



Your patrons are using TikTok. Here's how you can reach them.

We frequently hear from public libraries about the desire to spark engagement with new (and younger) members of their communities.

This has inspired some library staff to embrace TikTok to spread awareness and promote library materials and services. TikTok is a free social media app that allows anyone to create, watch, and share 15-second videos shot on mobile devices or webcams – and has become a phenomenon among teenage and young adult users.

One library that has had great success using TikTok is the Dallas Public Library, which circulates over 8,000,000 items a year and has 30 service points throughout the city. The library system's Creative Marketing Manager, Emily Jackson, launched their TikTok in May 2022 and less than a year and half later, has garnered more 5000 enthusiastic followers – surely due in no small part to Emily's colorful personality and hair.

We were fortunate to have Emily join us for a fun [webinar](#) highlighting why more libraries should be embracing this social media craze:

1. HUGE audience potential

People of all ages use TikTok, but it is especially popular among members of Gen Z and, increasingly, Gen Alpha. Emily acknowledged that getting young adults, teens, and preteens more interested in the library can be a struggle – but with TikTok, you can easily reach these audiences where they are.

According to [Sprout Social](#), the largest group of users on TikTok are ages 18-24, and they average 45 minutes a day on the platform. Reaching this demographic (and even younger) with social media can increase your engagement both in the short and long term by getting them excited now so they become habitual library users for years to come.

Additionally, you can target specific user groups in your community. For example, if your library gets frequent requests for sci-fi recommendations, you can create a TikTok to highlight your staff's top 10 picks in the genre.

Doing so can get those hard-to-reach audiences to start thinking of your library as a valuable resource they can turn to again and again.

2. Show your personality

What sets libraries apart from other content providers is the awesome people who work in them. With TikTok, you have a unique opportunity to put the spotlight on your unique staff.

As we mention above, TikTok videos don't need to be perfect – in fact, what lends authenticity of these short videos is their spontaneous, real-life look and feel. The TikTok platform offers an almost effortless way to encourage library staff to get creative and show off their sense of humor or nerdiest passions, in a sincere, conversational way that inspires their audience to join in the fun.

TikTok is also a way to highlight the personality of your library in general. From special services and rare collections to the overall "vibe" of your space, there are endless ways you can show users (and potential users) the multitude of reasons they want to pay your library a visit, and what to expect when they do.

3. It's unpolished

One of the charms of TikTok is the homemade, rough-around-the-edges aesthetic of most videos.

Creating a TikTok video requires no special equipment (though Emily suggests using a tripod for your phone, especially if you are creating videos yourself). Everything from filming to editing to posting online can be done right in the mobile app with a minimal time commitment—you can have a TikTok go live within a matter of minutes without needing to invest any of your marketing funds.

This not only makes the content feel fresh and accessible, but it also defies the outdated stereotype of libraries being fussy or formal. This is a personable way to show off the fun, flawed human side of your library. Who can't relate to that?

4. It's fast-moving

Unlike some social channels where trends are over before they've started, new TikTok trends are constantly bubbling up to the surface, and they have staying power.

This makes it easier to leverage topics that are hot in the moment while managing your time around other library tasks on your to-do list.

Emily said she sets aside a couple of hours on Mondays to create her TikTok posts for the week. There is absolutely no pressure to be perfect.

Because it's fast-moving, she pointed out that TikTok can also be a source of inspiration for creating content. In the app, check out niche areas like LibraryTok (a community of users talking about libraries—search #LibraryTok) or BookTok (users who share a passion for books and reading—search #BookTok) to find out what others around the world are talking about, then give it your own spin.

How to get started

1. **Set up an account for your library** then search #LibraryTok and #BookTok to find other libraries and book lovers. Follow your favorite accounts (like [@DallasPublicLibrary](#)) and get inspired by what they are doing.
2. **Get set up.** Beyond your mobile device, no special equipment is required but you may want to have a good tripod to steady your phone or tablet while you are recording. Also, scope out the library for good lighting and good places to film.
3. **Block time in your calendar for TikTok.** Start with 2-4 hrs a week for following trends, planning content, recording, and editing videos, and scheduling posts.
4. **Spread the excitement!** Find ways to get your staff and members of your community involved. Invite them to share ideas, feature them as special guests in your videos, encourage them to like and share your posts.
5. **Promote your account.** It's easy to copy and paste links to your TikTok content on your other social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. For users not (yet) on TikTok (or other social media), encourage them via newsletters and other communication channels to find and follow you.



Check out

a recording of the [webinar](#) for more tips about using TikTok to promote your library and improve engagement with your community.

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