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## Bird's Eye View: Using Twitter in #ClubRoesch

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Katy Kelly and Hector Escobar

## **Bird's eye view**

### Using Twitter in #ClubRoesch

**F**or many libraries, social media is usually another platform to share information about library resources and events. For some, the term has become overused so much that the *social* aspect has fallen by the wayside. By using a Facebook page or Twitter account to “say it loud”<sup>1</sup> with frequent posts, libraries are essentially yelling at their audience, and what is social about that? Facebook page updates or tweets are only part of what you can bring to and achieve from social media.

In this article we discuss how students communicate with our academic library on Twitter, and how we used conversations to improve library spaces, technology, and services. We will explain the process of tracking and responding to student tweets, as well as the pros and cons of such an endeavor. Lastly, we will share our use of Application Programming Interface (API) generators and provide examples from institutions using this technology to communicate with students.

At the University of Dayton (UD) Libraries, our public services areas use notification tools and Twitter's search feature to observe what students write about the library and to engage with them on a daily basis. Established in 2009, the Roesch Library Twitter account (@roeschlibrary) started as a way to announce events and services. Beginning in 2010, the newly hired communications and outreach librarian began tracking tweets that referred to the library, organized them in a spreadsheet, and began categorizing them. Similar to many named buildings, students refer to Roesch

Library, as Club Roesch, and use a hashtag (#clubroesch). #clubroesch is one of our saved searches that we check frequently. A term that was created by our students, the idea of the library as a club appealed to them, especially when students are in the library late at night or over the weekend. Monitoring Twitter chatter provides an opportunity to improve services by knowing what students criticize (slow Wi-Fi in the building, loud students on quiet floors, etc.), and it also informs us that the library is viewed as a popular place on campus.

#### **What we have done**

The discovery of #clubroesch was exciting because it was not only being used often, but it was also the sole label used by student culture. Club Roesch highlights what students want their peers to see, not necessarily what they want the library (or librarian) to see. This hashtag allowed students to converse with each other, trade Club Roesch anecdotes, and comment on their library experiences. The tweets tracked were uncensored, funny, and informative. Once we started responding to the hashtag and library mentions, students would often retweet our replies and we would gain more followers. It is clear that once we

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began building a reputation of being responsive, tweets continue to flow in.

Communication about @roeschlibrary has painted a clearer picture of how the library is used and viewed by students. Tweets have included how long students have studied in the library for extended periods of time. Students are then willing to share where they are with everyone (their followers and friends), and they are proud to be camping out in the library for so long.

Since students are on social media, we also wanted to use it for various promotional events. For National Library Week, we hosted a #roeschselfie contest,<sup>2</sup> inspired by the #selfie trend. People who tweeted with that hashtag and a photo of themselves in the library were entered into a drawing for a gift card of their choice. Our most popular contest is the Club Roesch VIP contest,<sup>3</sup> which we run before every finals week every semester. The prize costs the library nothing, aside from

scheduling a room, and the lucky student gets a key to his or her own study room for the entire week. Students enter the contest by retweeting our original tweet. Similarly, we have followers “like” the contest photo on Instagram to enter, as well. These contests promote our presence on social media and also allow students to engage with us, with an incentive for them to participate. The contest popularity has grown so much that in one semester’s drawing, there were more than 100 retweets by students in a half-hour period.

In addition to using Twitter to interact with students and promote events, UD has exploited this service to respond to refer-

ence questions that may have been viewed as cumbersome if students had to submit their questions from a web form. Students began using Twitter to ask directional and reference questions. To ensure the responsibility did not fall to just one employee, we established a workflow so that service desk employees respond to questions during our normal hours of operation. This workflow also ensures we address questions or concerns in a more timely manner.

## Use of APIs

The Twitter API and notification tools allow institutions to track what students are saying about their library. The Twitter API

pulls in public tweets that include designated keywords within a specified radius of a geolocation. For example, at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio,<sup>4</sup> librarians use the Twitter API to proactively identify user needs and opinions, which fosters word-of-mouth marketing. This

engagement helps build social rapport, find the “lost” reference questions, and helps focus on listening to users.

Examples of keywords they use include books, course names/numbers, and library. Social media management tools such as Hootsuite and TweetDeck can also facilitate this tracking. Typically, Miami University’s librarians see 10 to 15 tweets daily through the API, with the numbers increasing during finals period.

APIs generally require some degree of programming skills, which may prove to be a barrier for librarians interested in learning from Twitter interactions. However, newer online services allow individuals to create



Example of @roeschlibrary interacting with one of its followers. View this article online for more detailed images.

API services with no programming background needed.

UD uses a free service called Zapier,<sup>5</sup> which allows you to create if/then relationships that interact with social media. For example, with Zapier a library can create a geocode to interact with a keyword in Twitter. UD identified its GPS coordinates and created an API in Zapier. The condition is if the word, *library* is mentioned within a 1.5 mile IP radius of UD, the referenced tweet is emailed to an account for notification. In addition to searching for #clubroesch, our API script allows the library to get updates about how students may be interacting with the library, which can then be analyzed for any trends.

How can a geocoded keyword search be useful?

Let's assume a random person in a two mile radius of your library tweets,

"There is a person on the third floor of the library who appears to be fainting." If an API notification is sent when the word *library* is mentioned, library staff can verify whether someone did fall ill.

### Best practices and tools

Twitter now functions as a customer service hotline for big brands such as Southwest Airlines, Sephora, Nike, and JetBlue. As more companies use social media to engage with customers, the more customers, and, in our case, patrons, will expect to see the same level of engagement from libraries with Twitter accounts. Questions posed via Twitter have increased over the past year. Setting up a workflow for responding to tweets can help address patron issues. Our shared research email inbox also receives notifications so staff members at the desk can respond. It is important to check if

someone has already answered a question before doing so.

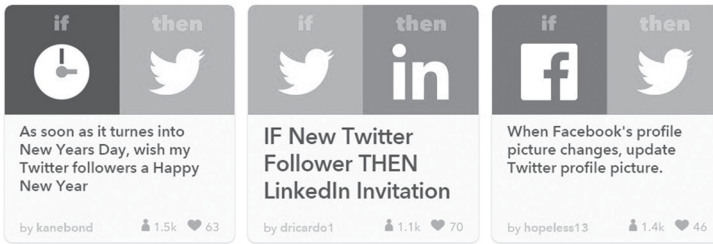
For university and high school students, as with national trends,<sup>6</sup> we saw our students increase their Twitter use with a corresponding decrease in Facebook. With this transition, we saw a new communication style in using social media. This transition requires library staff to reply to tweets using a 140-character limit, which may be challenging. Hands-on training may be the best way in that it empowers staff confidently responding to questions and comments. Periodic review of Twitter interactions conducted by staff can also help with training.

An example of a free online API generator that does not require programming<sup>7</sup> is If This Then That (IFTTT). APIs using IFTTT are

referred to as recipes. Recipes are based on the conditional if/then relation-

ships. For example, a library can create a recipe to automatically tweet to a new follower. Another IFTTT opportunity may be for when smartphone users enter a specific geo location, such as your library. You may want to send an automatic tweet that tells your followers that you are now at work. IFTTT works with many devices as well, such as WeMo switches and the Nest thermostat. Possibilities are endless.

Similar to IFTTT, the Zapier service we use at UD is an API generator that allows you to create zaps. Zaps work with a variety of social media and online websites. Once again, these API generators are conditional on an if/then relationship. For example, you can create a zap to send you an email each time a specific Pinterest account pins something new. Another example is using this service to notify you when a tweet mentions a certain keyword in a specific geographic location, as described in the previous section.



Example of Twitter recipes from If This Then That.

## Conclusion

Your library's Twitter account has the potential to develop a positive reputation on campus and increase followers, which ultimately increases communication with your users. We realize that not every library may have developed a nickname, and that is acceptable, too. Some institutions may discover over time their library is known for a particular service or regular event. Ask patrons what your library is known for. You may be surprised at the names given to your library on Twitter.

Using Twitter effectively requires timely responsive interactions, as well as an investigative interest to see how your library is being used. By searching and using APIs, UD has created a bird's eye view of how the library is being used, and, if needed, can investigate concerns if API notifications are generated.

## Notes

1. Remi Castonguay, "Say it loud: Spreading

the word with Facebook and Twitter," *College & Research Libraries News* 72, no. 7 (2011): 412-415.

2. Share a #roeschelfie during national library week 2014, [https://www.udayton.edu/blogs/libraries/2014\\_04\\_10\\_roeschelfie.php](https://www.udayton.edu/blogs/libraries/2014_04_10_roeschelfie.php) ed. Vol. 2015. Dayton, OH: University of Dayton Libraries.

3. Volunteer as tribute (club roesch vip) 2014 <https://www.udayton.edu/blogs/librar->

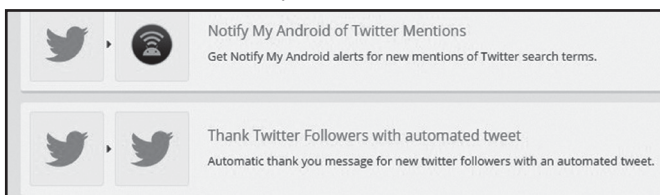
[ies/2014\\_11\\_21\\_tribute.php](https://www.udayton.edu/blogs/libraries/2014_11_21_tribute.php) ed. Vol. 2015. Dayton, OH: University of Dayton.

4. Katy Kelly, ACRL marketing discussion group, 2014 (cited May 1, 2015). Available from <http://connect.ala.org/files/ACRLMarketingDiscussionGroupAC2014Notes.pdf> (accessed May 1, 2015).

5. Zapier, available at <https://zapier.com/>.

6. M. Duggan and A. Smith, "Demographics of key social networking platforms," Pew Research Internet Project 30 (2013).

7. IFTTT, available at <https://ifttt.com/>. *zz*



Example of a Twitter zap from Zapier.

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*"ACRL Board of Directors' actions, June 2015" (continues from page 432)*

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## Enabling programs and services

**Goal Area: Member engagement—Strategic goal areas will be supported by financial and operational planning, and will guide the development and implementation of programs and services that target education, advocacy, and member engagement.**

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- Approved the revised name and charge for Information Literacy Standards Committee to the Information Literacy Frameworks and Standards Committee.
- Dissolved the AASL/ACRL Interdivisional Committee on Information Literacy.
- Established an ACRL ULS Outstanding Professional Development Award, with a cash award of \$1,000 donated by Library Juice Academy.
- Approved the establishment of an Idaho ACRL Chapter.
- Approved the renewal of the Image

Resources Interest Group.

- Approved the renewal of the Librarianship in For-Profit Educational Institutions Interest Group.
- Approved the renewal of the Residency Interest Group.
- Approved the renewal of the Universal Accessibility Interest Group.
- Approved the renewal of the Virtual World Interest Group.
- Approved resolution of thanks for Steven J. Bell, chair of ACRL's Kick Start the Future campaign. *zz*