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+Live-tweeting: the rise of real-time reporting

Introduction

It might not have been intended as anything other than a simple social messaging platform, but Twitter developed rapidly as a tool used by journalists after its launch in 2006. Initially newsrooms concentrated on sourcing material for stories, particularly during major incidents. It then developed an expanding role in breaking news and other live coverage.

Breaking news often involves dealing quickly with incomplete, unconfirmed information emerging piecemeal and unpredictably. However inadvertently, Twitter offers the means to handle this by providing (almost) real-time communication, and a series of chronologically ordered, distinct but related containers for content. Add to this the scope for dealing with different forms of content (including photos), updates via mobile phones, linking and integration in web pages, and the appeal is clear.

Journalists' early experiments with Twitter often sought to address some of the huge changes in the media at that time (Pavlik 2013). Social media were competing for our time and attention, as well as for advertising revenue. A substantial online presence seemed essential for news organizations, which struggled to engage "users" in a more participative age. The rise of smartphones, and then of tablets, changed consumption patterns, too. But live-tweeting was not a focus for most editors; promoting their organization's stories and brand, and exploiting Twitter as a pool of information, took priority. (Broersma and Graham 2012: 404).

Only as the service became better-established as a resource for news – and increased its user base – did more journalists turn to Twitter for live reporting. It remains a specialist, if increasingly important, resource for many reporters. As a relatively new format, live-tweeting is still evolving – and best practice remains a work in progress.

This chapter will briefly review the evolution of live-tweeting and the forms it can take, and outline some pointers for formulating best practices, drawing on academic research, interviews with journalists and examples of live-tweeting. The discussion will point to areas of ethical challenge such as maintaining accuracy and continuity. It will concentrate on real-time coverage of news events, and conclude with a framework for students and teachers to use in learning to live-tweet effectively.

TWITTER EARNS ITS NEWS WINGS

By 2007, just a year after Twitter was launched, Sky News, the BBC and ESPN were experimenting with it. CNN was tweeting news updates, and the *New York Times'* Twitter page, "which has about 400 followers, gets updated sometimes several times an hour, using RSS feeds from the paper's Web site" (Tenore 2007a).

When the *Orlando Sentinel* live-tweeted a space shuttle launch in August 2007, senior editor John Cutter saw its scope for live reporting: "If we think, wow, this

is something I'd want to know right now – the death of someone famous, a major road closure, charges in a significant ongoing case, something big from a major local company like Disney – then we would Twitter it, as well as send other alerts” (Tenore 2007b).

In October 2007, reporters used Twitter to provide updates on wildfires in southern California. Coverage of a series of major breaking stories – such as earthquakes in China (May 2008) and California (July 2008), the presidential election in the USA, terrorist attacks in Mumbai (both November 2008), and a plane crash in New York (January 2009) – all accelerated its take-up by journalists.

This was helped also by the continuing development of relevant technology (including the first iPhone, on sale from June 2007) and experiments in reporting. By May 2008, UK newspapers were live-tweeting football matches (Oliver 2008) and local elections (Kiss 2008). Live-tweeting arguably represented a greater shift – and opportunity – for newspapers than for radio and television news, where live coverage had long been a core feature.

Live-tweeting was itself evolving. The typology I have developed (see table below) identifies ten different types of usage, although some of these overlap.

TABLE: Definitions: towards a typology of live-tweeting

Live-tweeting can be defined as using Twitter to report in (almost) real-time from the scene of a news event, scheduled or not (Broersma and Graham 2012). But this is a still-evolving format whose borders can be fluid. Below is a typology of live-tweeting, which attempts to draw fairly wide boundaries while keeping a focus on journalistic uses.

Scheduled events	Speeches, conferences and other meetings, launches (of reports, products etc), elections, court cases, sport.
Other breaking news	Natural disasters, crime incidents, politics.
Set-pieces	Investigations, features, own-initiative projects.
On-going news	Election campaigns, scandals, big news issues beyond one discrete story. Might be linked with live blog and/or other continuing coverage.
Explainers	Specialists adding context, insight, background.
Prepared exclusive	Partly publishing a story (or elements of it), partly promotional.
Chats	Based around a hashtag, often responding to questions tweeted in advance.
Behind the scenes	Showing part of the workings, process of a story, not routinely presented to public.

Retelling history	'Recreating' past events, typically at an anniversary, through pre-planned updates scheduled to retell stories in historic 'real time'.
Second screen	Accompanying TV or radio broadcasts, usually simultaneous with the broadcast (not necessarily live itself).

These categories can overlap, and may be covered by journalists in the field, in the newsroom, and/or working from home. They might draw on accounts from colleagues and other sources, and form part of other coverage. The priority accorded to engaging with other users can vary, as can the senses in which the activity is 'live'.

TAKING CENTER STAGE

The emergence of live-tweeting as an integral part of journalism is clear from its role in award-winning reporting – including Pulitzer prizes, which were established to incentivize and honor excellence (Topping n.d.).

The 2013 award for Breaking News Reporting went to the *Denver Post* for coverage of a mass-shooting, “using journalistic tools, from Twitter and Facebook to video and written reports, both to capture a breaking story and provide context” (“The Pulitzer Prizes | Citation” 2013). It broke the news in a tweet at 1.47am, nearly one hour before its first story on denverpost.com, followed by updates from reporters at the scene. Similarly, live-tweeting formed an integral part of the 2012 winner, the *Tuscaloosa News*, for its tornado coverage (“The Pulitzer Prizes | Citation” 2012).

The criteria had been changed the previous year “by emphasizing real-time reporting of breaking news” (“The Pulitzer Prizes | Pulitzer Prizes for Journalism Move to All-Digital Entry System” 2011). Pointedly, perhaps, no Breaking News prize had been awarded that year, although the 2010 winner, the *Seattle Times*, had tweeted as part of its reporting of the shooting of four sheriff’s deputies in November 2009. The paper’s journalists had previously used Twitter “relatively infrequently for breaking news” (Marchionni 2013: 257).

By 2010, most U.S. news organizations were running Twitter accounts, primarily to drive traffic to their websites (Messner, Eford, and Linke 2011). But live coverage is usually done through named individuals’ accounts; indeed, it made up almost one-third of the tweets sent by daily newspaper reporters, according to a 2011 study (Artwick 2013). This points to an unfamiliar situation that news organizations had to deal with – that although they might publish tweets on their website, the service is controlled by a third party, Twitter. Furthermore, live-tweeting relies on individual journalists publishing directly, without the usual oversight from an editor, often from the field. While such characteristics may facilitate live-tweeting in many respects, it also means that reporting in this format is perhaps more prone to error or misjudgment.

Twitter came of age as a tool for live reporting in the UK in 2011 – as a result of its extensive use to cover riots in London and other cities in August. “Reporting”

made up almost half of the tweets sent by two reporters – 46.3% of the total from Paul Lewis of the *Guardian*, and 49% from Ravi Somaiya of the *New York Times* – according to an analysis of their tweets from four days and nights (Vis 2013). These consisted primarily of their own accounts as eyewitnesses on the scene (30% of total tweets for Lewis; 32.8% for Somaiya), but also included quotes from others present.

PRESSURES AND BEST PRACTICE

Live-tweeting has not always been featured in social media guidelines provided to reporters, which probably reflects its relatively recent rise to prominence. In 2011, the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) appeared to position its “best practice guidelines for editors crafting social media policies” as geared principally to social media as “essential newsgathering tools” (Hohmann 2011).

One inadvertent effect of having such policies is that they may encourage journalists to regard social media as a separate realm where the usual rules do not apply. Some guidance addresses this explicitly, and the ASNE document usefully highlighted: “There’s no reason that traditional ethics guidelines should go out the window.” In similar vein, the importance of “adapting your instincts to digital/social” forms a section in AP’s 2013 guidance (“Social Newsgathering in Sensitive Circumstances”). It encouraged its staff -- familiar with best practice when operating in person or on the phone – to apply their “journalistic instincts”. One part is worth reproducing here in full:

“Twitter, in particular, can present some challenges — with a tight character count and no way to modulate your body language or the volume and tone of your voice, requests that are intended to be sensitive can come across as cold or even demanding. Think about how your tweet would come across if spoken with an angry voice, because that’s just how the recipient may hear it in his head.”

The competing demands of live-tweeting and established journalism practice – speed versus accuracy, for example – can be seen in the *Denver Post*’s Pulitzer submission, which included hundreds of tweets. “We were determined to be aggressive but measured, fast but accurate,” wrote editor Gregory L. Moore. “There were inaccurate rumors [...] that hit other outlets – but not one appeared on *Denver Post* platforms” (Moore 2013).

Checking and communicating factual information accurately has long been a core tenet of journalism – but not of social media, perhaps by its very nature. “The development of social networks for real-time news and information, and the integration of social media content in the news media, creates tensions for a profession based on a discipline of verification,” notes Alfred Hermida (2012: 659; see also his chapter on verification in this volume).

Unless reporters wish explicitly to prioritize speed over accuracy, best practice in live-tweeting probably has to remain checking and double-checking – and where information is uncertain, to make this explicit. A survey of journalists in four European countries found most agreeing that accuracy was “the biggest problem with social media” (Gulyas 2013: 282).

The rise in commentary and opinion as part of reporting has been linked to social media in general and live-tweeting in particular. One researcher suggests that “the *form* of microblogging lends itself to freer personal expression” (Lawrence et al. 2013). The intimacy and immediacy of social networks can prompt confusion, too; when tweeting, am I a reporter, an editor, a critic, or just chatting with friends, a journalist might wonder (Farhi 2009).

One large-scale US study found that nearly 43% of journalists’ tweets included at least an element of opinion, and nearly 16% were primarily opinion (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012). Consistent with Singer’s 2005 findings for political journalism blogs (Singer 2005), the researchers concluded that journalists were adjusting “professional norms and practices to the evolving norms and practices of Twitter” – as well as normalizing Twitter to fit their own (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012: 31).

The risks of compromised impartiality or integrity – and the perception of this – tend to permeate the social media policies of some news organizations. This is one reason why retweeting can be contentious, for example, although some guidelines do not regard it as a problem (see also the chapter by Kelly Fincham in this volume). AP’s policy on retweeting was seen as overly cautious and restrictive by some social media editors (Sonderman 2012).

USING KEY FEATURES EFFECTIVELY

Some best practices for live-tweeting involve simply making good use of its features. A common mistake, for example, is starting a tweet with someone’s @ handle (Twitter account name), typically as a form of attribution. This reduces – often drastically – the potential audience for the tweet, as it then functions as a ‘reply’ usually visible only to users who follow both the sender and the account mentioned. Starting the tweet with a full point (before @) remedies this. Referring to others by their @ handle can be useful – but a name may be needed if this is unclear from their @ handle and/or Twitter profile.

Using hashtags (#) effectively can aid the visibility and reach of tweets as they will appear in search results for a particular hashtag – which may often emerge as a breaking news story takes shape. Journalists may initiate the use of hashtags, bearing in mind that they work best when short, unique and easily recognizable. Checking hashtags can also help live-tweeting reporters who need to monitor tweets – complicated by the possible use of a number of different hashtags. To find other relevant tweets (including those without a hashtag), journalists need to identify other key words to use in searches, save searches, and build Twitter lists of relevant accounts.

Monitoring tweets is much easier in Twitter management tools that allow users to create separate columns for tweets of different kinds, eg for a specific list, search term, hashtag and/or type of content, with optional filters for each column. Such features make Tweetdeck, for example, popular among journalists who use Twitter intensively.

Advance planning can be crucial to make best use of live-tweeting, says Kate Day, social media and engagement editor at the Telegraph in London. For intensive coverage of a major scheduled event, the paper may allocate different reporters

to focus on different strands of a story, as well as mapping out the expected timing of key stages and how live-tweeting will form part of coverage on its website and other social media (Day 2013). Reviewing the analytics after the event, including the sharing of tweets and the traffic to the site from social media, has become a regular part of their practice, too.

Reporters' advance research will probably include that needed for any form of coverage – the names, titles and correct spelling of the key people involved, for example, and likely angles for stories. But for live-tweeting, they can usefully add the @ handles of participants; hashtags; relevant links (eg to previous articles and other background material); and setting up Twitter lists and searches. Creating a document containing these can save time during the later live coverage.

Presenting oneself explicitly as a journalist is considered fundamental in most reporting (undercover investigation is an obvious exception), so news organizations usually expect their staff to make their affiliation clear in their Twitter profiles. Sometimes this extends to @ handles as well; most BBC reporters with an official account include "BBC" in theirs, for example. Some employers may provide further guidance on the format for profiles, such as links, bio text, and style of photo. As latter will appear next to every tweet sent, its significance should not be underestimated – it forms part of the branding of that journalist and their organization. If one envisages the face of a grinning reporter next to tweets containing the details of a disaster, it is not hard to see why a sober appearance prevails.

In some circumstances, it may be important to ensure that one feature is not sued. This is where revealing the location of a reporter (and perhaps interviewees) could put safety at risk – as in conflict areas, for example. For this reason, remembering to turn off the GPS/location feature of phones used for tweeting is important in such cases.

LIVE-TWEETING COURT CASES

The reporting of court cases has developed as an important strand of live-tweeting. Artwick found that court reporters live-tweeted more than journalists on other beats (2013) – and in the UK, live-tweeting has developed as the only way for journalists to report live from inside a courtroom. However, familiarity with the law is important not only for responsible live-tweeting from court but for covering other events, too. In the UK, for example, a number of laws restrict not only commenting but also the disclosure of some facts (eg the identity of victims) in limited circumstances (Wheeler 2013).

Coverage of legal cases can also illustrate the challenges of handling complex outcomes when live-tweeting. It can require specialist knowledge and experience, advance research, familiarity with the case, and care in producing tweets that are both accurate and timely. Even then, mistakes are made.

The decision of US Supreme Court in June 2012 on Obama's Affordable Healthcare Act was keenly awaited, a major news event – with live coverage on Twitter as well as broadcast. A number of news organizations reported wrongly that the court had struck down the 'individual mandate' element of the law –

including CNN on its Breaking News Twitter account, as well as on its website. After 13 minutes, it sent a tweet correcting the mistake.

The confusion was apparently caused by one point in the court's ruling – that the law was unconstitutional in terms of the 'commerce clause' – emerging before another important one: that it allowed the law to stand as a tax. In its statement, CNN hinted at the pressures of breaking the news quickly: "CNN regrets that it didn't wait to report out the full and complete opinion regarding the mandate. We made a correction within a few minutes and apologize for the error." ("CNN Correction: Supreme Court Ruling" 2012. See also Tim Currie's chapter on corrections in this volume.)

Some news accounts automatically tweet the headline of a story when it is published online. This simplifies the process but removes flexibility. Human error can occur at different stages, of course, indicating the importance of checking and, where feasible, involving more than one set of eyes. The Associated Press's main Twitter account tweeted inaccurately in December 2013: "MORE: Celebrity cook Nigella Lawson and her former husband are cleared of fraud charges", with a link to its story published online. The latter, also visible in the in-line Twitter card preview, had the correct headline: "Nigella Lawson's ex-assistants acquitted of fraud". A tweet correcting the error soon followed (Hewett 2014).

CONTINUITY AND NARRATIVE

The short format of tweets can have particular implications for live coverage, which is necessarily spread across separate tweets – which, unlike most news stories, cannot include much context. Social media trainer Sue Llewellyn advises that, in general, reporters should assume that every tweet will be seen in isolation (Llewellyn 2013). It might also be read some time after the time at which it was first sent, particularly if passed on and/or republished.

One approach to signal a series is to include "1/3", "2/3", "3/3" (or similar) in successive tweets – but that requires the reporter to know – before sending the first tweet – the total number of tweets involved in this series. Another technique involves the use of an ellipsis (...) or "cont" (for continued) where more follows or continues.

These techniques still do not prevent any tweet from being read on its own. One work-around is provided by services such as TwitLonger enable messages longer than the standard Twitter length to be posted – with a link from a tweet to the full text usually on that service's website. However, most journalists – perhaps recognizing the difficulties of relying on users following such links – seem to avoid this approach.

If the narrative of a story or breaking news event is sufficiently strong and engaging, this may help to 'carry' a story even when relayed through a series of tweets. This was the experience of BBC correspondent Matthew Price when he tweeted the story of a survivor from a boat carrying more than 200 migrants capsized in the Mediterranean Sea in October 2013.

Having located and interviewed this survivor for BBC radio and television news, Price picked out key elements for a series of 16 tweets telling his story. He typed “Survivor:” to introduce each tweet, thus also attributing the short, vivid sentences that followed:

“Survivor of boat sinking: boat was small but it was too late. We had no home. Couldn't live in Syria. Banned in Egypt. Libya too dangerous.”

“Survivor: they shot the engine room that's when water started to get into the boat. We tried to fill the holes. The water was so strong.”

“Survivor: we carried on. Girls started screaming. We called Italians. They told us we were in Maltese water. We called Malta.”

“Survivor: Malta told us they'd come in 30 minutes. The waves got high. The boat let in water. People for scared. More water.”

“Survivor: another wave. The boat leaned right. All the people were on the right. The boat capsized. We got on life jackets.”

“Survivor: I could see the people swimming to reach each other. We were in water for an hour or more. Then they came to save us.”

Price says his tweets were prompted partly by the strong response he received to an earlier tweet that day breaking a key story element (Price 2013): “Survivor of Lampedusa boat sinking Friday tells BBC that Libyan gunmen fired on the boat causing it eventually to capsize.” Another had also engaged users, encapsulating the tragedy of the incident in four short sentences: “Syrian couple floated for an hour in Med after boat sank. Clutching their 9mth old girl. Couldn't also hold their son. He drowned.” More than 300 people drowned after their boat sank the previous week, and the wider the issue of migrants to the EU had received coverage in the media for a few years.

This example of live-tweeting overlaps several of the types outlined earlier in the chapter. It was live not in the sense that Price was tweeting as he interviewed the survivor – but in the sense that it was breaking the news of that man’s account of the event soon afterwards. Some parts were included in news packages already broadcast by the time of the tweets, but these preceded the fuller account that was published online the next day. It was a ‘prepared exclusive’ in some ways, and partly promotional in that it probably generated interest in the online story, as well as having elements of ‘on-going news’, as part of the bigger story of migrants trying to reach the EU by boat.

In this case, Price used the translated English transcript of the man’s words in Arabic as the basis for his series of tweets. “I knew it was a compelling story that I wanted as wide an audience as possible to see,” he says. “Using Twitter meant I could get it out there myself before the online version could go up the next day.” (Price 2013.) The timing of the tweets also played a part, he believes, by finding interested users at accessible times; it was near the start of the working day in much of Europe, and mid-afternoon for the US east coast.

“One of the challenges of reporting via Twitter is not just condensing the facts into 140 characters, it’s also about how you construct a narrative over a series of tweets and add context,” says BBC journalist Dominic Casciani (Casciani 2013). He has been experimenting with what he calls “signposting” tweets – alerting users at the start of the day to what he’ll be covering later, for example, or

providing a reminder of key points to add context and/or to help those who have not been following the story. On the morning of 29 November 2013, for example, Casciani tweeted: "Good morning from the Old Bailey where we are expecting the start of the trial of the men accused of the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby." (The Old Bailey is the Central Criminal Court of England and Wales, which handles many important cases; the term is well-known in the UK.)

This kind of approach can be important in telling a story – but in large news organizations it also provides a valuable signal internally. In Casciani's case, it helps the BBC's social media team running the BBC's main Twitter accounts (such as @BBCBreaking, with 8.5 million followers [Jan 2014]) to pick out updates to retweet, and/or flag up his account for live coverage of a particular story.

CONTEXT AND EXPLANATION

As a specialist correspondent in a high-profile area (home affairs), Casciani also uses tweets for what one might call 'explainers' – providing the background and context to help readers to make more sense of a breaking story. As well as explaining the why or how of a situation, he also highlights key points that might not appear in, say, the headline of a story. Covering Ecuador's granting of asylum to Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, and the surrounding legal and political issues, he tweeted pertinent details, links and quotes, before explaining the position in six tweets (16 August 2012), numbering the first five and then summarizing with the sixth:

"So, here's the legal deal. 1) Assange has asylum - but that doesn't equal immunity from prosecution for non-political crimes."
"2) He's wanted in UK for breaching bail - and UK Supreme Court backed extradition on allegations of rape. (That's non-political crime)"
"3) He can't come out - because he will be arrested by the Met Police outside."
"4) The coppers can't go in - unless the UK decides to revoke the embassy's status as a lawful diplomatic mission."
"5) Even if he successfully got into a diplomatic car (which can't be searched) what next? Police could surround and stop it."
"So this is one serious serious stand-off."

It is worth noting the use of informal language (eg "legal deal", and "coppers" – police officers), which helps to reinforce the idea of Twitter as a conversational medium.

SHOWING THE HUMAN SIDE

As well as the core content they tweet, journalists need to think about showing that they are human, says trainer Sue Llewellyn. "These are the little bits you could share, the photos from behind the scenes, the amazing scenery where you've just reported from, the other-side-of-the-camera shots, your hobbies. I think it makes you more real, and makes your feed more interesting. It might not be directly relevant to your audiences, but it's helping them think 'OK, now I know a little bit more about this person and feel more connected to them'." (Llewellyn 2013.)

For the live-tweeting journalist out and about, there may be scope to show people something of the process of reporting that is not normally visible. “We like the idea of the ‘glimpse behind the curtain’; people like that,” says Casciani. At the end of a complicated trial involving 13 separate charges, he tweeted a photograph of a whiteboard he used to help him keep track when reporting the outcome to camera. He has also tweeted images of evidence presented in court (provided to journalists by state prosecutors), including documents, stills from CCTV footage, and photos.

CHOICES OF EQUIPMENT

Working from a desktop or laptop has some advantages, such as easily tracking others’ tweets for relevant information, along with other online sources. The multiple columns and filtering/search features available in some Twitter clients help here. In the field, however, journalists may find themselves relying on smaller mobile devices. Phones are easy to carry, but some reporters prefer the larger screens (and on-screen ‘keyboard’) of tablets – with the option of an add-on physical keyboard. An external battery pack can be a vital back-up.

Despite improved wireless, 3G and 4G coverage, internet access can still be patchy in some locations, and signals can be impeded by buildings, become unreliable – or have bandwidth overloaded by demand. Reporters therefore need to know how to tweet by text message (SMS). This involves linking the mobile phone to the relevant Twitter account (which can be done via SMS, as well as the web interface) and then posting updates by texting it to a dedicated number.

Settings enable selected notifications (eg direct messages, replies and mentions) to be received by text, too – although there may be a risk of these overwhelming a reporter’s phone in some situations. It may be preferable to turn on such notifications only for specified users, eg an editor in the newsroom who can monitor replies to and mentions of the reporter’s account (eg to pick up other leads, potential UGC etc) and respond to these if appropriate. Reporters likely to live-tweet via SMS should familiarize themselves with the range of Twitter commands available, too – and note the risk of inadvertently making public an intended direct message (or part of it). This can happen if the sender omits the “D [username]” needed at the start of the message, or if the SMS exceeds 160 characters and so is split into multiple messages – when any material after the first will post as a normal tweet.

Best practices in action

- 1) Examine the social media policies of some news organizations (Hohmann 2011 and Kelly Fincham’s chapter in this volume offer some starting points, or you can find your own). Review these to identify the elements of the guidance that are most relevant to live-tweeting – and supplement these from your perspective as a reader by drawing on your own experience of following live events and breaking stories on Twitter.
- 2) Identify some cases of live-tweeting, ideally some scheduled examples you know are about to take place, and follow them. They might feature one individual reporter, a number covering the same story, the accounts of one or more news

organizations, and/or based around a specific hashtag. A large class could have different people looking at different kinds of live-tweeting (see the typology earlier in the chapter).

After the event, review the tweets for content, tone and other relevant points. Consider them both as individual updates and as a stream. Take account also of the publicly available metrics, such as retweets, mentions and replies. Comparing tweets from different journalists covering the same story (as well as with reports in print, online and on broadcast media) can prove interesting. If you follow the live-tweeting as it happens, taking notes at the time can helpfully complement a review of coverage at a later stage.

Identify what you think worked well and what you found less effective, focusing on the reasons underlying your evaluation. If you found differences between individual reporters live-tweeting the same event or story, what were they and why do you think they occurred? How does the coverage fit with the best practice pointers in this chapter and elsewhere?

3) Identify some suitable (scheduled) events to cover, taking account of the level of journalistic experience that might be needed to live-tweet it effectively. A local public talk is likely to prove more straightforward than a complex legal case, for example. As in point 2 above, it can be useful to have more than one person live-tweeting the same event – and/or to have an editor who might help plan coverage. There is scope also to use live-tweeting as part of a live-blog (see Neil Thurman’s chapter in this volume) and or to curate them using tools such as Storify.

Prepare in advance – think about how to cover it, check you have key details about the event, key individuals, links, Twitter handles, hashtags etc, as well as the practicalities of equipment. You may need to check with event organizers that they are happy for you to live-tweet it, and what the venue is like.

With a large group, try live-tweeting different events and different forms of live-tweeting (see the typology earlier in this chapter). Have some reporters ready to cover breaking news, too – preferably those with previous experience of live-tweeting a scheduled event.

It can be useful to save the tweets for review. For simple, short coverage, copying and pasting them from timelines and/or hashtag searches can suffice. Otherwise, save them using a tool such as Scraperwiki or the Twitter Archiving Google Spreadsheet (TAGS) (Hawksey 2013).

If you’re teaching, why not join in? If you have previously live-tweeted events and/or breaking stories by live-tweeting, there is scope to model good practice. Otherwise it could be a valuable opportunity to catch up and join in the learning experience alongside your students.

4) After the live-tweeting, review both the output (as in point 2 above) and the experience. Asking those not directly involved in covering that event can help to capture the perspective of an audience – and try asking followers for their feedback, too. Drawing up a list of learning points, and recommendations for the

next time, can form a useful focus, consolidate the learning, and feed it forward into future practice.

Curating tweets after the event can be a valuable exercise; it requires the review and selection of tweets, and can integrate other online coverage of the same story, too. Using Storify, one can also add reflections and other comments on the experience of live-tweeting as well as the output(s) – and publishing the results can encourage others to review, learn from and comment on it. Publication in this form can also attract the useful attention and input from practising journalists, just as Twitter itself can act as an important professional networking and learning tool (Hewett, 2013).

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