

Report on Facebook/Twitter Committee

The Society's Facebook and Twitter accounts continue to build connections to other organizations, promote academic discourse among scholars, and share military history across social media platforms. As of this report's filing, the SMH Twitter account--@SMH_Historians under the charge of the Heather Salazar (the Society's Mark Grimsley Fellow)--has over 3,376 followers and counting. @SMH_Historians has also produced over 32,600 tweets (original and retweets) which continually increase the reach of information in an accessible manner.

The Society's Facebook presence falls under two categories—the closed Facebook group and public Facebook page. Under direction of the Executive Board, specifically President Jeffrey Grey and Vice President Jennifer Keene, the Facebook/Twitter Committee (hereafter referred to just as “committee”) successfully composed an official mission statement. A copy of the statement is filed with this report, and is available online at: <http://smh-hq.org/policies/socialmedia.html>. The committee is composed of myself, Dr. Terry Beckenbaugh, Dr. Galen Perras, Mary E. Walters, and Heather Salazar. The closed group, with members allowed in by the committee's approval, stands at 701 members as of the filing of this report. Facebook members that have not joined the Society formally are periodically removed by the committee—so this number will fluctuate accordingly. The Society's public Facebook page, as of this report, has 1,269 “likes” or followers.

The public page has served well as a posting board for announcements such as the Society's annual meeting, advertising the new conference mobile app, other calls for papers, and related military history activities. The public page, similar to the Twitter account, also can “like” and follow Facebook accounts of other organizations such as the Canadian War Museum—mutually enhancing the visibility of both with sharing of posts. The closed group has been a bit more controversial in recent months.

Report on Facebook/Twitter Committee

The group, for the most part, has been a congenial venue for academic debates on military history's place in the academy, successful posting of authors' works, pedagogical advice, and announcements of military history events around the world. However, a few members have taken to posting inflammatory comments towards other members or topics relating to current political events that were far from conducive to academic discussions. As a result, the committee's initial reaction was to delete the problem comments and posts while delivering warnings via Facebook direct messages to the offending members. This was proving ineffective as there was often a delay in the time it took for the committee members to realize there was a problem before other members responded—extending the thread of problematic comments. Also, members that were warned sometimes would not see the direct messages in time or ignore the admonitions.

President Grey and Vice President Keene asked the committee to come up with a better solution to the group's issues with inflammatory posts. The committee considered several options including switching the group to a fully moderated setting whereby all posts would only be done by the committee members. The committee also considered a partially moderated setting where group members could submit posts that the committee members would then have to approve before they would appear on the group. The committee decided against both of these options as being detrimental to the spirit of free discussion in the group as well as putting an undue burden on the committee members now and in the future. The committee members decided to adopt a stricter posture with removal of offending members. Offensive posting members in the group would be removed immediately, and warned via Facebook message afterwards. The offending member would not be allowed to rejoin the group for a period of three months. Thus far, the offensive posting has apparently been reduced within the past couple of

Report on Facebook/Twitter Committee

months leading up to this report. Facebook has also recently added a feature that allows group administrators disable commenting on posts within groups they operate, but the committee has not put this function to the test as of this report.

The group's issue's aside, the Facebook and Twitter presence for the Society continue to be a great means for the Society to promote its events, military history, and connect to related organizations. The committee continues to be vigilant in maintaining the Society's academic brand among its social media platforms, and the Society's electronic presence continues to grow in a healthy direction.

Gregory N. Stern, Ph.D.

Society for Military History Facebook/Twitter Committee--Chair