CHAPTER 7

Twitter

7.1 CASE STUDY 1

Tweeting to Success: Managing an Academic Library’s Twitter Campaign to Enhance User Engagement

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Institution: Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library (serves under 10,000 students at Clark-Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Interdenominational Theological Center, and Spelman College as a consortium library for these four Historically Black Colleges and Universities).

Campaign Purpose: Engage library student user groups via Twitter.

Target Demographic: Students.

Measure of Success: Increase in students participating in International Games Day 2015 compared to prior years.

Team: One tweeting librarian, and an additional five committee members on the Social Media Working Group.

7.1.1 BACKGROUND

Today’s students, as contemporary users of the academic library, by and large engage with their surroundings digitally via social media. Recognizing that, the Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library (AUC Library) began social media campaigns on Facebook and Twitter in 2012, and later added an Instagram presence in 2015. In order to distribute the workload, a separate librarian managed each of the social
media campaigns, but a Social Media Working Group was established to keep the messaging coherent and cohesive for the library users. This case study provides an examination of the AUC’s use of Twitter as a tool to promote the library and to get its services on the radar of the 21st century student users. The specific example of using Twitter to promote the ALA-sponsored International Games Day serves as the lens through which increased user engagement might be better understood.

7.1.2 INTERNATIONAL GAMES DAY

On November 23, 2015, our library hosted an ALA-sponsored International Games Day. ALA’s National Gaming Day, first celebrated in 2008, focuses on the social and recreational side of gaming. Gaming at the library encourages patrons of all ages to interact with diverse peers, share their expertise, and develop new strategies for gaming and learning. At the library, patrons can socialize with their friends and play board and video games while surrounded by books, librarians, and a real world of knowledge. We had hosted this event for several years prior to 2015, but this year represented the first time that social media was employed to help promote the event. Previous years’ Games Days had suffered from low attendance. Students who happened to be in the library were delighted to partake in the Games Day activities—everything from video games to board games, and other activities—but it seemed apparent that the message about Games Day had not really reached as many students as library staff would have hoped. Prior to 2015, library staff handed out small flyers advertising Games Day to students walking along the common quad from their campus toward the library. Once the Twitter account had been established, we used it to promote International Games Day 2015.

7.1.3 HOW TWITTER PROMOTED INTERNATIONAL GAMES DAY

After the back to school welcome messages had died down toward the beginning of September, the social media working group tweeted informational messages about library services, programs, and events. These tweets tended to be short in duration (meaning they were only tweeted once or twice) and were topical to the event. In these instances, Twitter was used as a messaging system. Tweets such as “Reserve a Study Room”
with a link to the scheduling software alerted students to the availability of study spaces. Other messages such as “Visit the notebooks of Tupac Amaru Shakur in the Archives” also communicated to students the existence of rich resources in the library. When it came to Games Day, the Social Media Working Group decided to try an actual Twitter campaign to build awareness of the events.

While there was not an official tweeting schedule established by the Working Group, beginning in October, about six weeks prior to Games Day, the E-Learning Technologies Librarian tweeted the first mentions of the event for the year. A link to ALA’s website included more detail, but the focus of each tweet was to share the date, time, location, and event itself. As the day drew nearer, we posted “catchier” more targeted tweets in order to capture student attention. Provocative, gaming-like tweets that inspired fun and friendly competition replaced plain, informational only tweets that only communicated event details.

7.1.3.1 Examples of Games Day Twitter Campaign tweets by Month

**October**
- International Games Day 11/23/15;
- Join us at the Library for IGD 11/23/15 @2 pm.

**November**
- Are you the next Michael Jackson? Just Dance IGD;
- Studying Economics? Try your hand at Monopoly 11/23/15;

These tweets caught students’ attention as evidenced by the fact that this was the first time any library tweets had been retweeted! Students seemed to enjoy the fun nature of these Tweets and we discovered, through their retweeting, that they were also inspired to strike up friendly competition with their friends, roommates, and classmates as Games Day approached. Following the retweets and the hashtags help us gather a sense of the efficacy of the Twitter campaign. The primary goal of using Twitter was to increase attendance but the secondary goal certainly included engaging students and causing them to think of the library as a place of recreation and respite, at least for this one day out of the school year.
7.1.4 USING TWITTER ON INTERNATIONAL GAMES DAY

The Social Media Working Group strategized the campaign leading up to International Games Day. However, live tweeting during the event further promoted the day’s festivities. During the event, real-time updates about the game tournaments comprised the bulk of the tweets. These tweets functioned to attract further attention to the activities. For example, when the board games area was running a bit slow, tweets in real time brought some attention and pep to the event. Tweeting in real time also provided an opportunity to contrast the various games offerings. Tweets about the availability of snacks helped suggest an alternative activity to playing video games and announcing a Scrabble tournament allowed students an opportunity to use their minds in a fun, gaming atmosphere.

Perhaps not too surprisingly, most of the tweets that were retweeted during the event were those that mentioned the high scores and student’s first names (with their permission—we had a short form for them to sign granting us permission to post their names) who achieved these scores. These tweets worked to incite a friendly competition between the Games Day attendees and allowed for participants to track high scores. Via Twitter, these game results were displayed in a fashion that was reminiscent of a score board—and the library’s twitter site became the impromptu place to find this information. It also became a way to track high scores and provided students and the library staff score keepers a unified method for keeping tabs on the individuals who had won as well as the teams who were in the lead at any given moment.

7.1.4.1 Examples of “Day of” Games Day Twitter Campaign tweets

- “Devon outdanced us all in DDR” (Dance Dance Revolution)
- “Relax after dancing, Scrabble with us”
- “Beat team blue at Dominos”
- “Refuel your game with snacks by the café”

In order to keep the Twitter “conversation” active, students who engaged via Twitter during Games Day were rewarded with a mention or even an extra treat or soda in the snack room. Most of all, students who engaged in Games Day via Twitter could easily become “helpers” for getting students engaged in the festivities in subsequent years by sharing about the fun they had with their peers and the incoming freshman class.
We hoped that they would also be important allies to help spread the word about International Games Day in coming years.

7.1.5 ASSESSMENT

The Social Media Working Group understood the need to assess the success of the various social media platforms. Where “Likes” on Facebook can provide some clues and indicators about the library’s Facebook page success, it can be more difficult to assess Twitter in a meaningful fashion. Given this reality, the Social Media Working Group designed a brief survey to give out to students who were participating in International Games Day. The one page survey probed student knowledge about the current library social media campaigns and delved a bit deeper to ascertain their interest in engaging with their library via Twitter.

7.1.5.1 Questions Asked on the Library’s Social Media Survey

- Would you rather engage with your academic library on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or another platform?
- Would you consider engaging with your Library on all of the social media platforms that you use or only one or two?
- How often would you want to receive updates about your library on Facebook?
- What types of topics would you like to learn about via your library’s social media presence?
- What would make you block the library on your social media feeds?
- What types of tweets from the Library would you be likely to retweet?
- Would you engage in a Twitter conversation with your academic library?
- How often would you engage your Library via Twitter?

The results of the survey indicated that the largest obstacle to student engagement via Twitter was likely their lack of knowledge that the library even had a Twitter site. Many survey respondents indicated their interest in engaging with the library about myriad topics provided that the library did not over use social media (as it would “get old” or “be annoying” eventually). It is certainly a fine line to walk. On the one hand, it is critical to use social media in the way that it was designed to interact with and engage others in the digital environment. However, some students reported that they consider their academic library as being somewhat like
engaging a parent or older relative online, it can be a little “awkward” and “forced” according to qualitative data students provided. If the library uses Twitter just as a mode of communicating information, it loses its power as a mode of communicating in the digital sphere. On the other hand, if Twitter is overused or used in a way that seems too much like the library is trying to be the “buddy” of the students, they will become turned off and will begin to disengage.

7.1.5.2 Recommendations for an Academic Library Twitter Campaign

- Utilize Twitter to actively engage library users in the digital sphere.
- Keep the interest and “momentum” of Twitter up by responding directly to student tweets.
- Using the platform to communicate information is acceptable, but should be kept minimal in favor of students engaging as opposed to passively reading information about their library.
- Where appropriate, and with their permission, use student names to connect more actively with Twitter.
- Use a library event (such as International Games Day) to provoke interest in the library’s Twitter site.
- Periodically, set up questions or conversations to pique interest in the library’s Twitter site. By following certain events (such as Black History Month, the impending arrival of an author, etc.), students may be more likely to engage online.
- Allow students to lead Twitter conversations and allow the library to learn about student interests and needs via what they say online.

7.1.6 SUCCESSES

The main reason the AUC Library started a Twitter account was to ensure that the library had a way to engage students in the digital environment. Secondarily, it was to serve as a way to try to heighten awareness of the library’s resources, programs, and services. The results of our social media survey indicated that most students would be willing to engage with the library via social media.

The AUC Library Twitter campaign worked well, overall, for International Games Day. Twitter, when used for specific events, tends to provide students with a way to communicate online and in real time, which then works to enhance student engagement. Part of the success of
the Games Day Tweeting correlated to the work the Social Media Working Group ahead of the event to ensure a coherent and cohesive social media campaign. By strategizing to build a Twitter campaign, the library was able to gain more student interest in the library’s Twitter account.

Following the International Games Day, the AUC archives had a series of guest scholar talks and used Twitter to tweet pictures and to quote the speakers. During the talks, the number of Twitter followers and retweets increased. As a result of the continued success, The Social Media Working Group developed a policy to allow for the Twitter account login and password to be shared with library staff. This allowed those who were hosting an event to make use of Twitter in order to engage library users in the online environment.

The 2015 International Games Day event enjoyed more student participation as determined by gate count numbers, but what precise role the use of Twitter may or may not have had is difficult to describe with any degree of certainty.

### 7.1.7 WHAT WORKED

- Using a committee to target communications via social media.
- Using Twitter to heighten excitement about events (in this case Games Day).
- Setting up a virtual forum wherein students could engage each other about the event in real time online.

### 7.1.8 FAILURES

Early on in the AUC Library’s Twitter use, the site was used primarily to communicate information. As such, it functioned as a message board, but retweets were very rare and student tweets (if there ever were any) were largely ignored. Twitter was not being used as a social media platform, but rather as a one-way online announcement board. It was difficult to cultivate followers in the early days because Twitter was not being used in the way that it was intended. Once the committee started utilizing it to engage students more actively, it resulted in more followers and retweets. The AUC library discovered that using social media as it is intended—to have online conversations—is a lot more interesting and productive.
toward the goal of engaging library users than trying to use it as an online bulletin board.

7.1.9 WHAT DIDN'T WORK

- “Boring” information-only mass-messaging tweets.

7.1.10 FINAL THOUGHTS

An academic library using Twitter to promote an event might benefit from developing a specific and targeted campaign. Sometimes a committee is a viable option for managing a Twitter campaign as it can help in keeping the messaging coherent and consistent. It can also provide back-up support for the library staff member tasked with tweeting the event. When Twitter is used to publicize an upcoming event and then used to engage during the live event, retweets and the number of followers tend to increase. By using Twitter to engage users in the online environment, it works to complement and supplement the interactions that users have with the library in person.
7.2 CASE STUDY 2
Drop Everything and Tweet: Building Community on Your Campus
Joanna Ewing, Amber Wilson and Karen Pruneda
University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, United States

Institution: University of Central Arkansas (student population Fall 2016—11,487).

Campaign Purpose: We planned this outreach event as a community-building exercise that would highlight a variety of academic departments, student groups, and other nonacademic entities. The extended reach of Twitter afforded us the opportunity to share news and information about library services, as well as provide research tips and instruction.

Target Demographic: University of Central Arkansas community, including students, faculty, staff, and student athletes.

Measure of Success: During the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) campaign month, 30 pictures were tweeted (10 tweeted by others, 20 by us), we gained 29 new followers (average new followers per month is 16.7), and we had significant DEAR-related engagement (82 likes, 33 retweets, and 4 replies).

Team: Social media committee, Library Technician for Education and Outreach, Interlibrary Loan Supervisor/Graphic Designer.

7.2.1 CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND
The University of Central Arkansas (UCA) Library decided to plan a Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) campaign as a fun way to encourage reading and increase campus engagement. We first came up with the idea of implementing a DEAR campaign after seeing pictures of faculty and staff reading on other university library social media pages. These images reminded library faculty and staff of our cherished childhood experiences with reading programs, and we hoped to capitalize on the UCA community’s feelings of nostalgia to create a unique outreach opportunity. While our DEAR campaign was held on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, we decided to focus on Twitter for this chapter because its popularity and
versatile sharing features made it an especially effective platform to spread this campaign.

Children’s author Beverly Cleary coined the phrase “Drop Everything and Read” in her popular 1981 book *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* in response to reader letters mentioning sustained silent reading (SSR) activities in their schools (*D.E.A.R. Day, 2018*). DEAR programs are now held annually throughout the month of April to commemorate Cleary’s birthday on April 16th. Although SSR has been practiced in elementary schools for at least 40 years, it is not as common in high schools and colleges (*Moore, Jones, & Miller, 1980*, p. 445). A review of school and public library websites reveals that these institutions frequently participate in DEAR–related activities, which typically promote children’s exposure to books and reading. Academic libraries, on the other hand, mainly mention DEAR in reference to aspiring K-12 educators and reading to young children. Although it is not common to hold a DEAR event in an academic library, we knew that we could make this Twitter campaign a success due to the enthusiasm of the UCA community and our project management skills.

### 7.2.2 UCA LIBRARY TWITTER IMPLEMENTATION

The UCA Library’s Twitter use has changed significantly since we first began using it in 2015. In the beginning, we primarily used Twitter as a way to tie existing library materials with historical events or national observations, such as Arkansas Women’s Suffrage or Black History Month. We used various tools such as Hootsuite and TweetDeck to organize and facilitate the process.

Over time, we figured out other ways to use Twitter to engage with our campus community. The library’s first major Twitter outreach campaign was for Banned Books Week in September 2015. We encouraged UCA students, faculty, and staff to “get caught reading a banned book” by taking a picture in front of our mug shot-themed library photo booth for a chance to win a campus bookstore gift card. We also used Twitter to share photos of library and campus events, such as speakers and therapy dog visits during final exams, as well as short videos with information about library services. We encouraged student engagement by sharing responses to questions we regularly posted on whiteboards (*Fig. 7.2.1*). We also promoted student creativity by tweeting pictures of art found on the whiteboard walls of the library’s study rooms.
7.2.3 APPROACH/PLAN

For our DEAR campaign, we invited individuals across campus to share creative photos of themselves reading and post them on Twitter with the UCA Library’s hashtag, #UCALibraryLife. Student photo submissions were entered into a draw to win an umbrella or study snacks. We announced our plans for DEAR in April 2016. Early in April we identified individuals within departments to contact via email. This strategic approach proved useful, as the contacts that we made helped spread the word within their departments. Next we planned out the posts that the library wanted to make, leaving space in the schedule for flexibility in case of overwhelming participation. These posts included information highlighting various UCA departments and student athletes who responded to our email communication. We strategically planned to incorporate suggestions of related library resources in our replies to tweets.

Figure 7.2.1 Example whiteboard question.
7.2.4 DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

The UCA Library’s External Marketing Committee is the primary group involved with social media activities. This committee initially met once a month, but met less frequently once we developed our social media ideas and philosophy. The committee uses Google Docs, Sheets, and Calendar to collaboratively plan and organize its social media campaigns. When we first started working as a committee, we created two Google Docs to plan possible posts and social media campaigns by month and by year. Previously used posts were changed to a different color for future reference. As the system became more fluid and we developed a common approach to content and implementation, we only referred to these Google Docs as needed.

For DEAR, we collaborated on a Google Doc to recommend and contact potential participants. We reasoned that individuals would be more likely to participate if they were contacted by someone they knew. After this initial communication, our Library Technician for Education and Outreach followed up to arrange times for individual photos in the library. The photos were taken with a high-resolution digital camera and the files were labeled with the name of the individual, the department, and the information to highlight about that department. This organization made it much easier for us to share and tag the departments’ photos on Twitter. For example, we tweeted a photo of a History Department professor reading a book and tagged the post with @UCA_History. Departments then received a notification and could retweet the photos highlighting their students, faculty, and staff. We were careful to tweet and retweet pictures strategically to avoid overwhelming followers or running out of photos. Monitoring the library’s hashtag daily allowed us to keep up with activity in the campaign.

7.2.5 IDENTIFYING COLLABORATORS

When identifying collaborators for the campaign, we targeted individuals whose participation would yield maximum exposure and encourage greater campus participation. In the spirit of building bridges across campus, we reached out to students, administrators, faculty, and staff throughout the university. We made a special effort to contact individuals who are not normally asked to participate in campus intellectual life such as custodial staff. Inclusion is an important value to UCA Library, and this is reflected by our social media activities. Moreover, we were fortunate that
a librarian served on a committee with UCA’s athletic director who could encourage the participation of student athletes. We also specifically targeted UCA’s Division of Outreach and Community Engagement, since we knew that it actively uses Twitter and would be most likely to share our content. Our university’s police department has a strong Twitter presence with conversational and humorous responses to students, so it was very important for us to make a connection with them. In exchange, the DEAR campaign provided the campus police with a new opportunity to connect with the community in a fun and positive way. We also targeted specific teaching faculty members in several departments, sometimes asking them to use specific props or backgrounds as appropriate (e.g., the observatory, laboratory equipment, etc.) (Fig. 7.2.2).

Figure 7.2.2 Example of faculty member reading in school setting.
7.2.6 MARKETING

We used email, print posters, and Twitter to market the DEAR campaign. We created an invitation email template for library faculty and staff to send out to a variety of departments across campus, both ones we knew well and others with whom we wanted to establish a relationship. Including example images of individuals reading with fun backgrounds related to their work, department, or a hobby in the emailed invitation inspired participation and set high expectations for creativity. The following text is an email that we sent out to an IT staff member:

Good afternoon __________,

I enjoyed meeting you yesterday and talking about instruction, and I thought you might be interested in participating in the event below in order to raise awareness of IT instruction and/or offer a recommended resource.

We’re celebrating Drop Everything and Read Month at the library, and we wanted to feature photos of individuals from throughout the UCA community reading on our social media. We hope the photos will be a fun community-building event. Would you be interested in posing with a favorite book?

You may submit your own photo with a background of your choice by tagging it with #UCALibraryLife on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. For Facebook, make sure to change the audience to “Public” before clicking the post button. You may include your name, department, title, the name of the book, and the author in the post if you would like, although it’s not necessary. I included some example photos below for inspiration.

Please email me if you would like to have your photo taken personally in the library or would like to submit your file as an email attachment. We would appreciate photo contributions before April 18, although we will accept them until the end of the month. If you know anyone else from UCA or IT who would be interested in participating, please pass along this email.

Thanks for your help with this project!

These emails were particularly effective because they reinforced or established relationships and offered to highlight that department’s services. In this case, the IT staff member asked us to tweet about his department’s Google Apps trainings. We were able to reach a larger audience by encouraging people to forward the email.

We also offered multiple ways to participate in order to accommodate varying comfort levels with technology or privacy. For example, some individuals wanted to maintain privacy of their personal Twitter accounts and felt more comfortable emailing the photo, coming into the library for a personal photo shoot, or asking their departments to tweet the
However, we ideally wanted departments to tweet their own photos in order to engage a wider, more invested audience.

For print publicity, we asked our Interlibrary Loan Supervisor who has a graphic design degree to create a poster advertising the campaign and the contest. We provided the text and she designed the poster and a social media graphic with instructions to share a DEAR picture with the library’s hashtag. The poster was displayed in the library and on a stand outside the door (Fig. 7.2.3).

We tweeted the contest graphic and information about the prizes several times. We then embedded participation instructions into the text of as many other DEAR photo tweets as possible. When individuals tweeted a DEAR picture, we replied “Thanks for posting your pic with #UCALibraryLife” in the hope that their followers would also participate. We sometimes included a shortened link to our Facebook post, which included contest rules, further details, or biographical information about the person featured in a photo. For example, we included a link to our Facebook page for additional information about the campus police officer in Fig. 7.2.4. Twitter has the option to include a link when posting, which is an advantage over other social media platforms like Instagram or Snapchat.

We also attempted to foster competition and increase participation through the text of posts. In the case of Fig. 7.2.5, we tagged a student group’s Twitter page since the Biology Department does not have one.
The student group did not ultimately retweet or like the post, which demonstrates that one cannot always anticipate results or know if someone is actively managing the Twitter account. The most popular posts were of student athletes and were liked and retweeted by a variety of groups, including students, athletic department staff, advising staff, and fans (Fig. 7.2.6).

Figure 7.2.4 Campus police officer tweet with link to additional information.
Figure 7.2.5 Creative tweets foster competition.

Figure 7.2.6 Photos of student athletes received the most reaction during our DEAR campaign.
7.2.7 WHAT WORKED

There were several specific strategies that proved very successful for encouraging the campus community to participate:

Collaboration
- Getting buy-in at the department level.
- Determining mutual interests and highlighting these connections.
- Partnering with the Athletic Director increased student athlete participation and overall campaign engagement.

Communication
- Identifying and contacting the individuals responsible for campus accounts in an effort to foster greater participation.
- Emailing individual faculty and staff members to encourage participation.

Organization
- Creating an email template to save time when reaching out to departments or individuals.
- Using a Google Doc to track who had been contacted.

Fostering Creativity
- Posting example pictures and posts allowed others to understand the campaign, build upon our content, and brainstorm their own ideas.
- Suggesting that individuals include creative backgrounds related to departmental focus, hobbies, or interests.

Marketing
- Replying to departmental DEAR posts with discipline-related library resources.
- Encouraging departments to retweet library resource information.
- Personalizing responses to every shared post, tag, and reply encouraged more interaction but was time-consuming.
- Promoting our library hashtag made it easier to find and share posts related to the campaign.

Campaign Data
- 30 pictures were tweeted for campaign (10 tweeted by others, 20 by us).
- 82 likes, 33 retweets, and 4 replies related to DEAR campaign.
• 23.3 K impressions in the month of April, compared to the 2016 monthly average of 14.32 K, were the second highest of year (highest month was December due to the overwhelming popularity of therapy dogs and study snacks giveaways).
• 29 new followers gained in April (average new followers per month was 16.7).

7.2.8 WHAT DIDN'T WORK

Prizes
• Omitting prize information on Twitter images that advertised the DEAR campaign.
• Students did not seem enthusiastic or motivated by the prizes.

Twitter User Preferences
• Students’ Twitter privacy settings may have prevented us from seeing DEAR-related tweets.
• Tweets that omitted the hashtag made it difficult to track the campaign participation.
• Lack of tweeting by students from personal accounts reduced the reach of the campaign.
• Not all campus departments have a Twitter account, so we were unable to tag them to generate enthusiasm, retweets, and additional DEAR posts.

Marketing
• Not advertising the post frequently enough.
• Failure to individually email students or clubs resulted in lower participation compared to faculty and staff members.

7.2.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Our experiences using Twitter to host and promote our DEAR campaign allow us to provide several suggestions for other academic libraries interested in using the platform for outreach activities:

Marketing
• Publicize your campaign or event outside of Twitter (via email, campus listservs, or other means) to reach additional individuals/departments/programs.
Use posts by departmental faculty as a springboard to share corresponding library services (e.g., link to subject LibGuides or other resources).

**Communication**
- Contact your university’s student governance and other student organizations directly to encourage greater participation.
- Encourage competition among campaign participants by providing positive comments/feedback/aspirational examples.

**Participation Guidelines**
- For campaigns involving picture submissions, encourage faculty and staff to share their images via their departmental accounts if they would rather not use their personal accounts.
- If hosting a contest, provide rules using a graphic or an outside link (Facebook post, library website, etc.) to circumvent Twitter’s character limit.
- Provide a variety of ways to enter contests, including liking, retweeting, or following, so as to increase the campaign reach and participation.
- Randomly select contest winners with an automatic number generator or by writing down names.
- Send both a private message and a reply to a contest winner’s initial tweet with a location and deadline to pick up the prize after which it will be redrawn.

**7.2.10 FINAL WORDS**

Twitter is an engaging and interactive platform that appeals to students, faculty, and staff on different levels, allowing us to boost our outreach and community-building efforts across campus. The combination of Twitter and a campus-wide DEAR campaign ultimately proved very successful for our library. We gained 29 new followers and the campaign resulted in significant community engagement, including 30 tweeted pictures, 82 likes, and 33 retweets. Inviting a variety of individuals to participate in the campaign was beneficial in identifying potential future collaborators for other projects and building goodwill toward the library. We encouraged the community to share their love of reading books about a variety of different topics and genres. This helped our community to learn more about each other’s interests, and to share their own vision of themselves or their department in turn. In the future, we hope to reach out more deliberately to student organizations to get them involved in DEAR and
offer an additional prize for the most creative picture. DEAR allowed the campus as a whole to learn about each other and the resources we offer in a less academic way.

REFERENCES


7.3 CASE STUDY 3

What Do You Do When They Start Talking Back? Training Librarians for Next-Level Twitter Engagement Using Springshare’s LibAnswers

Sheeji Kathuria\textsuperscript{1} and Amanda Clay Powers\textsuperscript{2}
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\textbf{Institution}: Mississippi State University (MSU); 21,127 students as of Fall 2016.

\textbf{Target Demographic}: MSU affiliated accounts (faculty, staff, students, and campus offices) and surrounding Starkville, Mississippi community on Twitter.

\textbf{Measure of Success}: In implementing our new taxonomy for assessing and categorizing tweets, we were able to streamline the VR Librarian’s workflow, develop an effective training plan, and improve the library’s response time and quality.

\textbf{Team}: The Social Media Committee at MSU Libraries has a rotating membership of faculty and staff from all departments at MSU Libraries. The committee began sharing its Twitter responsibilities with the Research Services Department in August 2014. This Department includes 10 faculty librarians and one Coordinator who all help manage our “Ask a Librarian” virtual reference service.

7.3.1 THE SITUATION

The MSU Libraries Twitter account is managed by a Social Media Committee, which consists of a mixture of staff and faculty from all departments within the library. With the hard work this committee has put into social media engagement, the account now has more than 4500 followers and an extremely dynamic give and take with MSU and the surrounding community. This heavy engagement eventually began to include actual reference questions that many of the committee members were either unable to answer or were unavailable to answer if asked outside normal business hours. The committee needed a systematic way to
assure that all the @msu_libraries Twitter comments and reference questions were being addressed in an accurate and timely manner.

Enter Research Services! In August 2014, MSU Libraries Research Services department adopted Springshare’s virtual reference (VR) tool, LibAnswers/LibChat. With this system, we were able to check any tweets that were tagged with @msu_libraries. As our reference desk was staffed by a VR librarian until nine o’clock most evenings, it made sense that the work should be shared. This way there would be a structure in place for responding to tweets in a timely manner (e.g., immediate noise complaints). We were so excited about this feature that we began routing all of our tweets through this system without thinking of all the potential repercussions.

We soon saw the error of our ways. As soon as we turned this feature on, the VR librarians were overwhelmed with LibAnswers tickets that said things like, “@msu_libraries too turnt” (Fig. 7.3.1). Obviously, this was not

Figure 7.3.1 Tweets and traditional VR tickets in our LibAnswers dashboard.
a reference question. While a Social Media Committee member may have laughed and provided an immediate “like” and funny response to the tweet, our VR librarians were having the opposite reaction. Frozen by fear they responded stiffly at best, or not at all. This “turnt” business was not something “easy,” like someone asking us to track down an obscure reference for a History thesis. The VR manager and Research Services coordinator soon decided that something needed to be done, and fast.

We tackled this situation in two ways:

7.3.1.1 Step 1: The Survey

We decided we needed to know more about what was panicking all the librarians. Twitter was easy right? Did not everyone know about how to get turnt? It had become clear that tweeting was not second nature to everyone, nor was it the same as doing a chat reference. For one, it was public. For another, fitting sensible responses into 140 characters (the limit at that point) was more of an art than a science. It was clear that we needed to get to know our colleagues better.

To get a feel for what was going on, we conducted a survey of the VR librarians. Did they use Twitter personally? Knowing this would give us crucial insight into how well they understood Twitter conventions and culture. For example, if a librarian did not know what a RT (shorthand for retweet) was, we were in for a very different sort of training program then if they were just nervous about their responses being public.

We developed and distributed a 14-question survey, assessing three different areas.

7.3.1.1.1 Survey Questions

Personal Twitter Usage

- Did you use Twitter before Fall 2014?
- Do you have a personal Twitter account?
- Do you follow the MSU Libraries’ Twitter account?
- If you do use Twitter, check all the following Twitter abbreviations you have used: [check as many as apply]
  - RT
  - MT
  - HT
  - Via
- In what situation would you “Favorite” a tweet?
- In what situation would you “Retweet” a tweet?
• When is a reply visible to all your followers, versus only to the followers you and the account you are replying to have in common?

*Twitter Experience With Virtual Reference Duties*

• Did you respond to a Twitter question through LibAnswers in Fall 2014?
• If so, can you describe the procedure you used (i.e., did you consult the MSU Libraries Twitter page?)
• Do you feel confident speaking on behalf of the library when publicly posting on Twitter?
• Did you assign a Topic or Question Type from RefAnalytics to any Twitter question, mention, retweet, etc.?

*Reflections on Twitter and Virtual Reference Program*

• What was your comfort level with adding Twitter into the Libraries Virtual Reference program?
• Do you feel you need additional training on Twitter through LibAnswers?
• If yes, what kind of training would be helpful?

The survey was constructed in Google Forms, and distributed to nine VR Librarians in May 2015. We had a 100% response rate.

7.3.1.1.2 Survey Findings
We found:

• All nine VR Librarians had a personal Twitter account as of Fall 2014.
• Eight out of nine librarians used Twitter personally before Fall 2014.
• Seven out of nine have used the Twitter abbreviation RT, MT (Modified Tweet), HT (Heard Through or Hat Tip), or Via when tweeting.
• Six out of nine follow the @msu_libraries account (Fig. 7.3.2,7.3.3).

7.3.1.1.3 Open-Ended comments
Q: In what situation would you “Retweet” a tweet?

• “I have never done so. Not sure when I would.”
• “When I find something very compelling, and I feel the way original author worded the tweet is the best way of saying it. . . .”
• “If I want to share the opinion or news and feel it was worded by the original ‘Tweeter’ well. . . .”
Q: What kind of additional training is needed?

- “Basically from scratch—I never use Twitter.”
- “General best practices for Twitter.”
- “I feel comfortable with Twitter itself, but I need to learn more about the workflow for closing tweets on the Dashboard; the workflow for answering tweets as they come in; and adding statistical information for both circumstances for different use cases.”
- “General overview of best practices (i.e., what comments and questions should be responded to). And the use of tweet abbreviations like MT etc.”

Figure 7.3.2 Survey responses to question, “Do you feel confident when speaking on behalf of the library when publicly posting on Twitter?” (n = 9).

Figure 7.3.3 Survey responses to question, “Do you feel you need additional training on using Twitter through Libanswers?” (n = 9).
Our survey demonstrated that while all of the VR librarians had personal Twitter accounts, it was clear that the depth of experience varied widely from “start from scratch” to eloquent Twitter philosophies, and we needed to find a way cover it all in some sort of comprehensive training program.

7.3.1.2 Step 2: The Coding

The other piece that vexed us was with how to categorize the tweets to make them effective for assessment. We had been categorizing our chats for years, developing excellent tools to determine the types of communication we were having with patrons. We had no idea how to do this with Twitter, but we had a vague idea that training everyone to respond to tweets involved mainstreaming it into our existing service. In addition, we knew that not all of our tweets were reference questions. In fact, we were sure most were not. Was it even worth involving the Research Services department, if their expertise was only occasionally needed? Maybe not. We needed to start over from the beginning.

7.3.1.2.1 Traditional Codes for Virtual Reference Questions

- Online Catalog
- Topic Search
- Known Article Search
- Known Book Search
- ILL
- Theses & Dissertations
- Special Collections
- Library Employment
- Hours
- Compliments
- Complaints / Suggestions
- Access Services / Circulation Policies
- Website
- Instructional Media Center

We exported every tweet gathered by LibAnswers with the @msu_libraries tag from August 2014—July 2015 into Excel. We took inspiration from a qualitative research method and coding technique grounded theory, which typically entails multiple phases of coding where the researchers treat “data analytically and discover what they see in them” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 442).
We each took half of the dataset to come up with an initial set of independent categories. Coming back together, each set of categories was analyzed, and we discussed what commonalities existed. We went back and forth with this and further discussions until we felt we had a final list, complete with definitions and examples. It was necessary to standardize and simplify our definitions in order to make coding work easily for everyone, no matter who was coding. For example, anytime a “Thank you” was used it would automatically be coded as a Compliment.

Once the categories were finalized, we went back and recoded the dataset over again with the new codes. Our finalized set of codes, definitions, and examples are below:

### 7.3.1.2.2 Grounded Theory Coding Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaint / Suggestion</td>
<td>Negative comments, corrections, feedback</td>
<td>We need more outlets! @msu_libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment</td>
<td>Positive comments, “thank yous”</td>
<td>Dear new MSU students, I would highly suggest you start following @msu_libraries immediately. You will thank me later. @msu_libraries I will be there around 330 to make a sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Library mentioned before the tweet text begins; public engaging the library in conversation</td>
<td>Monday night study time at @msu_libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Mention of the library within a tweet</td>
<td>Sunday night writing frenzy? Work out that idea with the writing center @msu_libraries in the IMC! #msuwrites <a href="http://t.co/TO9SiVmzyK">http://t.co/TO9SiVmzyK</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External promotion</td>
<td>Promotion by the library or other account of outside entities, events, or campus-wide notifications</td>
<td>Mark your calendars now for the #BannedBooksWeek activities next week @msu_libraries! <a href="http://t.co/eN5CTamMwV">http://t.co/eN5CTamMwV</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library promotion</td>
<td>Promotion by the library or other account of library “sponsored” events, entities, programs, or services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Here is a breakdown of our Twitter transactions from 2014 to 2017 by type of code (Fig. 7.3.4).

Adding in Twitter codes to our VR backend revolutionized our work in many ways. It cleaned up our overwhelmed dashboard and made our work more concrete. With these codes, we were able to track the research department’s work with Twitter and incorporate those statistics

![Twitter code distribution chart](chart.png)

**Figure 7.3.4** Twitter code distribution ($n = 2,421$), 2014–17.
into our reports. We were also able to share the data with the Social Media Committee to incorporate into their own reports and marketing strategy. It was now possible to pull out all the tags labeled Compliments and Complaint/Suggestions and get those to the right departments within the library. It was also possible to see how much we were promoting others (External Promotion) and ourselves.

Full of data, good ideas, and new systems, we embarked on a plan to fully integrate Twitter into our VR services.

7.3.1.2.3 Training Plan

To create your own training plan that is specific to your library, consider asking the following questions:

*Does your library Twitter account have a “voice?”* In order to train your librarians on speaking as the library’s voice, you may have to explore this explicitly yourself first. Are you funny? Serious? Do you use abbreviations or spell things out? Do you use slang, or do you keep it professional? Simple decisions like this will clarify expectation and help everyone feel comfortable responding to Twitter comments and questions accordingly.

*Do your librarians regularly use Twitter? And if so, how are they using it?* Even if they are using it all the time, not everyone uses Twitter in the same way. How do you want them to be able to use it for the library? Write it down and make your needs clear. Then check back in—do they have those competencies? If not, it can be taught:

- Focus on how to compose tweets effectively (character limit, tagging other accounts, using hashtags, replying to one account vs broadcasting).
- Start tweets with handles to limit the audience.
- Place a period or space in front of a handle to open the audience for the response.
- Assess comfort level with Twitter conventions (RT, HT, MT, via).

*What kind of tweets are we getting?* This is where the codes come in handy. Understanding the types of tweets that the library is likely to receive (not just questions!) and how to best respond to them will reassure any nervous VR librarian and provide a focus for training.

*Twitter and VR systems change all the time!* Think about how you will handle future staff training as the platform releases changes or updates. Face-to-face works better than email for updates.
7.3.2 WHAT WORKED

- Training our VR staff. Based on the survey results and coding system, we were able to move forward with a solid training plan with specific emphasis on where the Twitter “weak” spots were and how best to address them.
- Keeping the dashboard clean. With our coding system, we were able to close out our tweets that were not reference questions very easily.
- Using categories to organize tweets for analysis and training. With our new coding system, we were able to plan for training and Twitter feedback to our library administration.

7.3.3 WHAT DIDN’T WORK

- Tracking claims. From within LibAnswers, it is still difficult to tell if someone already answered a tweet, making for confusing and duplicate communication at times. Currently, it is critical for the “on duty” person to check Twitter directly before responding.
- Bringing everyone up to speed immediately. To accommodate comfort levels while training, we decided on a happy medium where VR librarians who serve on the Social Media Committee (think about the middle of a Venn diagram!) would be front-line on Twitter with the rest of the VR librarians as backup.
- Accounting for staff changes. With turnover in staffing, implementing an iterative assessment plan is critical.

7.3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Leveraging tweets to gain administrative support. Our administration values the engagement and feedback we receive from our online community. Make sure your administration is on board with the time it takes to develop these workflows.
- Valuing opportunities to gain patron feedback. Given that the large majority of tweets are not actual reference questions, the VR librarians doing this work must value the comments and compliments and see them as providing important insight. Decide what your priorities are as a department before embarking on such a social media adventure.
- Investing in ongoing assessment. With staffing changes and LibAnswers updates, a microintervention training strategy, which
involves reviewing changes to the systems and determining if there is any need for additional training, is critical. Often this sort of training can be done briefly at regular department meetings.

7.3.5 FINAL WORDS

Our survey showed that VR librarians are coming to the table with a wide variety of skillsets and comfort levels with social media tools like Twitter. When introducing a new tool like Twitter into an established system, it is critical to assess both the technological capabilities and the human consequences. Everything that can be done should not be done just because it is possible. Assessing the system and then adapting the workflow and training based on that information has proven to be effective for us. Once the initial competency levels and tweet types are uncovered, any training needs can be assessed either as a group or one-on-one.

Our Twitter codes illustrate that patrons are engaging with Twitter beyond asking traditional questions. They are using Twitter to promote their own events, provide complaints, and give compliments about their engagement of library services. The “new” VR library program must be willing to listen to these and be able to engage in such behaviors publicly. This sort of feedback is actively solicited through tools like LibQual+, yet on Twitter the feedback is freely offered. Is not it worth taking the time to listen?

REFERENCE

Rising Above the Noise: Increasing Local Engagement Through a Global Hashtag Campaign

Emily Jack
University Libraries, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, United States

Institution: University Libraries at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; roughly 29,500 students; 12 library locations.

Campaign purpose: Twitter #1lib1ref hashtag campaign: To increase engagement with the @UNCLibrary Twitter account; to establish a new identity and voice for our Twitter account; to show librarians as a useful resource for citation help and to model good information literacy practices in unexpected ways.

Target demographic: Students.

Measure of success: Increased engagement with #1lib1ref tweets compared to average Twitter engagement and compared to other tweets during that time. Our engagement rate for #1lib1ref tweets was 4.9%, compared to 1.6% for all tweets during that time, and 0.9% for the preceding comparable period.

Team: One librarian tweeting; 68 library staff members participating in #1lib1ref activities; 13 library staff members appearing in photos. Support from library administration and staff, especially the communications department.

7.4.1 BACKGROUND

In January and February of 2017, the UNC Library’s communications department took advantage of a convergence of factors to launch a unique Twitter campaign.

Until this point, the communications department had consisted of just two full-time staff members, who handled internal and external communications for a large library system with 12 library locations and nearly 300 staff members serving nearly 30,000 students. Our limited staffing
and the extensive demands on our time translated to a limited capacity for dedicated social media campaigns.

That changed in November 2016, when a new staff member joined the department with 20 hours a week to devote to social media. The staffing change gave us an opportunity to cultivate a more consistent identity and voice, and to plan and execute more elaborate social media campaigns than we had previously had the capacity for. The timing and scope of #1lib1ref suggested it might be a good fit for our library.

#1lib1ref is an annual Wikipedia hashtag campaign with the stated goal of getting every librarian to contribute one citation during the three-week-long project. The UNC Library had been involved in Wikipedia projects for several years but had not participated in #1lib1ref. The communications department saw in the campaign an opportunity to shape messages around one of its primary goals: emphasizing that the library’s staff members are trusted experts and interesting people. The campaign would let us show off our librarians as a useful resource for citation help and model good information literacy practices in unexpected ways, all while introducing a new voice on our Twitter account.

By definition, participating in a hashtag campaign should increase audience engagement on Twitter. Hashtags have tremendous utility for connecting people who are conversing around the same topic but do not necessarily share the same networks. I may not follow you and you may not follow me, but if we are both tweeting about or following the same hashtag, we can connect with each other. By invoking popular hashtags, Twitter communicators can reach new audiences with shared interests and, ideally, pick up new followers as a result.

While all those potential outcomes of a hashtag campaign sound appealing in theory, this particular campaign presented a challenge: How would we get students to care? We had all seen hashtag campaigns that sounded great to librarians but never seemed to break through the noise and gain students’ attention. Like #OpenAccessWeek, Wikipedia citations seemed to be one of these topics that excited librarians only. How could we approach this differently?

7.4.2 THE IDEA

By coincidence, the timing of #1lib1ref was set to line up with the moment when college basketball season—an all-consuming phenomenon at UNC—gains increasing intensity. The basketball rivalry between UNC
and Duke is so heated that it merits an entire merchandise section in the campus bookstore, has been the subject of at least one book, and, critically for our purposes, has its own suite of hashtags.

To take advantage of the attention students devote to the UNC-Duke basketball rivalry, we initiated our own competition. We challenged the Duke Library to a contest to see which library could contribute more citations to Wikipedia during the #1lib1ref project. We planned to use not only the #1lib1ref hashtag but also #UNCvsDuke, in the hopes that we would appear on the radar of students who did not (yet) follow us on Twitter.

The practice of using a trending topic to draw attention to yourself is known as newsjacking. Perhaps the most famous example in recent memory was Oreo’s famous tweet during the 2013 Superbowl blackout—a photo of an Oreo cookie carefully lit in a dark space, which appeared with the text, “Power out? No problem. You can still dunk in the dark.”

For every clever example of successful newsjacking, it is easy to find several clumsy or tone-deaf examples. As a result, this practice should be undertaken with careful forethought and with alignment to a larger strategy. We decided, for example, not to tweet during any UNC versus Duke basketball game. Yes, using the #UNCvsDuke hashtag during a game would surely get our content in front of more eyes, but it would run the risk of alienating people who would likely see our game-time tweeting as irrelevant, and blatantly self-serving, noise.

7.4.3 THE EXECUTION

Before the #1lib1ref project began, we reached out to contacts at Duke Library to initiate the competition and establish terms, rules, and a timeline. We introduced the contest to UNC Library staff members during an all-staff meeting, during which we were pleased to find that the friendly competition with Duke appealed to many of our colleagues.

Then we created a loose content plan for the campaign. Because tweets with photos tend to draw more engagement than text-only posts, we planned to include photos of our librarians in the act of editing Wikipedia. But because a photo of a person sitting at a computer makes for a less-than-compelling Twitter post, we planned to create a side-by-side image for each photo post, pairing a photo of the librarian typing in her or his office with a screenshot of the Wikipedia article she or he edited.

We planned our content in advance so we could pace our posts throughout the campaign. Because a three-week campaign is long in
social media time, we sought to strike a balance between keeping up the momentum and tweeting too much: We wanted to keep the project on our audience’s radar, but avoid alienating them and risking unfollows. In our case, that meant tweeting with the hashtag on average once a weekday, although there were a few weekdays on which we did not tweet with the hashtag at all and a few on which we tweeted more than once.

Our core content themes were:

- The library’s staff are interesting people with a wide range of interests and expertise.
- The library’s staff are eager to share their topical knowledge and citation expertise.
- Librarians can support student work with citations and/or Wikipedia.
- The library is engaged with the larger campus community and has a stake in (friendly) intercollegiate rivalries.
- We take research and citation seriously, but we know how to have a good time.

We sent email to our staff throughout the campaign, inviting volunteers to appear in photo posts and updating them on the score as our citations added up. Many staff members demonstrated a willingness to participate in the social media aspect of the campaign, which gave us rich fodder with which to flesh out the details of our content plan (Fig. 7.4.1, 7.4.2).

Our tweets included:

- Until 2/3, @UNCLibrary, and @DukeLibraries will compete to see how many citations they can add to @Wikipedia. Go Heels! #1lib1ref #UNCvsDuke.
- UNC librarians have added over 100 citations to Wikipedia so far during #1lib1ref. Proud to improve access to accurate information!
- If all this talk about Wikipedia citations has you eager to edit, we’ll host at least 4 edit-a-thons this spring. Stay tuned! #1lib1ref.
- Anatomy of a Wikipedia citation. We do this for fun, and we can help you with all your writing and citing needs! #1lib1ref [This appeared with a screenshot of a Wikipedia citation (Fig. 7.4.3)].
- The series of side-by-side librarian and screenshot photos appeared with text such as:
  - Did you know there’s a Wikipedia page listing state foods? Its citations are solid thanks to [librarian’s name]. #1lib1ref
  - @Wikipedia page about the Nigerian city Abeokuta, now with better citations thanks to [librarian’s user name]. The #UNCvsDuke #1lib1ref contest continues!
Figure 7.4.1 Several tweets throughout the campaign included photos of library staff.

Figure 7.4.2 Side-by-side posts depicting librarians next to the articles they edited showed the range of interests and expertise among our staff, and were our most successful in terms of audience engagement.
• E-records archivist [librarian’s name] updated the Wikipedia page on Margaret Warner Morley. B/c more citations = a better Wikipedia. #1lib1ref.

• Wikipedia article about fictional detective Phryne Fisher: Sources are no longer a mystery thanks to librarian [librarian’s name]. #1lib1ref.

• The #UNCvsDuke Wikipedia citation battle continues: [librarian’s user name] adds a citation to the page about electronic health records. #1lib1ref.

• [librarian’s user name] found a German source for this article about Madeira and had to translate before citing. Above and beyond for #1lib1ref!

As the campaign drew to a close, we posted two summary images: One, our most popular tweet during the campaign, was a “team” photo in which we asked a handful of willing library staff members to pose wearing UNC colors, holding books and computers, and glaring at the camera—a familiar style of team photo in the sports world. The tweet read, “#UNC librarians bringing their A game in a Wikipedia citation battle with @DukeLibraries. #1lib1ref #UNCvsDuke.”

The second was a photo grid consisting of eight separate images of library staffers at their computers—photos we already had—with the Wikipedia logo in the center. This appeared with the text “The UNC Library had a great time improving Wikipedia citations during #1lib1ref. We will host several edit-a-thons in March & April. Join us!” (Fig. 7.4.4).

![Twitter image](https://example.com/twitter.png)

**Figure 7.4.3** Tweets such as this promoted our staff’s writing and citing expertise.
A few days after the #1lib1ref campaign ended, UNC’s basketball team played Duke’s. The day of the game, we tweeted, “In the Wikipedia citations battle, the score: @UNCLibrary 204, @DukeLibraries 29. Aiming for similar tonight. #UNCvsDuke #1lib1ref #UNC.”

7.4.4 MEASURING SUCCESS

Aside from the challenge of getting librarians to put on a mean face for our team photo, the campaign was successful in achieving our primary goals:

Figure 7.4.4 One of our summary tweets showed photos of librarians hard at work in a grid around the Wikipedia logo.
7.4.4.1 Goal: To Increase Engagement With the @UNCLibrary Twitter Account

During the 22 days of the campaign, we posted 60 tweets, compared with 55 in the previous comparable 22-day period (a roughly comparable number). For the sake of comparison, we looked at November for a comparable period to avoid the winter holidays.

During the November period, we accrued 50.3 K total impressions. During the 22 days of #1lib1ref, we accrued nearly double that number, 101.3 K impressions. Our link clicks more than doubled, from 109 in November to 301 during #1lib1ref. So did our retweets, from 60 in November to 204 during #1lib1ref. Our likes were up from 120 in November to 397 during #1lib1ref. Our engagement increased from 0.9% in November to 1.6% during #1lib1ref. Isolating the numbers for tweets tagged with #1lib1ref only shows the success of the campaign even more starkly: The engagement rate for the 16 #1lib1ref tweets was 4.1%.

Table 7.4.1 shows our Twitter engagement during the campaign compared with the previous comparable period.

7.4.4.2 Goal: To Establish a New Identity and Voice for Our Twitter Account; to Show Librarians as a Useful Resource for Citation Help and to Model Good Information Literacy Practices in Unexpected ways

One of the goals of our newly expanded communications team was to highlight the human side of the library, which we did in this campaign. The data for these posts showed that this emphasis on people is a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Previous comparable period (Nov. 2 to Nov. 23, 2016)</th>
<th>Period of the campaign (Jan. 19 to Feb. 9)—all tweets</th>
<th>#1lib1ref tweets only (Jan. 19 to Feb. 9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tweets and replies</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressions (K)</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>101.3</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement rate (%)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link clicks</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
successful strategy for our audience. Out of the 16 tweets we posted, nine included photos of library staff, and the engagement rate for those nine photos was 5.6%, even higher than our overall #1lib1ref engagement rate. Although this was not part of our initial strategy, tweeting photos of library staff members helped those tweets reach a wider audience because staff members with Twitter accounts retweeted the posts in which they appeared, which spread our content into new networks.

A few staff members tweeted about the campaign independently, including one who tweeted, “For my #1lib1ref #UNCvsDuke I added citations to the Frank Porter Graham entry, but it needs LOTS more work. Help me finish it!” Retweeting such tweets gave us an opportunity to show librarians’ enthusiasm for this project through their own voices. This particular tweet also beautifully showcased the collaborative spirit of both Wikipedia and the library.

Anecdotally, while few people in our audience tweeted directly at us, colleagues within the library and across the UNC campus commented on how clever and entertaining they found the UNC versus Duke Wikipedia citation competition. While these offhand remarks are not hard data, they do suggest that the new identity and voice for our Twitter account had caught people’s attention. And we did get a few direct tweets, including this one from an alumna:

“My husband’s PhD is from Duke, mine is from UNC: we’re cheering you both on!”

7.4.5 WHY IT WORKED

Several factors were instrumental in our success. First and foremost was getting buy-in from the library’s administration and, by extension, library staff. Having the opportunity to present the competition in person at a staff meeting gave us a chance to build buzz around the project and to demonstrate how little time it would take to add a Wikipedia citation. This translated into a willingness on the part of 68 staff members to participate in the project, many of whom volunteered to support our content plan by appearing in photos.

The side-by-side posts depicting librarians next to the articles they edited worked incredibly well in helping us achieve our goal of showing the human side of the library. Most of our staff members edited articles on topics of personal interest, which enabled us to showcase the range of
interests and expertise among our staff. Those posts proved to be our most successful in terms of audience engagement.

It is difficult to gauge the success of the newsjacking strategy of using the #UNCvsDuke hashtag along with #1lib1ref, because there is no way of knowing whether the people who engaged with our posts found them through the #UNCvsDuke hashtag. Anecdotally, we did receive numerous compliments on the cheeky approach of tying our citation rivalry to the basketball rivalry through the competition, hashtag use, and fierce “team” photo.

One of the final images we posted, the photo grid with the Wikipedia logo in the center, was retweeted by the official @Wikipedia account, which has a high followership. As a result, that tweet received 90 total engagements, among the highest for the entire campaign. The post likely got the @Wikipedia account’s attention because it used their logo in a context that is consistent with Wikipedia’s mission of a free, open encyclopedia in which people with expertise make frequent contributions. This can be a successful strategy if deployed carefully—the Wikipedia logo is open source and can be used and shared freely, which is not true of most other logos. But the same principle could be successfully applied in other ways.

7.4.6 THE BEST-LAID PLANS...

Of course, planning a social media campaign that depends in some way on another institution means losing some control. Our initial vision for our content plan had included some mock-hostile trash-talk between the two libraries, but the contest was a runaway. Trash-talking when you are up by dozens of points just comes across as gloating, and that was not the message we wanted to convey: At its heart, the broader #1lib1ref project is about collaboration, and the collective power of librarians everywhere working toward the same goal. We intend to invite more local libraries to participate in our competition next year, with the hope that more participants will ratchet up the competitive aspect of the campaign and provide more opportunity for lighthearted interlibrary Twitter taunts.

One other sticking point had to do with our analysis itself: in the end, it is difficult to determine whether we reached our target demographic of students, because Twitter’s analytics tools are not granular enough to tell us who was liking and retweeting our posts.
7.4.7 WHAT WORKED

- Getting buy-in and support from the library’s administration.
- Invoking a popular local hashtag to draw more attention.
- Connecting a phenomenon few people care about (bibliographic citation) to something many people care about (college basketball).
- Highlighting the human side of the library by posting tweets with photos of library staff.
- Retweeting #1lib1ref tweets by library staff members on their personal accounts.
- (Carefully) seeking retweets from accounts with high follower counts.

7.4.8 WHAT DIDN’T WORK

- Developing a content plan that anticipated a close competition (which ours was not).
- Trying to determine whether we had successfully reached our target audience using Twitter’s analytics tools.

7.4.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Do not try to participate in every hashtag campaign. Choose strategically based on your goals.
- When engaging with a hashtag campaign that may have limited appeal to your audience, combine it with something that has broader appeal.
- Start with your communication goals (e.g., show librarians as experts and interesting people) and keep your content focused accordingly.
- Keep people front and center in your tweets to establish a unique identity. Show librarians’ workspaces and what they do when they are not on the desk.
- Retweet from your librarians and staff when it is possible and appropriate; their voices are often more personal than the voice of the institution.
- Show the products of research—not just the raw materials that go into research.
- Use photo posts for higher engagement—and remember that high image quality is essential.
- Tag other Twitter accounts—especially high-profile accounts.
• Keep your content diverse to avoid boring your followers. During a hashtag campaign, be sure to tweet other, nonhashtag-focused content.
• Engage with other librarians and libraries.
• When engaging with a hashtag campaign that requires staff participation, it is essential to practice good internal communication throughout to keep up momentum and participation. Your library’s staff are your greatest resources in a project like this one!

7.4.10 FINAL WORDS

Participating in hashtag campaigns can be exhilarating, but success depends on strategic participation. Start by establishing your goals, voice, and identity. Then creatively embrace hashtag campaigns that are a good fit for your unique presence, brand, and objectives.

The fundamental goal of a library’s social media account should be to advance the mission of the library. In an academic library, that usually means a focus on research, teaching, and learning. Of course, on social media our content appears embedded in a steady stream of viral videos, celebrity selfies, and mesmerizing animated GIFs. This campaign demonstrated that it is possible to rise above the noise in a way that stays true to your institutional mission and communication themes.