

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

SOCIAL STUDENT MEDIA:
A SYLLABUS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR STUDENT MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

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Master of Arts Mass Communication

This thesis project consists of social student media best practices in a downloadable PDF handbook located at SocialSyllabi.com. To create the handbook, an online survey was conducted of California community college instructors to determine what social media curriculum, if any, was being taught, and how journalism students responded to social media, including interest level in learning social media tools. Interviews were conducted to further identify what type of instruction was needed for a basic social media outline for student media. The findings of the survey and interviews showed that a very basic lesson plan of how to use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube would be most beneficial, and led to the creation of the PDF Handbook located at SocialSyllabi.com. This handbook is easily accessible and can be printed for reference, giving those associated with student media a simple and comprehensive “get started” guide for success with social media.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Journalism, as the world knows it, is constantly changing. From the first printing press, to the telegraph, to the radio, to television, to the Internet, and now, to mobile, the very definition of journalism, news, and media information is constantly evolving. The shifting trends in news media have had an impact on the reach and continuation of student media, which is a vital part of student's curriculum and education. By giving students the opportunity to produce journalism in a "real-world" setting, the lessons learned are often much more relevant than reading about something in a book. However, as academic institutions and organizations face staggering budget cuts, student media suffer. Many university and community college student newspapers have ceased publication entirely, while some have transitioned to digital versions and others barely survive, misunderstanding how or failing to adopt to new technologies.

This thesis project aims to discover how student media can effectively and simply embrace social media for success. The specific research questions for this thesis were:

1. How have student media at California community colleges responded to the rise of social media as journalism tools?

2. How should student media employ social media in their work?

The first research question was answered through a survey of community college student media employees and in-depth phone interviews, and the second research question was answered by the creation of a student media guide.

Today, news is a mobile 24/7 operation, and social media is the newest factor in this evolutionary shift. Social media is comprised of a number of websites that have been set up to enable and encourage users to create networks of acquaintances and to share messages and audiovisual material available to a wider public. Industry insiders call the three most internationally popular social media platforms the “Big Three” which Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (McQuail, 2010).

While some might argue that journalism education programs are behind in training future journalists to embrace new media, recent results from the Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Enrollments (2011) indicate that 80 percent of all U.S. university programs in journalism and mass communication have made changes to their curricula in the last two years to reflect digital advancement. Peter Bhatia, president of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, said

As this survey shows, many, many programs are embracing the necessary and ongoing curricular change required to prepare students for the digital world.

They should be applauded and encouraged to keep pushing ahead and to be doing so in a timely and continuing fashion” (“80% of J&MC Programs...”, 2012, p. 2).

But are these curriculum changes enough to save student newspapers? In a recent news article by CNN’s Keith Matheny, four major student newspapers, including the 140-year-old *Daily Illini* at the University of Illinois and the 141-year-old *The Daily Californian* at the University of California, Berkeley are listed as facing an uncertain future. As a former CSU Northridge Daily Sundial reporter and editor, the impact of working in a student newsroom had an impressive effect on my career, education, and

work ethic. Student media are a crucial part of any college experience – not just for the student journalists learning to apply real-world reporting skills, but also for the community, faculty, and above all, students.

In an era of shrinking university and community college budgets, student media are being scrutinized as readership of mainstream mass newspapers decreases drastically. Of 78 community college student news publications in the state of California, four have ceased publication in the past year as budgets dwindle and readership wanes. However, the journalism industry is not dying – it is just being refocused, as the world evolves from print to digital. For this thesis project, community college student media were examined to see how they were responding to the rise of social media and from that data, a practical handbook was developed to help students better incorporate emerging practices for social media into their work.

These interviews explored how the roles of journalists and educators have changed in regards to new media, and how these changes can be harnessed to adapt to a new model of participatory, user-focused student media that is encouraged, rather than threatened, by technology.

Student journalists were the ideal group to focus on for this project, partially because they have not yet been completely socialized into the norms of the professional world and because they are using social media exclusively for their personal use. While social media is not always a requirement of a journalism career, knowing proper usage and strategy is becoming more paramount to understanding today's impact of mass media.

In addition, there seems to be very few resources for student journalists looking to immerse themselves in learning social media. The goal of this project was to create an easy to understand handbook that would facilitate a basic understanding of the most commonly used social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The first section of this literature review will explain the findings and connections of previous research and literature focused on social media, digital journalism, and student media. The rapidly-evolving nature of the Internet has caused rapid transformation in what mass-culture now deems as journalism, and through the work of scholars and industry experts, it can be analyzed with a critical eye how these transformations will continue to affect a technology-reliant and news-seeking society. The role of social media technology in journalism will continue to have an impact on society, and by understanding the origins and trends behind it, lessons can be learned as well as put into effect for maximum impact.

Theoretical Framework

News, information, and entertainment generated by professional journalists, citizen journalists, and ordinary people are diffused through mass media to a range of audiences through a multitude of platforms. By studying key theories that inform the processes of mass communication, we can apply historical knowledge to today's new media advancements. One of the core concepts of mass communication studies is the public sphere.

Habermas (1969) states that a public sphere is a "space" which provides a more or less autonomous open arena for political discussion and debate. According to Habermas (1969), a form of the public sphere emerged in the 18th-century debating society, where people met in coffee houses and other venues to engage in public discourse on political

happenings and projects. One of the roles of the public sphere was to serve as a checks-and-balances system for the government through the creation of public opinion.

New communication phenomenon, like social media and user-generated content (UGC), have spurred new ways of thinking about public spheres. The public sphere theory, when applied in conjunction with user-generated content, reveals that many forms of user-generated content are not concerned with documenting or commenting on the public domain (politics, weather, the economy) and focus more on the personal or private issues such as individual accomplishments, family life, workplace issues, travel, and pets. While seemingly trivial, this expanded range of issues also means that some optimistic researchers now argue that hierarchies of gender, class, and ethnicity are being acknowledged (Oregret, 2012). That is because social media and user-generated content arguably give everybody access to the public sphere, and these hierarchies are no longer at risk of being left out.

Rise of mass self-communication

Although the Internet has existed for more than 50 years, it wasn't until the creation of the World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee in 1991 that it became widely accessible to the public. The World Wide Web launched a new form of interactive communication, with the potential to shift the traditional one-directional flow of media information. *Mass self-communication* emerged from the idea of mass communication, which is information that can potentially reach a large, global, audience. By 1999, Web 2.0 was coined to describe websites that use non-static technology and are focused on user-generated content in a virtual community. Web 2.0 was the home of the first interactive blogging communities like LiveJournal and Friendster. Such tools, according

to Castells, are “self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many who communicate with many” (Castells, 2011, p. 70). In other words, they enabled mass-self communication.

As a considerable body of evidence has demonstrated, the Internet, in the diverse range of its applications, is the communication fabric of our lives, for work, for personal connection, for social networking, for information, for entertainment, for public services, for politics, and for religion” (Castells, 2011, p. 64).

By appropriating new forms of communication, people have built their own unique forms of mass communication via text messaging, blogging, wikis, tweeting, and podcasts. According to a 2011 study by social marketing firm Simply Zesty, 30 billion pieces of content are shared on Facebook each month, Wikipedia hosts over 17 million articles, and people upload 3,000 images to Flickr every minute. These figures suggest how frequently the new forms of mass self-communication are used.

Although more traditional news outlets are finding ways to embrace the new genre of mass communication, Castells said that the “growing interaction between horizontal and vertical networks of communication does not mean that the mainstream media are taking over the new, autonomous forms of content generation and distribution” (Castells, 2011, p. 70). Horizontal communication is typically defined as communication between people who have the same level of authority or fall within the same social class, i.e., two middle class people talking to each other. Vertical communication is communication between those who are on different levels of authority or in different socioeconomic classes, i.e., a university professor speaking to a student. Castells’ quote

suggests that social media and new forms of technology are starting to dissolve these two brackets of communication, by allowing instant access to each other online.

New Forms of Journalism – The Rise of Online News

Initially, most newspaper publishers misunderstood the web, seeing it mainly as a new way of delivering print content. An unexpected financial downturn in newspaper profitability and share value starting in 2004 coupled by a sense of crisis and desperation was what ultimately encouraged new creativity and willingness to embrace digital. Then, a dramatic change in newspaper culture occurred in late 2004, when the industry realized that tools and skills of content production had been transferred to the people formerly known as readers (Rosen, 2006).

Early studies found newspapers often failed to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in online news. For example, a 2008 analysis of the editorial content of 10 online news media outlets in the United States, France, Britain, Germany, and Russia, found that all of the websites lacked multimedia content. In addition, there was an absence of options for direct contact and interaction with journalists (such as a reporter's e-mail address or chat link) and some stories were missing bylines, giving the reader no way of contacting the person who gathered and wrote the story (Vujnovic, et al. 2012).

Online news represents a change not only in medium and content, but also some argue that it adds more variety to the content mix – giving the public access to diverse news perspectives. Because of this, online news may weaken journalism's agenda-setting role, the process of intended or unintended media influence that demonstrate relative importance of news by the order of presentation (McQuail, 2010).

However, online news disappointed its advocates by its failure to deliver on some aspects of its promise of a more participatory journalism. A 2008 study of online newspapers in nine countries revealed that there was a reluctance to open the production process to citizens (Franklin, 2008).

While some media organizations were creative in their user-generated content experience, almost all applications of user-generated content were subject to the traditional editorial guidelines and principles of ethical journalism. This means that user-generated content was still vetted for accuracy and overt bias. “The ‘we write, you read’ principle still rules the newsroom and UGC is placed within this framework” (Jonsson & Ornebring, 2011, p. 128).

Despite earlier reluctance, news outlets were forced to acknowledge and adapt to technologies like social media (which are not one-way news publishing), and instead embrace a collaborative model of publishing—using a community network to disseminate news as information. They embody an “ethic of participation,” an element of a larger social shift from individual expertise to collective intelligence. According to Lewis (2010), “This perceptual shift from ‘news organization’ to ‘community network’ requires a degree of de-professionalization, as journalists must abandon the top-down authority and status of professional distance that is associated with one-way news publishing” (Lewis, 2010, p. 171).

User-generated Content

User-generated content is defined as the production of content by the general public rather than paid professionals or experts (Deuze et al., 2007). Participatory journalism is defined as any kind of news work at the hands of professionals and

amateurs, of journalists and citizens, and of users and producers benchmarked by “commons-based peer production” (Deuze et al., 2007). Conversely, Paulussen and Ugille (2008) define participatory journalism as “the wide variety of initiatives undertaken by mainstream media to enhance the integration of all kinds of user contributions in the making of news.” Citizen journalism is the practice of citizens with no formal training in journalism collecting and distributing news content (Netzley & Hemmer, 2012).

User-generated content and citizen journalism give way to participatory journalism. With consideration about monetization and the role of the consumer as the producer, the political economy of user-generated content is brought into question. Jonsson and Ornebring (2011) analyzed online newspapers in the United Kingdom and Sweden. They categorized the use of user-generated content by identifying content features as *low* (audience members as consumers, using features like RSS feeds, polls, and rankings such as Facebook “likes”), *medium* (audience members as “prosumers,” a mix between a professional and a consumer, as well as comments, contact e-mails, Q&A) and *high* (audience members as producers—forums, chat rooms, wikis, reader’s blogs, reader’s articles, images and videos, and reader’s podcasts) (Jonsson & Ornebring, 2011). What they found is that while all newspapers examined made room in their publications for user-generated content,

UGC in mainstream newspapers is more common in the sphere of popular culture and the private sphere than in the sphere of information. Content is related to degree of participation, such that a higher degree of participation is generally

allowed in relation to private sphere content and popular culture content”
(Jonsson & Ornebring, 2011, p. 135).

In addition, the authors found that the highest instances of user-generated content were in sections like health and travel, whereas “user-generated news texts, interviews, and other types of news material are virtually non-existent” (Jonsson & Ornebring, 2011, p. 135)

UGC in practice has very little to do with journalism as it is traditionally understood and defined, although it is often discussed in terms of public journalism, citizen journalism, or participatory journalism. This is not really a shift in power over news media content in the mainstream online news media, even if there is a higher degree of participation and interactivity (Jonsson & Ornebring, 2011, p. 140).

In a 2008 study of two leading online newspapers in six European countries, an analysis of participatory features concluded that there were few features that let citizens produce content themselves. The most popular citizen-involved features included invitations to submit audio-visual materials and story ideas. In addition, most sites had links to branded social media pages and a few had space for citizen blogs. However, few of the online newspapers used tools that are regarded as efficient for community-building, “something that citizen media initiatives have found to be a key aspect to engage participants and make them feel responsible for the quality of their contributions” (Domingo et al., 2008, p. 334).

Domingo and his peers found that the “distribution” or social networking features in particular were underused, with only one website out of 16 offering a “karma system,”

which offers users ‘points’ based on activity, and only two out of 14 sites allowed the user to tag content or link share based on interest. This is relevant because while this study was conducted in 2008, many would safely assume that in 2013, as the prevalence of Facebook and Twitter have grown, that news organizations would have by now embraced the share, link, and tag functionality. Specific tools for article sharing such as Digg.com, del.icio.us, and Technorati were also not widely used in the analyzed sites.

This research and previous studies prove that while the use of user-generated content in journalism faced initial reluctance, a study from 2010 has shown that over time, users have increasingly been encouraged to become part of the news distribution process. In a content analysis of a Swedish newspaper from 2005 through 2010, opportunities to participate in the news were infrequent in 2005, and in 2010, a host of new interactive features encouraged user participation. These included commenting, blog links, “liking,” or ranking articles (also referred to as a karma points system), grading an article, e-mailing to friends, posting on social media networks, or contributing to news articles by fact checking or eyewitness comments (Ots, 2012). These behaviors correspond to the five journalistic production processes proposed by Domingo et al. (2008), which include information gathering, selection/filtering, processing/editing, distribution, and interpretation.

Today, it is clear that journalism has immersed itself into the age of participatory news. Some might think that the answer to the question of how and why participatory journalism and user-generated content should be integrated into journalism is as simple as closing the feedback loop (Bruns, 2006, p. 93). A feedback loop, as it applies to journalism and mass communication, is an open understanding and development of

society's shared consensus on news and current events. The feedback loop is the opportunity for the public to engage in, comment on, debate, discuss, and question the media. "What must happen for the new media ecosystem to be sustainable is the attraction to and involvement in processes of political deliberation of the greatest possible number of all members of democratic society" (Bruns, 2006, p. 93).

Some researchers and industry experts have observed the media industry and their struggles to stay afloat and have wondered whether citizen journalism can help fill a gap in local coverage. Although many communities are served by citizen journalism news websites like Patch.com, these entities could not begin to take the place of reporting conducted by paid, trained journalists (Netzley & Hemmer, 2012).

In a recent study, more than 300 university students were surveyed if they thought that a news article written by a professional journalist was more credible than one written by a citizen. The majority of the students who participated in the survey did not differentiate between the credibility of a news article written by a professional journalist and untrained citizen. This finding does not support the research that people who read the news consider journalist-produced news articles to be more credible than citizen-produced articles, although it does support other researchers' findings that readers do not care much about professional norms that go into writing a news article (Netzley & Hemmer, 2012).

As many of the sources in this literature review have touched upon, the pressures for news organizations to implement interactive features are increasing, but the challenge this presents to the traditional idea of journalism as a professional identity can cause organizations to resist adapting to these newer forms of media production.

In addition, while the general public seems to want more interaction on news websites, when users are given the option for increasingly elaborate interactive options, users are easily confused and less likely to comprehend the news being presented (Bruns et al., 2007, p. 324). While this article was published six years ago when interactive options were less sophisticated and less intuitive, it holds merit in that digital journalism should be designed for maximum ease of use.

It must be clear that a more interactive, dialogical, or participatory style of news work is currently very much “under construction” in that it occurs in its most advanced forms on net-native and generally non-mainstream online platforms; and that more or less traditional makers and users of news are cautiously embracing its potential—which embrace is not without problems both for the producers and consumers involved (Deuze et al., 2007, p. 324).

Social Media’s Impact on Journalism

Social media, which is an interactive online media form that encourages public discourse, information sharing, and personal networking, has emerged as a powerful communication tool in the past several years. While many people may only consider social media as websites like Facebook and Twitter, the reality is that social media are spread among a wide range of different communication tools such as Facebook, Twitter, SMS text messaging, blogging, photo sharing, and video networks. A key aspect to consider about social media’s influence on journalism is the very core of social media—the *social* aspect of communicating, discussing, engaging, and participating in web content—and what that means when applied to student media, and particularly, how it drives readership to student news. According to a recent study of top online news outlets

in the U.S., social media are emerging as a powerful news referral service (Mitchell, Rosenstiel & Christian, 2012).

“The rise of social media recommendations at this point does not appear to be coming at the expense of people going directly to news sites or searching for news topics they are interested in” (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012, p. 5). This suggests that social media news consumption is supplemental, meaning that one does not simply replace the consumption of news produced by professional journalists. This information is crucial as more journalistic organizations explore how social and digital media can increase their news reach rather than replace it.

In addition to studying the role of how people read news distributed via social media, researchers also explored the types of people who use social media for news, and the differences in platform usage in these readers. For example, Facebook users get news from family and friends, but Twitter users get news from more varied sources, including family, friends, news organizations, and brands. When one thinks of the differences in functionality in these two platforms, this differentiation makes sense. Facebook is more of a closed network, in which users have to approve who can see their content by “friending” that person. While some users’ privacy settings allow others who are not their friends to see their “likes,” interests and posts, the average Facebook user must add someone as a “friend” before that person is able to see the full extent of their profile.

For users of the public Twitter feed, which is viewable by the general public and not restricted to only certain followers, content posted by anyone with a public account can be seen by anyone, and they can choose to see others’ content. This provides for a wider variety of content accessible. The authors, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, and Christian

(2012), compiled a list of the most striking social media and journalism facts over the past few years, detailing that nine percent of digital news consumers very often follow news recommendations from Facebook or Twitter. That compares with more than a third, 36%, who very often go directly to news organizations using either a computer, tablet, or mobile device. Thirty-two percent access news from searches very often, and 29% frequently turn to some sort of news aggregation site or app. Among primarily digital news consumers, (excluding those who say they do not access online news), at least 52% say they get some news from one of the two leading social networks, Facebook and Twitter. However, 92% of users still go directly to news websites for news, and 85% use search engines to find news (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012).

According to the popular web traffic ranker Alexa.com, Facebook is the number one most-visited website worldwide. In October 2012, Facebook reached one billion registered users. According to comScore, Facebook users spent an average of 405 minutes each on the site in January 2012. By contrast, the average reported time spent on one of the top 25 news sites is just under 12 minutes per month (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012).

According to the Pew Research Center's survey, Facebook and Twitter are pathways to news, but their role "may not be as large as some have suggested" (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012, p. 2). The population that uses these social networks for news is still relatively small, especially when compared to the demographic of people who do so very often.

While the numbers suggest that social media are not a sole source for news gathering, there are gaps in the literature as to the effects social media has on readership.

It is important to note however, that of the two primary social networks, more than twice as many digital news consumers follow news recommendations from Facebook than Twitter (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012). This is a fascinating parallel as most of the existing research on social media and its effects on news places emphasis on Twitter rather than Facebook. Perhaps the reason for that is because Twitter is more of an “immediate” platform in announcing breaking news, in that Twitter users are more apt to be on Twitter all the time, even receiving notifications on their phone of breaking news. Twitter has numerous connections with citizen journalism, backpack journalism, and eyewitness reporting.

However, the authors are careful in admitting that the social populations do merge their sources. While Facebook leads as the number one platform on which people post, share, and read news, 82% of those who get news via Twitter also get some news via Facebook, and 40% of those people do so very often. Interestingly, though, Facebook users are much less likely to be on Twitter than visa versa. Twenty-seven percent of Facebook news followers also get news via Twitter, with only 11% doing so somewhat or very often. “Thirteen percent of digital news consumers follow news recommendations on both Facebook and Twitter—but fewer than 4% do so very often” (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012).

Hermida (2011) argues that micro-blogging social media platforms like Twitter are forms of “ambient journalism,” which means it is embodied by asynchronous, lightweight, and continuous systems of social media such as Twitter and Facebook. New technologies, such as Twitter facilitate the immediate dissemination of digital fragments of news – meaning these fragments, or small tweets, are sent out as soon as they occur,

often via mobile phones, giving social media a true “on the go” capability (Hermida, 2011).

Hermida (2011) argues that Twitter should be viewed as both a network for the rapid dissemination of breaking news in addition to a system that alerts journalists to trends or issues hovering under the typical news radar (Hermida, 2011, p. 6).

Social media technologies like Twitter are part of a range of Internet technologies enabling the disintermediation of news and undermining the gate keeping function. Micro-blogging can be seen as a form of participatory or citizen journalism where citizens report without recourse to institutional journalism (Hermida, 2011, p. 4).

The real-time, immediate communication model of Twitter is what makes it unique in a social space, as tweets allow individuals to be aware of discussions without being contributors; and in this way, it can be seen as a system that alerts journalists to trends, issues or upcoming topics (Hermida, 2010).

This news mix becomes increasingly intensified as newer forms of news gathering and news media emerge, such as Twitter. Beyond socioeconomic, cultural, and racial indications, there is a major distinction among casual Internet users and those who are “Internet savvy,” explaining that the Internet savvy are far more likely to use and understand new media such as Twitter (Murthy, 2011). While Twitter seems to gain most of the news attention for its implications as a new media technology in journalism, Facebook is also an important contender in its role of delivering breaking news, a method in which the dissemination of news stories spreads faster because of the re-posting and sharing by people within a Facebook network.

Facebook is clearly embedded in participatory culture, where the more static display of personal profile information is framed by a variety of communicative channels for interaction. Facebook's community is best described as a "networked public": a public transformed by the practices and potential of networked media. In particular, the networks in Facebook are characterized by collapsed contexts where groups usually segmented in offline contexts are brought together in one environment (Page, 2010, p. 3).

The network environment and participatory culture are the perfect place for the content placed forth in the social network to be small in size—aka, "small stories." Small stories are characterized by "fluidity, plasticity, and open-endedness" (Page, 2010, p. 4). The small stories theory (Page, 2010) also explains why Twitter works well as a new media unit, for its sole content is also succinct and small in content, as is YouTube, where the content is easily digested in a visual format.

The changing of the news industry saw a shift from print to digital interactive as a result of the convergence of new media. Consumers now use new media technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to engage with "old media content," seeing the Internet as a "vehicle for collective problem solving, public deliberation, and grassroots creativity" (Jenkins, 2012, p. 175). Jenkins (2012) goes on to explain why convergence is so troubling to many of the makers of the media—in these new media technologies, companies, corporations, or news organizations can no longer control the way their message is presented, as a link can be posted with an opinion, a video can be made with clear bias, and users can react in every which way to any bit of content.

Traditionally, the challenge for news distributors has been making the leap into web publishing, but now, this challenge is intensified because simply being on the web is no longer enough; news distributors also must be on social media (Braun & Gillespie, 2011). A news organization must now consider the overwhelming connectivity to the public made possible by the social Internet. Users can now comment, tweet, share, provide leads, information, photos, videos, sources, and other content. In addition, it is common for the more active and outspoken users of a newspaper's website to publicly challenge web content and its sources, facts, and journalists' writing skills.

Online content platforms such as YouTube and Flickr, social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, and online communities such as LiveJournal and Daily Kos are described as "digital intermediaries" (Braun & Gillespie, 2011, p. 384). These content platforms are designed not just to produce content but also host user-generated content from users all around the world. As news producers increasingly find themselves acting as more "community moderators," or "handlers of content," the digital intermediaries are finding themselves hosting not just videos of laughing babies or viral charitable videos such as KONY 2012 but also content that includes elements of reporting, commentary, and public debate that news organizations traditionally provided (Braun & Gillespie, 2011).

One aspect that creators of social media platforms likely didn't consider was how direct of an impact they would have on the news-making process. Twitter launched its social platform in 2006 with a prompt to users asking, "What are you doing?" When it asked the question of "What are you doing?" Twitter was meant to be focused on the concept of personal status updates of up to 140 characters. In 2009, the company

changed the question to “What’s happening?” —a clear indicator that the role of Twitter had very much changed to include an emphasis on news.

This type of shift indicates that just as news organizations have found themselves migrating their content online and having to host user participation around their journalism, Twitter and other Web 2.0 content platforms, or digital intermediaries, “have found themselves hosting forms of content that look suspiciously like news” (Braun & Gillespie, 2011, p. 390) Braun and Gillespie (2011) explain that social networks “stumbled upon” this function of hosting news rather than encouraging it, and that these digital intermediaries have increasingly been used as the starting point for eyewitness news. In the past few years alone, the 2008 and 2012 U.S. presidential elections, natural disasters in Haiti and Chile, a commercial airliner crash-landing in the Hudson River, political protests in Iran, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the death of Osama bin Laden, and the Arab Spring uprisings as prompts for eyewitness reporting, citizen journalism, and public commentary launched via social media.

Research suggests that a new breed of hybrid digital/print journalists are using social media to better promote their work. Lasora (2012) conducted a content analysis case study examining over 500 different journalists’ tweets, ranging from news anchors to print journalists to editors. While combing through over 22,000 tweets, Lasora discovered that Twitter is mostly used by journalists for self-promotion and as another platform for journalistic gatekeeping. Almost 16 percent of the journalists’ tweets primarily offered opinions, and an additional 27 percent of the tweets that primarily conveyed information also contained at least one element of opinion. In addition, more

than 15 percent of the journalists' tweets were retweets, meaning journalists were sharing their gatekeeping role by including postings from others (Lasora, 2012).

Lasora (2012) explains that while this data reveals some habits of microblogging journalists online, "scholars continue to debate exactly how the definition of journalism is changing in light of digital platforms such as Twitter" (Lasora, 2012, p. 30).

Ethical Concerns with New Media

One major challenge facing newsrooms that embrace new media is that the rise of citizen and participatory journalism via social media can sometimes blur the line between producers and consumers of media. While some of the sources mentioned in this literature review feel that there is a risk of social media blurring the boundaries of journalism (Kreiss, Finn, & Turner, 2010; Jonsson & Ornebring, 2011), other authors like Stassen (2010) argue that these fears are unfounded. "Although news organizations use it to send out news flashes, the tool as it is at the moment, cannot facilitate well-researched, unbiased and informed reporting—and it is not meant to. The real value of social media to journalism lies in its interconnectedness" (Stassen, 2010, p. 13).

The four major points of the Society of Professional Journalist's Code of Ethics—seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable—can be applied to social media, user-generated content, and digital media practices (Meyers, Wyatt, Borden, & Wasserman, 2011).

The first tenant of the code is to "Seek truth and report it." As this applies to social media, it means to be conscious of retweeting, sharing, or endorsing digital work without first verifying and confirming the source. The Associated Press shares guidelines on what is appropriate in social media, specifically calling out Twitter, warning users that

even an action as simple as a retweet signifies endorsement. The next ethical code to consider when using social media or UGC for journalism is to “Minimize harm.” A false story or hoax can quickly cause panic or create consequences—such as the 2008 iReport story by CNN that reported that Apple founder Steve Jobs had suffered a heart attack. Apple stock fell 5.4% that day, and even experienced a further drop after the news was confirmed as false (Meyers, Wyatt, Borden, & Wasserman, 2011). A more recent example includes the incorrect reporting by CNN and Fox News that the Supreme Court health care ruling in June 2012 had been partially overturned, resulting in even President Obama initially believing that was the truth. With the immediacy of social media and the spread of information, it is more important than ever to be sure any facts reported on social media are factual.

The third edict of the SPJ Code is to “Act independently.” Passing on a report of a study by blog or tweet without independently verifying the information goes against the premise of independent journalism, but as Meyers, Wyatt, Borden, & Wasserman (2011) said,

Independence, however, is a difficult value to navigate when journalists are working in a fast-flowing network of information in which the public can receive, redistribute, or re-create reports from a multiplicity of sources—and when people may expect reports on social media to be tentative and developing (Meyers, Wyatt, Borden, & Wasserman, 2011, p.67).

The fourth principle in the SPJ code commands journalists to “Be accountable,” which proves even more important in the event of debunking a hoax or admitting errors.

In social media and user-generated content, transparency is crucial as the margin of error is higher and reputation management becomes increasingly important online.

Going forward, it will be important for journalism students, instructors, and journalists to think broadly and creatively about ethical use of social media and other online tools while maintaining a critical stance on information reports regardless of the source. The duties expressed in the SPJ Code and elsewhere provide an enduring ethical grounding for journalism that is both innovative and reflective” (Meyers, Wyatt, Borden, & Wasserman, 2011, p. 68).

A study was conducted of new media professionals to describe the ethical impact and best working practices of digital journalism. Paulussen and Ugille (2008) interviewed several working journalists from two Belgian newspapers, both of which had been trying to incorporate user-generated content and participatory journalism into their newsroom. They found that most of their interviewees had concerns of user contributions being perceived as less credible and lacking objectivity, independence, and accountability. However, the authors noted that their interview subjects seemed less inclined to embrace user-generated content not because of their fears, but more because of concerns about workload and structural organization.

Our interview findings confirm that the main factors for not using user-generated content in news making relate to the professional newsroom culture: tasks such as the management and moderation of user-generated content seem to be counterintuitive to the current work division, daily routines, and professional values in the newsrooms (Paulussen & Ugille, 2008, p. 35).

To prove that citizen journalism and user-generated content can work in some aspects, Deuze et al. (2007) studied the effectiveness and usage of participatory journalism in today's journalism industry with a case study of news organizations in four countries—the United States, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands. What they found was that the approach to participatory journalism is usually always a hybrid between institutional/commercial support and community engagement.

One of the results of the case studies was that the convergence of journalism and participatory users seems to “instill increased levels of transparency in the media system, where producers and consumers of content can ‘see’ each other at work, as they both play each other’s roles” (Bruns et al., 2007, p. 327).

Media analyst Steve Yelvington was quoted in a 2006 blog post as saying, My friends in our newspaper division spent many months wrestling with basic questions about content, tone, and especially, civic processes. They didn’t come up with a label, and they certainly didn’t call it citizen journalism. But they did come up with a catchphrase: A community in conversation with itself.’ (Yelvington, 2006)

One of the four news organizations studied, Skoeps.nl, which is Dutch for “Scoop,” has a user-generated content partnership with the School for Journalism in Utrecht. Freshmen in the program are sent throughout the country with camera-equipped cell phones to shoot video for the website. According to the website, the idea came from the November 2004 murder of Dutch film director Theodore van Gogh and the July 2005 public transport bomb attacks in London, where the first images and video came from eyewitnesses using their cell phones to show their friends and news media what had

happened. In addition, the Skoeps website has a team of student journalists who manage community moderation during the night.

What the authors found consistent in all four of their case studies on participatory journalism was that,

Ultimately, convergence culture in journalism relies on the readiness of both sides of the equation: participants must bring and/or build an understanding of how to operate in a news ‘produsage’ environment just as much as journalists must develop a sense of how to reinvent themselves as co-creators of culture (Bruns et al., 2007, p. 334).

Social Media’s Impact on Student Media

What will be vital to the success of journalism education in universities is that the education and teaching approach must take on the ideas and goals of news innovators while at the same time teaching the traditional platform of ethics, writing, and solid reporting to students (Lewis, 2012). Several scholars (Valhberg, 2008; Lewis, 2010; Meyers, 2010; Newton, 2012) have considered how student media can maximize the potential of digital media.

If a user-generated or social media content campaign is to be successful, it must follow major elements of content that appeals to a young demographic in a university setting. The problem with web-based news as a whole is that it is just “too much” (Valhberg, 2008). When Vahlberg polled a group of 17-22 year-olds to determine how they felt about eight election-focused news sites, including mainstream news such as CNN.com and some more youth-focused such as think.mtv.com, she found that in general, the subjects felt that the news websites simply were not designed for them.

People who participate in the construction of information in online newsrooms have an idea of what kind of users they would like to reach and inscribe this idea in technical and communication domains such as interface design, media choice, and information flows. Two dimensions of this inscription appear as particularly relevant in the present cases: users' technical expertise and their position as either consumers or producers of content (Boczkowski, 2004, p. 175).

The Model News Content Site

Scholars have suggested there are several remedies for an idealized news content site or application for all types of news consumers. The first is that “most news sites look to be made for news junkies—people who are already familiar with the people and issues. Interestingly, young people are not the only ones who would be interested in a different kind of site...we heard the same ‘too much’ refrain from adults who are light or inexperienced news consumers” (Vahlberg, 2008, p. 31).

Secondly, a more customized news website or application for a younger demographic would help make the process of becoming informed more enjoyable. “Most stories are too detailed; few distill things down, like Wikipedia does, so they can clearly understand the basics” (Vahlberg, 2008, p. 32).

Lastly, the site and design must be instantly recognizable, with immediately understood organization and navigation. Headlines should quickly and concisely describe the story, and the information should be presented in manageable segments so that it is not overwhelming but gives more depth when needed.

In short, news organizations need to pay attention to what young people say about what makes them tune out: too much information, too many details, too many choices at once without enough guidance as to which are more important; too much unrelieved text (text that isn't broken up by a new paragraph); stories that go on and on; endless coverage of trivial stories, and features that aren't immediately and intuitively understandable (Valhberg, 2008, p. 32).

Another aspect to making news more readable and more engaging to younger demographics is to increase the amount of student-produced media. South and Katcef (2009) explored the role of students in the ever-transforming journalism industry. The authors identify several universities across the United States, such as Florida International University, which generates stories for daily newspapers all across the state, and Arizona State University, which produces stories for television stations in Phoenix, Tucson, and Yuma, that have collaborative partnerships with established news organizations, and how student contributions are shaping and contributing to the production of news. In addition, California State University, Northridge, is listed for its student work with bilingual multimedia projects with American New Media.

South and Katcef (2009) describe the partnership between students and established media agencies as a win-win situation. Students get the hands-on experience, and news organizations get content, which, in today's short-staffed newsroom, is a gift with low overhead. The partnerships also offer several more advantages: for students, in that sources take them more seriously when stories are for the public; for the university, in that collaborative journalism partnerships raise a universities' profile; and for the

media partners—in that they are “scrambling to reach young readers” but can access a needed fresh perspective (South & Katcef, 2009, p. 32).

However, not everyone is convinced that student journalism partnerships are positive. Like many of the concerns about participatory journalism being used to replace the profession of journalists, some feel that using student journalists cheapens the role of journalists, and that it is justification for understaffed newsrooms (South & Katcef, 2009). In particular, journalists report feeling angry that students will be used as lower-cost solutions to fill roles that were once for full-time reporters. Several others have remarked that using student-produced journalism is insulting to an industry and craft that veterans have spent over 25 years practicing. These emotions are certainly justifiable, however, in an industry that has changed as drastically as it has, it’s likely that student produced media will become more common.

In summary, the monumental transformation of the news-making process to include increasingly digital activity and placement has had indelible effects on the readership and dissemination of news. Some scholars and researchers argue (Newton, 2012; Stassen, 2010; Vahlberg, 2008) that the newer journalists emerging from universities and academic institutions must be taught in a completely new manner, wholeheartedly adopting the approaching shift of journalism to information. In addition, learning the differences between user-generated content, citizen journalism and participatory journalism, and how they can contribute to a news organization’s digital success, is imperative for survival in a digital or space. This idea is confirmed by the theories of Castells (2011) and Habermas (1969), who emphasize the role of mass self-communication, and how the public sphere operates in regards to democratizing news.

These elements of content provided by a public, either independently or through coordination with professional journalists, are elevated by the use of social media. The information and messages are spread through out open networks to further disseminate the news, serving as a tool for real-time reporting or a vehicle for sharing.

All of this information, some of it seemingly inconsequential, has tremendous capability for changing the process of journalism education for students and educators. As additional case studies on social media and user-generated content emerge, it becomes more and more obvious that social media and user-generated content merging with journalism is not simply a trend, nor should it be taken lightly.

Newspapers have neither stood still in the midst of major technological changes, nor incorporated them from a blank slate, but appropriated novel capabilities such as multimedia, interactivity, variable publication cycles, and simultaneously micro-local and global reach from the starting point of print's culture (Boczkowski, 2004, p. 178).

As media scholars have explored, the very process of journalism is changing, and is less about being a "profession" and more of a practice of sharing and transmitting information. This shift absolutely must be taught to students via student media—if they are to succeed in such a volatile field, they must understand the challenges and opportunities that will present themselves very early on. "From telegraph to television, newspapers' ability to adapt to changing circumstances has always provided them with a survival strategy and secured their future" (Franklin, 2008, p. 31).

Connections to thesis project

Producing a web-based “Emerging Practices in Social Media” handbook for student media will benefit journalism educators and students, and show them that while this shift can be intimidating, it is ultimately an industrious opportunity for the community voice to be amplified. The research and theories presented in this literature review support a handbook of guidelines called “Social Syllabi,” for how to best utilize social and digital mediums for student media, and will help identify ways in which educators and students can smoothly and successfully integrate social media into their programs.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, the methods used to complete this thesis project will be explained. The purpose of this thesis project was to determine the ways California community college's student media programs have responded to the rise in social media and to create a student-specific social media "how to" handbook for student newspapers. First, existing social media platforms for California community colleges were examined. Then, an online survey was created and sent to California community college instructors, which was then followed up by in-depth interviews. Finally, the information was compiled and analyzed to create a student media handbook offering basic social media tips and practicum.

The specific research questions were:

1. How have student media at California community colleges responded to the rise of social media as journalism tools?
2. How should student media employ social media in their work?

CREATING THE HANDBOOK

Survey of Community College Instructors

A survey was the method of information gathering used for this thesis project as a survey is a low-cost way to investigate problems in realistic settings. The survey questions were written in both open-ended and closed-ended styles, with some multiple choice questions and some write-in questions. Some of the questions offered the respondent the option to skip the question, as some of the answers were not applicable in all cases, ie, "Why is this student media not using social media?" Perhaps the respondent

wouldn't know the information to answer that question, so the option to skip was provided.

“A descriptive survey attempts to describe or document current conditions or attitudes—that is, to explain what exists at the moment (Wimmer & Dominick, 2010, p. 167).” The survey of California community colleges would attempt to explain how and why student media should employ social media in their work, and to gather insights on to what social media tools and tactics had succeeded or floundered in the past.

Wimmer and Dominick (2010) suggest that survey writers do not include questions that ask for highly detailed information, so specific questions about analytics, traffic and page views were purposely omitted. In addition, as noted in general in the social media industry, the amount of “likes,” “followers” and “views” is sometimes seen as either embarrassing if low, or boasting if high, so specific questions about how many likes, followers, and views were avoided.

To prepare in writing questions for the survey, 50 California community college websites and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter were examined to help develop the types of questions being asked. The list of these websites and social media platforms was pulled from the Journalism Association of Community Colleges from their website, JACCOOnline.org.

The survey questions were written to focus on students' experiences with social media, as from initial review, the social media presence of most community college student media was sparse. No pilot or subgroup of the survey was conducted, as finding respondents proved rather difficult as the time frame of the survey was around holiday breaks, a time when most colleges are closed for a short timeframe. In addition,

conducting a pilot or subgroup for this type of information would prove rather unnecessary, as the information being asked was specific to a very precise userbase; professors and instructors of student media who had experience using social media for their publication.

The survey was conducted for an eight-week time frame via SurveyMonkey.com, from December 22, 2012, through February 22, 2013. The eight-week time frame was chosen to give respondents time to answer after the holidays. The survey link was sent out to the 170 members of the JACC listserv, a communication network created in the late 1980s for members of the Journalism Association of Community Colleges. The JACC Listserv was chosen as this is a closed network of professional community college teachers, professors, faculty, and staff. While the JACC does have a small Facebook page, the survey link was sent to the closed listserv to specifically target people other than students, as this project was meant to help determine what elements of social media were being taught to journalism students. The survey link was sent out a total of three times by a CSUN Mass Communication professor who is also a member of the JACC Listserv, as it is a closed group that non-members cannot access. Seventeen community college journalism instructors responded to the survey, which included questions such as “Which social media is your student media currently using?” “Who trains or teaches your students how to post or promote their content on social media?” “Do you feel your students enjoy or would enjoy learning about how to post and promote their content on social media?” and “What has been the biggest challenge in using social media for your student media?” I compiled and examined the survey results and patterns, and found three consistent themes:

- Facebook and Twitter are the most commonly used social media platforms for student media. While most student media have a YouTube, it is used infrequently.
- The “hardest” part of using social media for student media is getting people to know about or follow the social media platform, followed by having enough staff resources to use it.
- Instructors try to teach social media, but many do not feel experienced enough to approach it in-depth in their classes.

The complete survey and results of this survey are contained in Appendix A and B.

Interviews

While I believe that the results from this survey showed consistent information to my previous knowledge of social media, I wanted to elaborate further by conducting in-depth phone interviews with some of the survey participants. The survey asked if participants would be willing to speak over the phone in regards to their personal experiences with social media. In total, 26 people were contacted, of those, nine agreed.. Six people were aged 40 and above, one was 30, and two were between the ages of 18 – 22. Seven out of nine of these people worked in a professional capacity (adviser or publisher level) at a community college newspaper or news organization. The additional two people interviewed served as student social media editor at a California State University, and one was also the editor in chief of a student newspaper. All of these interviews took place over the phone and while these interviews were recorded and

transcribed, to respect the privacy of the interviewees, their identities will be kept anonymous.

These interviews included questions about available budget and resources for the student newspaper, student interest level in social media, teaching of social media ethics or online “etiquette,” emerging practices in social media and which social media platforms have been successful. All of the interviewee’s social media platforms were researched before conducting the interviews to be able to cite specific examples of posts, Facebook fan counts, Twitter followers, YouTube views, and content. The results from the survey and interviews are combined in the findings of this thesis project.

Creating the Handbook

After analyzing the results from the survey and the statements made in the interviews, a social media emerging practices handbook for student media was developed. The handbook details basic tips and information about Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and includes examples from some of the community colleges who participated in the survey and interviews. The examples were specifically chosen to demonstrate “real life” applications of social media from student media, for example, to show how posting a link with a call to action versus just a link would perform better. In addition, it was important to show that social media can be relevant in all kinds of news situations – from a hostage story, to posting a YouTube video about a youth orchestra. My focus for the main “topics” in the handbook was an emphasis on the “big three” – Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These tips lay the groundwork for anybody to have a basic yet strong foundation for social media marketing.

The handbook was written in a fresh, youthful voice with humor, as in my professional experience, the technicality of social media must be approached in a conversational rather than analytical voice. When social media jargon like “retweet” and “hashtag” come into written work, the writer must use simple language as the principles can very quickly become confusing.

The handbook was created directly from information gleaned from the survey and interview results, with additional images taken directly from social media websites to demonstrate certain lessons and tips. A website has also been created to include the following: background information about the project, the PDF handbook of social media practices for students available for download, additional resources, and a contact section for those who may need more assistance. This website can be viewed at <http://www.socialsyllabi.com>, and the findings from the interview and survey, covered in Chapter Four, helped guide the creation of this handbook.

Limitations

The main limitation to this project was that ideally it would have included more instructors. The response rate to the survey was lower than desired, however, the quality of the answers I did receive in tandem with the phone interviews proved the points I was seeking.

In addition, the risk of conducting any social media research is that by the time the research is complete, the social media tools and technologies may have already changed, as evidenced by Facebook’s nearly daily transformations. However, this limitation in particular only proves as encouragement to one day expand the scope of this

project, perhaps by building a detailed website designed specifically for student media as the necessity is certainly evident.

Chapter 4

Findings

In this chapter, the results of the survey and interviews are summarized, and tips and emerging practices for how student media can use social media are suggested. All of the recommendations presented in this thesis can be accessed online at <http://www.socialsyllabi.com> by clicking “Handbook” and downloading an easy-to-read PDF.

Survey Results

In order to create an insightful and helpful plan of action, a survey was conducted to determine current usage by student media, and their triumphs and challenges. The seventeen respondents all worked in a professional capacity (i.e., non-student) at a student newspaper or media organization.

The first question that had individualized results was “What type of student media are you involved in?” Out of 17 respondents, who were permitted to indicate more than one response as for example, it is common for a student newspaper to have a blog and a TV show, the majority (15) answered that they worked with a student newspaper.

The next question asked respondents if their primary form of student media has a website. Fifteen people replied yes, and one person replied no while one person skipped the question. The next question asked if people are using social media, and 14 people answered the question with yes, with three people skipping the question. This demonstrates that while social media may not yet be a strong part of promotion and marketing for student journalism, it is something being considered and is receiving some experimentation.

The next multiple-choice question asked respondents which social media platforms are currently in use by their student media. Thirteen people replied to this question (four people opted to skip the question), with all respondents answering Facebook, 13 people using YouTube, and 14 people using Twitter. None of the 14 respondents answered Google+, while four respondents reported using Flickr and Pinterest. Three respondents said they were using Storify, along with three respondents also noting they used Instagram. For the purposes of this thesis project, the handbook focuses on emerging practices and strategies for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as these historically have been noted as the “big three” in social media, and the results of this survey are consistent with that unanimous opinion.

The next question required a write-in response asking “How satisfied are you with how your student media is performing on social media?” Fourteen people responded, with varying answers from, “Right now our social media presence is lacking, however we are trying to fix that,” to “Pretty well, we need more people to update more often” to “Students are trained in class to ‘turn in a paper’ and continue to think like that, not understanding a whole diverse set of postings equals one communication effort” to “Our staff is so small that it’s hard to move beyond the basics of keeping the main site populated.” Four answers specifically noted the need for students to embrace the immediacy of journalism and social media. Some of these answers included, “They struggle with the idea of constantly reporting. They have been trained in academia to have deadlines, crippling them for new media,” and “They don’t completely understand they immediacy of news. They wait sometimes days to post something that happened right then.”

Almost all answers noted there was room for improvement, most of them suggesting that students need a more clear way to understand the connection between social media and their journalistic efforts.

The next multiple-choice question (with space for a write in response at the end for “Other”) asked, “Who trains or teaches your students how to post or promote their content on social media?” A total of 15 people answered the question, with no one answering the Publisher of the Media, meaning the faculty adviser. Thirteen people responded that student editors are responsible for publishing content to social media. Seven people responded teachers, while two people responded community members, and two “other” responses said that students, not necessarily student editors, are teaching each other how to post on and use social media.

The next question asked, “Do you feel that students enjoy or would enjoy learning how to post and promote their content on social media?” All 14 people who responded to this question said yes. The next question in the survey was “Of social media currently being used, which has been the most successful for your student media?” Multiple answers per respondent were allowed. Fourteen people in total answered this question, with four people skipping the question. Twelve respondents said Facebook, while seven respondents said Twitter. Three respondents said YouTube, while one person replied Ustream.tv. No respondents said Flickr, Pinterest, Instagram, or Storify. These results are again consistent with the “big three” concept that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the dominant social media platforms. The next question, in contrast, asked which social media has been the most challenging, confusing, or unsuccessful for their student media. Seven people responded Twitter, while five people responded Storify, and

YouTube followed close behind, with four people responding. Pinterest and Flickr both received three votes, and one vote was captured for Instagram. These results again, are consistent in my reasoning that the handbook focuses on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, with some additional resources available on the website SocialSyllabi.com.

The next question in the survey was, “What has been the biggest challenge in using social media for your student media? (Check all that apply)” with a space for writing in additional responses, and multiple answers were allowed. The majority of the respondents, eight people, said that “Lack of understanding in how to use it” was the biggest challenge, while seven people said “lack of staff resources” and also “lack of interest by students.” The third biggest challenge was “trouble getting likes, views, or followers,” with six people responding. Two “other” responses included “Students don’t personally have the technology” and “time to do print, online, plus social media.” These results are consistent with the answers to the in-depth interviews.

The next question was “Does your student media organization have a budget for web, digital, and social media support?” Six respondents said no, while five respondents said yes. Two “other” respondents said the money comes directly from ad revenue from the student paper, and the other said they pay for hosting out of their own pocket. This information solidifies my opinion that social media marketing for student organizations can and should be a free or, very low cost solution for student media.

The next question asked, “Does your student media currently have an online/digital/social media student editor?” Fourteen people responded, with four skipping the question. Twelve respondents, said yes, and two respondents said no. This

information again confirms that while social media may not be fully understood, student media organizations are recognizing its value and importance in a journalistic capacity.

The last question asked was if social media plays a large, medium, or small part of course curriculum. Eleven people answered this question, with seven opting to skip. A total of 5 people, of all respondents said social media was a medium part of their course curriculum, while three said large, and an additional three said small. This shows that there is no “one size fits all” method for teaching social media, and often, it is mentioned when it is convenient or applies particularly well to a certain lesson plan or exercise.

Interview Findings

To prepare for the phone interviews, I researched all of the interviewee’s applicable social media platforms and analyzed the number of fans, followers and views, the frequency of content being posted, the level of engagement shown by fans and followers, and the style and tone of the content being posted. The majority of the interviewees had personal Facebook accounts, but for the purposes of this project, only the student media’s official social media pages were examined. A full list of the social media pages are listed in Appendix E.

Lack of Resources

Because all of the interviews except for one were focused on community college student media, a majority of the respondents said that having resources available to teach students to learn to use social media was a challenge. Specifically, many of the newspaper staff themselves were small and had only a handful of student reporters and editors, and in the crunch of putting out a print newspaper, were unable to be active on

social media as well. One adviser of a community college said, “The problem is just one of personnel. We just had so few people the last few semesters that there’s really been no one to spearhead.”

Another community college professor who assists with a weekly print newspaper said,

(Students) always flake, they either don’t do it or they drop (the class). So if you have been on either our Facebook or Twitter feeds, you will see that it is very sporadic. Like there are four in a row and then nothing for the rest of the semester. And so, that is a function of overworked, underfunded students in a very poor area who have to work and drop left all of that kind of funny stuff.

While most of the people I interviewed referred to resources as physical staff or people assisting in preparing the newspaper, a few people were also quick to point out that financial resources can also put a damper on teaching students social media. Although social media is mostly a free tool and the tips presented in the handbook are free, some people argued that focusing on social media was senseless when they were working to save their journalism programs as a whole.

One part-time community college lecturer said,

The mass communication department is almost resource-less -- we have no faculty running it, we have a discussion going on right now about whether the money that was originally earmarked to upgrade our equipment will be used for that or if it isn’t, there’s a really good change that mass communication will die a slow death, or maybe a quick death...I don’t know.

Lack of interest

By far, the most challenging element of social media for student media is encouraging students to want to be involved in social media. Originally, this finding could strike some as surprising, as the typical college aged students, those who are 18 to 24, are using social media technology on a personal daily basis, usually checking their social media multiple times per day. This generation in particular are known as digital natives, those who have grown up around computer and mobile technology, tweeting their lunch and Facebooking their friends.

“Training students how to do any of this is tough – they all know how to do Facebook for themselves, but they don’t think at all when it comes to doing it for an organization,” said one community college journalism teacher. Later following up to their response, this teacher said, “So the question is—are they really interested in Facebook or Twitter? They express great interest in anything I introduce to them, but as using evidence when they actually follow through with it, my answer would have to be no, they really aren’t.” An advertising manager who helps with the set up of a weekly newspaper at a California community college said, “I’m sure that they all have Facebook. I don’t think they’re diligent about using it for the campus as opposed to just whatever things they do.” While seven out of 10 interviewees felt that college students were generally not interested in learning social media for student media purposes, two people, one new media professor and one student editor, argued that they were, but it was a lack of understanding that lead to the disinterest, not a disinterest in the process itself.

Attitude towards platform

One new media professor said, “I think they don’t know how to use it, and it’s kind of more like a fun thing rather than a work thing. I think it’s just a matter of really understanding how to use it, what’s the benefit for them.” Another journalism adviser, who specializes in media convergence, said

The number one question students ask is, is this on the test? If you say no, they immediately turn off, and they will not listen to anything that’s not on the test. They come out of high school and they’re all trained to be baby birds, open mouth, insert worm. And no, no, no, you don’t just see something and write a print article about it, you need to put it online.

However, one student editor contended that she was very excited about learning to use social media and felt her classmates would be too if they were properly educated on how to use it. “I definitely think there could be more incorporation of social media in classes, especially since it’s such uncharted territory. People are definitely interested in it, I think part of it is that they’re scared, too. You just have to kind of play with it, and see what works,” she said.

Among interviewees, the platform that has been the most successful for most community colleges is Facebook. A mass communications instructor said,

Last year when our current editor started, she was very disappointed that we weren’t using social media. So she has really kind of started linking us to a lot of school activity things and is really driving that. She uses Facebook a lot, and she uses Twitter to a certain extent, but students use Facebook really well.

However, for as user-friendly and engaging as Facebook has been for student media, Twitter, while intriguing, is not as simple to understand due to its unusual

restriction of 140 text characters. An advertising coordinator for a community college newspaper said about Twitter, “It’s always like a constant process because we will get somebody that doesn’t really know much about Twitter or how to post to Twitter or what to say on Twitter or anything...so we kind of try to piece together training and how to use it and what to use it for. We’re trying to figure it out.” One publisher and faculty member of a community college newspaper questioned when asked about his success with Twitter, “Is Twitter even popular? Do people even use it?” Another staff instructor of a student newspaper said, “Students have their own Facebook accounts, but definitely not Twitter.” She went on to explain that for most students, Twitter is seen as this “weird, confusing” type of social media platform. “I like the idea of Twitter (for journalism students), think about like people who’re doing really great writing on Twitter, because if you can write a decent sentence in that short space and convey some information, I mean, that’s a good way to learn how to write a lead, right?”

Another student newspaper publisher said,

We talk about how with just 140 characters, you really want to report something very concisely. I usually throw in something old school, like how I used to hand set a story, and you have a paragraph to do it—and if you take that to today’s world, that’s Twitter. It really makes you not miss words and makes you tell a story in a short period of time, so it’s a neat way to do things, I think.

Several of the interviewees also mentioned that they are interested in learning Twitter as more of a reporting tool rather than a promotional tool. A journalism instructor explained how when she was a working reporter in the early ‘90s, all of the reporters had pagers and used them to be notified to call in to the newsroom when a new

assignment popped up. “We didn’t have computers or laptops, but basically pagers were better than just calling somebody back when you don’t have a cell phone. I can see Twitter being used like that, like an internal communication tool.”

Another mass communication instructor has been impressed with how one of his students used Twitter to source a story. “One of the students I talked to today uses Twitter. She was doing a story on kids who saw the inauguration and she wanted some local comments. She did a story and it looked like a good job and I said, “How did you get these kids?” She said she sent it out on Twitter!”

Ethics

Online ethics is not a large concern for most student media, as all students on staff of a student media platform are encouraged to post without approval. An advertising manager said that for the most part, the students control all online content, and that she and the adviser only step in when the students ask for help. Another student newspaper publisher said he has no control over what goes on social media sites, and can only use posts after they’ve gone up as examples of “do” or “don’t.” “I kind of follow, and there’s enough people sending things that I can talk about what makes a good tweet and what doesn’t. Most of us are kind of just wondering, should we be doing this? And yeah, we probably should be, but we don’t know a whole lot about it,” he said.

In terms of other social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter were the most frequently discussed, with YouTube coming in third. While student media staff seem interested in Storify, Pinterest, and Instagram, they often find just the “big three” intimidating enough to manage and maintain during a busy semester. For these reasons, the student handbook focuses specifically on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

SOCIALSYLLABI.COM

A SOCIAL MEDIA HANDBOOK FOR STUDENT MEDIA

All of the information presented in the next section of this thesis has been condensed into a smaller, easy-to-read PDF handbook available at <http://www.SocialSyllabi.com>. The PDF handbook on SocialSyllabi.com was created to serve as an easily-shared print out for student media students and teachers, or as something that can be e-mailed, posted to social media sites, etc. The name Social Syllabi was chosen because a syllabus outlines the content of a specific course, just as this PDF outlines a basic social media “lesson plan” for getting started. The vision for having this PDF live on a website is that it can easily be updated, as social media and strategies change quickly. As social media platforms change and evolve, the goal is to update this PDF with new information. These strategies have been compiled based on the survey and interviews of a college student media staff and are intended to maximize student media’s success on social media. For clarity and to not overwhelm the readers of this handbook, the handbook details only the “big three,” Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The more extensive information and instruction for these social media platforms is presented below.

FACEBOOK

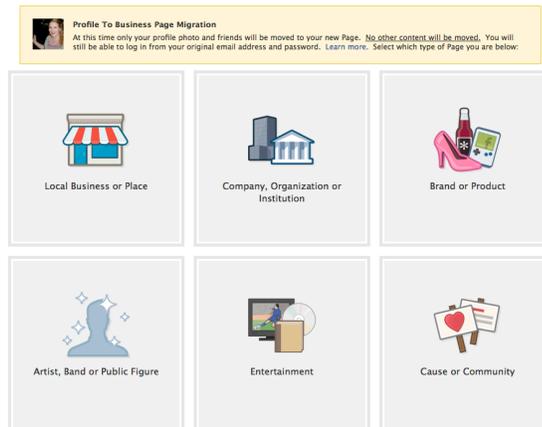
As of December 2012, 67% of U.S. adults who have Internet access say they use Facebook. Facebook is especially appealing to adults ages 18-29 (Pew, 2012). With the influx of the ubiquitous blue “f” icon, from restaurant windows to billboards, it is no surprise that Facebook is one of the strongest tools in a social media toolbox.

The most important thing for student media to remember is that a Facebook page should be an extension of a website, not a replacement. There is no reason that social media needs to “take over” what is currently being done, nor does it need to become a full-time job. It certainly can become a full-time job, but for most student media, one dedicated person a couple of hours per week or even a handful of dedicated people one hour a week can make a drastic change in content effectiveness.

If the organization does not yet have a Facebook page set up, visit Facebook and select “Create a page for a celebrity, band, or business.” If a Facebook account is erroneously created as a person (which several community college journalism programs had done), it restricts who has access to the content, to only approved friends. There are many other reasons for a student media organization to be a business “page” and not a person (aka a “friend”): what is posted on a business page will end up in search results more easily, it is more professional, and has the ability to schedule posts to go out when needed. Six out of 17 community colleges surveyed have incorrectly set up their Facebook account as people rather than pages. The first step in a successful social media strategy is making this change, or if one is setting up a page for the first time, follow the prompts to set up a business page on Facebook.

If the organization has already established a Facebook account, but set it up as a person, it can be changed a business profile from a friend to a page by visiting <https://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php?migrate>.

The page will look like this:



To determine whether the page is a business page or a person, look at the section underneath the profile picture. If it says “Lives in,” “From” or “In a relationship” and has a “Friends” box to the right of this information, this profile is set up as a person. For most student media, “Company, organization or institution” is the appropriate page category for the page. Once that category is selected, choose “Media/News/Publishing” to categorize the page further. This helps people searching on Facebook to identify the organization. When converting a personal account to a Facebook page, Facebook transfers the current profile pictures and adds all friends and followers as people who like the page. The account's username becomes the username for the page, and the name associated with the personal account will become the page's name. If one wants the page to have a different name, consider creating a new one instead of converting your profile to a business page. This is important—no other content will be carried over to the new page, so be sure to save any important content before beginning the conversion. The organization can save their previous content by downloading their timeline information. The organization can download a file that contains all of the previously sent and received

messages and all of the photos and videos that have been uploaded to Facebook since they've had the page.

FILLING IN THE PAGE

Once the Facebook page is established, set a username. Click “edit page” in the admin panel (the admin panel is the dashboard at the top of the business page). Click “update info” and then “username.” The username for student media sites should ideally be the name of the newspaper, like *thedailysundial*. The username will be right after “facebook.com” and is also called a “vanity URL.” If the first choice of names is taken, try a variation, perhaps with the location or school, like “*csundailysundial*.” When typing this name in, be very careful that no typos have been made, and proofread, because once a page username is selected, it cannot be changed. Once the name is finalized, the organization can begin to promote the page by telling people to visit facebook.com/username.

The organization will also want to add a short description, mission, start date and longer description. Adding text to these fields improves search rankings on search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo. The descriptions section should contain an overview about the student media, for example, if it is a daily newspaper, what is the name of the university or college, who produces the content, and where the public can find additional information and content.

This is what the “About” section looks like -- make sure to fill in both the short description and longer description fields, as these are the words search engines use to find pages on Facebook.

[View Page](#)

Category: Companies & Organizations | Media/News/Publishing [?]

Official Page: [?]

Username: Your page needs at least 25 fans to have a username. [Learn more.](#)

Name:

Start Date: 2012 [Add month](#) [?]

Start Type: Launched

Address:

City/Town:

Postal Code:

Note: If you add a valid address, users will be able to see and check in to your page using Facebook Places. It may take a few hours for our system to process the address.

Short Description:

Description:

Mission:

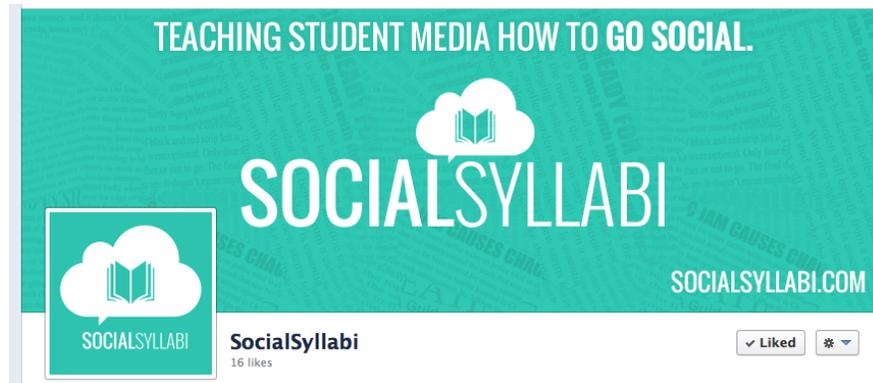
Founded:

Awards:

Once the “about” and “information” sections have been completed, consideration needs to be given to how users will be drawn to the page. One way to accomplish this is by decorating the page with imagery and logos. There are two areas on Facebook to “decorate” when setting up a new page – the cover photo, the large rectangular area at the top of the page and the profile picture, which is the small square shaped area to the bottom left of the cover photo.

The cover photo should be something related to the student media and/or college that draws the reader in to the Facebook page. Maybe the cover photo could be a striking photo of the college campus, an artistic photo of the newspaper, or a thoughtfully designed image incorporating the college colors, mascot, and tagline. The cover photo is 851 pixels wide and 315 pixels tall, but if a larger image is uploaded, Facebook will shrink it down and the same applies to a smaller size. For best visual impact, create a cover photo that is exactly 851 by 315. The profile picture should be the organization’s logo. This is the photo that will “stick” with all activity on Facebook, because it is the first thing people see when they see the organization’s name. The profile photo is 160 by 160 pixels, a perfect square. Facebook will re-size or shrink if the photo is bigger. To adjust

the position of the photo, click “edit Profile Picture” and then “Edit Thumbnail.” This allows one to choose the center of the image and how it aligns.



Posting content

Now that the organization’s page is set up and optimized, content needs to be considered. Content, or items that are posted online, are the most important part of any social media strategy. Social media is about being social and inspiring people to talk about the student media, brand, company, or product. Excellent content makes people talk, by inspiring them, making them laugh, educating them, asking a question, or giving them information. A student media outlet can do all of these things. How many times a day should an outlet post? Media outlets will occasionally have breaking news, and breaking news is a perfect example of what to use your Facebook page for. Let’s take a look at California State University, Northridge’s student newspaper, The Daily Sundial.

On February 10, 2013, ex-Los Angeles Police Department Officer Christopher Dorner, who police allege had killed four people, was on the run in Southern California. There was a possible sighting of the man at a Northridge hardware store. The Daily Sundial posted this update on their Facebook page:



The Sundial effectively put the information on their page as it happened, but how could they have improved this? They could have added a call to action, or instruction to the reader, at the end. Maybe it could have read something like “Breaking News: Possible Christopher Dorner sighting near CSUN. Local police urge you to call 213-486-5230 with any information.” This gives citizens a sense of duty, and also informs the public where they can notify if they have any information. By sharing information, in this case, the news and a police tip line, the Sundial is providing a service to its fans on Facebook, one that will increase engagement, sharing and dedication to the Facebook business page.

Engagement

Two hours later, the Daily Sundial posted another update – this time with more comments and more engagement. It is likely that their “reach”, or how many people saw this post, increased as well. Why? Because it had an image, a link, and a call to action. Remember, on Facebook, be succinct, but always give as much information as possible.



After several engaging and informative updates on this story, the Daily Sundial had more clout with their social media to encourage people to click on the link, thus sending traffic to their website.

Here is another example: The Prospector, a community college newspaper from Yuba College, wanted to share an opinion piece about being a Christian. They posted this to their Facebook page:



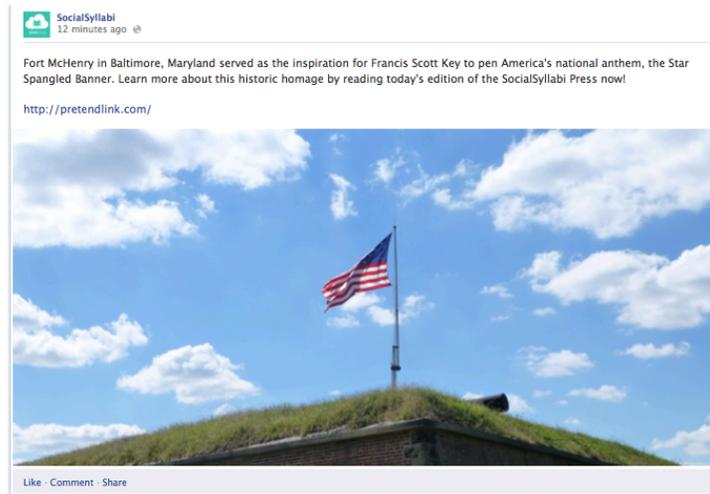
While posting a link is one way to send people to read content a website, this post could have been much more engaging if they had written an update that encourages the reader to chime in with their own opinion, or at the very least, instructs them to click on the article link. Perhaps they could have tried something like “This journalist thinks

Christians are facing harassment for their faith. What do you think? Click now to chime in.” By combining some information (what the article is about), with a question (what do you think?) and a call to action (click now), they are giving their Facebook fans explicit instructions on what to do—thus maximizing their social media impact.

Another way to drive engagement on a Facebook page is to use photography. People respond very well to visual stimuli, and stunning photographs, especially those coming out of the organization’s photojournalism students, make engaging content for social media. Here is a strong example of student photography on a student media Facebook page. This photograph is from UCLA’s student newspaper, the Daily Bruin. By choosing an impactful, bright and interesting photo to use on Facebook, there’s a much greater chance that this image will spread around social media and be documented in Google search results, thus driving traffic to the Daily Bruin’s website and encouraging people to pick up the print version. In addition, the photo was accompanied by an informative caption, including a link, some background context, and a call to action.



To optimize pictures in Facebook’s news feed as well as on the page, post the image, and then click on the star icon in the upper right hand corner of the image that says “Highlight.” This will expand the image into your newsfeed and page, giving it a panoramic size range and increasing its prominence on your page.

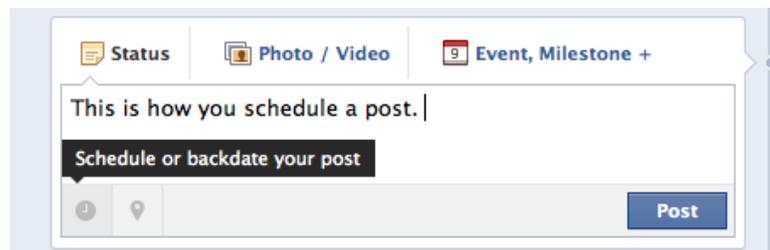


Know your audience: scheduling posts

Engaging content is a large part of the strategy towards success in social media, but the other important factor is knowing your audience. When thinking about a social media audience, there can be key differences in how the majority of people reading your content affect things like how often to post on a Facebook page. For example, a toy brand might be interested in posting around lunch time, as most of their social media users are busy moms and dads who only have time to check social media on their lunch break from work. However, a demographic of a student media is usually going to consist of all students, so it might be ideal to post information through out the day as students check their mobile phones between classes. Ideally, social media best standards include posting at least once a day on Facebook, Monday through Friday. While a brand should usually not post content more than one time per day to prevent overloading their social

media users, in a news and media industry, it is acceptable to post news as it breaks. For this student media demographic, it is recommended that student media post at least one time per day, up to three times per day with links to interesting articles, and more than three times a day if it is a newsworthy, breaking story.

What should an organization do if they do not have the time or resources to log on several times a day to post updates? There are several free or low-cost tools that allow content to be posted at scheduled times, like HootSuite and TweetDeck. However, the simplest solution is to schedule posts through Facebook. When writing a status update in Facebook, a small clock icon appears in the lower left hand corner of the status update box. Click on that icon to be prompted through the scheduling process. This allows content managers to schedule messages so that the message goes out on Facebook at an ideal time, even if someone cannot be there to do it manually. Student media groups might consider this solution if they have information about upcoming events that is unlikely to change, or if there is a weekly feature column they would like to “set and forget.” Either way, when scheduling, do not forget these content guidelines – posts should always be clear, informative and include some sort of call to action or instruction to the reader.



By following the recommended tips for success on Facebook, student media has a fantastic chance for achieving higher visibility for their work.

TWITTER

Twitter can be one of the most confusing yet useful forms of social media. Twitter is composed of millions of users sending short updates of text and links as tweets, but tweets are limited to only 140 characters. The point of Twitter is to send short updates so that users do not have to wade through tons of content or see things like pictures, videos, apps or ads like they do on Facebook.

Twitter has garnered attention in the industry for being a journalist's best friend. Certainly, being limited to writing 140 characters of text will lead students to become better writers in that it teaches them to trim, edit and re-write their content. These skills can also have a positive impact on headline writing, which can be a challenge for some students. In addition, Twitter is a useful resource for breaking news, as countless major global events have first been mentioned on Twitter, including the death of Osama bin Laden, the Hudson River plane crash, the Egyptian Arab Spring uprising, and more recently, news and updates as they occurred from victims and bystanders of the Aurora, Colorado Theatre shooting.

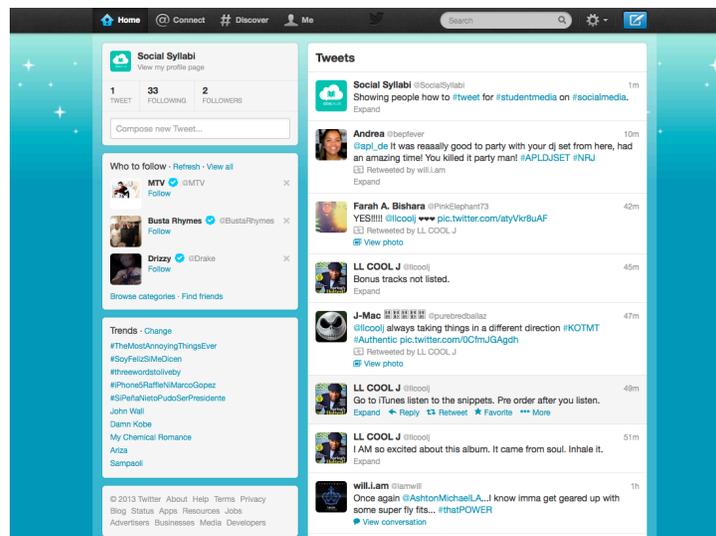
One of the key components of why Twitter is a more "open" social media than Facebook is that it does not have a built in "privacy" that users have to get through first. For example, on Facebook, users cannot see a real-life friend's updates until they accept them as a friend. Even on Facebook pages, the public cannot access information being posted by a company, brand, organization or public figure until they have agreed to "like" the page. On Twitter, all of the content, unless marked "private" by the user, is accessible via searching through Twitter, especially with the use of hash tags (which are linked key words or phrases that users can click on to see other tweets in the same

category). The public can choose to follow people, or you can find information simply by searching. In this way, Twitter is a more open social network and the availability of content is much more. Journalists are now even using Twitter to find sources, and there's a whole organization, called @HARO, which stands for Help a Reporter Out, in which journalists tweet requests for certain types of sources and those who are applicable on Twitter can tweet back to be interviewed or considered for the story.

Twitter basics

When signing up for Twitter, the display name should best represent the organization you are tweeting for. For example, CSU Northridge's Daily Sundial would be best as @DailySundial or @CSUNSundial. The name or handle can be changed later on if necessary, but try to claim a strong user name from the beginning. Once a user name has been secured, the student media outlet can invite people to follow it by simply telling them the user name with the "@" sign before it.

Many times, people avoid Twitter because they're not sure how to use it. It is helpful to look at the main screen of Twitter when trying to understand how to use it.



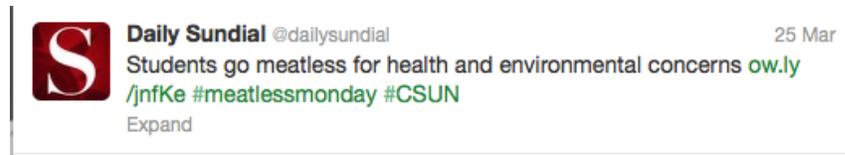
When first logging in to Twitter, this is the screen the public will be greeted with, but with the user's information. The large list-like "feed" on the right-hand side is where the public will see all of the user's tweets, and others tweets as well. To the left, is a dashboard of sorts, where the user can write tweets, as well as see who is following them and who they are following in return. Underneath the dashboard, there are suggestions of people to follow based on recent tweets, and then below that, are Twitter trends, or things that have been mentioned frequently on Twitter by other users. Twitter trends usually change daily and reflect what is happening in the news media, celebrity culture and the Internet. Viral videos and memes will often appear with their own hashtag in Trends.

At the very top of this page and any others on Twitter, is a black control panel that says "Home, Connect, Discover, Me." When clicking "Connect," the user can see who has recently mentioned their user name in a tweet. By clicking "Discover," users can search tweets, see what is trending, and find other people interested in your content. By clicking "Me," direct private messages sent from one user to another can be seen.

To search on Twitter, users can either use the "Discover" page or the search bar in the upper right hand corner of the screen. One thing to remember is that on Twitter, users will not find search results for tweets or content more than several days old. This is a limitation of Twitter's server space, but there are free websites like Topsy.com and Snapbird.org that have archived all tweets in Twitter's existence. This could be useful for researching or finding quotes and sources of past events.

Student media use of Twitter

How should student media use Twitter? Twitter is most powerful if breaking news is occurring, and you want to share information but are not quite ready to post a written story. It should also be used daily to promote published links and articles. Here is an example of an effective tweet by CSU Northridge's Daily Sundial:



This tweet is effective because it describes an interesting story, offers the reader an instruction a link to click, and includes a relevant hashtag that users can click on to find more information about the subject of the tweet.



The Chaffey Breeze was on the right track by asking an interesting sounding question, but they could have made this tweet stronger by asking people to click the link to find out why it's important, or hash-tagged with #siri or #apple or #convoswithsiri. This would increase the reach of the tweet and in the end, encourage more readers of the article by using popular and relevant search terms in the forms of hashtags.

When using hashtags, it is important to think about them as keywords. If somebody were to “file” your tweet under one word, what would that word be? Users may use up to four or five hashtags, but try not to use more as the message becomes convoluted. If users are unsure if a hashtag would be effective, search the intended hashtag on Twitter to see if other tweets using that hashtag are similar.

Some other key parts of Twitter are the re-tweet, usually seen as “RT.” Re-Tweet simply means re-posting somebody’s tweet to a user’s network. Retweets are valuable if users want to share event information with their network, or perhaps somebody said something nice about the user’s media organization and the user wants to broadcast it to your followers. It can also be used to raise awareness about an issue or news event. Users can also ask people to re-tweet their content, which is a valuable way of spreading content to other networks and increasing followers and engagement.

A reply is seen as “@username.” While a reply notifies the person being replied to, a user’s tweet can be seen by that person’s other followers, so always make sure replies are not private information. For private information, it is best to click on the username and select “message,” where you can send a private 140-character message.

Twitter is perhaps the only social media tool that benefits from frequent, consistent use several times a day. Twitter’s very nature is fluid, open and fast-moving, so sending multiple tweets, usually over five and up to 25 per day, is an effective strategy for a media organization on Twitter. Especially when applied to breaking news, a media organization would be wise to break information on a story via twitter by creating an individual hashtag. If the CSUN Daily Sundial is reporting on a grocery store robbery, they could perhaps use a hashtag like #northridgerobbery with each tweet they send out. This compiles all of the tweets into one “channel” of Twitter, making it more searchable and also “filing” them for later reference.

Student media organizations have also found success using Twitter for event-based reporting, like while a student basketball game is happening or during an on-campus lecture. This type of tweeting is called “live tweeting” and is done by most

media organizations at all kinds of events. The Chaffey Breeze used live tweeting during a women's basketball game.

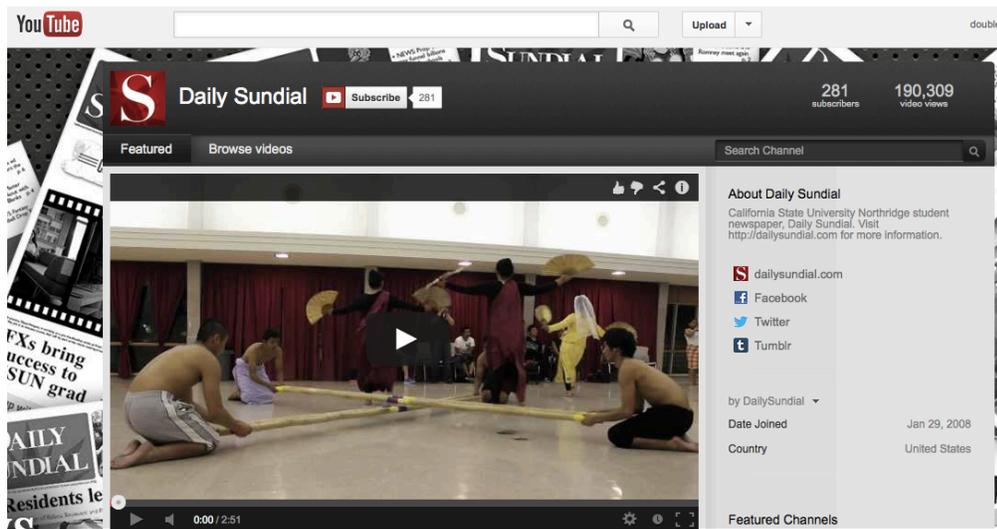


As you can see, the Breeze used Twitter to live report key parts of the game as they happened, which is a fantastic strategy for people who might be unable to attend the game but want to follow along from their homes or while they're on the go. Twitter is a true convenience tool among the social media platforms as it is very mobile in nature. Think about the 2012 presidential elections and how many people and news organizations were live tweeting candidate results, electoral votes and crowd reaction as the nation waited for the votes to come in. While Twitter can seem confusing, once you master the basics, it is a wonderful and quick tool for any media organization to embrace.

While the “Share Twitter on Facebook” option (meaning all tweets are posted on Facebook) is convenient, it is not ideal for social media emerging practices. Because Facebook and Twitter are so different in nature, lumping them together so that they both have the same content is lazy and is not optimum for engagement and interaction. It is much better to keep the two separate, and while users can post about the same story on both Twitter and Facebook, make each post a little different—for example, the Facebook post can be a little longer (maximum is 420 characters, but try not to go that long) and include images. Twitter’s post has to be 140 characters or less and include an instruction/call to action to the reader and a link.

YOUTUBE

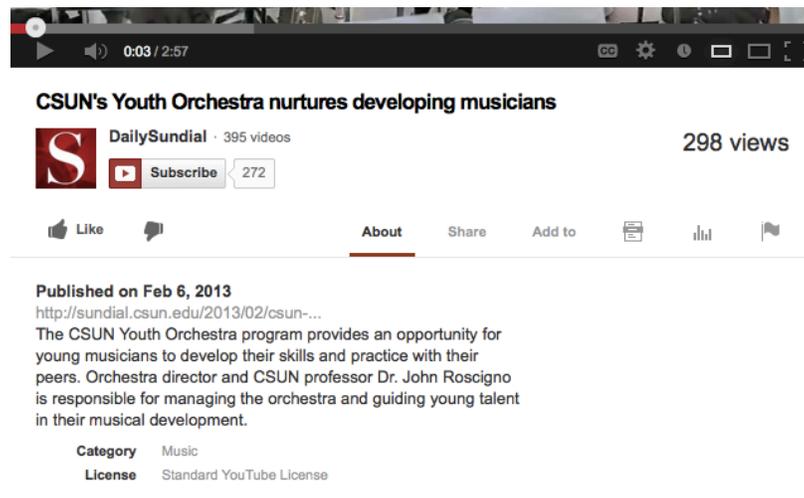
While the need for a YouTube strategy was not as strong as for Facebook and Twitter, YouTube was included in this project as it is an important part of social media for any media organization because of its viral capacity. Because YouTube is owned by Google, YouTube videos always rank number one in Google’s searches, meaning having video affiliated with your student media organization gives the organization a big boost in search rankings. This also increases the likelihood that somebody searching for general terms like “community college newspaper” or “csun student paper” will actually find the right result rather than having to sift through a few pages.



Here is an example of a YouTube page that has been set up correctly to optimize video views. The CSU Northridge Daily Sundial YouTube page is a strong example, as it has a themed background, a simple profile picture of the Sundial logo, and a concise and informative “about” section. Just as it was for Facebook and Twitter, having an “about” section is incredibly important for all social media as it drastically improves your chances of being found in search results.

Even if a user’s organization doesn’t have many videos to upload, it is important that the videos that are uploaded have three things: a title, a description, and tags. The title is simply a short description of the video the user is posting and can be up to 100 characters in length. The description can be up to 5,000 characters in length, and should be an in-depth overview or synopsis of what the video is about. This is the place to mention source’s names if they are prominent people, the location the video was taken in, and what the video is all about. Lastly, tags are a major part of optimizing content on YouTube. Tags are to YouTube what hashtags are to Twitter—basically search terms or keywords to help people find your content on YouTube. You can use up to 120 characters worth of tags. Separate each tag with a comma—for example: journalism,

media, orchestra, csun, music. Here is an effective example of a title and a description from CSU Northridge:



This title and description is concise and informative, and contains many words that people may search for. However, this video is missing tags. By not including tags, the Daily Sundial is potentially missing out on a large number of organic traffic through search engines. The Daily Sundial could have used a tag like youth orchestra, music or CSUN.

When loading video to YouTube, videos should always be as high quality as possible. Try to select video that has clear audio, little background noise and is lit properly and avoids shadows and over or under exposure. Whenever a user uploads video content, be sure to share the link on the organization's Facebook and Twitter pages to encourage viewing. Videos have an amazing capacity for going "viral," or reaching millions of people, when properly titled, tagged, described and socially shared. In particular, a student media's website organization should consider always linking their YouTube videos within articles. This will increase their views and in general, increase and encourage social media activity from their followers, readers, and viewers.

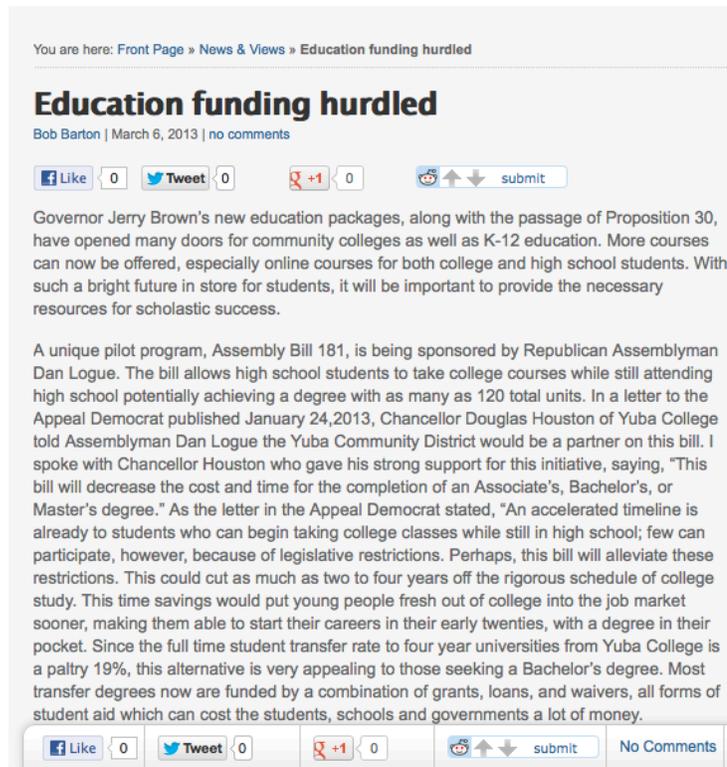
Marketing your social media

Now that we have covered the basics for how, why and when to post content on the big three social media platforms, it is time to discuss how to drive people to your social media sites. Having great content and completed pages is the first part of the battle, the second part is knowing how to tell people to stop by. First of all, social media icons should always be near the top of your student media webpage, and they should link directly to your social media. Here is an effective example from the Cerritos College student news media, Talon Marks:



When social media icons are at the top of a webpage, they're right in front of the viewer and the viewer does not have to hunt to find them. Secondly, all digital content should have social media icons implemented into them. These social media icons are small, unobtrusive buttons asking people to tweet the web site's content, "like" or "share" it on Facebook, "like" it on YouTube if it's a video, and some offering to share on Reddit

or StumbleUpon, or pin on Pinterest. Here is an example from the Cerritos College Talon Marks of how social sharing buttons should be incorporated into an article. Note that this article has social sharing integrated into the top of the article as well as the bottom—increasing the likelihood of readers taking a social action.



If the organization's website is hosted through a blogging platform like Wordpress, simply search for a "social plug-in" in the widgets section. If the website is not hosted on a blogging platform, visit Developers.Facebook.com, a Facebook developer page for Facebook "like" and "share" icons. This is one of the most simple ways to get people "liking" your page and content, as well as tweeting and sharing articles from your site.

The second way to attract visitors to an organization's social media platform is to make sure people know about it in person, not just online. This means the printed version

of the student media, if applicable, should have the Facebook URL, Twitter handle and YouTube name under the masthead or contact section. When passing out business cards, make sure the Facebook page URL is on there too. Plaster social media URLs everywhere you plaster your webpage URL—after all, all of these web addresses profit your organization in the end. The CSU Northridge Daily Sundial took its word-of-mouth marketing one step further and pasted paper signs into their newsroom window in a highly visible place on campus. Anywhere social media can be promoted, it should be done—getting the word out is the most important step in attracting “likes,” followers and views.

Another tool that people forget about when it comes to social media marketing is e-mail. Anytime an organization sends out an e-mail, make sure the social media icons are visible. This can be as simple and as unobtrusive as putting tiny icons in the e-mail signature at the end of the message, or garner great results by designing an e-blast dedicated entirely to asking people to like the Facebook page or become a follower on Twitter.

Hosting a small contest is another low-cost or free way to garner users on social media. Here is an idea for Twitter: Pretend the CSU Northridge Daily Sundial has a pair of tickets to the upcoming showing of “The Nutcracker Ballet” on campus at the Valley Performing Arts Center. CSUN’s Daily Sundial will give away the tickets to one lucky student if they gain 100 more Twitter followers. CSUN should post on their Twitter, “Re-tweet and follow for your chance to #win a pair of #Nutcracker tickets. (Link to more information)” By asking their existing followers to retweet, those followers are spreading their content to their entire network of followers. Then, the people who see the

message but are already following the Daily Sundial will follow them and re-tweet their message to their friends. This spreads the tweet through out thousands of people, creating tons of viral content marketing for just the cost of the Nutcracker tickets. However, whenever organizations or people host contests, they should always have simple and clear rules accessible to people via a link that list the start and end dates, the prize being offered, any age restrictions (for social media contests, make sure all entrants must be ages 13 and up—the minimum age to use social media sites), and location restrictions (like USA only).

People should also never discount the simple power of “asking” people to share their Facebook page, Twitter user name or YouTube URL. Generally, there are people on social media who will support your cause and like or join your page. Sometimes a post can be as simple as, “The Daily Sundial is trying to grow our Facebook fan page so we can share more news with our campus community. Please share this post and tell your family and friends to “like” us for all the CSUN news.” Items can be posted cross-platform, which means they can be posted on Facebook asking people to follow the media outlet on Twitter, or post on Twitter asking people to like the outlet on Facebook, or post on Facebook asking people to watch a certain video on YouTube.

For more help on growing Facebook fans, visit the admin panel on the Facebook page. The admin panel is a dashboard on top of the Facebook page. Near the bottom right, there is a section that says “invite friends.” This simple tool can help users suggest that their friends “like” their page, and can easily add over 50 fans just by simply clicking “invite.”

Want to reach more people on Twitter? Let's talk about hash tags. They can help you categorize content for searching, but hash tags are also useful for attracting new followers. For those looking to grow Twitter followers, try writing a tweet with the hashtag #followback or #follow or #teamfollow. These hashtags are specifically made for people looking to get more followers. Twitter protocol says that whenever someone follows someone, that person should follow them back. There is a notification on the Twitter page that somebody new is following the user. Simply click "follow" to follow them back. This is the type of "digital currency" that social media is starting to spread—a follow for a follow, you scratch my back, I will scratch yours.

Another simple method for attracting new users to social media pages is to simply reply to comments, "like" comments, Twitter replies and retweets by returning the discussion happening on your social platforms. People like to know they are being heard, and by replying to questions and comments, the user is showing their audience that they are actively engaging them and care about what they think. The simple tool of conversation helps spread user activity virally. For example, a newspaper commenting on a reader's question about a recent crime in their city will be seen by that user's Facebook friends, which might prompt them to think, "Oh! I didn't know the Daily Newspaper was on Facebook. I'm going to "like" them." As social media is all about the *social* aspect of communicating, it is sometimes simple to forget that social media is not just a one-way platform and should be as conversational as possible.

People may be tempted by spam advertisements offering to add 5,000 Facebook fans to a page for \$50, or things like 3,000 Twitter followers for \$25. While these tools may offer the psychological validation of seeing more fans on pages or more followers on

Twitter, keep in mind that these are not “real” people and are simply a software hack on social media. In addition, these people will not “like” your content, leave comments, or engage in any way. Social media needs to be less about the numbers and more about the impact you are having on the people who DO like and follow your content—even if there are only 100 people listening to what you have to say. Student media outlets that follow these general guidelines will find that the original 100 people will eventually grow into 100 more and their social media will be thriving, active and engaging, spreading the mission of the student media organization and helping to keep journalism alive.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The needs and demands for journalism to thrive in today's digital society have only elevated with the influx of social media. By teaching student media organizations to effectively use social media to market their journalistic content, student media organizations will have a better chance at succeeding by gaining more readers, increasing knowledge about their campus and communities, and guiding students into how to use digital media to further their own academic pursuits.

By researching key media theorists and experts on the topic of digital journalism and the convergence of social media with new media, we know that news industry changes saw a shift from print to digital interactive as a result of the convergence of new media. Consumers now use new media technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to engage with "old media content," and that is why convergence is so troubling to many traditional media. With new media technologies, companies, corporations, or news organizations can no longer control the way their message is presented, as a link can be posted with an opinion, a video can be made with clear bias, and users can react in every which way to any bit of content. However, the positive attributes of new media technology like social media, are that messages are quickly being amplified and proliferated, audiences are growing, awareness is coming to light, and information is processed quicker. If journalism students are not being taught how to best utilize the tools available to them, like social media, journalism education is lacking a crucial piece of curriculum.

The need for social media curriculum

In completing research about social media and community college student media, the results were surprising in that community colleges were expected to be much more advanced in their use of social media because of the prolific personal use of social media by college students. While it was expected that they would still be “beginners” in terms of emulating professional journalistic use of social media, it was surprising to see that many community college Facebook pages are incorrectly set up as people and many information sections were missing all together or were underdeveloped.

We know that student media are interested in using social media, but the problem seems to be one of how to learn how to do it. In discussions and interviews with instructors and students, it was revealed that the problem is that social media is in its infancy and cannot yet be supported with concrete curriculum, as the body of research does not yet exist on what is considered to be best practice.

Suggestions for future research

In the future, a curriculum should be developed for journalists seeking to use social media in a professional capacity – one that highlights every element of social media and journalism, including ethics, content, community moderation, best practices, engagement strategies, analytics and web marketing. This curriculum will need to start at the very basics, covering the who, what, where, when, why and how of social media, as these factors have not yet been stabilized as social media is such a new phenomenon.

If a curriculum like this were to be developed, it is likely that students and instructors would have a simpler time in learning the basics of social media, allowing them to move beyond just sharing links into a mode of efficient, viral news-sharing to a

vast network of consumers. In addition, the current research is extremely lacking on the extended forms of social media, those specific to a certain type of medium, for example, Instagram for photography and Vine for video sharing. The lack of research on these specific applications of social media points to the need for in-depth studies on the effects of these digital technologies on the spread of news.

Social media can be a tremendous tool, one full of potential, opportunity, and intelligence, *if* these tools are used correctly. By creating an easy-to-use handbook that details a basic social media overview, my hope is that community college student media everywhere has improved chances of their work reaching the world, or at the very least, a wider audience. As journalist and “Democracy Now” host Amy Goodman once said, “Go where the silence is and say something.” Every day, students across the nation work to become storytellers, to find silence, and to squash it. As journalists, we can greatly reduce the silence by finding thoughtful ways to reach our audience—including social media.

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Appendix A

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Name (optional)

Age (optional)

University or Organization (Optional)

Name of Student Media (Optional)

1) What type of student media are you involved in?

Newspaper

Magazine

TV Show

Radio show

Podcast

Other (Write In)

2) Does your primary form of student media have a website? YES NO

3) IF NO – Why does this student media not have a website? Write In

4) Is this student media using social media (like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) ?

5) If answer to #3 is no – Why is this student media not using social media?

- Resources
- Budget
- No student involvement
- Not sure why
- All of the above
- Other (Write In)

6) If answer to #3 is yes – Which social media is your student media currently using? Check all that apply.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Flickr
- Storify
- Other (Write In)

7) Are you satisfied with how your student media is performing on social media?

Yes

No

Sometimes

Why? (Write In)

Other (Write In)

8) Who trains or teaches your students how to post or promote their content on social media?

Publisher of media

Student editors

Teachers

N/A

Other (Write In)

9) Do you feel that your students enjoy or would enjoy learning about how to post and promote their content on social media?

Yes

No

Maybe

Other (Write In)

10) Of social media currently being used, which has been the most successful for your student media?

Facebook

Twitter

YouTube

Flickr

Pinterest

Instagram

Storify

Other (Write In)

11) What has been the biggest challenge in using social media for your student media? (Check all that apply)

Lack of resources (Staff or financial)

Lack of understanding of how to use it

Trouble getting “likes”, views or followers

Concern over ethical use of social media

Lack of interest by students

Other (Write In)

12) Does your organization have a budget for web, digital and social media support?

Yes

No

Maybe

Other (Write In)

13) Would you provide a free website and handbook to students to help them learn how to use social media for promoting student media?

Yes

No

Maybe

Other (Write In)

14) Which social media has been most challenging, confusing or unsuccessful for your student media?

Facebook

Twitter

YouTube

Flickr

Storify

Pinterest

Instagram

Other

15) Does your student media currently have an online/digital/social media student editor or some other type of position?

16) Are you or your co-workers using analytics or metrics to track your student media's success on social media and/or web?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Other

17) Is social media a part of course curriculum in your program? YES NO OTHER

18) If Yes – Would you say it is a large part of course curriculum, a small part or a medium part?

19) Would you be willing to participate in a brief telephone interview to help a graduate student create a handbook and website for student media on social media?

Yes

No thanks

Maybe

Other

Appendix B
SURVEY RESULTS

Student Media on Social Media Survey



1. What's your name?	
ResponseCount	16
AnsweredQuestion	16
SkippedQuestion	1

2. How old are you?	
ResponseCount	16
AnsweredQuestion	16
SkippedQuestion	1

3. What university or organization are you affiliated with?	
ResponseCount	16
AnsweredQuestion	16
SkippedQuestion	1

4. What is the name of the student media you're affiliated with?	
ResponseCount	16
AnsweredQuestion	16
SkippedQuestion	1

5. What type of student media are you involved in?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Newspaper		87.5%	14
Magazine		56.3%	9
TV Show		6.3%	1
Radio show		6.3%	1
Podcast		18.8%	3
Blog		18.8%	3
Other (please specify)		25.0%	4
		AnsweredQuestion	16
		SkippedQuestion	1

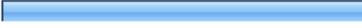
6. Does your primary form of student media have a website?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes		93.3%	14
No		6.7%	1
		AnsweredQuestion	15
		SkippedQuestion	2

7. If you indicated that your college's student media does not have a website, please explain why it doesn't have a website to the best of your knowledge.

	ResponseCount
	1
AnsweredQuestion	1
SkippedQuestion	16

8. Is this student media using social media like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube?

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes 	100.0%	13
No	0.0%	0
AnsweredQuestion		13
SkippedQuestion		4

9. If you indicated that your college's student media is NOT using social media, please explain why it doesn't use social media to the best of your knowledge.

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Resources	0.0%	0
Budget	0.0%	0
No student involvement	0.0%	0
Not sure why	0.0%	0
All of the above	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
AnsweredQuestion		0
SkippedQuestion		17

10. Which social media is your student media currently using?

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Facebook	100.0%	13
YouTube	92.3%	12
Twitter	100.0%	13
Google+	0.0%	0
Flickr	30.8%	4
Storify	23.1%	3
Instagram	23.1%	3
Pinterest	30.8%	4
Not currently using social media.	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	15.4%	2
AnsweredQuestion		13
SkippedQuestion		4

11. How satisfied are you with how your student media is performing on social media?

	ResponseCount
	13
AnsweredQuestion	13
SkippedQuestion	4

4 of 11

How satisfied are you with how your student media is performing on social media?

Satisfied, but we could be doing better
somewhat satisfied

Pretty well. We need more people to update more often though.
Students are trained in class to "turn in a paper" and continue to think like that, not understanding a whole diverse set of postings equals one communication effort.

Needs improvement
Not using it to its full capability
Scale 1-10 about a 7

Our staff is so small that it's hard to move beyond the basics of keeping the main site populated. We've also had 3 different social media editor-ish personnel, all of whom dropped early in the semester, so there's been little follow through.
very satisfied

They struggle with the idea of constantly reporting. They have been trained in academe to have deadlines, crippling them for new media.
We are at the beginning stages and need to get much better about integrating it into our work. The problem is that we have been a weekly newspaper for so long that it required moving to a daily model to be effective.
I am fairly satisfied, although our presence could be stronger.
I am somewhat satisfied. They don't completely understand the immediacy of news. They wait sometimes days to post something that happened right then.

12. Who trains or teaches your students how to post or promote their content on social media?

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Publisher of media	0.0%	0
Student editors	85.7%	12
Teachers	50.0%	7
Community members	14.3%	2
They are not being taught how to post or promote their content on social media.	7.1%	1
Other (please specify)	14.3%	2
AnsweredQuestion		14
SkippedQuestion		3

13. Do you feel that your students enjoy or would enjoy learning about how to post and promote their content on social media?

	ResponseCount
	13
AnsweredQuestion	13
SkippedQuestion	4

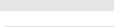
14. Of social media currently being used, which has been the most successful for your student media?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Facebook		84.6%	11
Twitter		53.8%	7
YouTube		23.1%	3
Flickr		0.0%	0
Pinterest		0.0%	0
Instagram		0.0%	0
Storify		0.0%	0
Not currently using social media.		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		7.7%	1
AnsweredQuestion			13
SkippedQuestion			4

**15. What has been the biggest challenge in using social media for your student media?
(Check all that apply)**

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Lack of staff resources		53.8%	7
Lack of financial resources		0.0%	0
Lack of both staff and financial resources		15.4%	2
Lack of understanding of how to use it		61.5%	8
Trouble getting "likes", views or followers		38.5%	5
Concern over ethical use of social media		30.8%	4
Lack of interest by students		53.8%	7
Other (please specify)		15.4%	2
AnsweredQuestion			13
SkippedQuestion			4

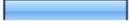
16. Does your student media organization have a budget for web, digital and social media support?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes		30.8%	4
No		46.2%	6
Maybe		15.4%	2
Other (please specify)		15.4%	2
AnsweredQuestion			13
SkippedQuestion			4

17. Would you be willing to provide a free website and handbook to students to help them learn how to use social media for promoting student media?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes		69.2%	9
No		0.0%	0
Maybe		23.1%	3
Other (please specify)		23.1%	3
		AnsweredQuestion	13
		SkippedQuestion	4

18. Which social media has been most challenging, confusing or unsuccessful for your student media?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Facebook		8.3%	1
Twitter		50.0%	6
YouTube		33.3%	4
Flickr		25.0%	3
Storify		41.7%	5
Pinterest		25.0%	3
Instagram		8.3%	1
Not currently using social media.		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		0.0%	0
		AnsweredQuestion	12
		SkippedQuestion	5

19. Does your student media currently have an online/digital/social media student editor or some other type of position?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes		92.3%	12
No		7.7%	1
Other (please specify)			2
AnsweredQuestion			13
SkippedQuestion			4

20. Are you or your co-workers using analytics or metrics to track your student media's success on social media and/or web?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes		69.2%	9
No		23.1%	3
Not Sure		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		15.4%	2
AnsweredQuestion			13
SkippedQuestion			4

21. Is social media a part of course curriculum in your program?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes		25.0%	1
No		75.0%	3
Sometimes		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		25.0%	1
AnsweredQuestion			4
SkippedQuestion			13

22. Would you say It is a large part of course curriculum, a medium part or a small part?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Large		30.0%	3
Medium		40.0%	4
Small		30.0%	3
Other (please specify)		10.0%	1
AnsweredQuestion			10
SkippedQuestion			7

23. Would you be willing to participate in a brief telephone interview about your experiences with your organization's social media/student media to help a graduate student create a handbook and website for student media on social media?

		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes		75.0%	9
No thanks		16.7%	2
Other (please specify)		16.7%	2
AnsweredQuestion			12
SkippedQuestion			5

24. Please provide your name, telephone number, e-mail address and the best days and times to call. I will coordinate a time that works for your schedule. Thank you so much!

	ResponseCount
	10
AnsweredQuestion	10
SkippedQuestion	7

Appendix C

Survey Respondents College Association

1. Chaffey College (3 people from Chaffey College took this survey)
2. Yuba College (2 people from Yuba College took this survey)
3. City College of San Francisco
4. Cypress College
5. Los Medanos College
6. Las Positas College
7. Cerritos College
8. Mt. Saint Antonio College
9. American River College
10. Chabot College (2 people from Chabot College took this survey)
11. Solano Community College
12. Southwestern College
13. Glendale Community College

Appendix D

Analyzed social media platforms for interview participants

1. Chaffey College
 - www.facebook.com/chaffeybreeze
 - www.twitter.com/chaffeybreeze
 - www.youtube.com/chaffeybreeze
2. California State University, Northridge
 - www.facebook.com/dailysundial
 - www.twitter.com/dailysundial
 - www.youtube.com/dailysundial
3. Cerritos College
 - www.facebook.com/talonmarks
 - www.twitter.com/talonmarks
 - www.youtube.com/talonmarks
4. Cypress Chronicle
 - <https://www.facebook.com/TheCypressChronicle>
 - www.twitter.com/cychron
5. Mount St. Antonio College
 - www.facebook.com/mountiewire
 - www.twitter.com/mountiewire
6. Yuba College
 - www.facebook.com/the-prospector

www.twitter.com/ycprospector

7. Solano College

www.facebook.com/solano.tempest

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