

American Historical Association Communications Policy

Social media and communications with the press offer the American Historical Association opportunities to announce and promote activities to the historical community, engage with members and potential members, and connect with other online constituencies. The AHA encourages and supports the use of social media by staff and Council members to share news and engage in conversations with audiences around the world.

These guidelines provide information on the use of official AHA communications channels; responses to press inquiries shared with the AHA, individual staff, and Council members; and public commentary by staff and Council members who identify on social media as associated with the AHA. It addresses the distinction between work-related and personal use of social media and makes recommendations for use of personal social media accounts.

AHA staff and Council members may identify themselves using their AHA affiliation but should not state or imply that they officially represent the AHA or speak on its behalf, unless approved to do so by the executive director.

Press Inquiries

- The executive director is the only individual authorized to speak on behalf of the AHA. The executive director may delegate the responsibility of speaking to the press to other staff or Council members.
- Press inquiries should be directed to press@historians.org. The director of communications and public affairs will ensure that inquiries are shared with the appropriate people and that responses are sent.
- If a staff or Council member is approached directly by a member of the press about an issue related to or affecting the AHA's work: The individual must contact the executive director and director of communications and public affairs about the inquiry. The executive director will discuss the inquiry with the individual, determine the appropriateness of the request, and work with staff or Council members to share talking points as appropriate.
- If a staff or Council member is approached directly by a member of the press about an issue related to the individual's own research and scholarship: Once the article or interview is published, please email the director of communications and public affairs, so the AHA can share the piece as a Members Making News item.
- If a staff or Council member wishes to publish an op-ed article about an issue related to or affecting the AHA's work: The individual must contact the executive director and director of communications and public affairs to discuss the idea and goal of the piece and determine any risks posed by publishing the op-ed. AHA staff can assist with placing the op-ed.

Social Media

- All AHA (including *American Historical Review*) social media accounts are the responsibility of the publications department. The publications and communications associate, in consultation with the director of publications, ensures that the accounts are used to fulfill the organization's mission and adhere to organizational communication expectations and standards.
- The publications and communications associate works with the engagement director and marketing coordinator to ensure that AHA messaging is consistent across all platforms.
- Should the publications and communications associate be absent or unable to fulfill these duties, the director of publications will designate a substitute who has been trained on using these platforms and is familiar with the established AHA guidelines for social media. No other staff are authorized to communicate via official AHA social media channels.
- The director of publications, in consultation with the executive director, determines which platforms are appropriate for the AHA to use in official communications. As of 2025, these platforms include: Bluesky, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, and YouTube.
- The AHA does not post confidential or proprietary information about the AHA, its staff, or Council or committee members.
- The director of publications and the publications and communications associate will ensure that all social media accounts adhere to current best practices for security, including such standards as secure passwords and two-factor authentication and updating software.
- Citation and credit are as important in social media as in scholarship. The AHA credits original sources for news or other information posted to social media accounts when appropriate.
- The AHA is nonpartisan, and therefore all communications from AHA accounts should be similarly nonpartisan. Under no circumstances should AHA social media posts express support for or opposition to a political party or candidate. Additionally, AHA social media posts should take no stance on matters of public policy unless they reflect the position of an official AHA statement or publication, or they have been specifically approved by the executive director.

Staff and Council Members' Personal Social Media Accounts

The AHA understands that staff and Council members use social media and other websites and platforms for personal matters in the modern workplace. Personal social media accounts are the responsibility of the individual. While staff and Council members may use social media to engage in online discussion around issues related to AHA activities and concerns, whether and how an individual chooses to do so is a personal decision. AHA staff and Council members are not required to use their personal social media accounts to promote the AHA or its activities.

When using personal social media accounts, staff and Council members may identify themselves using their AHA affiliation when discussing an AHA program or project they

manage. They should not state or imply that they officially represent the AHA or speak on its behalf, unless approved to do so by the executive director. In addition, staff and Council members' conduct on social media should adhere to provisions in the Employee Handbook and to the AHA's Code of Professional Conduct at Officially Sanctioned AHA Activities. Within these boundaries, the AHA recognizes the right of its staff and Council members to use personal social media accounts at their own discretion.

We offer the following recommendations:

- Do not post anything that you would not present in any public forum or submit for publication.
- Remember that internal conversations—among staff, in Council meetings, and via email—are confidential and should never be disclosed, especially in a public forum. This policy includes Council votes and discussions.
- Remember that whatever you share might be public for an indefinite period, even if you attempt to modify or delete it.
- Be careful what personal or institutional information you share online. Many social networking websites are not secured, and information is available to anyone with access to the internet. Keep in mind that on many social networking websites, your name and photo/icon appear next to the content that you post and will be associated with you or with the AHA.
- Do not engage in professionally unethical or disreputable behavior online that could adversely reflect on the AHA. When publicly discussing your work at the AHA, be consistent with the mission, vision, reputation, and values of the Association.
- Be respectful of others' views and avoid incendiary language. Use care when discussing matters in which emotions run high and show respect for others' opinions, provided they are not in your judgment offensive, defamatory, or discriminatory. On platforms that limit the length of posts (e.g., Bluesky), the impulse to debate—even defend—should be weighed against the limitations of space to fully articulate an idea. Humor, especially sarcasm, can easily be misconstrued. Giving air to criticism that isn't getting any traction or that has been posted recently by someone with few followers can be counterproductive.
- Note that linking to someone else's post will often be considered an endorsement by other social media users, unless you expressly and unambiguously declare your distance. This can happen even if your profile page includes a disclaimer.
- If you encounter online harassment related to your work at or on behalf of the AHA, please consult the AHA's Guide for Contending with Online Harassment and alert your supervisor or other appropriate members of the senior management team. The Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policies, detailed in the Employee Handbook, delineate the actions that the AHA does not tolerate in the workplace or by individuals with whom staff interact as part of their work, including through social media. Conscientious staff and Council members performing their AHA work with good judgment and integrity have a right to expect similarly respectful treatment on social

media, and the AHA will use the resources it has available when staff or Council members have not received appropriate respect and consideration.

Staff Guidelines

Activity on social media is also subject to the provisions of the Employee Handbook, and staff should heed the following:

- All staff are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner showing courtesy and consideration to members and officers of the Association, to the public, and to colleagues. In all dealings with the public and with each other, all AHA staff are expected to be considerate of the rights of others and to respect the dignity of each individual.
- Communications activity is also subject to the Employee Handbook's Employee Responsibilities and Workplace Ethics, Anti-Harassment, and Anti-Discrimination Policies. The AHA will not tolerate staff engagement in online harassment or discrimination, on either institutional or personal staff accounts.
- Staff may engage in incidental personal use of social media in the workplace so long as such use does not consume significant time or resources, interfere with operations and productivity, and does not violate other AHA policies.