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ATG Luminaries

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ATG Luminaries — Comment On .. Twitter

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It is a large world out there with many forums for conversation. Even in small communities, a lot happens on a daily basis, some things are critical to know; some are entertaining; some trivial; and some could advance your career. Increasingly, conversations take place on services like Twitter.

NISO is based on openness and sharing, so sharing on Twitter makes sense for us. My own use of Twitter is driven by that precept.

I tweet a lot during open meetings and conferences. This public note taking serves our community by sharing my participation, what is happening, and the conversations taking place around those events.

Engaging virtually in meetings we can't attend in person, or following conversations via hashtags, is another use of Twitter. NISO regularly monitors an extensive list of hashtags for relevant activities that we need to be abreast of.

We use Twitter to find experts to engage in community work taking place at NISO. We also use Twitter to engage the community and build awareness of our activities, but advertising is very different from engaging conversations. If all one does on Twitter is broadcast ads, it is unlikely people will want to follow you.

One does not need to read everything on Twitter. I get what I get out of it, when I get it and know I am missing a lot. Things will pass by and I don't need to be the first person to hear anything. I encourage everyone to engage in the conversations taking place. Everyone has something to say and can meaningfully contribute. 🐼

I first joined Twitter to talk about sports, and I still talk about baseball all the time, but I've been surprised at the ways in which Twitter has come to support my professional life.

Twitter is a never-ending conference where you can be inspired and challenged daily. I follow conferences I am unable to attend, and find blog posts and journal articles to read. I enjoy watching conversations about important topics develop between different people I follow almost as much as I enjoy engaging in these discussions. As someone working and living in a rural area, the ability to interact with people in similar positions is a vital professional network. Their perspectives and activities keep me excited about my job and my profession.

I prefer Twitter over blogs, Facebook, and most other media because of the flexibility and flow. While I use Twitter a certain way, it is not the only way, and the user has control of how they tweet and interact with other users. For me, Twitter's effectiveness is strengthened by the fullness of personalities users bring to their postings. I get to know whole people, not just their professional identities. Twitter is a place where I can engage with the lives of other users, from watching the west coast morning just before lunch time to chatting on evenings and planning for weekends. Finding librarians with similar interests to mine has kept me engaged in the profession and invigorated my professional development. 🐼

When my professional friends started using Twitter, I was totally disinterested. It took a conference in which everyone else knew where the after dinner drinks were, via Twitter, to change my mind. In the six years since, I've written 12,000 tweets, followed hundreds of people, and been followed by nearly 2,000 more. The greatest personal advantage for me is what I think of as social proprioception — I know what's up with my network of friends and colleagues in the mundane and the sublime. Twitter is the real-time extension of my professional network, giving space to fascinating conversations about my passions. They're short conversations, but when the topic warrants moving to a longer form, I do.

My blog is my longer form, but the conversations about my writing don't just happen there. Even when something is heavily commented upon, like my post about the American Chemical Society (<http://www.attemptingelegance.com/?p=1765>), there's a whole other unarchived conversation happening. It often plays out like this: I autoTweet an announcement of a new post, and that gets retweeted, and then the Twitter conversation starts... and stays right there. It's the fleeting emotion- and reaction-driven thoughts that live on Twitter, but the "I think X for reason Y" commentary gets saved for the blog. And I think that's okay. If all I ever had were the comments on my blog, I wouldn't know about the emotional reactions. I wouldn't know about the real impact my writing has for librarians. And I'd be less for that loss. 🐼

Twitter plays a key role in the library and information science profession. I view my job as a librarian to create connections and continue conversations. Twitter has been a natural extension of that role, particularly as it relates to my primary responsibilities and professional development. It is a highly rewarding personal learning network and networking tool. By being active on Twitter I have learned about new library resources, different approaches to library instruction and collection development, and a more global perspective on our work. In our people focused profession, Twitter is a valuable resource for interacting with librarians (both new to the profession and new to me), library school students, library-related vendors, and library advocates. It gives job seekers an opportunity to view the current work of the profession, a particular library/ employer, or even job openings. It provides members and perspective members of library related organizations and associations another way to interact with their professional association and stay informed on legislation and advocacy efforts for the good of the profession. During my ALA presidential campaign, Twitter provided me with an opportunity to not only reach people interested in libraries who may or may not have attended one of my presentations at a library related conference, but it allowed me to be an active listener in a number of conversations related to the profession. For me, the opportunity to observe and acknowledge a conversation is significant for the future of library leadership. 🐼