Frequently Asked Questions – Social Media and the SCA

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Note on Terms: The following terms are used throughout and unless otherwise specified are defined as:

1. Social Media Director – the Deputy Society Seneschal for Social Media.
2. Branch – any local or regional chapter of the Society, including Kingdoms and Principalities
3. Page – a brand (aka "fan") presence using platforms like Facebook Pages, Google+ Pages, etc.
4. Group – a discussion presence using platforms like Facebook Groups, Google+ Communities, etc.

Q: Are branches required to have a Social Media Officer in order to use social media? To whom does that officer report?

A: Because Social Media is an optional (but strongly recommended) effort for branches to undertake, no branch is required to have a Social Media Officer. If a branch wants to pursue social media as focus for recruitment and retention, we recommend having an officer (or officers, as it's usually a busy job) who can dedicate the time and energy necessary to maintain a vibrant and responsive social media presence. If an existing officer (such as the Webminister) can take up the task , great! Otherwise, we encourage every branch to find someone who is comfortable with the platform(s) the branch wants to use and add them as a Deputy for Social Media.

At the Society level, the Office of the Social Media Director is a deputy to the Society Seneschal and works closely with the other Society and Corporate officers. At the branch level, the branch Seneschal can determine who is best served being the officer under whom a social media deputy falls. Our recommendation is to pair the social media deputy with an officer who is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about technology, social media, and/or recruitment and retention, such as the Webminister, Media Relations, or Chatelaine.

Q: What information is provided through social media vs. other channels? If I choose not to have or am otherwise restricted from having an account on a given platform, won't I miss out on important information from my branch, kingdom, or the Society?

A: There are certain types of information that must be distributed through specific channels, such as changes to kingdom law, event flyers (as distributed through a kingdom newsletter), requests for commentary from the Board, changes to Corpora, changes to handbooks or policies for a specific office, etc. This information will never be initially distributed through social media on any platform at

any level (though they will likely be repeated over these platforms for convenience and discussion).

All branches are strongly encouraged to keep a website with current, accurate information as a first destination for information about your branch. This includes maintaining a page for any upcoming event with the most up-to-date information about that event's activities. Further, kingdoms, principalities, and those branches that have them are strongly encouraged to use their newsletter and supplement not only to make required announcements but to publicize information from officers, highlights from activities and events, etc.

Beyond that, any branch at any level can determine the best method of distributing other information to their participants. If that best method is announcements at a business meeting, an email discussion list, a social media Group, a social media Page, a bulletin board system, or anything else, it is up to the officers and members of that branch to determine which one(s) works best for them.

Unfortunately, this brings the reality that not everyone will choose to or be able to receive that information. If your branch announces everything at a business meeting and you cannot travel to the meeting, you're going to miss that information. If you do not have an email account, if you do not subscribe to the newsletter, if you do not log into the bulletin board, if you do not visit the website, if you don't have an account on the social media platform, etc. you are not going to be able to get to that information, wherever it may be.

We encourage branches at all levels to explore the options that are out there, invite the feedback and platform recommendations of their participants, and use the technologies that work best for them to reach the maximum number of people, but we acknowledge that there is a burden on the participants to actively seek out or make themselves available to that information. If your branch chooses to use a given platform for communication, you must choose whether or not to access that platform according to your needs and preferences, and understand that you may not be able to fully receive information without doing so (just as you may not be able to fully participate in branch activities if you do not attend meetings or practices).

No branch at any level will ever select and use a platform for the specific purpose of excluding those participants who aren't on it, but they cannot be held responsible for those participants who voluntarily choose not to use it, or those participants who are otherwise restricted from it through no fault of the branch or Society.

Q: Can we use the term "Unofficial" on our presences to avoid having to follow the policy?

A: When a social media presence represents an individual branch, officer, or event, that presence is

going to speak with Official Voice, whether or not it is labeled as such. There is no such thing as an "unofficial" brand Page or event Page that provides information directly from a branch, officer, or event. Even if a page is marked "Unofficial Three Spears Barony Page," if branch officers are posting information from the voice of that Page such as meeting announcements, fighter practice times, event details, or any other materials that could be construed as information from the branch, that Page is an Official Voice for the branch according to the policy.

Branches, officers, and events must never apply "Unofficial" to a social media Page that directly represents them.

Groups on social media platforms may choose to be labeled "Unofficial" but that will not prevent content coming from Official Voice from being responsible for adherence to policy (see below).

Q: Does the need to log in to a social media platform before viewing particular content count as "Closed" for the purpose of determining access?

A: No. Because practically all of the content posted on a social media platform is posted for the benefit of the Society participants who are on that platform, we start from the assumption that the viewer has an account on the platform and is at least logged into the platform and ready to access content. Any further actions needed, such as joining a Group or liking a Page, determine the level of access.

Q: How does the Social Media Policy affect social media discussion Groups (such as Facebook Groups, Google+ Communities, etc.)? Should we mark our Groups "Closed" to the public?

A: The policy as a whole applies to content that meets the criteria of Official Voice and Open Access. For Groups that are Open and available to the public for viewing, any content which is posted using the Official Voice of an officer, branch, or event must adhere to all the guidelines in the policy as well as any relevant officer's policies and the Governing Documents. Officers are encouraged to specify when they are presenting content separate from their office to distinguish between the use of Official Voice vs. personal opinion.

For Groups that are not open to the public (i.e. they specifically require the user to register for the Group and/or be approved by an administrator), the content posted in that Group by any officer must adhere to the relevant officer's policies and Governing Documents concerning electronic communication.

Each individual branch or officer must make the determination as to whether or not their Group should be marked Open or Closed per the options available on a platform. The benefit of an Open

Group is that it doesn't require any additional action for someone to view the information, such as a newcomer who isn't sure whether or not they would like to join.

Please note: no content that is considered inappropriate per the social media policy is permissible on any social media presence associated with a Society branch, event, or officer at any time regardless of the level of access.

Q: Does the content posted to an event-specific Page hosted on a social media platform qualify as publication for the purpose of sanction? Is that content considered Official Voice? If we have an event Page on social media, do we need an event page on our website as well?

A: Social media does not satisfy the requirement of publication per the Governing Documents for an event to be sanctioned by the Society. However, content posted by the event staff and branch officers concerning the event is considered Official Voice and the restrictions on inappropriate content apply to all content posted on an event Page.

Not every platform allows for an event Page to be viewed by those individuals who do not have an account on that platform. Therefore, it is not recommended that a social media event Page be the first source of information about your event. Most potential visitors will visit your website to look for information about your event (if you do not have a branch website, contact your Kingdom Webminister for resources for creating one or at least a temporary page specifically for your event) and guests will use a social media event Page to supplement that information and discuss the event. Any information you distribute on an event Page concerning event activities, meals, staff, changes, etc. should likewise be added to the event website.

Q: If an individual has violated the inappropriate content section of the policy, how do we moderate that content / the individual?

A: Every branch's social media administrators will need to decide for their Group the level of moderation they want to take with their presence. Some social media presences will be more disposed to casual conversation that doesn't necessarily stick to SCA topics. Some will be public, branded sources that come straight from the branch. The content that is designated as inappropriate per policy, however, must be dealt with efficiently and quickly to ensure a productive environment that promotes the Society and its activities.

For minor infractions such as starting arguments, posting inflammatory material or insults, discussion of modern politics or religion, or politicizing the office, contact the individual and inform them of the inappropriate nature of the content (cite the specific Social Media Policy section on this content). Request that they voluntarily remove the content or offer to remove it for them. If they agree,

ensure the content is removed in a timely fashion. If they do not agree, remove the material and inform them that further inappropriate content will result in a temporary removal from the presence.

Q: Someone has created a [Group/Page/event] that represents our branch or event without our authorization. What do we do? What if no avenues of communication resolve the issue?

A: First, determine if the presence is presenting itself (or could be genuinely construed) as an Official Voice of the branch or event staff. The Social Media Policy is only concerned with those social media presences which function as sources of Official Voice for the branch/event.

Unless there is an issue with inappropriate content, your next step whenever someone has created a social media presence representing your branch or event should always be to open dialogue with that individual. Assume good faith that they are trying to encourage participation and communication. You may have just found the perfect volunteer to help you with social media!

If the individual is a participant with your branch, your branch Seneschal should contact them, take this opportunity to determine if the individual is a qualified volunteer to assist your social media efforts and invite them to collaborate if appropriate, apprise them of the administration requirements in the Social Media Policy, and work with them to bring the presence into compliance.

If they refuse, the Seneschal should reach out a second time and inform the individual of the policy requirements and that refusal to follow policy may result in sanction. At a further refusal, the branch Seneschal should contact the Kingdom Seneschal (and notify the Social Media Director) and together, they shall determine a further course of action, up to and including pursuing sanction against the person through the Office of the Seneschal and/or the Crown.

If the individual is not a participant of your branch, follow the contact process above but if they refuse, contact the branch Seneschal of their current branch of residence. That branch Seneschal, in tandem with your Seneschal and their Kingdom Seneschal, will continue as above to resolve the issue.

If the individual is posting inappropriate content using the Official Voice of a branch or event, the branch Seneschal should immediately request they cease, remove all inappropriate content, and either remove the presence or turn over administrative control. If they refuse, escalate the issue to the Kingdom Seneschal (and notify the Social Media Director) to determine a further course of action as above.

In any case where you cannot assume administrative control of a presence that represents your branch or event, immediately create an official version of that presence and publicize its existence to

ensure you have control of the message seen as coming from your branch.

If all efforts from the Office of the Seneschal and/or the Crown do not resolve the issue, your Kingdom Seneschal can escalate the issue to the Social Media Director who will work in tandem with the Society Seneschal and Society President to resolve the issue.