Social Media

A hundred years ago, the "media" meant the print media—newspapers and magazines. Then along came the broadcast media—radio and television. With the rise of the Internet, traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television are now online and have become more and more interactive. New media have also emerged on the Internet. Among them are blogs, micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter), podcasts, Internet forums, email, video-sharing sites (e.g., YouTube), and social-networking sites (e.g., Facebook).

Facebook

Across the globe, more than a billion people use Facebook. By using Facebook, you are using something familiar to millions of people to raise awareness and share your civic actions. Creating a group page for your project is a civic action. And it's free.

Protect your privacy. Always consult Facebook's privacy policy before creating a profile or group page. You may want to keep your information available only to your fellow CAP students and teacher, but a group page would probably be most helpful to your project if it is public. You and your parents should consult Facebook's Family Safety Center, and especially its Playing It Safe page for teens. *Remember, whatever you post on Facebook is potentially visible to teachers, parents, the public, and current and future employers.*

Decide how you want to use Facebook. You can either use your personal Facebook page to subscribe to pages in order to receive helpful information, or you can create a group page for your CAP project.

Describe your civic action project. In the "Info" section of your Facebook page, describe the issue or problem you are working on, the reason why it is important, and what the public policy connection is. You should also identify yourself (e.g., Jenny S. from Ridgeview High School) and other group members. Be clear in your description and use grammar, spelling, and punctuation correctly. That will ensure that people take your work seriously.

Build a constituency for your issue with friends and others. If you create a group page, invite your friends to join. In turn, they can invite more friends. Facebook can serve as your project's website. If you choose to allow the public to view and post on your group's wall, you can potentially build a larger constituency for your issue. Be aware that you may also attract comments from people who disagree with your perspective.

Beware Internet "trolls" and bullies. Fifteen percent of teens using social media say they have been the target of mean or cruel behavior on social networking sites (Pew Research
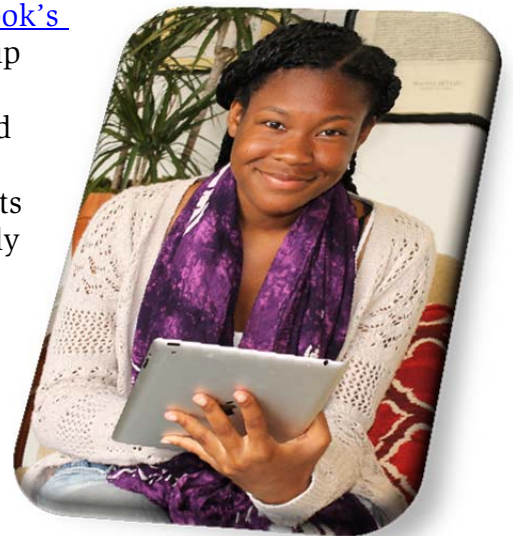
Center, 2011). Some people, known as "trolls," just post negative or abusive comments simply to provoke others. As the saying goes, "Don't feed the trolls." Just delete their comments. Facebook even allows you to report abuse and block abusive users. See Civic Action Project's Anti-Bullying Project page for resources on how to prevent cyberbullying.

Connect to elected leaders. Most elected officials have social media accounts. Find out who your representatives are and follow their news feed. You can also send them messages voicing your concerns and opinions. Always use respectful language, especially since your posted comments will be public.

Tumblr, Blogger, and Wordpress

Blogs can give you freedom in controlling the content and visibility of your civic action project. Creating a blog is easy, and there are several free services enabling you to do so, including Tumblr, Blogger, and WordPress. Blogs give you a chance to be creative in presenting your project. Remember, creating the blog itself is a civic action.

Blogging is publishing. Remember that when you post something on your blog, it becomes published material. That means you need to carefully review anything you want to post before publishing it. Make sure your information is accurate and supported by evidence and credible sources. Avoid publishing information that could be insulting offensive to others.

Describe your civic action project. In the "About" section of your blog, describe the issue or problem you are working on, the reason why it is important, and what the public policy connection is. You should also identify yourself and any other group members. Be clear in your description and use grammar, spelling, and punctuation correctly. That will ensure that people take your work seriously.

Choose your authors. The content on your blog can be all yours, or you can invite guest bloggers to express their opinions. If your project is a group effort, decide if everyone should write for the blog, or if you want your group to have one spokesperson writing blog posts.

Connect with your constituency. You can write to ask your readers to email their local representatives, check out your Facebook page or Instagram, or attend a meeting. Write about your successes, but also about your struggles. Decide if you want to allow people to post comments. People like to visit blogs they can interact with, even if they disagree with the blog's perspective.

Share ideas, civic actions, and news. You can also share tips or ideas on how to address your issue or problem. Post photos, stories, or videos that display your civic actions. If you organize an event, ask attendees for their opinions about the event and then post it. If you spot an article on the web that relates to your issue or to your project, post it on your site. When you post the link, describe how it relates to your project. People will return to your blog if it is an up-to-date source.

Always give proper attribution to any link (the author and website where you found it).

Always get permission to publish information and interviews. A blog is a great place to publish an interview with a community leader or elected representative. If possible, post a photo of any interview session. Always be clear in explaining to interviewees that you plan to publish the information on your project's blog. Give them the URL of the blog.

Twitter

There are over 300 million Twitter users worldwide. Microblogging means users share small bits of information quickly and easily with as few or as many people as they want. A post on Twitter is called a "tweet," and it is limited to 140 characters. Maintaining a Twitter page about your civic action project is itself a civic action.

Become familiar with Twitter's unique language. Unlike Facebook or blogs, Twitter only allows you 140 characters to work with. Tweets use abbreviations, sentence fragments, symbols, and hashtags. By using a hashtag (e.g., #littering, #citycouncil, or #civicaction), you can get more attention from others on Twitter. It is a good idea to include a web link in a tweet for more information, given the limited space you have.

Protect your privacy. Consult [Twitter's privacy policy](#) before creating a Twitter page.

Build a constituency for your issue with "followers." By clicking "Follow" on anyone's Twitter page, you become their follower. In turn, others can become your followers. When more people see your tweets, you are raising awareness of your issue or project. Be aware that you may also attract comments from people who disagree with your perspective. See the section on Facebook above about trolls and cyberbullies.

Connect to elected leaders. Most elected officials have a Twitter account. Find out who your representatives are and click "Follow" to follow their tweets. You can often learn a lot about public policy from the tweets they post. You can also send them messages voicing your concerns and opinions. Always use respectful language, especially since your tweets will be public.

Retweet! You create connections and attract attention to your project if you retweet others' tweets that relate to your project, or that help explain an issue or policy.