



Finanziato
dall'Unione europea
NextGenerationEU



Ministero
dell'Università
e della Ricerca



Italiadomani
PIANO NAZIONALE
DI RIPRESA E RESILIENZA



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

Social Media and Cultural Heritage

Module 5 — Editorial Planning & Digital Workflow

Dr. Serenella Mancini

This module addresses a central challenge of digital communication: how can institutions create communication practices that are coherent, accountable, and sustainable over time?

The answer lies not in isolated successful posts, but in building a reliable system. Long-term visibility and credibility depend on the ability to plan, produce, review, publish, and evaluate content consistently across changing contexts.

This module introduces the editorial infrastructure that makes this possible: editorial planning, content calendars, production workflows, approval processes, and content repurposing strategies. Together, these elements transform communication from occasional activity into structured institutional practice.

Learning Objectives

This module has four main objectives: to understand social media management as an editorial practice; to design an effective editorial plan; to develop structured content production workflows with clear responsibilities; and to create coherent communication across different platforms while maintaining a consistent institutional identity.

Social Media as Editorial Practice

Let us begin with a foundational claim. Managing a sustained digital presence is an editorial activity. Like the editor of a journal or the curator of an exhibition, the social media manager makes decisions about selection, sequencing, and emphasis — and those decisions carry real consequences for institutional integrity, for how the institution is perceived, and for the communities it serves.

This editorial dimension is present across all types of cultural institutions, though the specific challenges vary. Museums and galleries curate narratives around exhibitions and collections, balancing permanent holdings with temporary programmes for diverse audience segments. Archaeological missions communicate in real time from field contexts, often under significant logistical constraints, balancing methodological rigour with the need to produce accessible and engaging content. Archives, libraries, and heritage sites must serve both specialist researchers and broad public audiences, building content around collections, conservation activities, and access initiatives.

In all of these contexts, the same editorial competences are required: selection, sequencing, adaptation, and sustained attention to quality. The institutional context varies; the underlying professional standard does not.

The Editorial Plan: Structure and Components

The editorial plan is a strategic document. It typically covers a horizon of three to twelve months and defines the thematic framework, content types, platform roles, and institutional milestones that will govern all communicative activity during that period.

A robust editorial plan rests on four components. First, core themes: three to five thematic pillars that characterise the institution's communicative identity during the planning period. These themes should connect research or programme activities to audience interests, so that communication serves both institutional and public purposes simultaneously. Second, the content type range: a specification of which formats will be produced — educational explainers, behind-the-scenes documentation, narrative features, interactive content, community-oriented posts — and in what approximate proportion. Third, platform roles: each platform is assigned a distinct strategic function, because platforms are not interchangeable distribution channels. Each has its own audience demographics, content conventions, and algorithmic logic. Fourth, institutional milestones: the plan must be anchored to known fixed points in the institutional calendar — field seasons, exhibition openings, publication releases, funding deadlines, public events.

The Editorial Calendar: Tools and Design Principles

If the editorial plan is strategic, the editorial calendar is operational. It translates the plan into a concrete schedule of communicative actions, specifying date, platform, format, theme, responsible person, and review status for every planned publication.

Five design principles are worth keeping in mind. First, the right tool is the simplest one that everyone on the team will use consistently — a well-maintained spreadsheet will outperform a sophisticated platform that is used erratically. Second, every entry must have a named owner: unassigned tasks do not get done. Third, reactive slots must be protected — spaces reserved for unplanned content that cannot be scheduled months in advance, such as field discoveries or breaking institutional news. Fourth, review stages should be built into each entry from the outset; review is a structural feature of the calendar, not an afterthought. Fifth, the calendar is a living document and should be revisited at every weekly team meeting.

Content Production Workflow: From Field or Collection to Publication

The workflow defines how raw material is transformed into a platform-ready publication. A minimal viable workflow has six stages, and each must carry an explicitly assigned responsibility.

Collect: photographs, video, and observational notes gathered during fieldwork, gallery sessions, or collection access. Production standards should be applied from the beginning. Select: assessing collected material for communicative potential, factual accuracy, and alignment with the editorial plan; material that is technically poor or thematically off-plan is excluded here. Draft: a caption or script written in the appropriate register for the target platform and audience, with explicit attention to tone-of-voice guidelines and, for discovery content, to the honest framing of uncertainty. Review: scientific, curatorial, or institutional review of factual accuracy, ethical compliance, and platform suitability; sensitive content requires senior approval. Schedule: queuing the content at the designated time and applying metadata, hashtags, alt text, and subtitles — accessibility features are a professional obligation. Monitor: publishing and then actively following engagement, responding to substantive questions, and flagging significant issues for the next review meeting.

Cross-Platform Repurposing: One Event, Multiple Outputs

One of the most important principles in editorial planning is repurposing. The naive approach to multi-platform communication is to publish identical content everywhere. This is both inefficient and ineffective: it fails to exploit the distinct strengths of each platform, and it signals to audiences that the institution is not addressing them specifically.

A single institutional event can generate six distinct, platform-specific outputs. On Facebook, a long-form narrative for community audiences with detailed contextual explanation. On Instagram, a curated image carousel with an interpretive caption and a targeted hashtag set. On Reels and TikTok, a short vertical video built around the most visually compelling moment, communicating one clearly framed idea. On YouTube, a longer documentary segment or full lecture — evergreen and searchable. On LinkedIn, an institutional impact post for professional and funding audiences, linked to a preprint or report where available. On X, a thread for specialist audiences contextualising the event with scholarly references. The principle is consistent: repurpose, do not replicate. Adapting content to each platform is more effective and, for small teams, more efficient than producing everything from scratch.

Key Takeaways — Module 5

What this module emphasises is that social media management is not simply about posting content, but about developing a structured and sustainable editorial practice.

An effective institutional presence depends on planning, coherent workflows, clearly defined responsibilities, and the ability to adapt content across platforms while maintaining a consistent institutional identity.

Most importantly, effective communication is based not on repetition, but on the strategic adaptation of content to different audiences, formats, and digital contexts.