

- [Home](#)
- [Worth Knowing](#)
- [Praiseworthy](#)
- [Noteworthy](#)
- [In The News](#)
- [Photoworthy](#)
- [Archives](#)
  - [November 2013](#)
  - [October 2013](#)
  - [September 2013](#)
  - [July 2013](#)
  - [May/June 2013](#)
  - [April 2013](#)
  - [March 2013](#)
  - [February 2013](#)
  - [December 2012](#)
  - [November 2012](#)
  - [October 2012](#)
  - [September 2012](#)
  - [August / July 2012](#)
  - [April 2012 & Earlier](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [GPC Publications](#)

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THE NEWSLETTER OF GEORGIA PERIMETER COLLEGE

## [Faculty and staff embrace social media at GPC](#)

[September 20, 2010](#)

October 2010

GPC librarians well-versed in the art of social media include, from left, Sonya Slutskaaya, Rebecca Rose, Amy Eklund, Mary Ann Cullen and Pat Leamon.

*by Rosemary Jean-Louis*

Georgia Perimeter College's libraries are Facebook and Twitter fans.

Last year they set up a [Facebook fan page](#) and [Twitter feed](#). They use the social networking websites to post information about library resources and new books, research tips and library happenings.

Decatur Campus librarian Sofia Slutskaaya says the libraries adopted the sites last year for two reasons. "Our motivation was to be where students already are—in an environment that they are comfortable with," she says. "It was also a way for librarians to become comfortable with new social networking technologies."



The librarians are not alone. They are among a growing list of GPC faculty and staff who are embracing social media sites as a means of connecting with students and with one another. ([View GPC's Facebook and Twitter directory](#)). Their efforts represent innovative ways to support the college's strategic goals of strengthening student success and fostering a culture of teamwork, leadership, quality service and continuous improvement.

Social media websites are sites that facilitate interaction between users and the site itself. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are among the most popular of these sites. Here are some of the success stories of faculty and staff using Facebook and Twitter.



The official GPC Study Abroad Facebook Fan page keeps up with students who are abroad on excursions.

### Find them on Facebook

The offices of Financial Aid, Study Abroad and Alumni Relations all have found Facebook to be a useful tool to reach out to students and alumni. The Office of Marketing and Public Relations created an official GPC Facebook Fan page, which has blossomed into a customer service communications vehicle. [Read separate story.](#)

Financial Aid counselor Aisha Harley set up that department's fan page to make financial aid less intimidating. It turns out that it also helps reduce calls and office visits, saving staff time.

Through the page, Harley answers questions and adds updates and general information. From the discussions posted on the fan page wall—a general area where all members can post their thoughts—she learns what students need and are concerned about. She also uses the wall to troubleshoot financial aid problems.

Harley adheres to the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), a law designed to protect student privacy and educational records. Because Facebook is an open network, she admonishes students not reveal too much information. When student problems are too specific, she advises students to e-mail her directly.

Study Abroad Advisor Adrienne Langston turned to Facebook to market GPC's study abroad programs to potential students. She runs the program's blog, [GPC Global Connection](#) and promotes it on the official [GPC Study Abroad Facebook fan page](#).

She says the social network helps her keep up with students on trips and also keep up with alumni. "Even long after our students leave GPC, they remain in touch with us, and they remain members of the groups we have set up," says Langston.

Jenn Banks Mason, who is in charge of communications for the Office of Alumni Relations, considers Facebook "too powerful a connection tool to pass up." In addition to posting event photos and news on the [Alumni Association Facebook fan page](#), she uses the site to run contests.

"We held a contest called "Jaggy Spotted You Online," in which followers were asked to guess the number of spots our mascot has," explains Mason. "We timed this just after graduation, hoping to capitalize on the fact that recent graduates would still have their most recent alma mater on their minds."

"The response was really positive. We gave away a Flip camcorder courtesy of Cisco and have asked our winner to submit a video about her GPC experience that we can post to Facebook. So we're trying to bring things full circle."

Langston and Mason also use Twitter to promote their departments.

### Tweeting Philosophy

Philosophy professor Jason Flato experimented with Twitter, the microblogging service, in his honors class. Flato says philosophy texts are often challenging to understand. Even more challenging was convincing students to spend adequate time reading and absorbing the texts.

So he employed Twitter to combat his students' "passive and limpy" reading habits and to encourage student participation. He instructed them to tweet their notes, texts they highlighted, observations, questions and comments in the 140-character feed page.

A post-class survey revealed his experiment worked. "All of the students agreed that Twitter helped them hone their reading skills," reports Flato. "Moreover, the students felt that they are better able to analyze and articulate philosophical arguments."

Additionally, Flato discovered that students who normally did not participate in class discussions chimed in on the feed.

While these faculty and staff members are pleased with the results of their Facebook fan pages and groups, they advise others interested in following in their footsteps to be aware of the work and commitment involved.

They concede that growing the site's followers and fans is a challenge. Keeping the site's content fresh and invigorating is time-consuming.

Counsels Langston, "You cannot set up a site and expect it to work magic by itself. Social media is like the ocean. You can never turn your back on it."

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← [Noteworthy October 2010](#)

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- [Archives](#)
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- [In The News](#)
- [Noteworthy](#)
- [Photoworthy](#)
- [Praiseworthy](#)
- [Slider](#)
- [Worth Knowing](#)

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