

Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Social Media Adoption, Utilization, and Consequences in the Nonprofit Sector

Hugo Asencio, Department of Public Administration and Public Policy, California State University, Dominguez Hills, California, USA

Rui Sun, Department of Public Administration and Public Policy, California State University, Dominguez Hills, California, USA

Social media are now ubiquitous in society and have changed the way people and organizations communicate (Asencio & Sun, 2015). Compared to traditional websites used for one-way sharing of web content, social media allow users to create, share, and exchange content in an interactive way (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval, & Hovy, 2010). They also facilitate the development of social networks (Asencio & Sun, 2015).

For nonprofit organizations (NPOs), social media are fast becoming important tools for promoting stakeholder engagement. A few years ago, NPOs were primarily sharing information with their stakeholders through Facebook (e.g., Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009) or Twitter (e.g., Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Today, more and more NPOs are beginning to take advantage of social media's interactivity and dialogue features by using them to engage their stakeholders in two-way communications (e.g., Nemenoff & Schenk, 2015). Furthermore, social media are inexpensive tools that, if used strategically, can help NPOs accomplish their goals (Asencio & Sun, 2015) and fulfill their missions (Hackler & Saxton, 2007). In particular, social media can help NPOs reach larger audiences; this in turn can translate into more people taking action, such as donating online (e.g., Adler & Carpenter, 2015) or attending local fundraising events (e.g., Sun, Asencio, & Reid, 2015).

Despite the increasing adoption and utilization of social media within NPOs, the academic inquiry on social media use in the nonprofit sector is still underdeveloped (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Nah & Saxton, 2013). This special issue seeks to address this gap in the literature. Specifically, the objective of this special issue is to contribute to the discourse among researchers and practitioners on the antecedents and consequences of social media adoption and utilization in the nonprofit sector. The five articles included in this special issue utilize quantitative and qualitative techniques to answer important questions that significantly contribute to our understanding of social media adoption and utilization within NPOs.

In "The Influence of Leadership and Strategic Emphasis on Social Media Use of Regional Nonprofit Organizations", Debika Sihi examines the impact of leadership and strategic emphasis on the use of social media for information transmission by regional NPOs. Based on regression analysis of survey data from 121 NPOs and case studies of Facebook data for seven NPOs, the author finds that NPOs with executive directors who have more experience in the corporate sector and board members who exert greater influence are more likely to utilize social media for information transmission. The

author also finds that greater financial investments in social media result in less strategic use of social media, suggesting that more money does not always equate to improved effectiveness.

In “Understanding Nonprofit Organizations’ Use of Social Networking Sites: An Examination of Management Factors”, Qian Hu and Wanzhu Shi analyze how NPOs in Central Florida use social networking sites to enhance stakeholder relations; they also investigate the organizational management factors that contribute to effectiveness in using social networking sites. A survey of 67 local NPOs in the Tampa Bay and Orlando metropolitan area reveals that strategic use of social networking sites, such as spending more time managing the sites and having a target audience, can better foster online connections between NPOs and their stakeholders. Also, managerial decisions can have a great impact on how effectively organizations use their social networking sites.

In “Civic Engagement through Social Media: Strategic Stakeholder Management by High-Asset Foundations”, Sarah P. Maxwell and Julia L. Carboni employ a Relationship Management Theory approach to assess effective civic engagement within high-asset foundations. Based on Facebook data of 300 randomly sampled high asset-foundations, the authors find that private and corporate foundations are more likely to use social media overall but community foundations are more likely to use social media as a call-to-action. This study has implications for foundations and the larger nonprofit community on how to use social media to support their missions and civic engagement goals.

In “Effectiveness of Social Media in Disaster Fundraising: Mobilizing the Public towards Voluntary Actions”, Aya Okada, Yu Ishida, and Naoto Yamauchi focus on the case of the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear threat in Japan to investigate whether the use of social media was effective in nonprofit fundraising both before and after the disaster. Based on an online survey of 143 NPOs in February-March 2014, the authors find that social media are most effective in mobilizing the public towards donation if used both *before* and *after* the disaster. This implies that communication strategies from non-disaster times are critical for NPOs. The authors also find that the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter is effective in raising more money than in-house media such as organizational websites and blogs.

In “Strategic use of Facebook to Build Brand Awareness: A Case Study of Two National Sport Organizations”, Ann Pegoraro, Olan Scott, and Lauren M. Burch apply branding theory and frameworks to the use of Facebook by National Olympic Committees in Australia and Canada during three Olympics Games. Using a data triangulation method, the authors find that the two organizations share a similarity in using Facebook to broadcast product related brand attributes such as information about athletes and teams, while present significant differences in using Facebook for branding a sport organization. The study has implications for sport organizations on how to use Facebook to build positive brand images, promote fan engagement, and ultimately create brand ambassadors.

As this special issue is a collective effort to explore the adoption and use of social media within NPOs, we would like to thank the authors for their contributions and the reviewers for their insights and guidance. A special acknowledgement also goes to Dr. Christopher Reddick, Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age* (IJPADA) for his advice and support.

Hugo Asencio
Rui Sun
Guest Editors
IJPADA

REFERENCES

- Adler, S., & Carpenter, H. (2015). Peer-to-peer fundraising success: Paws with a cause. In H. Asencio & R. Sun (Eds.), *Cases on strategic social media utilization in the nonprofit sector* (pp. 24–65). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-8188-0.ch002
- Asencio, H., & Sun, R. (2015). Preface. In H. Asencio & R. Sun (Eds.), *Cases on strategic social media utilization in the nonprofit sector* (pp. xviii–xxv). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Chun, S. A., Shulman, S., Sandoval, R., & Hovy, E. (2010). Government 2.0: Making connections between citizens, data and government. *Information Polity*, 15, 1–9. doi:10.3233/IP-2010-0205
- Hackler, D., & Saxton, G. D. (2007). The strategic use of information technology by nonprofit organizations: Increasing capacity and untapped potential. *Public Administration Review*, 67(3), 474–487. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00730.x
- Lovejoy, K., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Information, community and action: How nonprofit organizations use social media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 337–353. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01576.x
- Nah, S., & Saxton, G. D. (2013). Modeling the adoption and use of social media by nonprofit organizations. *New Media & Society*, 15(2), 294–313. doi:10.1177/1461444812452411
- Nemenoff, E. K., & Schenk, J. (2015). Creating brand ambassadors: Strategic online engagement in a nonprofit association. In H. Asencio & R. Sun (Eds.), *Cases on strategic social media utilization in the nonprofit sector* (pp. 153–183). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-8188-0.ch006
- Sun, R., Asencio, H., & Reid, J. (2015). Enhancing organizational capacity through the use of social media. In H. Asencio & R. Sun (Eds.), *Cases on strategic social media utilization in the nonprofit sector* (pp. 262–300). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-8188-0.ch010
- Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 102–106. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.006

Hugo Asencio is Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Administration at California State University, Dominguez Hills. He holds a PhD in Public Administration and Public Policy from Auburn University. Dr. Asencio also holds a Master's in International Relations and a Bachelor's in International Studies, both from Auburn University at Montgomery. His research focuses on public-sector ethics, management, human resource management, nonprofit organizations, and e-government. He is editor (with Rui Sun) of Cases on Strategic Social Media Utilization in the Nonprofit Sector (IGI Global, 2015). His work has appeared in Public Administration Quarterly, International Review of Public Administration, E-Government and Websites: A Public Solutions Handbook, Citizen 2.0: Public and Governmental Interaction through Web 2.0 Technologies, and PA Times. Dr. Asencio previously served on the Board of Directors of Lunches for Learning, a nonprofit organization, and is currently serving on the Chapter Council of the American Society for Public Administration Southern California Chapter. He teaches graduate courses in public-sector management, leadership, ethics, human resource management, and nonprofit management.

Rui Sun is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Administration at the California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH). She received her PhD in Policy Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2009. Her research interests are in the area of fiscal federalism, state and local government finance, nonprofit financial management, and economic development. Her work has appeared in public administration, budgeting and finance journals, including Public Budgeting and Finance, Public Finance Review, American Review of Public Administration, Public Finance and Management, and Municipal Finance Journal. Dr. Sun also holds a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree from Auburn University, an MA and a BA in International Relations from Peking University, Beijing, China. She worked as Assistant Professor in Georgia Southern University and University of Central Florida before joining the CSUDH.