*Student Journalists and Social Media*

Social media has become the outlet where we read, share and post about daily events and news stories. It’s an integral part in the way the community communicates. For student journalists, it’s an important tool to gather and share news, while also creating an open dialogue with the community.

Student journalists should be treating social media similar to professionals in the newsroom. While not everything can be found on social media, it’s an important tool to locate stories, pictures and real-time information on a developing event.

Students should utilize social media in its ability to track down sources, witnesses and story subjects. Social media has become a journalist’s “little black book” of contacts, with a direct line to sources or subjects through messaging. Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites should be used as a launching pad for potential story ideas and a direct platform to contact and verify information.

Student journalists should also explore social media’s ability to share news stories and ask for feedback. Asking questions to a large audience or community is at a journalist’s fingertips compared to years past. User-generated content has also become an integral part in the way we gather and share news directly from community members.

Social media should also be treated as a public view into a reporter’s thought and fact-gathering process. It should not be used to share unverified information, but as a tool to encourage and share verified information to the public.

The cycle of gathering and sharing information on social media allows for open-dialogue within a community. It’s important that student journalists, just as professionals, understand it’s potential to build a relationship with the public that includes transparency, integrity and passion for journalism and storytelling.