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# Pound That Presentation: Connect with Twitter Users via Hashtags

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## **Pound That Presentation: Connect with Twitter Users via Hashtags**

Chances are that, as an information professional you have a pretty good idea of what Twitter is and its potential for libraries and educators. Twitter is “an online social networking website and microblogging service that allows users to post and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as “tweets” (Statistics Brain, 2013). That simple description belays astonishing numbers: over 241 million monthly global users, who send over 500 million Tweets per day (Twitter, 2014). This gusher has shaped the social, political, and cultural fabric of our connected world. If that sounds too grandiose let’s not forget how Twitter has continually managed to keep pace with text, pictures, and video on a global scale, with events such as the Sochi Winter Olympics, the socio-political unrest in the middle east, the so-called the Arab Spring that started in 2010 and, most recently, the 2014 Academy Awards, commonly known as The Oscars. The host, Ellen DeGeneres, tweeted the following status on her personal Twitter account:



Ellen DeGeneres

@TheEllenShow



+ Follow

If only Bradley's arm was longer. Best photo ever. [#oscars pic.twitter.com/C9U5NOtGap](https://twitter.com/C9U5NOtGap)

Reply Retweet Favorite More



RETWEETS

3,427,941

FAVORITES

2,012,284



8:06 PM - 2 Mar 2014

Flag media

That single tweet, favorited and retweeted (shared) several thousand times throughout the night and following days, broke the record for being the most tweeted status in Twitter's history—it has garnered over 3 million retweets. Notice also the pound sign and keyword combination: “#oscars.” That lowly ‘#’ symbol is a big reason Twitter has been able to connect people in powerful new ways, and it is one aspect of Twitter I want to address.

The ‘#’ symbol followed by a keyword is known as a “hashtag” or simply “tag” in social media circles (I will use it interchangeably in this document), and it is “used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages (Twitter, 2014).” Twitter users created it, and hashtags have proved useful to content producers as well. These range from social media people and events, to cleaning products, to government agencies as a way to have their content

recognized in media and social networks. By adding a tag to a show, concept, or presentation, they let viewers and participants know that by searching for a particular tag on Twitter they can find additional tweets or information about that event, and to share it accordingly to others in their own social networks. Twitter makes sharing that content easily by means of retweeting (or re-posting) said content.

For example, Boise State (2013) posted the following at the start of the 2013 Fall semester:



Others include television and cable programming, who have recently begun to use hashtags in their programming and especially in prime time shows. Examples include *Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey* which places a “#cosmos” tag above the station’s digital on-screen graphic:



AMC's *The Walking Dead* (2014), which regularly adds badges and accompanying tags to keep an ongoing conversation about specific episodes, regularly tweets content related to its series, and adds multiple tags when appropriate:



**The Walking Dead AMC** @WalkingDead\_AMC · Mar 29

Here's your #TWD badge for watching #Isolation! #TheWalkingDeadMarathon  
[pic.twitter.com/OLeJku0Jel](http://pic.twitter.com/OLeJku0Jel)

↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite

Flag media

For information professionals, Twitter is great tool for discovering and sharing conference proceedings, social events, or simple gatherings. These can be from local, city, county, state, regional and international entities; to nonprofit, for-profit, commercial, educational, and government circles.

As Twitter continues to grow (remember that 645,750,000+ figure?) it becomes apparent that your Twitter followers, big or small, will gain some nugget of knowledge as you tweet your experiences throughout the day, especially if those tweets contain research-related material. This is particularly true if your Personal Learning Network (PLN) is a rich and well populated one. A PLN, according to Lalonde (2012), is “an

informal learning network of people you connect with for the specific purpose of learning, based on reciprocity and a level of trust that each party is actively seeking value added information for the other.” Twitter enhances this particular type of network nicely.

I recently attended a free webinar on how to find reliable international statistics, and provided numerous website links. This was relevant stuff for anyone in education and information fields, something to be shared widely and enthusiastically. However, because this particular presentation did not include a hashtag (and, as it is often the case, at least for me, to multitask and share research-friendly tweets whenever I am able to), I felt the resources and ideas from this presentation were not fully shared to a potentially appreciative audience—mainly those research-happy Twitter users. This was a missed opportunity. First, it ignores Twitter folks as viable message enhancers—before, during, and after the event has taken place. Without a hashtag to unite under, users are likely to create their own to separate the witnessed event from their general Twitter status posts. Second, if several people attend the same event (some via online, some on-site) their potentially useful tweets will go unnoticed by others as there is no anchoring tag to keep the tagged conversation going; or many tags are borne out of the same conversation, thereby diluting the overall message. Third, it ignores the backchannel such events generate: hashtags provide the easiest way to help promote, keep track, and disseminate the presentation’s key concepts throughout and after the presentation; it helps unify the overall narrative and provides a channel that empowers conversation to take place—the impressions, links shared, and commentary that provide added insight even to those who come in late to the conversation, or where not able to attend altogether.

A simple search from the Twitter website, or at hashtag search sites like <http://www.hashtags.org/> or <https://tagboard.com/> offer countless tagged events linked to all manner of content useful to your Twitter followers or profession. The simple hashtag can change your event and open it up for wider discussion. And it is not only presentations that benefit, but ongoing conversations on Twitter supply a steady mix of subject and profession-specific tags. For example, library professionals can connect with others via popular chats or conversations with tags like #libchat, #library, #books, #reference, #librarian and many more. For educators there are even more opportunities to engage with others, such as Sean Junkins’ tweet, with the graphic “Make today “Invite a Friend to a Twitter Chat Day””:

**twitter**  
Chats for Educators  
**MONDAY**

**PLACE SPECIFIC CHATS**

#cdnedchat 8pm EST CANADA	#vaedchat 8pm EST VIRGINIA	#ohedchat 9pm EST OHIO
#mathchat 3:30pm EST MATH	#engchat 7pm EST ENGLISH	#sschat 7pm EST SOCIAL STUDIES
#ksed 8pm CST KANSAS	#edtechchat 8pm EST EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY	#flipclass 8pm EST FLIPPED CLASSROOMS
#aledchat 9pm CST ALABAMA	#musedchat 8pm EST MUSIC EDUCATION	#iledchat 9pm CST ILLINOIS
#4thchat 8pm EST FOURTH GRADE	#tlap 8pm EST TEACHING LIKE A PIRATE	#21stadmin 9pm EST ADMINISTRATION
#idedchat 7:30pm MST IDAHO	#kinderchat 9pm EST KINDERGARTEN	#tlchat 9pm EST TEACHER LIBRARIANS
#edchathi 6pm HST HAWAII	#smartee 9:30pm EST SMART TECHNOLOGIES	

**LEARN. SHARE. GROW.**

SEAN

And Doug Lederman’s (editor of *Inside Higher Ed*) post:



**Doug Lederman**  
@dougledIHE

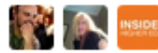
Follow

About to start an @insidehighered chat about globalization issues in higher ed -- hashtag is #iheglobal.

Reply Retweet Favorite More

RETWEETS  
2

FAVORITE  
1



11:01 AM - 15 Apr 2014

As an active Twitter user and information professional who enjoys sharing research tidbits, I strongly suggest adding a hashtag to your presentation (on every slide if possible), event, or social gathering. This digital stream of consciousness shared via tags is a powerful connector because it ties differing user experiences, on a variety of social media outlets, to a specific narrative or concept. And one you can revisit any time. A presenter who does not add a hashtag to their presentation—and it seems a simple enough task—misses an opportunity to have their shared to a wider audience. Let your Twitter PLN in on the action!

Here are some tips on how to best use hashtags for your particular event or presentation:

- Use initials or keywords that best describe your topic, or that tie-in to a conference or event. Do not make them too simple or you will likely copy someone else's tag. Check Hashtags.org to see if yours is available, or to make your own.
- On a tweet, hashtags are hotlinked. Click on a hashtag to see all the tweets that contain your particular tag.
- Do not use spaces, commas, or diacritical marks as they break the hashtag's continuity and link.
- You can combine letters and numbers but avoid special characters.
- Make the hashtag as short as possible as the character length will count against the 140 character limit. You can add as many hashtags as possible, but it is considered gauche to add more than two.
- Hashtags are not case sensitive so capitalize words to make them easier to read: #digitalarchives to #DigitalArchives.
- Hashtags can be placed anywhere on a tweet.



- Make your own hashtag if a presenter does not provide one. It will at least help keep your own tweets threaded.

*Memo Cordova is a Librarian/Associate Professor at Albertsons Library – Boise State University*

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