

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING Q&A**

### **Is it OK for AP employees to have accounts on such social-networking sites as Facebook and Twitter?**

Absolutely. They've become an integral part of everyday life for millions of people around the world, and the AP already has a robust corps of employees with accounts on all the social networks. These networks also have become an important tool for AP reporters to gather news – both for big, breaking stories and in cases in which we're seeking out members of the public who might serve as sources for our stories. And they're a prime source of citizen journalism material. One of our top images from the US Airways crash in the Hudson River, for instance, was a photo taken by a civilian that first surfaced on Twitter.

### **What are the general guidelines for such accounts?**

Employees must identify themselves as being from the AP if they are using the networks for work in any way. Posting material about the AP's internal operations is prohibited on employees' personal pages, and employees also should avoid including political affiliations in their profiles and steer clear of making any postings that express political views or take stands on contentious issues. Employees should be mindful that any personal information they disclose about themselves or colleagues may be linked to the AP's name. That's true even if staffers restrict their pages to viewing only by friends. It's not just like uttering a comment over a beer with your friends: It's all too easy for someone to copy material out of restricted pages and redirect it elsewhere for wider viewing. As multitudes of people have learned all too well, virtually nothing is truly private on the Internet.

### **Anything specific to Facebook?**

It's a good idea to monitor your profile page to make sure material posted by others doesn't violate AP standards; any such material should be deleted. Also, managers should not issue friend requests to subordinates, since that could be awkward for employees. It's fine if employees want to initiate the friend process with their bosses.

### **How about Twitter?**

We're still the AP. Don't report things or break news that we haven't published, no matter the format, and that includes retweeting unconfirmed information not fit for AP's wires. Feel free to link to AP material that has been published. It's difficult for most people to link to AP Mobile stories right now, so link to member and customer sites instead and try to vary the links to spread the traffic around. It's a good idea to reference the AP in the promo language, i.e. **Just how much geek can be chic? Test your fashion IQ with this interactive game (AP):** <http://bit.ly/BvAqv> <<http://bit.ly/BvAqv>> . Also, when tweeting, remember that's there a big difference between providing an observation ("I nearly bumped into Chris Matthews outside Penn Station") and an opinion ("I nearly bumped into the loudmouthed and obnoxious Chris Matthews").

### **Why does the AP care or think it should have a say in what I put on my social networking feed/page?**

We all have a stake in upholding the AP's reputation for fairness and impartiality, which has been one of our chief assets for more than 160 years. These guidelines do not break new ground – they are consistent with the rest of our Statement of News Values and Principles. They just take into account the new realities of the social-networking world and answer questions that many AP employees have asked.

### **Do these guidelines apply just to AP employees who are journalists?**

They apply to all employees, just as the Statement of News Values and Principles does. We cannot expect people outside the AP to know whether a posting on Facebook was made by someone who takes pictures, processes payroll checks or fixes satellite dishes. We all represent the AP, and we all must protect its reputation.