

# #Academic Libraries

Social media strategies from Ontario  
University Libraries

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Good afternoon, and welcome to Academic Libraries : Social Media Strategies from Ontario University libraries.

Today we will discuss the use of Twitter, a popular social media tool, in Ontario academic libraries. In this presentation will learn what demonstrates successful use of Twitter in an academic library, what strategies are being successfully utilized for the use of Twitter and how these strategies can be applied to college or university libraries of any size.

## Social Media



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Social media includes web and mobile technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue between organizations, communities, and individuals. Social media is ubiquitously accessible, and enabled by scalable communication techniques. Broadly speaking, there are six different types of social media ; : collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., [World of Warcraft](#)), and virtual social worlds (e.g. [Second Life](#)).

Twitter



The mission of an academic library is to foster the search for knowledge and understanding in the University and the wider community. To fulfill this mission the library will provide innovative services and comprehensive access to information founded upon research resources.



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While all six types of social media tools can be valuable in a library context, this presentation will focus on the role of Twitter, a popular microblogging site.

Twitter's mission statement is "to instantly connect people everywhere to what is most important to them."

When we look at what Ontario academic libraries are striving to do in their mission statements, we can begin to sense some themes

- provide innovative services
- facilitate access to information resources
- meet the challenge of emerging technology
- anticipate information and service needs
- connect members with resources

Two broad themes emerge innovation and access

Twitter is an innovative way to connect students, faculty and staff with librarians and library resources. It enables a two way conversation, allowing the library to respond to user needs, connects users with services and resources and fosters a sense of community around the library in a way that does not rely on the physical library space. It is a tool for knowledge exchange.

## Building best practices

- What are the techniques for social media use that produce superior results and are appropriate for an academic library setting?

Learn from the successes of others

Create Measurable goals

Strategize a social media presence



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Before we discuss results it is important to consider the value of this type of research. Social media tools like Twitter can be used in many ways in Academic libraries.

Most practically they are useful to market library products and services to users. A student, faculty member or researcher who follows their library on twitter is a captive audience for news from that library.

Twitter followers are engaged users. A library user who is also a twitter follower is waiting for information from the library every minute of the day. Studies in business and education have shown that online engagement through Twitter translates into offline behavior. Besides just using Twitter to stay current, this tool can help drive users into the library, drive circulation stats and service usage.

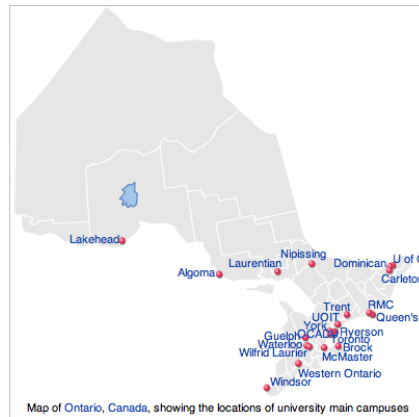
Twitter is a service that did not exist five years ago. The speed at which these technologies emerge mean it is hard to study them and develop clear practices and training programs from our staff. We often take an ad hoc approach to the application of new tools, and this often fails. Our best strategy for successful use to to study how others who are like us, have been successful .

# Twitter in Ontario University Libraries

22 Twitter feeds

2200 tweets in 214 days

Twitter followers / Total enrollment



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Image : Wikipedia  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Ontario\\_universities\\_map](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Ontario_universities_map)

## Slide 5

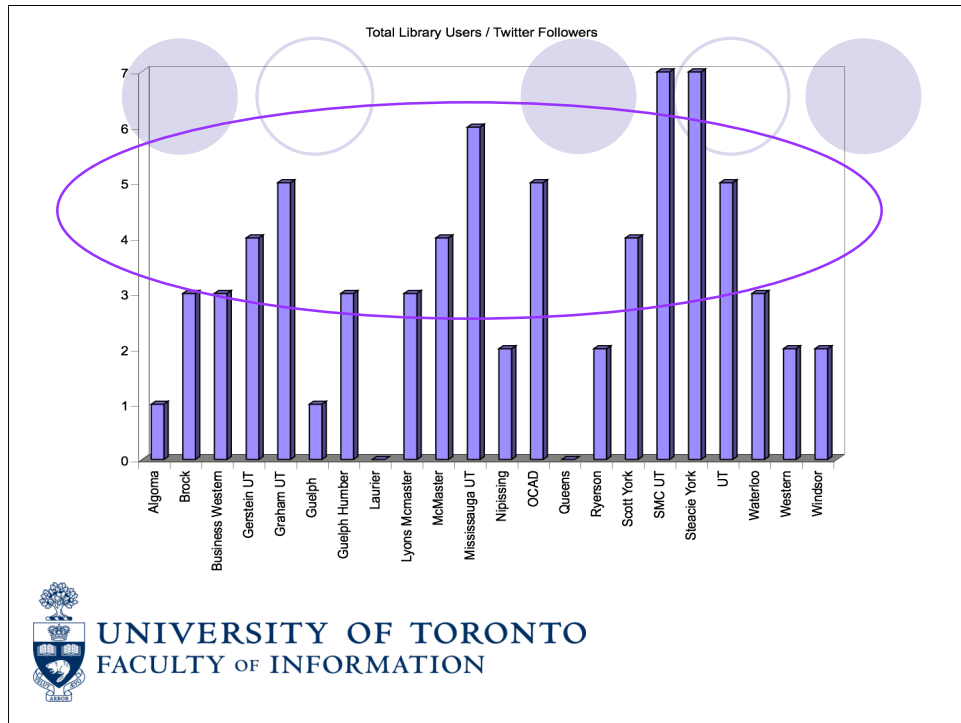
To devise best practices we used Ontario as a model. 30 universities in various settings, various sizes and various specialties. By tracking what these institutions were doing we were able to extract best practices to immediately apply to our social media work. The schools are diverse; geographically, culturally, and technologically so we were provided with a robust sample of social media work.

To begin to better understand how Ontario academic libraries are using Twitter, I began by searching out the twitter feed of every Ontario University – first by examining the library website, and then by searching Twitter for the library or university name. 22 Twitter feeds were identified.

Several libraries did not have a twitter feed that could be found at all, while many had more than one Twitter feed. Where several Twitter feeds exist for one university campus the largest two libraries were used as representative of the whole.

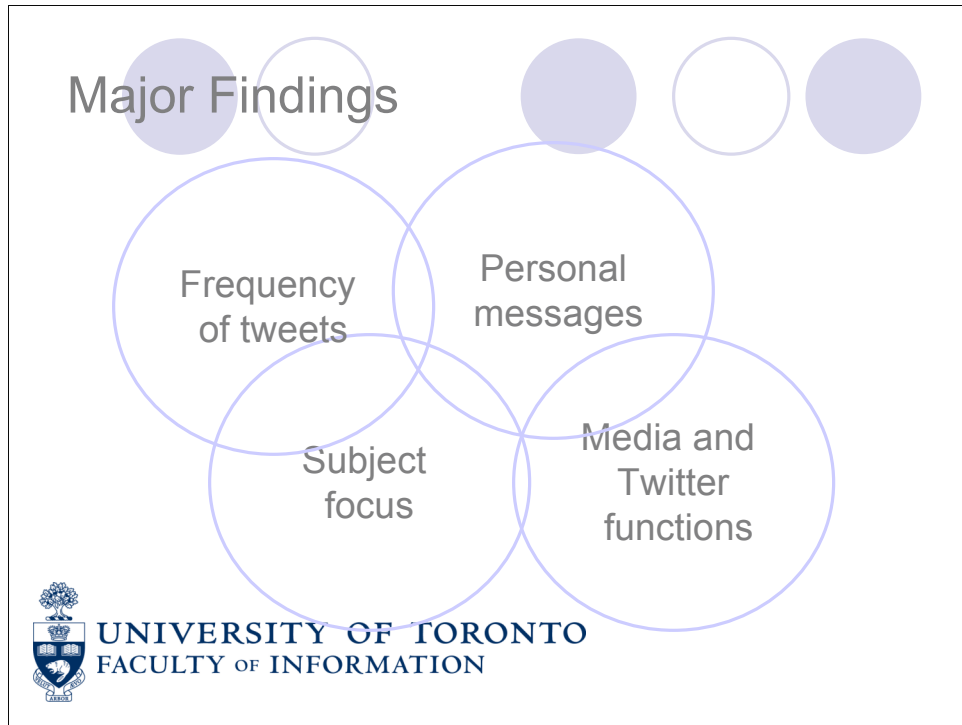
Seven months worth of tweets were examined, from April 1 2011 to November 1 2011 representing almost 2200 total tweets. Each tweet was coded in several ways; based on the type of content such as a news item, or the invitation to an event, the type of media used including hashtags, retweets and embedded photo and video and by general subject.

The success of a Twitter feed was determined by number of followers. Since the populations of Ontario universities vary quite widely, the number of twitter followers was taken as a percentage of the overall campus enrollment. Where several libraries exist at one university campus, an attempt was made to determine how many users each library serves. For example, in the case of a Science library, the amount of students enrolled in science-based programs were taken as users of the science library and the remaining enrollment figure was used to determine a follower percentage for non-subject specific libraries. The method is not exhaustive but meant to be broadly representative of the ongoing work in Ontario university libraries.



There was not clear leader in terms of Twitter followers as a percentage of total enrollment. The most successful libraries are engaging about 7 percent of their total enrollment as twitter followers.

Our discussion of successful strategies will focus on the work of the libraries with more than three percent of their enrolled population as Twitter followers. These findings show that every library, even those that are doing it best have a long way to go in terms of their status as a major Twitter presence.



When analyzing the twitter feeds of the university library, I looked for common characteristics shared by the successful feeds, that were not present in the unsuccessful ones. What I found was that there is no one key strategy, but a toolkit that is applied as appropriate by the best tweeters.

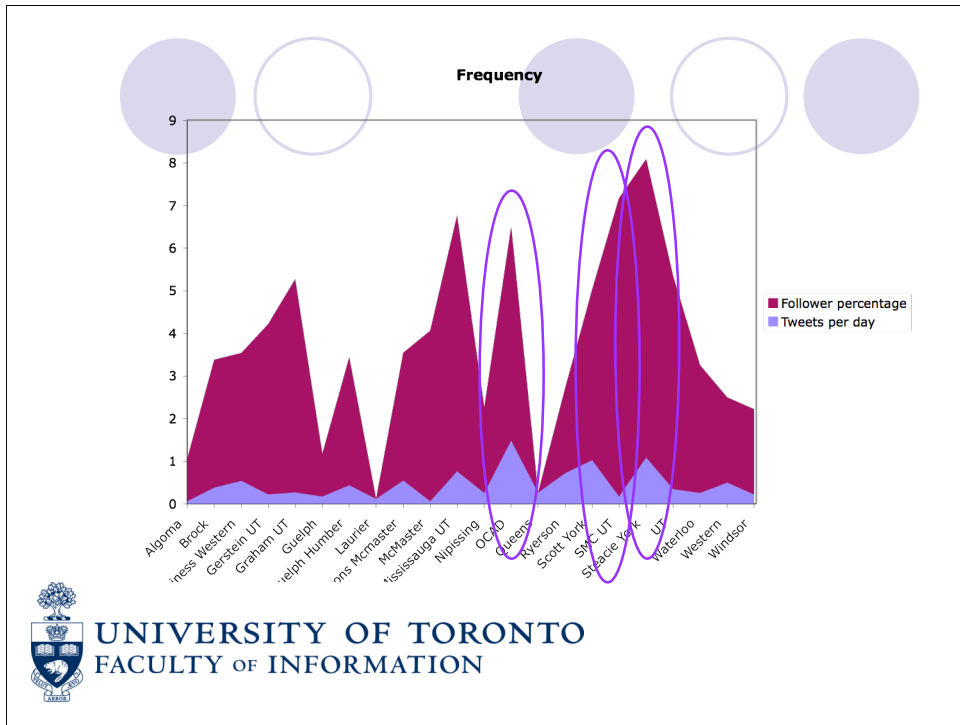
The first tool is subject focus. This involves acting as a subject expert, and posting content related primarily to one subject area.

The second is the use of media and twitter functions. This means utilizing at replies, hashtags, links, photos and videos in tweets.

The third is frequency. This means that once a library has committed to use of a tool, they use it often, and consistently.

The last is personal messages. This means reaching out to users and engaging in two way conversations via twitter.

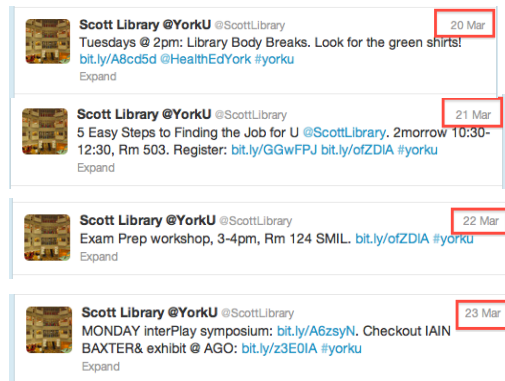




The first item in the toolkit is frequency. Frequent content encourages users to start, and then to keep following a twitter feed.

## A standard for frequency

- 365 tweets per year or
- 1 tweet every single day



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Success in this capacity means setting a goal and then adhering to, or exceeding it. It is important to note that changes in social media usage will not produce results immediately - but rather will gradually show themselves to be effective. In the case of frequency, the standard is at least 365 tweets a year, or one tweet every single calendar day. Treating social media as a 9 to 5 endeavor is simply not sufficient.

# Strategies for Frequency

## Tweets



**National Film Board** @thenfb

12 Dec

Who knew a piece of paper could be this versatile?  
vimeo.com/33480080

Retweeted by OCADU Learning Zone

[View video](#)



**Toxel.com** @toxel

11 Dec

3D Street Paintings: [bit.ly/vAZDqT](http://bit.ly/vAZDqT)

Retweeted by OCADU Learning Zone



**Co.Design** @FastCoDesign

12 Dec

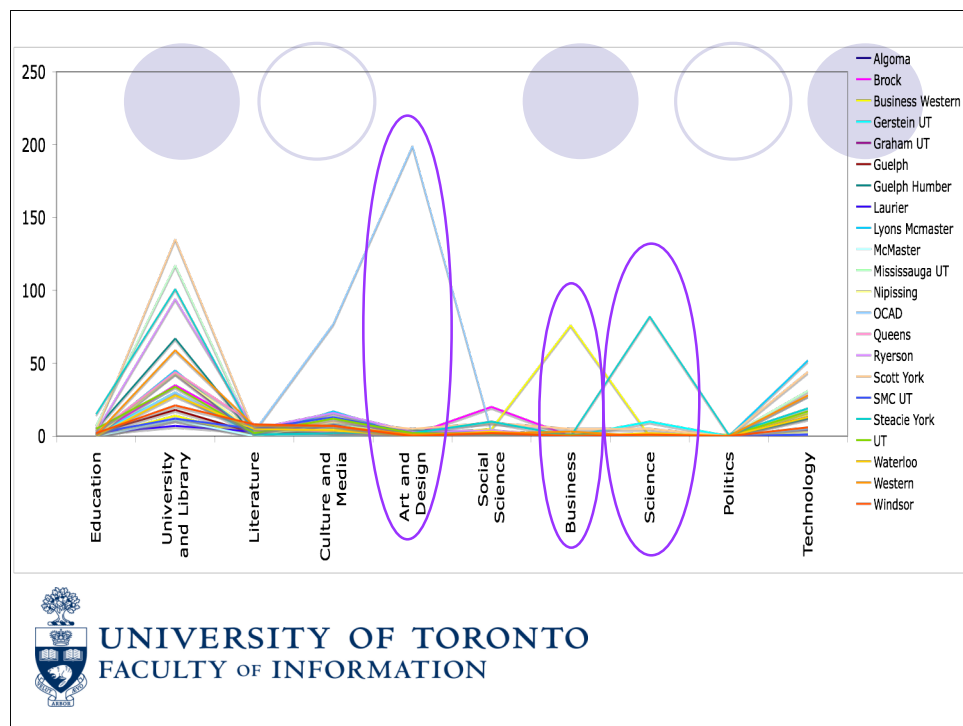
Can You Identify These Brands Without Seeing Their Names Or Logos? [bit.ly/tG3yUa](http://bit.ly/tG3yUa)

Retweeted by OCADU Learning Zone



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An interesting strategy for frequency is in place at OCADU. This twitter feed utilized almost no original content, but rather acts as a news aggregator for art and design. Several times per day, OCADU retweets art and design stories that may be interesting for their followers. This means that OCADU does not have to invest the time of a librarian to compose original content everyday, but they have a captive audience when there is a service message they decide to share via twitter.



OCADU’s strategy also utilizes the tool of subject specialization. The first ridge on this chart represents tweets that are related to the school or library that owns the twitter feed. Every school heavily utilizes this type of content. What is interesting is the clear break from pattern of the fine art college in their art and design tweets, the Business library at in their business tweets, and Science and engineering library in their Science tweets.

# Subject Specialty



**Johnston Library** @uwobuslib  
The World in Figures: Top Growers: World GDP Growers 2012:  
[lib.uwo.ca/news/business/...](http://lib.uwo.ca/news/business/...)

12 Dec



**Steacie Library** @SteacieLibrary  
Did you know that the Steve Jobs bio coming out tmrrow is by Walter  
Isaacson who also wrote a fantastic bio of Einstein  
[chapters.indigo.ca/books/Steve-Jo...](http://chapters.indigo.ca/books/Steve-Jo...)

23 Oct



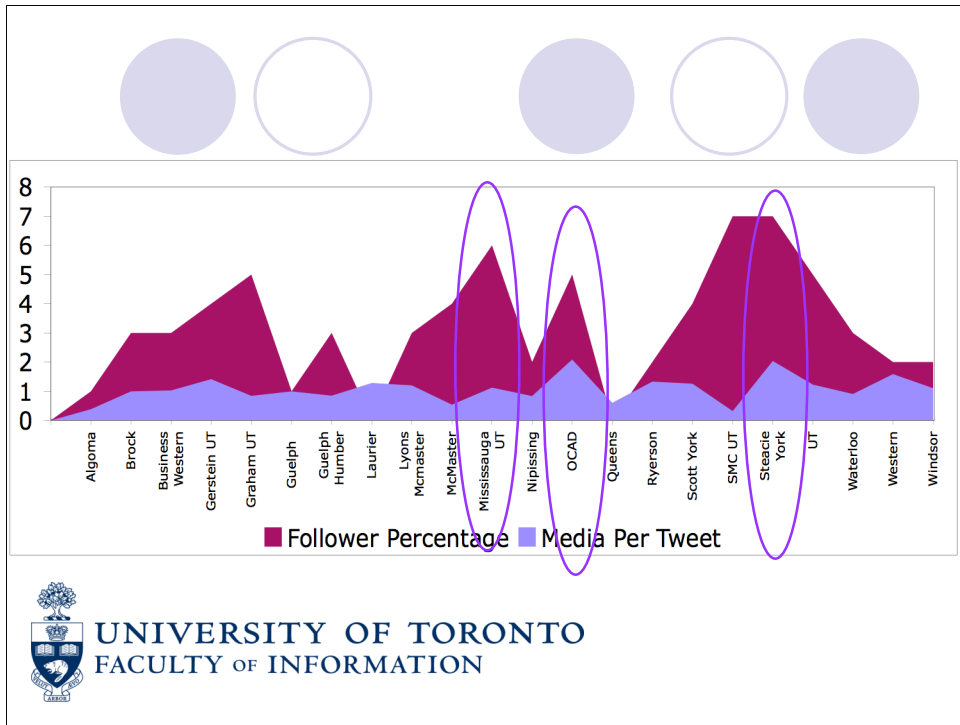
**Steacie Library** @SteacieLibrary  
Did you know that the Steve Jobs bio coming out tmrrow is by Walter  
Isaacson who also wrote a fantastic bio of Einstein  
[chapters.indigo.ca/books/Steve-Jo...](http://chapters.indigo.ca/books/Steve-Jo...)

21 Oct



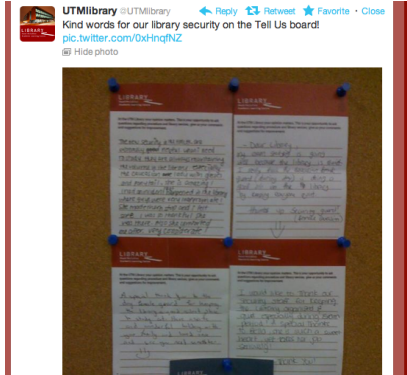
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These libraries all serve a niche population, so either through reposted or original content, try to be as interesting as possible for that population. This is an excellent, and effective strategies for libraries service a subject focus.



The heavy use of media and twitter functions per tweet is being successfully utilized at the three major Ontario university libraries.

# Photos and Video



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There are two functions this serves. Embedded photos and video serve the very practical function of breaking up a wall of text, and adding something interesting, or different for users to look at.

## Twitter functions



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It is the addition of hashtags, retweets and at replies that are particularly important. Twitter, unlike Facebook does not rely on existing social relationships to suggest connections, or otherwise link users. Rather, it is these twitter functions that integrate a twitter account into the twitter network. Research in this area has found the use of these tools is an integral part of creating an influential twitter feed, and of connecting with potential followers.



# Hashtags

- What is trending?
- How can we contribute to the conversation

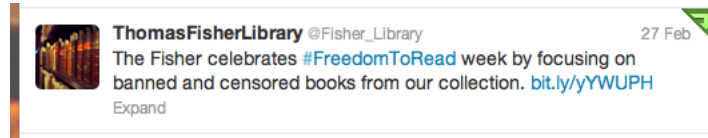
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Hashtags are used to mark individual messages as relevant to a particular group, and to mark individual messages as belonging to a particular topic or "channel." In a way, hash tags allow you to create communities of people interested in the same topic by making it easier for them to find and share info related to it. Hashtags also function as beacons in order for users to find and "follow" (subscribe) or "list" (organize into public contact lists) other users of similar interest.

When a user clicks on a hashtags term, a list of other tweets using that same hashtag is created, allowing users to aggregate twitter content by subject and connect with twitter feeds that are expressing a common interest.

## Examples from the Fisher library

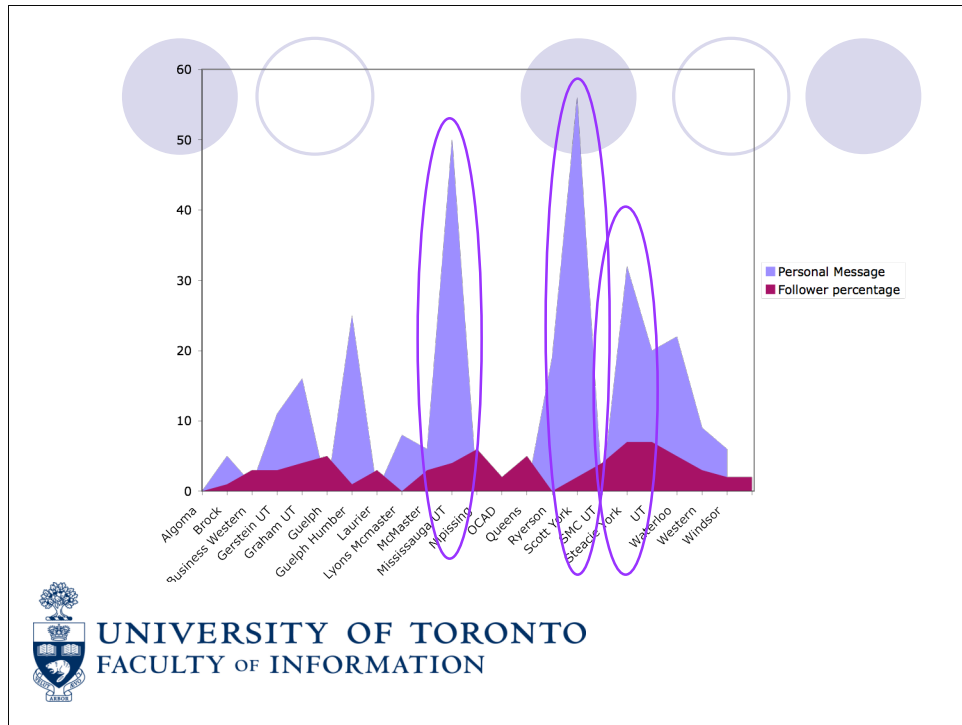
- A post to help drive “Freedom to Read” activists to content prepared for the occasion.



- In response to city council debates about a new transit initiative, the library directs twitter users to historic materials.

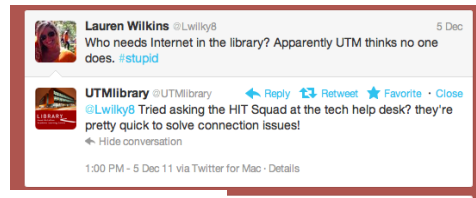
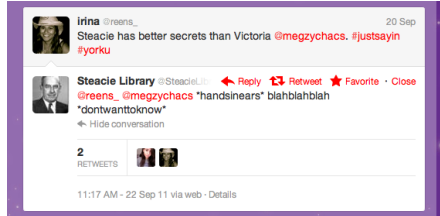


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The final strategy in the toolkit is the use of personal messages. This is the most labor intensive of all of the strategies discussed thus far, but has been successful anywhere that it is utilized

# Personal Messages



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The use of personal messages is an active strategy in which the library searches for tweets that may be related to their library or campus, and then send unsolicited replies to these tweets. This can be done to identify and resolve complaints about library systems or services, or, simply to reach out to users and encourage two-way conversations. It almost always results in a follower, and it creates an approachable way for users to interact with the library.



A Twitter feed, if utilized correctly allows an academic library to build a community of like minded people, allows the library to effectively market its offerings and services, and allows users to engage in a two way conversation with the library. To sum up, our Twitter toolkit now includes tweeting consistently, ideally seven times a week, maintaining a subject focus , where appropriate, utilizing twitter functions to integrate yourself in the social network, and reaching out to users through personal messages.

More importantly, we've seen that our peers in the Ontario academic library community are an excellent resource for innovative strategies.

Questions?

Contact me on Twitter

@MsEvaV

Thank you!



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# Resources

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