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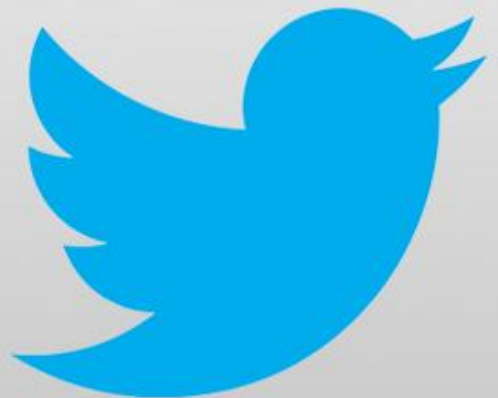
Understanding Twitter

From Hashtags to Retweets

Monday, April 21, 2014

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Class Hashtag:
#NYSLTwitter



Understanding Twitter

WHAT IS TWITTER?

Twitter is an open social network, based on a microblogging format, focused on real-time sharing. Short messages (**tweets**) are shared and published and doing so is possible at any time from any device. Tweets tend to be ephemeral in subject, discussing current activities, trendy topics and breaking news. Twitter calls itself an information network. 500 million tweets are sent per day.

WHY USE TWITTER?

Twitter can be used as a **social network** by following people and discussions that allow you to interact, share and be social. Twitter can also be used as a source for **breaking news** or for the most current happenings through the reporting of other users. Users can share their own **current thoughts** and activities with their followers. They can also follow other users to keep updated with the most current happenings of friends, family, colleagues, celebrities, and businesses, to keep up with news and trends, or to promote their own business or creative enterprise.

Example users of Twitter:

- An author tweets to promote her book, selecting snippets to share or events to promote.
- A college student uses Twitter to keep up to date with classmates and their progress on classwork.
- A business uses Twitter to connect with its clients and customers, offering a platform for interaction.

How Twitter differs from other social media platforms:

- The length of tweets is limited to 140 characters.
- As an open network, Twitter content is open to anyone, making it easier to connect and interact.
- Began as a text message (SMS)-based sharing platform, which is still a capability within Twitter.

Anyone can view tweets of others (provided they are set to public, rather than private), but to create your own tweets and use some other features, you'll have to sign up for an account.

Getting started

CREATE A NEW ACCOUNT:

Use your email address to sign up for a new account and create a username. This username is also known as your **handle** and will be your unique identifier. The full name you provide will also be a visible part of your profile and will identify you, however it might not be unique. Continue through setup and prompts to follow suggested users, add profile picture, update profile or skip these steps. Twitter.com is your **home feed** and is now populated with tweets by those users you just followed. Update your profile and account as necessary (see Settings below). To further personalize your profile information, click on Settings – Edit Profile or go to your 'me' feed and edit your information directly from your profile.

TWITTER VOCAB:

Tweet: A post that cannot exceed 140 characters.

Timeline (aka Feed/Stream): reverse chronological order of posts that have been tweeted by the users you follow. The 'home' feed, 'me' feed and other feeds are all examples of timelines.

Follow: Subscribe to another user's tweets by clicking on the 'follow' button.

Username or handle: Unique identifier that will be preceded by an @ symbol.

Mention or @: Tagging a user in a post, by using the @ symbol before their username which creates a link to their profile, and alerts the user being mentioned.

Reply: Placing @username at the beginning of your tweet is a reply. Ex: “@NYSLPeri This is for you!”

Hashtag: Using the symbol ‘#’ creates a linked instance of the word following.

Re-tweet ↻: Re-posting another user’s tweet, re-broadcasting that post to your followers, quoting the original poster or crediting them for their post.

Direct Message (DM): Send a private message.

NAVIGATING TWITTER.COM:

The main content of Twitter.com lies in the center of the page, in the form of an updated feed of posts. They are listed in reverse-chronological order and are updated regularly. The main Twitter.com page is where you will find your ‘home’ feed, which is populated by the tweets of the people you follow, as well as your own tweets.

All Twitter.com pages have a banner at the top of the page

The LEFT side of the top banner contains the following options:



Home: Home feed, as well as some of your profile information and trending topics.

Notifications: updated feed of *interactions* and *mentions*. This is activity related to your account, and will have a pop-up number of notifications to be viewed.

Discover: Tailored feed of activity, suggestions, and new content to discover.

Me: Your tweets, followers, favorites, and more about you. This displays how you appear to others.

The RIGHT side of the top banner contains the following options:



Search: Search Twitter. By beginning to type in the search box you will see suggestions.

Direct messages: Private messages to and from other Twitter users

Settings and help: Edit profile, lists, settings, etc. Settings also includes account info, security and privacy, email notifications and other account-related options.


Compose new Tweet: create a new tweet using a pop-up window.

VIEWING USERS ON TWITTER:

Profile pages: When viewing a user’s profile, you have the option to sort which of their tweets you will see; the options are all tweets or tweets with replies (and in the new profile option you have the option of showing media tweets, ie: tweets with photos or videos). You may also see recent activity, such as new users followed.

Pinned tweet feature: In the newest iteration of user profiles, users have the option to pin a tweet, meaning they can place one of their own tweets at the top of their profile’s timeline. This is a way of promoting a single tweet, keeping it in a prime position when their profile is viewed. You also have the option to pin a tweet by clicking on the ellipse (...) button below a tweet and selecting ‘Pin to your profile page’.

Finding users’ profiles: Users can be found through search of either their username or their full name. You can also click on a @mention of a username within a tweet and a brief view of that user’s profile will appear in a pop-up box. In this pop-up box you can view some details about the user, and follow them from here. You can also continue through to their full profile for their full timeline and more details. If you want to follow someone whose tweets are private, you will see a “lock” symbol by his or her user name, and you will be prompted to request access to his or her tweets.

Following a user: You can follow a user from their profile page (or from a short profile pop-up page) by clicking on the ‘follow’ button, which also displays a user image with a plus sign , indicating you are adding this person to your list of people you follow. Once you follow a user the same button will change to ‘following’, and if you hover over this button it will display a red ‘unfollow’ option.

HOW TO TWEET:

COMPOSE NEW TWEET:

Compose a new tweet either from the box to the left of your home feed, or from the button on the top right corner of the page, which will engage a pop-up box. Tweets are limited to 140 characters and there is a counter that will count down from 140 to display each remaining character and will warn you if you have exceeded the total 140. You can add a photo to your tweets, and add your location.

Share a link on Twitter: Within the text of a tweet you can copy and paste a link. Links are automatically shortened, but will still link to the URL you are sharing. There are other ways to share a link, an example of which is directly from the page you are sharing, which may include a ‘tweet’ button or a ‘share on Twitter’ option.

RETWEET:

There are a few options when it comes to retweeting other user’s tweets. You can simply click on the retweet button below the existing tweet and you will post that tweet, attributed to the original poster, but with your retweet credit with it. It will appear on your profile timeline of all your tweets sent, and will appear to users following you on their feeds.

Another option for retweeting the content of others is to manually copy and paste their content and mention the poster at the beginning with the acronym RT for “ReTweet” and the user’s @handle to imply you are retweeting another user’s tweet (this method allows you to add a comment along with the retweet). Example: “Great idea! RT @NYSLPeri I think I’ll teach a Twitter workshop!”

DIRECT MESSAGE:

This is a message that can only be sent to a user who follows you. You can set who can send you DMs in Settings. This can be through the Direct Message pop-up box at the top right corner of Twitter.com or by using the acronym DM before a username and message. Example: “DM @NYSLPeri Here’s my email address, I prefer to share it privately”

More about tweets:

The timeline updates with the most recent posts of the users you follow. Hover over a tweet to see additional options to further interact, such as reply, retweet, and favorite. Expand each post by clicking on the box in which the tweet is located. On this same page, details about the tweet will expand and show more information, including how many times it has been retweeted and favorited and replies, which will show under the tweet. You can click on ‘details’ to view the tweet on its own page with all the information available about it.

More about hashtags:

All tweets can be searched by keyword, but “hash tags” are specific indicators of a topic or audience that help other users discover tweets related to that subject or group interest without following you, and to determine which topics are “trending.” They can be a part of the main syntax of your tweet or added on at the end. Common hash tags are determined through popular consensus and repeated use rather than any official list of terms. To include a hash tag in your tweet, simply precede it with the pound symbol (#), e.g.: “Just finished my first set of mittens! #knitting” The tag then becomes a link to a list of other tweets with the same tag, in this case, knitting. Some tags are situational rather than topical. For example, tags like #ff (“Follow Friday”) or #musicmonday Others


are short-lived (e.g. #election08) and others simply add an element of humor or sarcasm. Hashtags can be located #anywhere in your tweet #LikeSo. No special characters or symbols can be hashtagged, nor can spaces be included in hashtags. There exists no preset list of hashtags, you can create any.


More about replies:

You can reply to tweets by mentioning the user you are replying to at the beginning of your responding tweet. Tweets that begin with a mention are part of your tweeted timeline, but will not appear on the home feed of those who follow you, unless they follow both you and the user being mentioned (this is why you will sometimes see a period at the beginning of a tweet before a username, like so: .@username – this ensures that this tweet is not treated as a reply, but as a message to post for all to see in their home feeds.) Remember replies are *public* messages directed at the user being mentioned. When replies are used, there is a conversation that can be tracked and there will be an option to ‘view conversation’ to see previous tweets and later responses.

Mobile

Access to Twitter is available through mobile apps as well as webpage. Because the nature of Twitter is real-time and instantaneous, mobile apps are popular for sharing and viewing. The mobile app (iPhone app pictured at right) looks very similar to the Twitter website, and you will recognize the features.

The top bar includes a user image with a plus sign: , allowing you to add people to follow. There is also a search option and a ‘compose new

tweet’ option  on the top banner. Other features include a ‘Timelines’ option under which you can find your Home feed, Discover feed, and Activity feed by swiping side to side. Notifications can be found under the bell image:



Settings

Under the gear icon on the top right corner, you can edit your profile, and change settings, among other things.

Edit profile: change your profile photo and header photo, as well as name, location, website and bio.

Account info: Under ‘Settings’ and ‘Account’ you can change your username and email.


Security and privacy: Add security measures and privacy features to your Twitter profile. Choose whether you want your tweets to be *public* (anyone can see them) or *private* (only users you approve can see them). If you choose private, you can choose to be notified when a user requests to see your tweets so that you can approve or deny access.

Email notifications: Automatically signs you up to receive emails for all activity on Twitter. You can uncheck boxes for any options you do not want to receive emails for. Specify whether you want Twitter to send you an email when you receive a new follower (or a request to follow if your tweets are private), or Direct Messages, and if you want to receive the Twitter newsletter.

Advanced

Lists: A curated list of users that can then display only tweets from those users. You can create a list, and follow other users’ lists. This can be a way to organize the people you follow and their tweets. An example of a list is found here: <https://twitter.com/museumnerd/lists/museums>

Trends: Find what people are talking about and what is trending on Twitter at the moment. Trends can be keywords or hashtags that are being used most frequently. Trends can be based on your location, or tailored to your Twitter account based on your Twitter activity. To set trend preferences, click on the ‘trend’ box near your home feed.

Verified accounts : public figures or businesses can verify their official accounts, indicated with a badge icon next to their name. This differentiates them from imposters or imitators.

Cashtag: use \$ before a stock symbol of a company to create a linked instance of that symbol, similar to the use of # for hashtags.

Live tweeting: A practice that takes advantage of Twitter’s instantaneous nature. During events or scheduled happenings, Twitter is a platform for sharing and discussing as the events unfold. This may include a hashtag. Examples include: #SOTU, #Oscars, special panels, lectures or conventions.

Chats: hashtags can be used to facilitate chats that can be scheduled. Using a hashtag such as #blogchat will make a chat easier to follow.

Saved searches: If there is a particular keyword or hash tag of interest to you, you can search for it in the “search” box and from the results click on ‘save’. You can then have a quick way to search for that word or term.

Old profile vs. new profile: Twitter recently changed some details about user profiles and added some features. The main differences are a rearrangement of the profile pictures and bio information, as well as user statistical information (ie: number of tweets, followers, following). Tweets with more engagements now appear larger in user timelines (this is not true of tweets in home feeds). New profiles also have the option to pin a tweet to the top of their profile page, keeping and highlighting that tweet at the top of the feed.

Etiquette: Learn more here: <http://mashable.com/2013/10/14/twitter-etiquette/>

For more, visit Mashable.com’s Twitter Guide Book: <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter>

This workshop and handout are intended as a guide; the New York Society Library and its staff are not responsible for individual social media activities and personal usage of Twitter. This guide reflects Twitter functionality and privacy policies contemporary to April 2014.

Notes