Promoting your work online with social media and more

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Introduction

• Digital Education Manager / Service Manager at EDINA, University of Edinburgh.

• Co-I for the PTAS-funded Managing Your Digital Footprints (2014-15) and Yik Yak (2016) research team, and engaged in ongoing social media research.

• Social Media expert advising academic and professional colleagues on communicating their work for over 7 years, including a wide range of disciplines, types of projects, and variety of forms of social media and online engagement.

• Developed and led the Social Media module for the UoE MSc in Science Communications and Public Engagement from 2012-2015. Contributor to the UoE MSc in Digital Education.
What is Social Media?

• Social Media are any websites that allow you to contribute, to engage, to connect with others and are “Web 2.0” tools (O’Reilly 2005).

• Examples include:
  • Blogs (WordPress, Medium, Blogger, Tumblr, etc.)
  • Twitter
  • Facebook
  • YouTube, Vimeo, Vine, Periscope, etc.
  • Google+
  • Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.
  • LinkedIn, Academia.edu, etc.
  • Mendeley, Delicious, Diigo, Reddit etc.
  • FigShare
Why Use Social Media?

Social media tools...

• Are go-to spaces for expertise and advice.
• Offer new ways to tell stories, to engage in dialogue, to reach out to your audience(s).
• Rank highly on Google, Bing, etc.
• Can enable direct access to key figures including policy makers, press, high profile experts and public figures, funders and Research Councils, and potential research participants or data users, etc.
• May generate media interest in your work, new collaborations and other unexpected opportunities.
• Offer inexpensive ways to raise your own profile and that of your work, your project, your organisation.
This Time It’s Personal...

• Social media are about people, personality and quirkiness.

• They provide a quickly digested and accessible route into longer form and more authoritative websites and materials.

• They are designed to nurture communities, networks, peer support, sharing, participation and collaboration.

• They let you use links, images, animations, video, audio, live streaming and other multimedia to bring a topic to life.

• They are often updated and engaged with via mobile phones – crossing personal and professional spaces, places and times.

http://lookslikescience.tumblr.com/
Planning social media activities to promote and engage others in your work

- Consider what goals you want to achieve, what you want to share about your work. How can you track progress?
- Are you interested in developing your personal professional presence? Or are you keen to raise the profile of your project or organisation? Different tools suit different purposes.
- Think about your audience(s): where do they hang out online? What will engage them in your work? How can you make it relevant to them?
- Be creative – what events, activities, opportunities, publications, community groups, social media tools, etc. could help you to communicate in new ways?
- Be pragmatic - what best fits your project’s or personal style, expertise, and time availability?
Task: Understanding Your Priorities

In a group of 3 or 4 look at your priorities for engaging others in your work. Use the worksheet but also consider:

- Who do you want to reach?
- How well do you understand your audience(s) needs and motivations?
- What are your priorities for this engagement?
- What might be an appropriate way/event/space to engage them?
- What would success look like?

[10 mins to do this, 10 mins to discuss].
Where (online) does your audience(s) hang out?

• Which audiences are important for you to reach and engage in your work?

• How well do you know your audience? The easiest and best way to find out where your audience hangs out is to ask them!

• Your audience may already use a particular preferred set of spaces, engaging with particular organisations, following key bloggers, etc.

• Your own engagement should be something that meets your objectives and that feels right for your intended audience(s).

• Participating as a guest contributor to established communities and activities (online or offline) can be highly effective.
What tools should you use?

• **Blogs** - make your work visible, enable semi-formal ways to share working methods and progress, and provide a way to find and engage in dialogue with your audience. Medium is the hot blogging platform. WordPress is the biggest and most flexible platform. Tumblr is a playful and visual blogging option.

• **Twitter** - very effective way to share key research updates, build a network around your work, find peer support and advice, track news.

• **Video or Audio** - can bring clarity to complex concepts quickly. Well-made short videos or animations can convey complex concepts and research quickly, accessibly and in very engaging sharable ways. Podcasts are cheap to create and hugely popular. And don’t be afraid to try out Google Hangouts, livestreaming via Periscope, Meekat or Facebook Live, podcasting etc. as long as it feels appropriate for your context and audience.

• **Image and Interactive spaces** - any images bring a project to life – research is about people, ideas, events, collaboration, equipment... Images, visual content, and interactive imagery make your ideas, achievements and discoveries far more tangible. Flickr, Pinterest, Storify, data visualisations, StoryMaps, Textal, Issuu, FigShare, ThingLink, etc. can all be effective in the right circumstances.
Are blogs still “a thing”?

Blogs quietly power the web in 2016, with many having influence and impact, shaping public debate and mainstream media priorities.

Mainstream news and media includes blogging as a key source of ideas (e.g. political blogging and election coverage) and format for output (e.g. Channel 4 News’ blogging presence).

Many news sites also borrow blog formats (e.g. interactive stories) and writing styles, presenting informal short form content alongside commenting and discussion space. Indeed most traditionally printed newspapers have moved from news production to blog-like comment pieces as core unique offering.

Blog posts – often as well edited and illustrated stand-alone pieces of writing or content – make up a huge amount of the content shared across social networks of all kinds.

Blogs are a great way to practice writing for different audiences and find your own writing voice. They are easy to experiment with, particularly as a guest contributor. But they do take time to research and write (my rule of thumb is ½ day for a great 500-800 word post).
Blogs are great as a...

- Platform for getting your voice heard and get your organisation’s work shared throughout the year, not just at key media-friendly focal points.
- Way to bring organisations and processes to life, to highlight ongoing work and activity.
- Opportunity for a wider range of colleagues to engage with your audience(s), even if for one-off posts around special events, recruitment, specialist stories.
- Form for playful storytelling and more human angles, opinion, stories, “behind the scenes” details.
- Place to expand on key events, news, current events, reports, issues, successes.
- Alternative news streams and routes to engaging the media, funders.
- Space to develop and engage your audience, to build a sense of community and engage in discussion.
- Search engine-friendly content management system.
- Content sources for social networking sites, sharing, generating buzz.
Successful blogs don’t fit one pattern, they have their own voice and style...

http://seedtoshirt.tumblr.com/

http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/

http://andrewgelman.com/
Podcasts are a quiet but influential phenomenon...

- Around 3.7 million adults in the UK listen to podcasts (RAJAR 2015), with 57% of them using smart phone to listen – meaning they can look up topics discussed, explore articles, etc. whilst they listen.

- The popularity of Serial, This American Life, Radio Lab, etc. drives interest but podcasts are cheap to make enabling a huge diversity of podcast types and voices (e.g. Millennial, The Tech Gypsies, Black Men Can’t Jump in Hollywood, The Guilty Feminist, etc.)

- Skilfully explained intellectual content finds a receptive podcast audience. Popular statistics and economics podcasts include: More or Less; NPR Planet Money; FiveThirtyEight Elections; Gimlet Media’s StartUp; Freakonomics Radio.

- The barrier to entry is low: smart phones, digital recorders (e.g. Zoom mics), or podcasting microphones all produce good results. Editing software is free or inexpensive. Creative commons licensed music can be used for free. But time, research, and a good ear for what makes an enjoyable podcast are required.

- As with blogs, podcasts influence and feed into mainstream media coverage and approaches...
Great Podcasts Have Their Own Voice, style, or Sound...

http://99percentinvisible.org/
Twitter is for networkers...

• Approx. 11-12% of adult internet users engage with Twitter – it doesn’t have the take up of Facebook – but...

• Twitter is an influential space, particularly for engaging with policy makers, politicians, activists, press and media, public figures.

• Time commitment to Twitter is minimal but it is more effective when you post at least once a day and engage actively around, e.g. event hashtags (hint: #RSS2016Conf).

• Twitter is an exceptional networking tools (despite all of recent changes and tailoring of the platform). It enables direct access to people who are hard to reach any other way.

• It is also an invaluable space for amplifying other activities – links to reports, sharing infographics, videos, reports, key news, booking links, etc.

• Don’t get caught up in numbers - look for the right people to follow and learn from/engage with, try to attract appropriate followers, make sure it is a space that works for you.
Twitter use can be very professional, very personal or a blend...
Don’t be limited – any online space can be the right one to promote your work...
What should you share?

• What your work is about and what it aims to achieve.
• Processes, updates, changes of approach – to the extent that such transparency is appropriate and acceptable.
• Research findings, impact, relevance – be realistic, don’t overpromise.
• Quirky, playful and accessible content around your work and research area.
• Publications, presentations, press mentions and materials that reflect research outputs and expertise.

• CHECK ANY EXISTING PRIVACY, NON-DISCLOSURE OR SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES AND ENSURE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE OR ACTIVITY COMPLIES.
What should not be shared

• **Commercially sensitive data** or other material your employer/project partners/PI would not want shared or that might breach guidelines.

• **Personal information** about colleagues, participants, those at partner organisation that might breach Data Protection law or ethical guidance.

• Similarly do not share location information that might compromise your own safety or that of your colleagues.

• Material (images, discussion board posts, tweets, etc.) that might impact on your own professional reputation or the credibility of your research.

• Anything you would not want a funder, professional peer, project partner, or future employer to see or read.

Social media guidelines can help establish consistent approaches, particularly within an organisation. You will find a link to openly licensed guidance in your handout, and an example blog comment moderation flow chart (adapted from the US Air Force).
Planning Social Media that actively engages your audience

- **Be open about who you are and what your interest is** to be authentic and build trust and engagement from your audience.

- Ensure you **keep profiles and presences up to date** and relevant, review their effectiveness, and ensure they represent your work as you want it to be seen.

- **Manage expectations** about the type of engagement being sought, about what will happen as follow up, how often events etc. will take place, what they can expect if they attend, about who should get involved, etc.

- Think about creating and including ** Calls to Action** – the thing your audience should do next on reading a post, engaging with a video, etc.

- **Reward participation** so that your audience is motivated and interested in engaging again, and understands that their input matters. Acknowledging participation goes a long way to ensuring public engagement activity is successful.

- **Build your network and community** so that future activities can build on previous successes, so that your participation is authentic and you are visible to your key audiences.
Turning existing assets into great opportunities to engage

You will already have much of what you need to create great content:

• Key achievements, past successes, awards, notable work.
• Events, activities, reports, feedback, participation data or survey results*. Or projects with clear outcomes and success metrics.
• Press and blog coverage, news.
• Behind the scenes details and information on process, new staff or interesting staff achievements.
• Relationships with other organisations, notable figures, supporters.
• Sharable stories and insider “secrets”* – things that have gone wrong, tips for others, surprising facts, mythology about the organisation or building.
• Resources - Images, video, audio, slides, interactive content, etc.
• Interesting people to highlight or contribute – staff, volunteers, experts, performers, supporters, etc.

* Avoiding any genuine secrets, or commercially confidential, inappropriate or embargoed stories.
Task: Identifying content you can share

Think about your own work...

• What do you already have available that might be interesting to share or engage people with?

• How do you want your audience(s) to engage? To hear about it, to offer their comments, to enter a dialogue or collaboration?

• How will you make your work relevant and interesting to your audience – what’s the hook that will draw them in?

• Are there practical considerations around the content, the activities you are able to run, support your audience may need?

10 mins to do this, 10 mins to discuss.
Social media is just part of the mix...

Don’t think of your social media activities as sitting in isolation – they should be part of your broader public engagement and communication of your work.

Use your own and/or organisational web and social media presences to draw attention to, support or continue the conversation around other public engagement activities which might include:

• Specialist briefings for policy makers, decision makers, industry etc.
• Sharing formal outputs, reports, publications with accessible commentary.
• Publicity like press, articles, publications outside academic journals.
• Consultation events, workshops, community group meetings and activities that enable genuine dialogue with your audience(s).
• Targeted events, festivals, performance, stand up, etc.
• Collaborations with audiences and/or creative partners (e.g. artists, theatre), and more playful interpretation based on or inspired by your work.

Try to plan big activities 3-6 months ahead so that you have time to prepare blog posts, videos, or more involved social media, and so that this content fits well with other plans for you/your organisation. (A worksheet in your handout can help with this).
Evaluating Success

It is much easier to understand success if you already know how you will measure it...

• Think about what success would look like, what you’d like to achieve, how you will know you’ve achieved this.

• Establish SMART Goals early on, that way you will have something clear to evaluate against.

• Capture key measures (KPIs) regularly and reflect on them.

• Put other measuring and evaluation tools in place – these might be technical, or survey data, or anecdotal feedback.

Reflect on what both quantitative and qualitative measures are telling you:

• Why was this approach successful?

• Are there topics, qualities, formats that are particularly engaging?

• What isn’t working so well? How will you take action on that?
Taking this forward: Check List

Promoting your work online with social media and more: Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your personal professional profile on your own or your employer’s website is clean, up to date, engaging. You have a picture and description of your professional interests. You have included a clear indication of who you want to work and engage with, and how they can get in touch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any social media presence, including professional forums and networks, are appropriately branded. You have checked that you have appropriate permissions and privacy/disclosure settings in place for the intended purpose.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have considered and identified your promotion, public engagement, networking, and communication objectives, desired outcomes and goals for the next 12 months.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>You have a clear idea of who your audience(s) is, and have asked them or explored the kinds of events, channels, online spaces, etc. that will be effective for engaging them. You know what kind of engagement you want with your audience(s).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Existing content and ideas that you could use to share your work have been captured, and the list is updated regularly. Ideas for exploiting this content as new activities, blog posts, events, etc. are also captured and scheduled.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A content plan has been developed for the next 0-12 months. This includes key messages, dates, and priorities. It is clear to all contributors to social media presence which content they will be creating, and how they will be involved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You have set aside sufficient time to evaluate the activities you have planned. You know how this fits into wider commitments and timelines.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have thought about evaluating your activities, to enable you to report and reflect on what is working well, and what isn’t, and how your audience is responding.</td>
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Take a look at the check list after today’s session – it should help you to capture your notes and ideas for knitting this all together and putting it into action.

Don’t be afraid to try stuff out and, if it’s not working for you, it’s ok to stop using a tool/space etc.

Be realistic and reflect, and re-evaluate regularly.
Q&A

Over to you!

Further comments and questions welcome:
nicola.osborne@ed.ac.uk
@suchprettyeyes
Some additional interesting resources...

- GDS Digital Engagement blog: You know why we blog, here’s how we blog (10th December 2015): https://gdsengagement.blog.gov.uk/2015/12/10/you-know-why-we-blog-heres-how-we-blog/