At ALA, we understand that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your association involvement with family, friends and co-workers around the world. However, when you are in a position to represent ALA (such as creating and/or posting content through your chapter or committee account), use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, we have established these guidelines.

These guidelines are intended for use by all members of ALA, but especially chapter presidents and other association leaders, as members will look to you as an example. Please be sure to share this document with your chapter and committee members who curate your social media.

Know and Follow the Rules

ALA strives to foster open and honest dialogue with our members and the greater legal management community. Social media is an excellent tool for spreading thought leadership, event information and success stories. It's also useful for recruiting new members to your chapter.

Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online. Carefully read these guidelines and ensure your postings are consistent with the recommendations outlined below. Inappropriate postings that include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you or your chapter to disciplinary action up to and including termination of charter and/or membership.

Be Respectful

Always be fair and courteous to fellow members and ALA staff. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve association- or business partner-related complaints by speaking directly with association leadership rather than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage members or business partners, or that might constitute harassment or bullying.

Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or association bylaws.

Be Honest and Accurate

Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know to be false about ALA, fellow members, business partners or other associations.

ALA Headquarters staff will correct inaccurate or misleading postings on our own social media pages as they arise. We will not delete posts unless they violate our policies. Most changes will be made by adding to posts, and we will mark any additions clearly. Consider employing these methods on your chapter or committee pages.

Post Only Appropriate and Respectful Content

Do not create a link from your personal blog, website or other social networking site to an ALA webpage or content without identifying yourself as an ALA member.

On your personal social media accounts, express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for ALA unless you are posting as an admin. If ALA is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are a member and make it clear that your views do not represent those of ALA, fellow members, business partners or staff.

Some subjects can invite heated dialogue that might not be appropriate for a professional social media page. Be careful discussing topics that might cause emotions to run high (e.g. politics and religion), and show respect for others' opinions.

Avoid giving out personal information about yourself or your fellow members, or posting confidential or non-public information.

Using Social Media at ALA Events

ALA encourages the use of social media at events (be sure to use our conference hashtags!). This is a great way to network and share ideas from education sessions that you find particularly useful. It also spreads the word about the value of attending ALA events, encouraging your fellow chapter members to attend next year.

We do ask that you consider ALA's professional reputation when posting updates regarding social events, or photos that depict fellow members or business partners. It's always a good idea to get permission first from those in the photo, and make sure they are OK with the content being shared.

Retaliation Is Prohibited

ALA prohibits taking negative action against any member or business partner for reporting a possible deviation from these guidelines or for cooperating in an investigation.

Media Contacts

All media inquiries should be directed to ALA Headquarters staff or chapter leadership.

For More Information

If you have questions or need further guidance, please contact marketing@alanet.org.