Using Twitter in academia

A starter guide to creating a Twitter account and using it to disseminate research

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The steps included in this guide will teach you how to set up a new Twitter account. It also includes advice for using social media to disseminate your research and suggests how to connect with other Twitter users.

Why use a Twitter account?

Using social media, particularly Twitter, is a great way to connect with academics and peers in your field of research. You may work alongside the people you connect with initially, however you can also quickly connect with academics that you are familiar with but haven't yet met. You can also discover someone new with the same research interests as you.

There is a lot of latent value in Twitter as a professional network and it is an excellent tool to:

- Disseminate your research
- Connect with new individuals
- Establish yourself as an influencer and a thought-leader with peers
- Contribute to discussions on topics related to your field of interest. See Twitter chat hashtags
- Share relevant news, research and comment from within or outside your field of interest
- Discover new researchers in your field or adjacent to your field.

Before setting up a Twitter account, consider…

- You should be able to commit to sending at least three original posts a week. Consistent use of the account will lead you to effectively build networks.
- You might already have a Twitter account. Many professionals use accounts for both personal and professional issues. This decision is entirely at your discretion. Take a look at @ijclark and @DrChanceWLewis who use their accounts for both personal and professional communication.

Creating a Twitter account

To create an account on the web:

1. Go to **https://twitter.com/signup**
2. Enter your full name, email address, and a password
3. Click ‘Sign up for Twitter’
4. On the next page, you can select a username (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter) — type your own or choose one suggested. Twitter will tell you if the username you want is available
5. Double-check your name, email address, password, and username

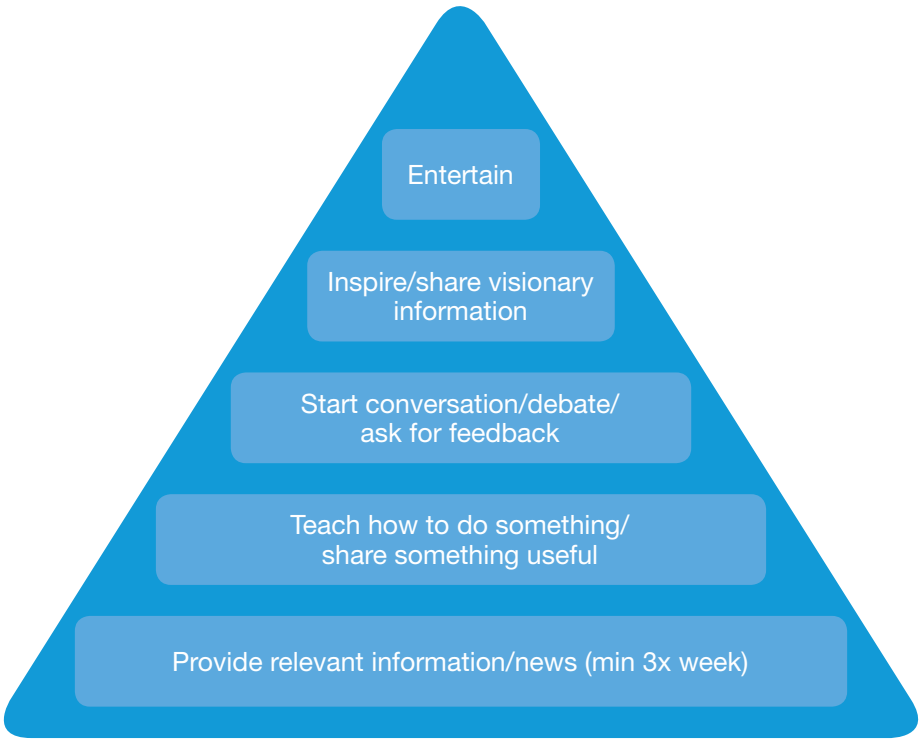
6. Click ‘Create my account’
7. Twitter will send a confirmation email to the email address you entered. Click the link in that email to confirm your email address
8. Complete your biography – Your biography can only be 160 characters long. Having a biography quickly allows users to see if your fields of interest are similar to their own and gives your account credibility. You can consistently update or revise your biography
9. Add a profile picture and cover picture (the image that sits at the top of your profile page)
10. Finally, follow people! To do this, simply type the name of the page you want to find into the search box at the very top of the page and select the Follow button.

Content planning

A great Twitter account:

- Shares important/interesting content from other people
- Posts its own interesting content
- Engages with other users in a positive way by replying to posts, offering advice or insight

The figure below suggests the frequency and type of content you should be aiming to share in order to establish a balanced social presence:



Creating the content

You only have 140 characters for each tweet but there are lots of things that you can post which are relevant to the journal. A few examples are:

- Calls for papers
- Details of published issues – congratulate authors on articles
- Articles of particular interest
- Special Issue details – Guest Editor introduction, context and importance of publishing the Special Issue
- Information about the journal scope and objectives
- Share appropriate news about your activities in relation to the journal such as photos and stories from the conferences you have attended. (Please see 'Some final tips' below)

Think about including a URL in your tweet and link to the webpage you are referring to. Use one of the free link shortening tools such as **https://bitly.com/** or **https://goo.gl/**. This will reduce the length of the URL to close to 20 characters leaving you much more room in your tweet.

Try also to post and share visually stimulating and media rich content such as photos, videos and **infographics**. These are **proven to increase** the level of interaction with your tweets.

Next steps – Disseminating your research, promoting your account

1. Think about the people and groups you want the page to appeal to. Follow the accounts of other relevant journals, editor or editorial board members, your own university accounts, academic associations, media outlets (such as newspapers or online trade magazines), the @EmeraldGlobal account and the other Emerald account relevant to your own area of interest. A full list of these Emerald accounts can be seen here.
2. Take every opportunity to promote your account. Add a hyperlinked Twitter logo to your email signature. Add your Twitter handle to your business card or LinkedIn profile. Promote the page through your networks and proactively encourage peers to follow it.

Outlined in the table below is some good practice which will help to increase the number of people who are aware of your page, who interact with your posts (by favouriting, retweeting or replying to what you post) and who follow your profile.

Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly
Aim to post interesting, rich content with pictures, figures and video. Each post can be your own original tweet or you can share posts from other influential Twitter accounts. Whenever you retweet content from another profile try to add your own viewpoint or commentary.	Follow new people you meet at conferences and follow back the relevant people who follow you who you might not have met in person.	Contribute to **Twitter chat hashtags**
Check for direct messages or replies to your posts.	Invite comment from the people who follow you or those people you wish to connect with. Establish your profile as a means for conversation as well as interesting content.	Use the Twitter analytics function (go to **https://analytics.twitter.com/** and log-in using your Twitter username and password) to see detailed analytics about your posts.

Some final tips

- Think about the tone of your profile. Try to keep it positive and celebrate success. Don't be afraid to congratulate your authors or any Guest Editors after they have published in your journal
- Choose to follow people who are likely to be interested in the content you post. Do not feel obligated to follow everyone who follows your account
- **All good social networking activity is based on conversation**. Reply to people who comment on your posts and ask for the communities' thoughts on topics of interest
- Test using hashtags in your posts. Insert a hashtag # before key words in your posts and this will allow other users to find your page. E.g. "We are pleased to announce the publication of a Special Issue on the theme of #marketing and #emergingeconomies. To find out more, visit the link: www.xyz.com"
- Please do not share sensitive information about the policies and practices of Emerald or your academic institution which might damage the journal. Keep your personal views separate from the page and do not post anything which is offensive or unlawful.

Kudos

In 2014, Emerald signed a deal with Kudos, a service that helps increase the impact of published articles. All authors who publish with Emerald have the opportunity to enhance the impact of their article by disseminating content through social channels.

Find out more about Kudos.

Glossary

The @ sign: This is used to call out usernames in Tweets, like this: Hello @Twitter! When a username is preceded by the @ sign, it becomes a link to a Twitter profile. See also Replies and Mentions. Read more about replies and mentions.

Direct Message: Also called a DM and most recently called simply a "message," these Tweets are private between the sender and recipient and can only be sent if both parties follow each other's account.

Favourite: A favourite is an indication that you like a particular tweet. When you favourite a tweet, the person who posted that tweet will be notified.

Hashtag: A hashtag # is a system which allows Twitter to classify a certain word or phrase. Users can search on any word or phrase which is precluded by a hashtag. Anyone can make up a hashtag.

Name: A name is a personal identifier (sometimes a business name or a real name) displayed in your profile page.

Profile: Another name for a user's Twitter account.

Retweet: When you retweet someone else's post this will appear in your timeline. You have the option to add a comment to this. Retweeting a wide range of content from other users encourages people to follow you as your account is not a stream of self-promotion.

Twitter chat hashtag: There are many different chat hashtags. These are used to thread together a conversation about a larger set of issues that might be wider than a topic. For example, the hashtag #PhDChat is a very active hashtag used by PhD researchers to discuss all issues relating to studying for a PhD. Other active hashtags include #Educhat (a discussion thread for educators) and #Libchat (a discussion thread for library and information professionals).

Username: Usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter. They are used for logging in @replies and direct messages.