

Sounding off on social media – the Acoustical Society of America

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ABSTRACT

Over the past five years, the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) has used social media in various capacities to promote content ranging from society publications, ASA announcements, educational resources, standards news and much more. In this presentation, the staff who manage these accounts share why and how the society created a social media presence. We will also share insights gained about using social media to reach members of the acoustics community, including how to engage with different social media platforms effectively, methods for building a social media presence efficiently, and thoughts on pivoting strategies as the social media landscape evolves. Finally, we will share some tips and tricks for acousticians interested in engaging with the acoustics community on social media.

Keywords: *social media, social networking*

1. INTRODUCTION

Although initially created for personal interactions, social media has evolved to include space for professional communication as well. There are, of course, professionally focused platforms where researchers talk about their work, like LinkedIn or ResearchGate, but even sites generally oriented towards personal content, like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, house communities of researchers. Five years ago, the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) joined social media in an effort to better serve our society members and those who read and publish with our journals [1]. In this paper, we'll discuss why and how ASA created a

social media presence, insights we've gained about using social media to reach the acoustics community, and some tips and tricks acousticians can implement if they are interested in engaging with the acoustics community on social media.

2. WHY THE ASA JOINED SOCIAL MEDIA

The simplest answer to the question of why the ASA joined social media initially is that we wanted to have another avenue for communicating with our community outside of our meetings and publications. Having a social media presence allows us to share ASA announcements regarding meetings/events, funding opportunities, and recent awards; promote publications (both articles that have been published and calls for submissions); and provide information about ASA Standards initiatives. Our social media presence also allows us to help our community members more, such as answering questions that come up in response to posts or sharing news that our community members have posted on their own pages.

Our efforts have not been in vain, either. For example, at the time of writing, the ASA LinkedIn page has over 8,000 followers, Twitter account has over 6,800 followers, and Facebook and Instagram each have over 2,000 followers. Additionally, *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (JASA)*, *JASA Express Letters (JASA-EL)*, and *Proceedings of Meetings on Acoustics (POMA)* each have between 1,000 and 3,200 followers on Twitter. In addition, ASA Standards, which began its social media presence in early 2022, currently has 217 Twitter followers and 187 LinkedIn followers.

3. HOW ASA USES SOCIAL MEDIA

The ASA's current social media approach is multi-pronged. Individual ASA social media accounts have been started by

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various society members over the years and were eventually taken over by the society for in-house management. Currently, the three branches of the ASA (headquarters, Publications, and Standards) manage their own accounts, with some overlap in content. ASA Headquarters accounts are run by Keeta Jones, Education and Outreach Coordinator for the ASA, and include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo, and most recently, Mastodon accounts. Publications-related posts are managed by Kat Setzer, Editorial Associate, and are published via journal-specific Twitter accounts (*JASA*, *JASA Express Letters*, and *POMA*) as well as through ASA headquarters Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram accounts. Liz Bury, Senior Managing Editor, collaborates on social media strategy for ASA Publications. ASA Standards has joined social media most recently, and Ken Berlack, Standards Development Support Specialist, produces content for Standards Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts.

Because all of the individuals managing social media wear various hats within the society, our strategy relies heavily on planning. Each branch of the organization aims to produce at least three to five posts per week related to their initiatives, which are then shared on via various accounts. We aim to create content that will work across platforms (e.g., posts with images so that they'll easily translate to Instagram or wording that fits within Twitter's character limits). The team meets once a month to discuss upcoming social media initiatives to amplify one another's campaigns and discuss strategies.

4. WHAT ASA HAS LEARNED

Over the past five years, we've learned a lot about social media strategy, ranging from basic details about how to write posts and when to publish them, to larger-scale factors, such as quantifying success from social media campaigns and adapting to changes to the social media landscape. Here, we'll discuss a few of these lessons.

4.1 Quantifying Success

To better understand how well our social media content is being seen and engaged with, we perform periodic reporting on performance on the social media profiles, as well as of individual posts [2-4]. These reports allow us to see how many people follow the various pages, the rate we are accruing new followers, how many people view each post, and, perhaps most importantly, how many people engage with our posts—whether by “liking” the post, leaving a comment, sharing with their own followers, or

clicking on a link. We can then see which type of content our users engage with the most and then develop more content of that type.

Of course, it's important to note that we also needed to decide which metrics were important for tracking purposes. For instance, for posts about journal articles, we want to see how many people click through from a “teaser” post describing the article to the actual article, whereas a headquarters post announcing new fellows within the society might be deemed a success simply if people “like” or comment on the post. In short, we decide what our end goal for a particular type of post is, then decide which metrics best quantify that information.

Tracking page-level and post-level performance also allows us to modify our strategy based on the changing landscape of social media. For instance, until the end of 2022, ASA Publications had individual Facebook accounts for each of the journals, in addition to ASA headquarters' Facebook page. Over the past two years or so, we found our content posted to the individual publications' Facebook accounts gradually received fewer views and engagement, despite our various profiles having more followers than ever. We realized that during that same period, Facebook had adjusted its algorithms for how much of various types of content appear on users' news feeds; as a result, content from business pages like ours began showing up less frequently on our followers' news feeds. After watching the trends in our post data, we decided to pivot strategies, combining all ASA Publications and headquarters content on a single ASA business page and focusing effort we once used for creating content for the multiple individual Facebook sites on increasing our presence elsewhere, like LinkedIn.

4.2 Be Social

Perhaps this tenet goes without saying. We have found that people are more likely to engage with our content if we engage with theirs. As a result, we make a point to follow acousticians on social media, as well as a react to and share their content. With our own posts, we tag individuals and organizations who may be linked to the content in some way (e.g., authors, authors' affiliations, ASA members, funding organizations, etc.). Social media is for developing an online community, and a community requires give and take. As we tag users, they are also more likely to tag us in relevant posts, which also helps us find and boost acoustics content.

4.3 Be Consistent

When building an audience on social media, it's important to consistently post content—partly because followers come to expect content at certain times, and partly because social media site algorithms typically note which posts users engage with most and increase the amount of those types of posts the users see. This tendency creates a bit of an anti-snowball effect; if content is sporadic or rare, then people interact with it less than other content, and, as a result, the site shares less of your content and more of whatever the user *is* interacting with. Our staff have found that a minimum of three to five posts per site per week is best, aiming for times that our pages see the most traffic.

4.4 Keep an Ear to the Ground

As mentioned earlier in “Quantifying Success,” the social media landscape is ever shifting. Facebook newsfeed algorithms changed [5]; Twitter saw a mass exodus of users after new ownership [6]; at the time of writing this article, Congress is debating banning TikTok... and so on [7]. Amidst the volatility of older platforms, newer platforms sprout up to take their place. The ASA's general policy is “wait and see”: we watch how changes to platforms affect our individual pages and posts, then make changes to strategy after we have had a chance to see how the changes have impacted our ability to reach our audience.

When considering new platforms, we look at the type of content typically shared on the site and who typically uses the site, then weigh how much extra staff time and labor will need to be put into creating content for the new platform and how many of our desired audience will engage with it. Thus, we decided it would help us to have the Publications office engage more with LinkedIn, since the content shared there is similar to content created for other sites (and therefore easily recycled) and many of our audience members use the site; on the other hand, we decided TikTok, which would require us to create new video content, is currently not possible due to the time commitment. In the middle, we created a single ASA headquarters account on Mastodon, a proposed replacement for Twitter, in order to test the site and assess how transitioning to it (or adding it to our repertoire) would work.

4.5 We're Best as Second Fiddle

As much effort as we put into our social media strategy as an organization, we've consistently found that individual researchers and authors will gain more

traction on social media than the journal or society will when sharing the same content. As a result, we try to amplify our community's posts as much as possible. In September 2022, we even developed a workshop and website on how researchers can best use social media to promote their work. Workshop materials and a recording of the webinar are available online at <https://acousticalsociety.org/asa-publications-guide-to-social-media/>.

This last note brings us to our next and final area of focus—tips for acousticians on how to engage with social media.

5. TIPS FOR ACOUSTICIANS

All of the above information can be applied to an acoustician's individual or lab accounts, but here are some other suggestions for how one can most effectively engage with social media.

- For your profile, include your real name, affiliation, and photo of your face.
- Find your audience by searching for hashtags (like #AcademicTwitter or #acoustics) and following people related to your field.
- Set aside time (may be brief) every day to engage with your community on social media by commenting, liking, sharing/retweeting interesting papers and posts.
- Include an image with your posts. Posts with images get noticed significantly more than those that include only text.
- Include relevant hashtags others may be following on words in the tweet/post.
- When discussing your research, avoid jargon. This De-Jargonizer (<https://scienceandpublic.com/>) can give you insights into how common the words you are using are in everyday media [9].
- On posts relevant to your research, share/retweet or reply to the post with a link to your article and note on how it is related.
- Share your research a few times over the month or two following a publication.
- If you are creating content for an entire lab or even organization, consider using social media scheduling and managing software, like Hootsuite [10].

With a little effort, researchers can easily join the online acoustics community. Besides being a place to promote one's own research, social media offers a bevy of benefits

to acousticians: users can easily crowd-source answers to specific acoustics questions, find help with specialized problems (like advice wrangling computer code for calculations), interact with fellow meeting-goers at professional conferences, and promote outreach and diversity initiatives. ASA members have also written more information about why acousticians should use social media [11].

6. CONCLUSION

ASA will continue to use social media, because even though it is ever changing, it is also a seemingly unstoppable force. The ASA embraces social media more than ever to support both our members and to encourage everyone to explore the field of acoustics. Please join us! You can always help by liking, following, subscribing, sharing, and retweeting.

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