



Marketing and Promotion Delivery Strategy 2021

Annandale National Historic Site



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Executive Summary

During this unprecedented time of a global pandemic, many cultural industries including museums and historic sites are evaluating and reimagining their operational models. The Town of Tillsonburg understands the value of this process and has, through the Recreation, Culture and Parks Department, commissioned this report to determine recommendations to ensure the future success and sustainability of the Annandale National Historic Site (ANHS).

Annandale National Historic Site has historically taken a traditional approach to its program delivery and marketing strategy. Now is the time to evaluate current methods and adapt them to deal with the effects the global pandemic has had on cultural industries including museums.

Public engagement is a core function of museum work. Even when museums are able to open to the public, it is predicted that people will not want to interact with the ANHS in the same way they did pre-pandemic. This, however, does not change the fact that the visitor experience should continue to be the focus of the museum's work. The way in which visitors interact and connect with the museum may be different post-pandemic but a positive visitor experience is just as important if not more so.

To ensure that Annandale National Historic Site remains relevant to the community it serves and continues to attract new audiences, staff need to think in new ways in terms of its communication and interactions with the public. A new, creative and bold approach is required. As a result, the following recommendations have been determined.



Recommendations

- Develop a digital marketing strategy for Annandale National Historic Site.
- Invest in the infrastructure and equipment required to offer a robust virtual delivery of programs.
- Develop new and creative methods for program delivery including virtual programming.
- Invest in ongoing staff training in the use of current digital strategies, platforms, and program delivery.
- Digitize the collection.
- Increase capacity through collaboration with community organizations and businesses.
- Improve gateway signage.
- Commencing in 2023, coinciding with the 50th Anniversary, review and revise Annandale National Historic Site's mission statement.

Background

Tillsonburg's first community museum was established in 1973. Today, the Town of Tillsonburg operates the Annandale National Historic Site and has done so since 1989.

Annandale National Historic Site occupies the former residence of Edwin Delevan Tillson, Tillsonburg's first mayor, and is situated on property located at 30 Tillson Avenue. The original home was built in the 1880s and was part of a large 600-acre estate known as Annandale, named after E.D.'s wife's ancestral home in Scotland, United Kingdom.

In 1985, the Town of Tillsonburg assisted with the purchase of Annandale House and moved the operations of Tillsonburg's community museum to the site. In order to accommodate the community museum's operations and collection, an addition to Annandale House was constructed in 1988. Today the addition houses the ANHS offices, temporary exhibit space, collections storage, and a second-story event space.





Annandale House embodies the Aesthetic Arts Movement. During an extensive restoration, that spanned twelve years, the beauty of the architectural details of Annandale House was revealed. The Victorian home boasts extravagant, hand-painted ceilings, ornate mantles, inlaid floors, and stained glass.

In 1997, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board deemed Annandale House as the best surviving example of the Aesthetic Art Movement in Canada designating it a National Historic Site.

The restoration of Annandale House was funded by community donations of over \$1 million demonstrating the people of Tillsonburg value the built heritage and history of their community and recognize the importance of its preservation.

In 2020, Annandale National Historic Site like all cultural organizations globally, experienced an unexpected and unprecedented closure in response to COVID-19. What was expected to be a two-week closure extended into months and continues today.

The global pandemic has significantly impacted the cultural sector. According to the Honourable Lisa McLeod's white paper *Reconnecting Ontarians*, "Ontario's heritage, sport, tourism and cultural industries were among the first and hardest hit. They are expected to be the longest to recover."

This messaging emphasizes the need and importance for museums to re-evaluate their operations moving forward. Even as the pandemic abates, many people will be reluctant to gather in public spaces. Traditionally museums have been gathering places, places for establishing connections and participating in shared experiences. The pandemic disruption is encouraging museums to rethink their operating models and shift their approach to better serve their communities.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are expressing anxiety about gathering in small crowds and travelling to locations outside of their own public health unit zones. The public's mindset has changed and for many, this has resulted in changes in behaviour. This is what cultural industries are referring to as the "new social reality" and it is a reality that will significantly impact the heritage sector for many years to come.

Staff at the Town of Tillsonburg recognize the need for new methods to connect and communicate with audiences to ensure the sustainability and the ongoing success of the Annandale National Historic Site through the recovery period.

This report examines the need for new and alternative delivery methods to connect Annandale National Historic Site to its many publics. It presents the benefits of a robust digital marketing strategy and sets out an actionable work plan that can act as a blueprint for staff to follow.

Context

Annandale National Historic Site is owned and operated by the Town of Tillsonburg and falls under the purview of the Recreation, Culture and Parks Department.



Annandale National Historic Site employs 3 full-time employees; the Culture & Heritage Manager/Curator, a Program Coordinator, and a Collection & Exhibition Specialist.

The Culture & Heritage Manager/Curator reports to the Director of Recreation, Culture and Parks. There is a Council-appointed Museum Advisory Committee.

The Program Coordinator and Collection & Exhibition Specialist report to the Culture & Heritage Manager/Curator.



Annandale National Historic Site reported 11,239 visitors in 2018 and 10,901 in 2019. In 2019, 100 volunteers contributed 4,000 hours of time to the site.

The ANHS's mission statement was created in 2000 and has not been revised since.

Staff indicate that the site has attracted and connected with senior and children/youth audiences. The latter primarily through the delivery of education programs. Staff indicated they want to focus on attracting a new audience ranging between the ages of 20-50 years.

Annandale National Historic Site is a historic house museum with a separate but connected gallery space. The Pratt Gallery hosts the museum's temporary exhibits. The site promotes self-guided tours of the temporary exhibits and the historic house. There is a five-year exhibit plan developed by staff that often relates to anniversary dates, the Christmas season, and the Tillson family. Staff install four to five temporary exhibits per year and create programming to complement the exhibits.

The site has dedicated collection storage located on the lower level of the 1987 addition. The museum's collection consists of approximately 18,000 artifacts, archives, and works of art.

Education programs for school-aged children are offered and staff report they are particularly popular during the Christmas season. Special events such as Lunch and Learns are a regular and popular program offering.

The Tillsonburg and District Historical Society (TDHS) is an independent organization affiliated with Annandale National Historic Site and supports the ANHS through volunteerism and financial contributions. The TDHS host events at the site, such as outdoor concerts on the lawn. They receive use of the property free of charge but donate proceeds from these events to ANHS. Members of the historical society are granted free admission to Annandale National Historic Society as a member benefit. The ANHS does not have its own membership program.

Annandale National Historic Site is also supported by the Museum Advisory Committee. Members are appointed by Council and a member of Council sits on the Committee. The Committee's role is to advise Council on matters related to Annandale National Historic Site and to act as advocates and ambassadors for the site. They have expressed a commitment to developing a new direction for program delivery and marketing in response to COVID-19.

General Assessment

Marketing is the responsibility of the Culture & Heritage Manager/Curator. Staff have employed a primarily traditional approach of employing print media for the promotion of the site.

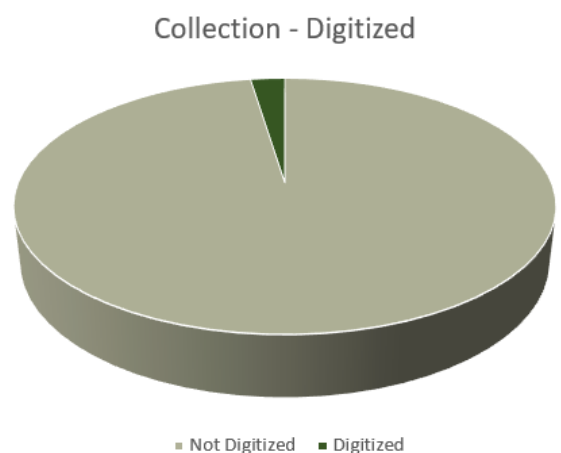
Annandale National Historic Site is represented on the Town of Tillsonburg's website which is updated and maintained by the Communications Department.

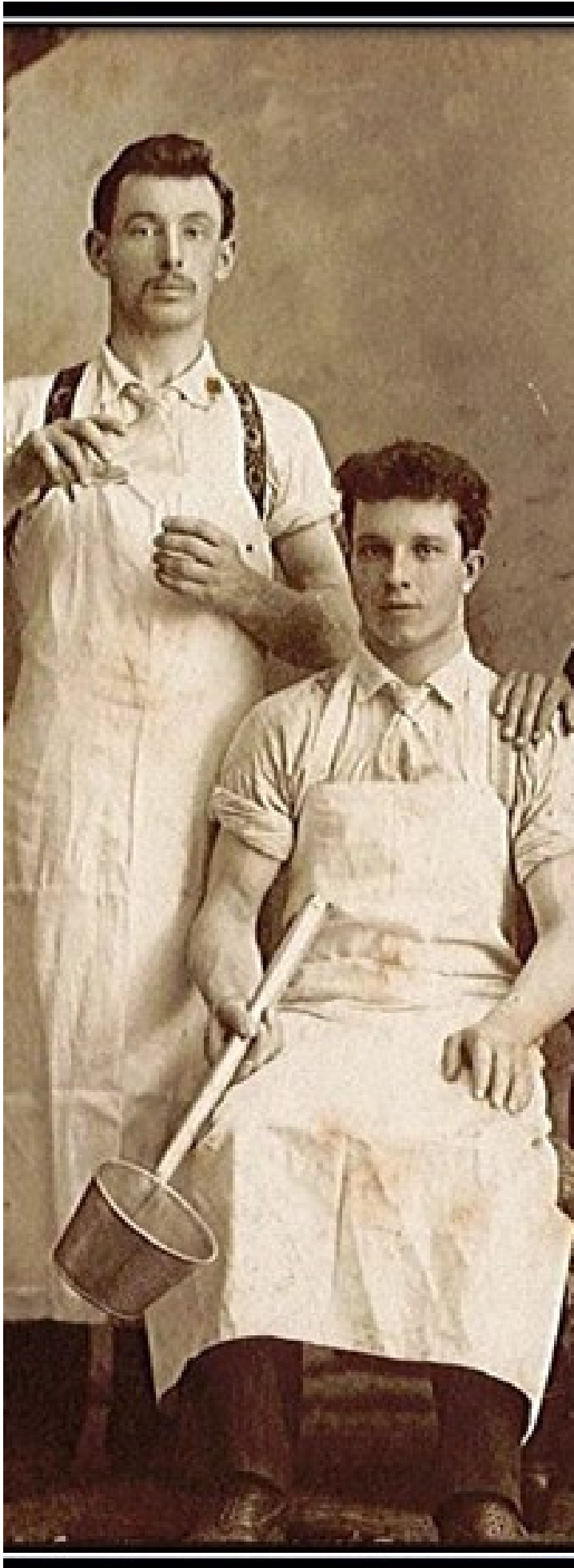
Prior to 2020, ANHS staff used digital platforms on an occasional and informal basis. No one staff person was tasked with managing social media. With the global pandemic and resulting closure of the site, staff recognized that new ways to remain connected to the public would be required.

It was at this point that the Program Coordinator was tasked with the responsibility of managing the site's social media. Staff began to use Facebook on a more regular basis. There is also a Twitter account that is used regularly but is not referenced on the museum's website. Both of these social media platforms are used primarily to promote exhibits and events. This approach is not conducive to encouraging online interaction with users.

In 2020, staff was able to adapt the site's annual Christmas education programming to a virtual offering. Working with the Town of Tillsonburg's Communication Department, pre-recorded videos with program content were created. These were available to registered classes via a YouTube link that required a special code. Staff report that 50 classes registered for the program which is approximately the same number as the previous in-person sessions.

ANHS uses the PastPerfect Museum Software to manage its collection. This program provides database storage for artifacts, photographs, and documents. Of the 18,000 objects in the collection, only 2.5% of the museum's collection is digitized.





Actionable Work Plan

Recommendations

- Develop a digital marketing strategy for Annandale National Historic Site.
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- Commencing in 2023, coinciding with the 50th Anniversary, review and revise Annandale National Historic Site's mission statement.

Overview

Public engagement is a core function of a museum's work. Over the past few years, the use of social media has become an increasingly important tool for museums. It has led to greater accessibility for audiences and allows museums to interact with these audiences.

By engaging in social media, museums not only present content, but they can also generate feedback on their content, events, education programs, and exhibitions. By allowing the public to interact through social media, museums engage users on a more personal level and give them a voice. Social media users can ask questions and the museum can respond in real-time. This interaction can lead to long-term engagement and support.

There is an ever-growing amount of virtual content available as a result of COVID-19 and for the foreseeable future that is only going to increase. With the increasing number of cultural industries vying for a piece of the “virtual audience” it is important for Annandale National Historic Site to distinguish itself.

In response to the global pandemic, Annandale National Historic Site needs to look to establish a digital marketing and promotion strategy and new program delivery methods. These two concepts, while different, are not mutually exclusive. They are intertwined.

Annandale National Historic Site should increase capacity by bolstering existing relationships and establishing new ones, with local businesses and organizations, and explore ways in which collaboration would be mutually beneficial. Innovation and collaboration combined with a willingness to try something new are vital to future success and sustainability.

As a result of changes in public behaviour, museums will need to adopt a blended model to their program delivery providing both safe in-person experiences as well as digital offerings for those who want to experience the museum from the comfort of their own home. While virtual experiences will continue to be an important component of marketing and programming, it needs to be recognized that nothing replaces the personal experience of interacting with an artifact or in this particular case the house itself.

Action Item #13 of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Cultural Industries white paper *Reconnecting Ontarians* announced that in 2021 the Province will be offering a travel incentive to encourage the residents of Ontario to explore the province. \$150 million has been set aside to provide Ontarians with up to 20% for eligible tourism expenses “to encourage them to safely discover Ontario in 2021.” This introduces an excellent opportunity for the Annandale National Historic Site to introduce itself to new visitors within Oxford County and from across the province.



As the province recovers from the impacts of the global pandemic, there are and will continue to be new funding opportunities to allow cultural industries to embrace new technology. Staff should explore ongoing funding opportunities to increase its capacity during the long recovery phase.

With the implementation of new initiatives and strategies, regular evaluation should be a built-in component of the process so that staff can make adjustments to the plan as required. Ongoing evaluation will ensure that ANHS continues to respond to the impacts of COVID-19.

Mission Statement/Mandate

A mission statement is the guiding document of any museum, it sets the foundation for all policies and planning. The mission statement directs the work of the organization ensuring everyone - staff, volunteers, and governing bodies - understand the work of the museum. The Annandale National Historic Site's mission statement was created in 2000 and has not been revised since.

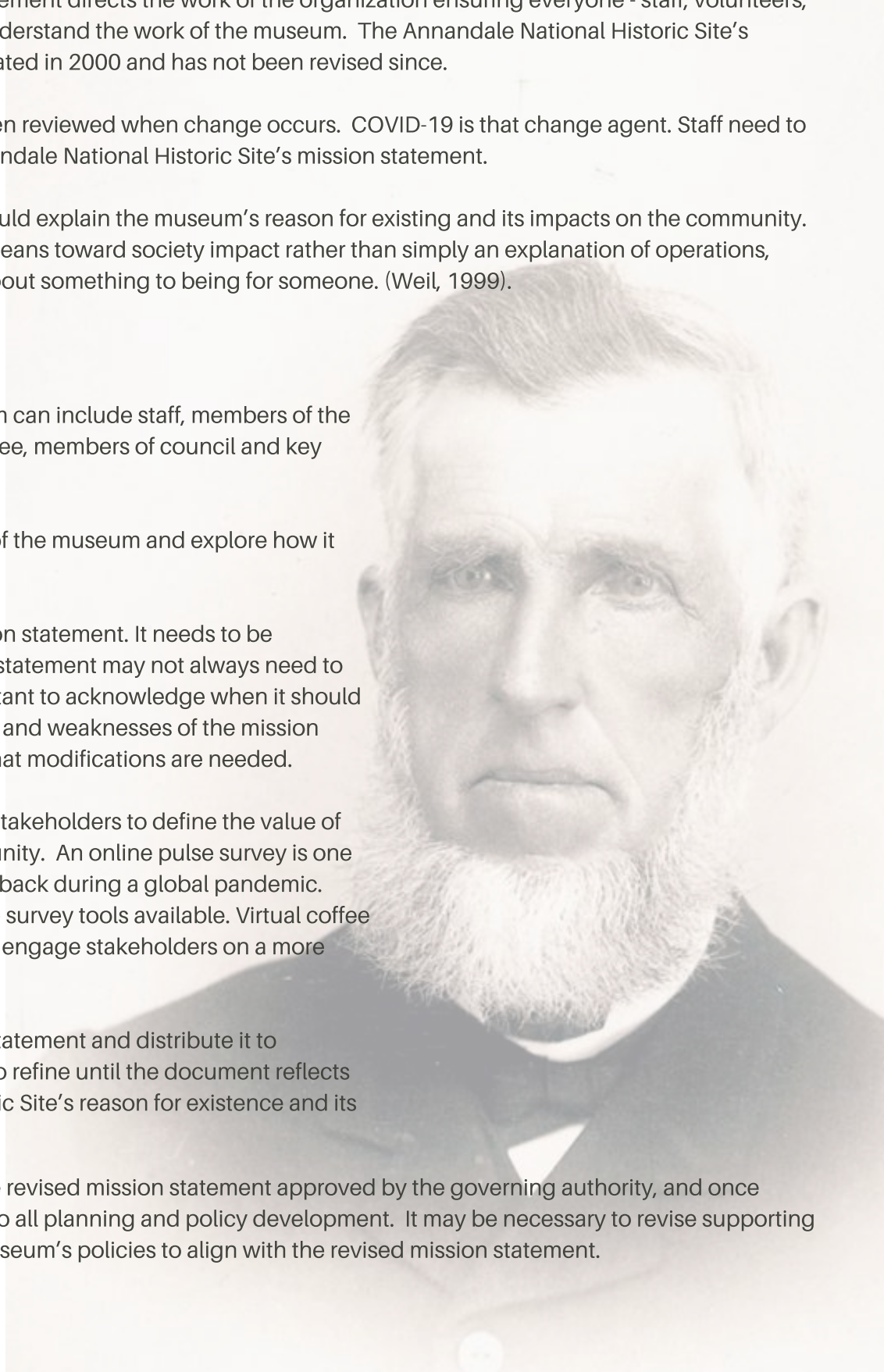
Mission statements are often reviewed when change occurs. COVID-19 is that change agent. Staff need to revisit and review the Annandale National Historic Site's mission statement.

The mission statement should explain the museum's reason for existing and its impacts on the community. A good mission statement leans toward society impact rather than simply an explanation of operations, transitioning from being about something to being for someone. (Weil, 1999).

The review process:

- Assemble a team. The team can include staff, members of the museum advisory committee, members of council and key stakeholders.
- Research the beginnings of the museum and explore how it has evolved over time.
- Examine the current mission statement. It needs to be recognized that a mission statement may not always need to be changed but it is important to acknowledge when it should be. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the mission statement to determine what modifications are needed.
- Solicit feedback from key stakeholders to define the value of the museum to the community. An online pulse survey is one method to gather this feedback during a global pandemic. There are many free online survey tools available. Virtual coffee chats can be scheduled to engage stakeholders on a more personal level.
- Draft the revised mission statement and distribute it to stakeholders to continue to refine until the document reflects Annandale National Historic Site's reason for existence and its impact on the community.

Upon completion, have the revised mission statement approved by the governing authority, and once approved incorporate it into all planning and policy development. It may be necessary to revise supporting documents such as the museum's policies to align with the revised mission statement.



Digital Media Strategy

Staff need to create and adopt a digital marketing strategy. The digital marketing strategy will provide a tangible plan for staff to follow and implement. It will ensure a strategic and scheduled roll out of messaging.

Two key factors distinguish digital marketing from traditional marketing. One is the pace at which the technology evolves and improves. Secondly, the opportunity it presents to connect the organization and people. With nothing but a smartphone, staff can create digital content in minutes.

Museums and historic sites are chocked full of content and social media has the ability to make the museum, its collection and its programming more accessible than ever before.



Social media is continuously evolving with the creation of new platforms and constant changes to existing platforms. It is recommended that the digital marketing strategy be a “living” document that is constantly evaluated and revised to respond to changes with social media itself but also the work of the museum and its audiences.

It is recommended that one staff person be tasked with responsibility for Annandale National Historic Site’s social media. This is not to say that content can’t be created by the staff team, but it should be managed by one person, a Social Media Manager.

Staff need to determine the museum’s goals and how best to achieve them through their digital marketing strategies. Digital marketing hinges on knowing your audience and finding the best online platforms to reach them as well as determining the best time to post content. Many social media channels have a scheduling option so that staff can schedule a post to appear outside of traditional working hours when the targeted audience is more likely to engage. As an example, young professionals are most likely to check their social media right after work. Awareness of these trends is essential to an effective digital media strategy.

One of the strengths of social media, with the exception of staff time, is the low financial investment to get started. Another is the unlimited audience reach.

Understanding the digital environment and optimizing marketing activities means examining the available technologies and how they can communicate the Annandale National Historic Site brand. While many of these may be new to staff, the effort will be worthwhile and in fact, is essential to the future growth and development of the museum.

Social media can significantly boost awareness of the museum and its values. If potential followers come across your platforms and see that the museum regularly interacts through social media, it will encourage them to follow.

Social media algorithms are constantly changing, and organic posts are shown less and less often to your followers, this is a strategy employed by social media platforms to encourage users to purchase advertising. However, with regular posts that encourage follower engagement such as commenting, liking and sharing, platforms will begin to show your posts to more people. Consider social media as an extension of the customer service experience. Responding to questions, comments and concerns on social media is just as important as answering an email or a telephone query.



It should be noted that the municipality has a Social Media Policy as part of its Communications Strategy which needs to be taken into account when developing the social media plan. The expertise and guidance of the Communications Staff would assist Annandale National Historic Site in successfully implementing a new digital media strategy.

Social Media Analytics

Social media analytics is a critical tool in accessing the success of social media marketing. It will provide information that relates to audience engagement and the success of digital marketing strategies. Through data analysis, social media analytics software will present staff with all the information they need to successfully manage their social media platforms. Simply put social media analytics will provide staff with the data that allows them to identify what is working and what is not in terms of the content strategy. The right software can also tell you how to fix what is not working.

As with traditional marketing methods, without measuring and analysing how content is being perceived by users and performing, it will not be successful and the Return on Investment (ROI) will not be realized.

Analytics will track audience demographics, content performance, customer service, the value of paid advertising campaigns, and much more.

There are a number of social media analytic tools available that are easy to use and easy to understand. Many social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram incorporate analytics as part of their online services.

Social Media Platforms

Some of the most familiar and popular social media platforms include: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, Reddit, LinkedIn, SnapChat, Pinterest, Flickr, TikTok, Vimeo, WhatsApp.

This list is not an exhaustive list of social media platforms available but is intended to present some of the more popular and established platforms. In the ever-evolving world of social media, different platforms are more effective depending on the application. Staff need to determine what they want to achieve and research each platform and how it might meet their needs.

By the end of 2020, the number of social media users worldwide stood at 4 billion and 99% of all users access platforms via their mobile devices. Facebook is the most popular platform globally with 1.8 billion daily users.

It's imperative that the Social Media Manager understand where the museum's existing and potential audiences are active online. This will help to target messaging.

For example, ANHS staff have indicated that they would like to attract a younger audience. SnapChat records 300 million monthly users and 90% of those are between 13 and 24 years of age. While images disappear in 10 seconds, staff can post an artifact and pair it with popular music or memes that a younger demographic would find engaging.

The Social Media Manager should explore other similar accounts that can be followed in order to establish and nurture online relationships. This can be accomplished by tagging other accounts in your posts. Engaging content of other's accounts where appropriate by liking, commenting, and sharing will encourage others to engage in and share ANHS's content, expanding the online audience your content reaches. Instagram has a "Story" feature that allows for easy sharing of other's content.

Hashtags stimulate global conversation and are a useful social media marketing tool for museums. They are linked by the # symbol followed by a word or a series of words. Social media users can connect to content by searching the hashtag. Annandale National Historic Site can employ hashtags to increase the museum's reach. Some of the most popular museum-related hashtags include #AskACurator, #MuseumSelfie, #MuseTech, #ONheritageweek, and #MuseSocial to name a few. Hashtags are primarily used with Twitter but also apply to Instagram and Facebook.

Linking Annandale National Historic Site's social media platforms to the municipal website would drive website visitors to your various channels.

Lastly, there are many online forums for social media managers to connect with other professionals for support and advice. These forums provide peer support and advice about opportunities and challenges that arise through social media engagement. See Resources for Staff for a link to the Social Media Managers Facebook page.



Social Media Advertising

Most, if not all, social media platforms have an advertising component so that users can extend their reach through paid advertising. These ad campaigns offer flexibility in terms of cost and duration. They allow the advertiser to select their target audience based on age and geography. The platforms provide an ongoing analysis of the campaign so that advertisers can evaluate the campaign's success.

Video

Video is a powerful marketing and programming tool. Almost all museum work can be shared through video. They should be incorporated into exhibitions, programming, and day-to-day operations and approached with enthusiasm and commitment.

Videos intended for social media posts should not be lengthy, ranging from a few seconds to 3 to 5 minutes. Videos for exhibit or programming purposes can be longer. Many social media platforms, such as Instagram offer various video features.



Using Instagram, staff can use the Reel function to produce a short video. Staff can easily add effects and music to these videos before posting, increasing their entertainment factor.

Videos provide a great opportunity for followers to meet the staff and others who represent or interact with the Annandale National Historic Site. It is this personal touch that people respond to even online. The most effective videos are engaging. This may require staff to rehearse or practice in advance. Don't be afraid to solicit constructive feedback from a test audience as this will assist staff in delivering experiences that further cultivates visitor interest.

Add all videos to ANHS's YouTube channel to build an online profile through this platform. The YouTube video links can be easily shared on other social media platforms to increase your reach.

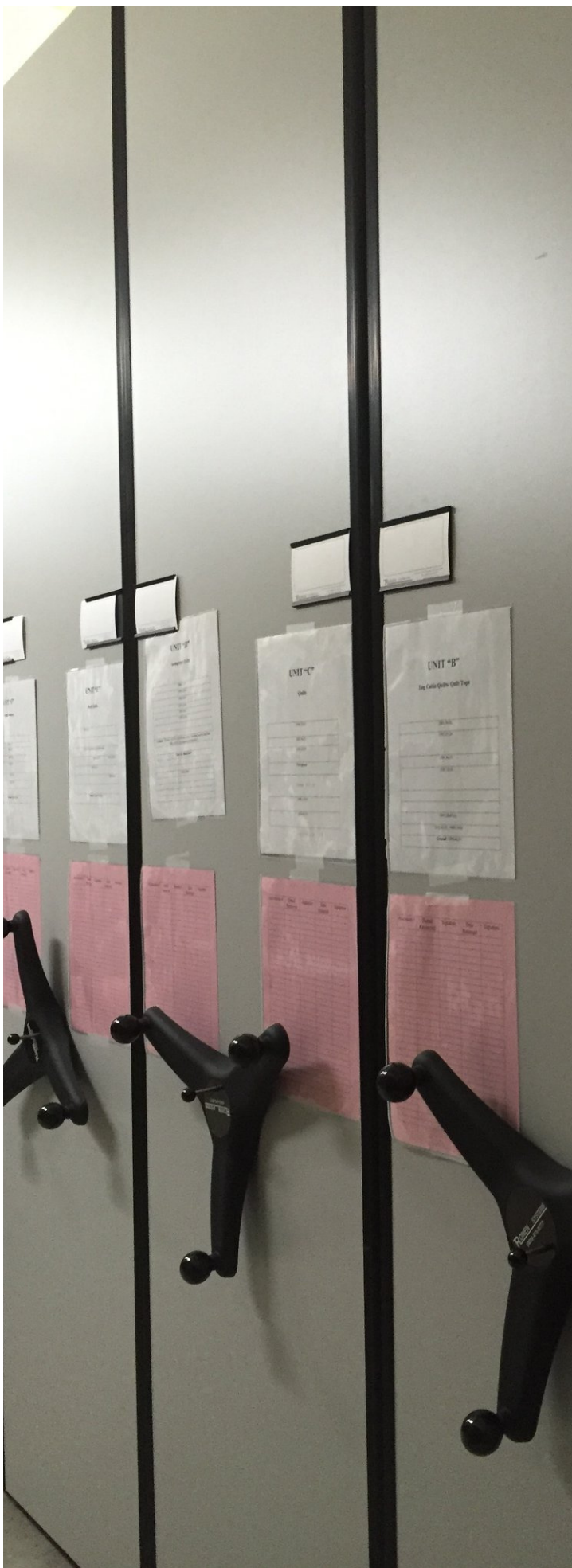
Marketing Concepts

Collections Management Project

The next phase of the Annandale National Historic Site's collection management project presents a unique opportunity to engage audiences by including them in the behind-the-scenes work that is collection management. In the museum world, much of the important work occurs out of the eye of the public. People are naturally curious about the artifacts that are housed in collection storage areas. Many are unaware of the importance of this work or what is involved in ensuring the safe and secure storage of the collection.

Using the FaceBook and Instagram Live function, staff are able to engage followers in real-time. With this function, as soon as staff select "start live video" followers will receive a notification. Both platforms are an effective way to document the day-to-day work of staff. Each has different features that may lend themselves more effectively to different applications.

During the "live" presentation, explain the work you are doing and why you are doing it. Not only are these live videos entertaining they are an opportunity to educate the public. They can demonstrate the skills and expertise museum professionals possess as well as explain the important role the museum plays as a steward of the public trust.



Encourage watchers to interact during the video. Prompt them to ask questions throughout the “live” video and be sure to answer them. If they can’t be answered during the video be sure to follow up afterward with the answer. Request that followers like, comment and share during the video, this will extend the reach and lead new followers to discover ANHS through social media. This practice is referred to as a “call to action”. Every time someone shares a post, the museum’s content is presented to a whole new audience. Ask questions of your audience to encourage engagement. An example might be, do you know why we carefully control the temperature and humidity in the museum? Allow time for responses and acknowledge them.

As museum professionals staff possess unique skills and expertise that can be shared with the public. Talk about why different objects are stored in different ways. For example, explain why you store the museum’s quilts on rolls. Demonstrate how to make a customized storage envelope for a document or explain why acid-free materials are used.

Provide opportunities for the public to share their collections or a special possession and ask questions about its care and storage. They could submit them by email or through social media. This could become a weekly segment as a post or a live video.

Allowing the public to engage with the collection management project will make them feel a part of the process. They will gain a greater understanding of the work staff do and its overall importance to Annandale National Historic Site and by extension the Town of Tillsonburg.

Museum Collection

Annandale National Historic Site’s use of collection management software PastPerfect presents an opportunity for robust community engagement online. Recognizing that only 2.5% of the collection is accounted for in the system, there is a good deal of work to be done but the process lends itself well to social media posts. As artifacts are catalogued into the system, they are photographed resulting in a digitized file of the artifact.

Highlighting artifacts in the collection through social media not only demonstrates the diversity and scope of the collection but also presents an opportunity to share the stories attached to them. These posts lend themselves well to the “call to action” engaging audiences.

It is also an opportunity to encourage donations of artifacts to build the collection ensuring the preservation of Tillsonburg’s past.

Increasing exposure to the collection can be realized. PastPerfect offers a Web Edition that allows subscribers to share their collections online through a searchable database. This is available as an upgrade to current PastPerfect users for an annual hosting fee.

BROADWAY, TILLSONBURG, ONT.

Another option is to apply to the Digital Museums Canada program. They are the largest funding program to assist museums with creating online content. It is important to keep in mind that matching municipal funding is required.

Digital Museums Canada website reads:

“We believe in the power of great content and digital technologies to connect with and inspire people.

- We provide investment of \$15,000 to \$250,000 for online projects by Canadian museums and heritage organizations that engage their audiences.
- We help organizations build digital capacity by providing support and leadership.”

Staff should study the eligibility requirements of this funding program and subscribe to receive notification of its annual call for proposals. Digital Museums Canada provides many online resources to assist potential applicants plan and prepare for their application. This funding opportunity could significantly increase the ANHS’s digital presence.

Podcasts

A podcast is an audio program that can extend the museum’s reach. They can range in length and can include one person to several. As they are audio-only, they can be created with little financial outlay. As with any of these approaches a strategy is recommended. Staff should determine what they are trying to achieve through the podcast.

Museums are well-positioned to present content that is original and engaging. Storytelling is an inherent part of museum work. Stories are told through exhibits, during tours, education programs and even events. Podcasts are an extension of this concept.

To quickly develop a podcast, staff should consider what stories they know well enough to tell without too much research or preparation. The Annandale National Historic Site lends itself to a number of engaging topics that could be explored through a podcast such as the aesthetic art movement, architecture, Tillson family, objects in the collection, Town of Tillsonburg, or the building restoration project. Staff are well versed in these areas and they could easily create a podcast that is informative and entertaining. Each of the proposed topics could be turned into a series. Inviting others to participate, adds to the podcast experience for listeners by offering a variety of perspectives. Podcasts can take a conversational or scripted delivery approach.





Program Delivery Methods

With the likelihood of the global pandemic continuing for the foreseeable future and the corresponding change in the public's behaviour, staff should implement a blended approach to programming.

Whenever possible, staff should integrate both an in-person and digital component. Exhibits lend themselves to both approaches and both have merit. The online exhibit could duplicate the in-house experience or be an extension of it by offering supplementary information not presented in the main exhibit. If using the latter approach, the onsite exhibit will require prompts to direct visitors to the online material.

Virtual Tours

Virtual tours of the Annandale National Historic Site hosted online would allow the public to tour the site from the comfort of their own home. An "app" could be developed that would allow the public access to tours of Annandale House anytime from their mobile devices.

Alternately, tours could be pre-recorded or live and posted to social media and the museum's website. This online experience could tour the Pratt Gallery and the exhibits installed there. Virtual tours of Annandale House should be offered. Live virtual tours allow staff to interact with followers/visitors in real-time. These tours should be scheduled on a regular basis. For example, schedule tours on the first Wednesday of every month with a focus on a different theme to encourage repeat views from followers. These tours could offer a value-added component such as a hands-on activity that expands on the tour's theme.

Events and Education Programming

Staff should explore ways to adapt current in-person programming such as the Lunch and Learns and education programs to a digital format. There are many video conferencing services that lend themselves well to this type of presentation that allow interaction between the hosts and the audience.

Explore opportunities for community partnerships and collaborations by finding ways to host joint events. These shared synergies increase the capacity for all involved parties.

Participating in a variety of local, provincial, national and international movements such as Culture Days, Ontario Heritage Week, Music on the Porch is a great way to connect with other cultural colleagues and present programming to the public that is part of a broader experience.



Annandale House presents the opportunity to provide a truly unique visitor experience. To do this museum staff need to consider creative ways to present the house and its many stories to engage the public. Annandale House is the perfect setting for hosting original and interactive in-person events. These events would involve only a limited number of participants to comply with COVID-19 safety protocols.

Hosting a special dinner party on site is one such event. The museum could involve community partners such as a local restaurant to cater the meal. Local musicians or theatre company could provide entertainment throughout the evening. Actors taking on the roles of the Tillson family could host the dinner regaling participants with stories of their life in the house, transporting participants to an earlier time. This event could be easily adapted to an online offering with participants picking up their meal at a partnering local restaurant and providing entertainment virtually.



Beyond the Walls

There are a number of opportunities to promote Annandale National Historic Site beyond the walls of the museum.

Gateway signage at the entrances of the Town of Tillsonburg should be improved to announce the presence of ANHS along with a wayfinding system encompassing creative signage and maps visually connecting them to the site.

Annandale National Historic Site is located on Tillson Avenue a busy thoroughfare in the Town of Tillsonburg. The exterior museum signage was offsite undergoing refurbishment during our site visits but was described by staff. The addition of a LED ticker display, similar to the one in Tillsonburg's downtown core, would be an easy and effective way of promoting museum events and information to the passing public, taking advantage of its high traffic location.

As stated earlier, the cultural sector recognizes that going forward that some members of the public may be hesitant to gather indoors so an interpretive plan for the property provides a unique opportunity to reach an expanded local audience. The property itself is an underutilized asset and can act as both an effective marketing and program delivery tool in response to COVID-19.

The Annandale National Historic Site property has a long and storied connection to the Town of Tillsonburg. It is situated on a large, picturesque corner lot which has a great deal of potential that should be leveraged in new and non-traditional ways.

ANHS possesses a rich archival collection that includes many photographs and papers related to the history of the site, the Tillson family, and the Town of Tillsonburg. It also has photographs that illustrate the extensive restoration the building underwent and photographs depicting the interior of Annandale House. The archival material should be incorporated into the interactive panels.



Interpretive panels that illustrate the history of the Annandale National Historic Site and the Town of Tillsonburg should be installed in strategic spots throughout the property. These storyboards would encourage the public to wander the property and learn more about the site without having to enter the building. These would also act as an introduction to the site for those who do choose to visit the museum.

Storyboards that tell the story of the extensive restoration the building underwent accompanied by floor plans and photographs of the interior would afford visitors the visual experience of touring the house without entering the building.

The storyboards could be augmented with an audio guide. Audio guides provide pre-recorded information and context that adds to the visitor's appreciation of the material they are viewing. Audio guides are compact, portable, and easily customisable and can be delivered through an app or a dedicated device that the museum rents out to users.

By tailoring content, the museum can meet the demands of all visitors from children to adults as well as offer audio tours in other languages. Working with a local theatre organization could lead to entertaining and creative audio content.

The storyboard initiative is one that lends itself to partnering with community organizations and businesses to assist with the cost of the boards. This could be achieved through a cost-sharing initiative or by offering sponsorship opportunities.

Temporary outdoor exhibits could be investigated to augment the exhibit on display inside the museum or could tell a different story. Hardware could be designed and manufactured allowing the easy exchange of large exhibit panels. Exterior lighting focussed on the exhibit panels would extend the amount of time the exhibit could be viewed and would generate additional attention to the site.

The 1988 addition at the north end of the museum presents a unique programming opportunity. The exterior walls are light in colour and flat. This surface makes a potential "screen" for presentations during the summer months including Lunch and Learns, movies, and other. This approach would allow people to participate in-person by presenting what is traditionally an indoor activity outside leading to a greater level of comfort and feeling of safety on the part of the participants.

Outreach

In response to the global pandemic, there is an opportunity to install temporary exhibits in spaces throughout town such as local businesses and schools where people are already congregating.

Approaching local businesses and organizations to host exhibits will increase the capacity of Annandale National Historic Site.

These "pop-up" exhibits could be a unique, self-contained exhibit or could act as a "teaser" or promotion of an exhibit available online or onsite at Annandale National Historic Site. A small exhibit installed in a school classroom could be augmented with a museum-generated curriculum-based education program with staff delivering the program virtually through Zoom or a similar platform that allows "live" interaction with educators and students.



Summary

It is recognized that this new approach to marketing and program delivery will require significant staff time and resources to pivot and implement. This will require the commitment of Council, senior management, the Museum Advisory Committee, and staff.

To roll out these new initiatives, staff will need to realign operations. An example might see staff installing fewer temporary exhibits each year and dedicate some of this staff time to community outreach or the digital marketing strategy.

Incorporating a digital marketing strategy is a key component that must be implemented. It will improve the Annandale National Historic Site's online presence and lead to a larger market and increased brand recognition. Throughout implementation and beyond, continued engagement with social media users, community stakeholders, members, volunteers, and sponsors is encouraged.

Annandale National Historic Site has unlimited potential to reimagine its goals and its impact on the community. Through a willingness to realign ANHS's current operational model and employ a creative and blended program delivery approach, the Town of Tillsonburg ensures future success and sustainability of Annandale National Historic Site.

Resources for Staff

Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader (gov.on.ca)

Ontario COVID-19 Response Framework: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open#restrict>

Digital Museums: <https://www.digitalmuseums.ca/>

Instagram Business: <https://business.instagram.com/>

Facebook Business Manager: <https://business.facebook.com/>

Museum Social Media Managers: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/musesocial>

Hootsuite: <https://www.hootsuite.com/>

Culture Days: <https://culturedays.ca>

Doors Open Ontario: <https://doorsopenontario.on.ca>

Ontario Museum Association: <https://members.museumsontario.ca>

Canadian Museum Association: <https://www.museums.ca/>

National Heritage Trust: <https://nationaltrustcanada.ca/>

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