

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ACADEMICS

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Using social media to publicise your work



Chapter themes

This chapter will:

- Explore how social media can be used to publicise academic work
- Discuss the opportunities for engagement social media offer above and beyond traditional forms of publishing
- Offer some practical guidance on publicising your work, and on using some popular tools that can support this
- Consider some of the risks inherent in publishing your work online

This chapter discusses how social media can be used to publicise academic work and how, in turn, social media can become part of this work. It was difficult to decide upon the word ‘publicise’ in framing this chapter. To talk of publicity has negative connotations and if the phrase ‘self-publicist’ has associations these are rarely positive. It’s not unlike ‘networking’ as a term associated with careerism and instrumentalism. However, in the same way that we might distinguish between ‘Networking’ and networking, as the difference between an aggressively instrumental activity and simply seeking to cultivate connections

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with others who share your interests, it's helpful to distinguish between 'Publicising' and publicising. While we might see 'Publicising' as involving aggressive, continual and untargeted announcements of your research and your publications, we can distinguish this from simply seeking to ensure that *those who might be interested know about your work*.

Part of the problem here is that social media are often equated with triviality and narcissism. The prominent British journalist Andrew Marr once opined that 'A lot of bloggers seem to be socially inadequate, pimpled, single, slightly seedy, bald, cauliflower-nosed young men sitting in their mother's basements and ranting' (Plunkett 2010). A strand of common sense which sees social media in such terms, or as providing means for 'people to talk about what they had for breakfast', has been reinforced by a literature of cyber-pessimism of varying degrees of sophistication, accusing social media of bringing about a state of 'digital vertigo', 'the shallows' or 'the big disconnect' to name but three examples (Carr 2011, Keen 2012, Slade 2012). Careers can clearly be made from this: for instance, Andrew Keen developed his arguments into a further, slightly gloomier book, *The Internet is Not the Answer* (Keen 2015), which despite being a bit better was remarkably reliant upon internet sources. As Morozov (2013) and others have pointed out, these cyber-pessimists are the mirror image of cyber-optimists like Clay Shirky (2008, 2011). Both see technology as leading inexorably to certain outcomes. As boyd (2014: loc 310) puts it, 'Utopian and dystopian views assume that technologies possess intrinsic powers that affect *all* people in *all* situations the same way'. We need to avoid this for reasons that are obvious, at least once the assumption is stated explicitly.

Nonetheless, the characteristics of academics and of higher education are going to have a big impact on how academics use social media within higher education. So for the purposes of this book it's useful if we can at least partially step back from our notions about social media in general and consider the particular kinds of uses to which these technologies may be put within the particular surroundings of higher education. These uses might be trivial and narcissistic. But they probably won't be. What's more likely is that they'll build upon existing things that academics do, helping in some ways and hindering in others. They'll suggest new ways of doing these things and change how we see existing ones. They'll also suggest new things we can do, with this novelty entailing all sorts of consequences for long-established professional practices and standards.

In the case of the present chapter, which considers how social media can be used to help publicise our research and publications, we immediately run into the question of what it means for something to be 'public'. Underlying the

widespread equation of social media with triviality is the fear that, as the novelist Jonathan Franzen (2007: 50) puts it in a discussion of privacy and cyber-culture, '[r]eticence, meanwhile, has become an obsolete virtue'. So when we see self-promotion as something negative, it perhaps reflects a more pervasive unease with the emphasis placed upon being visible; in our quest to be seen, to be recognised in public, we perhaps leave something important behind. On this view, publicity is seen as something suspect and questionable, to be contrasted with an intrinsic worth that doesn't require visibility to legitimate it. But then the 'ivory tower' has always had a complex relationship to privacy. After all, as the sociologist Les Back suggests, 'we academic scribes are not always very sociable' (2007: 163).

This undoubtedly varies between people and across disciplines. But I think Back correctly identifies what is at least a tendency within academic life. Oddly for a profession so dominated by publishing, with its literal meaning of 'making public', practical questions concerning the visibility and circulation of the actual publications which ensue have rarely received the attention that an outsider might expect. Certainly, there are 'how to' guides, but these tend to be problem orientated or aimed at graduate students. We might ask: *how public are our publications?* Inevitably, the answer depends upon what we have published and where we have published it. A paper published by an open access journal is in one sense more public than a chapter included within an expensive edited book. But what if the edited book has been widely promoted, enjoying an enhanced prestige and visibility in virtue of the commentators assembled within it? Is a paper published in a high-impact journal, read and recognised throughout a discipline, more public than one published in a highly relevant sub-disciplinary journal with a narrow but focused readership pertinent to the paper's topic? The point here is not to give way to an extended philosophical digression about what it means for something to be 'public' but only to indicate some of the practical dimensions to this issue. Learning how to approach publication in journals is a key aspect of professional socialisation, in which an aspiring academic learns to understand the topography of an intellectual field, framing their work within it and (hopefully) learning to negotiate the relevant gatekeepers who control access to the relevant public forums necessary to establish a career (Agger 2000).

The opportunities social media provide to publicise our research and publications invite us to consider issues such as these in much greater depth. The considerations discussed above concern how to place a journal article to maximal effect. In reality, how public the published article would be is only likely to be one factor amongst many in shaping the decision as to where to send it, though perhaps one that will

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become more pertinent with the unfolding institutionalisation of open access. In fields where publication in high-impact journals is a requirement, it's possible that factors such as these won't enter into deliberation at all. What makes these questions of which journal to choose interesting from the perspective of social media for academics is how relatively limited the options available for ensuring the publicity of the article now seem. The account Daniels (2013) offers of going 'from tweet at an academic conference, to a blog post, to a series of blog posts to a paper that became an article' is just one of the many potential iterations that become possible through social media, potentially transforming the process of 'making public' into something radically different (Carrigan and Lockley 2011). For instance, the psychologist MJ Barker described to me how they were invited by a journal to extend a blog post they had written into a paper for that journal. The cultural policy academic Dave O'Brien told me how he saw blogging as something to ensure his papers were more widely read. My own experience has been that many of the ideas that end up in my formal publications were initially rehearsed, sometimes rather speculatively, on my own blog.

There are certainly risks, which we'll come to later in this chapter. For now, my intention is simply to highlight some examples of how publishing is changing as a practice. Authors' potential influence upon the process has largely been a matter of choosing a journal which could best ensure that the right people saw their article. With open access, it became a matter of weighing up the greater visibility that would ensue from publishing in an open journal versus the loss of prestige which it would likely have entailed until relatively recently. The emergence of social media complicates this situation by radically extending authors' options for publicising their own work. In a sense though, it's still a matter of announcing that work within existing networks. It's just that the possibilities of *how* to announce and the potential scope of that network have expanded dramatically.

Publicising scholarship in the digital academy

Social media raise questions about publicising academic work of a sort which simply did not make sense when much of this activity was unavoidably conducted by publishing houses and perhaps, more recently, by communications offices in the case of particularly consequential research (Weller 2011). Perhaps the relationship between the words 'publicising' and 'publishing' reflects this: the former means to make something well known, the latter to prepare and issue it to the market. Until recently the 'publisher' was responsible for both. Now, to

use the fashionable term, we're beginning to see their unbundling. Increasingly academics collaborate with publishers on publicising their books, sometimes to a degree that would have once seemed remarkable (e.g. paying money to hire a publicist) and in some cases without much of the promised support from the publisher (Chen 2015). Sometimes they're also publishing the book themselves, though this is still a comparatively rare practice. The changing dynamic between 'publicising' and 'publishing' captures significant changes in scholarly publishing, albeit ones much more developed in the sphere of books than in journal articles.

Much of this chapter will concentrate on the *practical questions* entailed by this, but to draw the present discussion to a close we can consider what these new opportunities call into question. There's always a risk of caricature when trying to convey an established way of doing things, particularly when the intention is to contrast it to a newer (often by implication better) way of working. Nonetheless, it's hard not to see an element of truth in political scientist Patrick Dunleavy's (2014b) description of 'academic hermits, sitting alone on top of a pillar somewhere in academia and doing their level best to not communicate in any way with the outside world, or let any information about their work leak out'. While there's an obviously polemic dimension to this accusation, it's a claim made on the basis of a sophisticated piece of empirical research which sought to better understand the impact that academics do and don't have. As Dunleavy explains, his research team were unable to compile basic information on 35% of the academics they had initially targeted to be part of their random stratified sample. There was simply no information available about themselves and their work. Now these academics might not be working in solitude, in one sense of the term 'hermit', and, furthermore, any discussion to this end must recognise disciplinary differences in relation to working individually and in teams. But they surely are being reclusive in the other sense of the word, at least in relation to the proliferating opportunities for engagement which social media afford for academics.

While the motivations for seeking to publicise your work might seem obvious, it can nonetheless be helpful to take a moment to articulate precisely what these are. Here are some examples:

1. I want to increase the frequency with which my work is cited
2. I want to increase my visibility within my research area
3. I want to increase my visibility within my discipline
4. I want to disseminate my research to practitioners and others outside the academy
5. I want to generate media interest in my work

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These reasons are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but being clear about *your* reasons can be immensely valuable in negotiating the practical questions encountered by anyone seeking to engage online: what service should I use? How should I use it? How should I combine multiple services? Being clear about your goals at the outset does not entail they must be set in stone, but it does give you a starting point without which engaging online can be a confusing and ambiguous experience.

However, such questions don't simply concern what you want *to get out of it*. How you choose to answer these questions also depends on what you are willing and able to *put into it*. How much time do you have? These themes will run through the next four chapters. The different purposes considered in each of these chapters (publicity, networking, engagement and managing information) all overlap to some degree and all of them entail similar issues. My hope is that considering similar issues from a variety of perspectives will help deepen your understanding of what's at stake in each of them.

Potential Pitfalls

The issue of sustainability is one we'll come back to at various points throughout this book, but in brief it is simply a reminder to *be realistic*. Consider how much time you have. Consider how much energy you have. Consider the viability of your goals in light of these constraints. It will help you more to have a basic personal home page that you update regularly on an ongoing basis than it will to have a Wordpress blog on which you post twice weekly for a month before other commitments push it out of the picture. It will help you more to have a Twitter account you use regularly than to have rarely updated profiles across the full range of social media platforms. As the cultural policy scholar Ele Belfiore put it when we discussed this, 'because there are only so many hours in the day, I tend to stick with what works for me and that I enjoy'. Once you find what works for you, stick with it. There's no need to be active on all platforms and doing so could easily detract from your capacity to derive any satisfaction or enjoyment from a single one of them. It might be that *guest blogging* is right for you: approaching established blogs with offers of posts on particular subjects. The experience Dave O'Brien recounted to me of soon

building up helpful relationships with the editors of these blogs is becoming an increasingly common one. Alternatively, it might be that a group blog or Twitter feed is the best thing here, allowing you to split the workload between a group of collaborators.

What is ‘publishing’?

What is ‘publishing’? Most would see it as integral to what academics do and yet the nature of this centrality has changed over time, with ‘publish or perish’ now axiomatic in a way that would have previously been unthinkable (Carrigan 2015a). The practice of publishing changes with the institutions within and through which one publishes. This is a matter of new opportunities but also of new pressures, as Laura Brown and her co-authors stress in their helpful definition:

By publishing we mean simply the communication and broad dissemination of knowledge, a function that has become both more complex and more important with the introduction and rapid evolution of digital and networking technologies. There is a seeming limitless range of opportunities for a faculty member to distribute his or her work, from setting up a web page or blog, to posting an article to a working paper website or institutional repository, to including it in a peer-reviewed journal or book. (Brown et al. 2007)

In this sense, we can see that the meaning of ‘publishing’ isn’t fixed. So what is fundamental to it? What makes ‘publishing’ publishing beyond the particular forms of publications which might be involved? In an important way we can think of ‘publishing’ in terms of ‘making public’. Exactly what can and should be ‘made public’ is partly a function of the technology available, and with the emergence of social media platforms the range of potential forms of publication has expanded greatly. This helps bridge the gap between ‘publishing’ and ‘publicising’: the former has always entailed the latter but in a way which usually entailed this being the publisher’s responsibility rather than the author’s. Social media complicate this longstanding state of affairs when offering many new opportunities for authors to publicise their own publications. Furthermore, academics are under a diverse range of pressures across international higher education systems to demonstrate the impact of their publications and establish their public relevance (Burrows 2012). It’s for this reason that *publicising* will inevitably be a big part of how academics use social media, but

hopefully as we go on it'll become clear that this needn't have its usual negative connotations when applied to publications.

Publicising your publications

An obvious question posed by an intention to 'publicise your publications' is how to make that work available in a way susceptible to promotion. While it is certainly possible to simply announce the existence of a piece of work, doing so is unlikely to encourage others to engage with it unless they have a strong pre-existing reason to do so. It will always be more effective to provide a URL where the work can be obtained online, or at the very least, details about where it can be found. However this can be easier said than done. Though most journals will be accessible online, this is by no means true of all. Chapters in edited books can be difficult to obtain, with a tendency for publishers to focus on purchases by institutional libraries leading to small print runs. Putting the effort into making your work *accessible* certainly represents an additional set of demands involved in online engagement. However, if you seriously intend to publicise your work online then putting some thought into ensuring accessibility can really enhance the effectiveness of your activity. How accessible are the publications you want to publicise online? Are there people in other fields who might be interested in your work? Are there people outside the academy who might be interested in your work?

Yet 'accessibility' is not a straightforward concept. Making pre-prints available, writing blog posts and sharing other resources might be 'accessible' relative to material that is published in a pay walled journal for which few have access. But there are issues of accessibility specific to social media: there are 'web accessibility barriers that people commonly encounter from poorly designed websites and web tools' which pose difficulties for those with auditory, cognitive, neurological, physical, speech and visual disabilities (W3C 2012a). Familiarising yourself with accessibility principles is necessary to avoid inadvertently creating new barriers around material which your intention is to make accessible (W3C 2012b). These include providing text alternatives for non-text content, for instance by using the option in blogging platforms to provide a text caption for images included within posts. Text transcripts of multimedia content can be difficult without funding but they ensure an accessibility which is otherwise denied. YouTube actually offer automatic captioning on videos that meet certain technical criteria. These can easily be edited to improve their accuracy, something which varies greatly depending

on the quality of the video. WebAxe (2012a) offer a really helpful introduction to these issues, stressing how '[d]espite the web's great potential for people with disabilities, this potential is still largely unrealized'. They summarise potential design issues in order to highlight the perspective of the end user, for whom what might have seemed to be trivial issues relating to the design in fact render the content inaccessible (WebAxe 2012b). WebAxe (2011) provide 25 ways to help make your website accessible. In researching this topic for the book, with particular help from Sarah Lewthwaite, I realised how little I'd thought about these issues in my own online activity and the state of the web suggests that I'm far from being alone in this. Hopefully we'll see the emergence of an *expectation* that those engaging online take steps to this end, because without it academic social media will remain characterised by a pervasive inaccessibility.

Standing out from the crowd

Part of the pressure to publicise one's work comes from the sheer volume of publication. Arguably reflecting a much broader acceleration of the pace of social life (see Agger 2004 for an engaging overview of this idea), it seems that ever more publications are being released only to be read, we might pessimistically assume, by ever fewer people. The challenge posed by this proliferating stream of content is how to ensure your publications are recognised and read when there are so many other books, chapters and articles available to potential readers, as well as so many other demands on their time. Haunting discussions and debates about this challenge is the spectre of 'unread' and 'unloved' publications (see Back 2008), with ever more articles and chapters attracting ever fewer readers and often no citations whatsoever. Obviously the meaning of citation is a complex issue, however this chapter is being written from the assumption that if you're seeking to 'publicise your work' then you're seeking to increase its circulation and influence. All I'm suggesting here is that citation *fallibly* tracks influence, in so far as that someone choosing to cite your publication presumably indicates that they have encountered it and it has influenced them sufficiently to lead them to cite it, whether positively or negatively. As Bastow et al. put it, 'Within academia itself, the central form of such influence is for author B to cite an earlier author A's work, which implies that B has read the work and found it valuable in some respect'. Though critical citation certainly happens, this occurs much less frequently than many assume (2014: 37). So while we should avoid any simplistic assumption that citation rates track the value of publications, it seems necessary to recognise that they are

measuring *something*. As will be discussed later in the book, social media provide many alternative ways of tracking the influence of publications, which can readily be seen to *complement* citation rather than *replacing* it, fleshing out what can sometimes be a simplistic measure. Non-citation rates vary widely across disciplines, but the rapidity with which inflated non-citation rates circulate as urban legends points towards an underlying anxiety (Remler 2014). This might confirm a personal fear ('no one cares about what I write') or it might license a self-aggrandising judgement ('obviously people will cite *my* work but most people's work isn't worth citing'). What seems clear is that being cited does matter to most people, to at least some degree. Nonetheless, a focus upon citation doesn't entail the view that citation is the only thing that matters (Biswas and Kirchherr 2015).

Leaving aside these questions concerning citation for now, we can turn to the question of how you can help increase the frequency with which your work is cited. For people to cite your work, they will (hopefully!) have engaged with it. For people to have engaged with it, they will have had to open it. For people to have opened it, they will have had to download it. For people to have downloaded it, they will have had to access it. For people to have accessed it, they will have had to find it (Wang 2014). So when this chapter discusses 'publicising your work', this actually amounts to a number of things: inventorying your publications, making them accessible and publicising them.

Google Scholar

The most common way in which academics inventory their work is a publications list. In such a list, sometimes though not always part of a CV, publications are itemised and ordered. However these lists are frequently far from accessible, providing (sometimes incomplete) bibliographical details but failing to help a potential reader gain access to the publications in question. One useful starting point for making your work accessible is Google Scholar. Establishing a Google Scholar profile is quick and easy. In fact, if you already have an existing Google account, for instance as a Gmail user, then you might be surprised to find that you already have a Google Scholar profile waiting to be activated.

Google Scholar offers a number of additional features which can be valuable beyond publicising your work online. It tracks citations of your work in a way which can help you understand the influence it is having. It alerts you to new publications which might be of interest, utilising your citation network to make what I at least have found to be very useful recommendations. Maintaining your

Google Scholar profile serves another important function: it helps make the ‘grey literature’ visible by allowing you to incorporate working papers and blog posts into your profile. I’ve discovered this way that I’ve frequently had my blog posts cited in journal articles. However the newfound visibility of such material is not always welcome. Occasionally pruning your profile, adding overlooked items and removing reconsidered ones, can help sustain a clear portfolio of the research that you’re choosing to track and are presenting to the world as being worth tracking.

Institutional repositories

Much discussion of academic social media inevitably moves attention away from the institution, but one of the most valuable features of the landscape for digital scholarship might actually be at your institution itself. Many institutions run repositories for publications, in which you can file and index all your publications, often in a way that makes pre-prints accessible to a wider audience. As well as directly leading people towards your papers, using social network services can also increase their Google ranking because of the value that is assigned to links from high-ranking domains. Another useful feature is the capacity to track how many people find your articles and how many download them. Terras (2012) used this to track the influence of her social media engagement on the profile of her publications, once she had lodged them in her institution’s repository. The results were certainly positive, though our understanding of the link between downloading papers and their being read remains imprecise (Wang 2014). As Terras (2012) observes, the real test will come with the growing citation, or lack thereof, further down the line after this initiative. Using institutional repositories can be the most immediate option for self-archiving your academic work, albeit restricted in most cases to pre-prints (and even then, it’s important to check your copyright agreement with the publisher in question) (Lupton 2013b). But without some additional activity, such as that undertaken by Terras (2012), simply making it available online is not going to ensure people stumble across it.

Personal websites

Many academics will already have a university web page but using it effectively to publicise their work is a different matter. It is something which can too easily be overlooked in an age of social media. But a home page can be an effective way of integrating your social media activity into a coherent whole. Ele Belfiore

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explained to me how she felt her institutional web page had become *more* rather than less important as a result of her social media engagement, with the traffic she soon observed on the website motivating her to make a sustained effort to keep it regularly updated with a wide range of information about her work. As she put it, 'The people who want to find out more will go on my staff page'. However, this leads to issues of control and autonomy within the university as a drive towards the standardisation of the brand leads many universities to impose restrictions on staff web pages or even take away direct control of them altogether (Corbyn 2010). This was certainly MJ Barker's experience, who described to me how WordPress provided a degree of control over online publishing that simply wasn't available at their institution. Furthermore, given the insecurity of academic employment, in which a long-term presence at one institution is becoming the exception rather than the rule, it seems likely we'll see a drift away from voluntary affiliation with the university brand through websites. Nonetheless, many do keep a personal website as well as an institutional website, in spite of the additional workload this entails.

An often unanticipated benefit to time spent tweaking a personal website is the panoramic perspective this can help engender about your work as a whole. Though the risk that this becomes a powerful excuse for procrastination should not be underestimated! This issue is explored at length in a later chapter. The process of inventorying, sorting and presenting your work can help illuminate the interconnections within it. What can be particularly helpful here is identifying the themes within your research, in order to present your publications in an engaging and accessible way. Using your website to prominently display your publications frees them from the sequential and reductive ordering entailed by a list. It offers an opportunity to categorise your publications, defining your research agenda(s) and gifting a visibility to individual items which is impossible in a list. Using images of book covers or journal covers can help individual publications stand out, as can giving space to the relevant abstracts, blurbs and details about where a reader can gain access to the publication in question. These can be URLs to publishers' websites, journal websites or pre-print copies of an article in an institutional repository.

Social networks

Social networks designed specifically for academics are growing in popularity, with services like Academia.edu and ResearchGate effectively constituting a 'Facebook for academics'. These can play a specific role of allowing you to

archive papers in a way, while categorising them and promoting them to others who share an interest in these topics. The Victorianist Charlotte Mathieson described to me how Academia.edu provided an online presence that she saw as having a more official feel than her Twitter profile. It also highlighted her research in a way other platforms didn't. She also told me how her experience of tagging her papers by topic on Academia.edu almost immediately led to a demonstrable increase of interest in them, leaving her with a clear sense of how easy it was to find people on there and how actively engaged other members were as researchers.

The functionality of these services is geared towards the specific professional needs of academics as opposed to simply being smaller and professionalised versions of 'mainstream' social networks. Nonetheless the two can be used in tandem, with engagement on Facebook and Twitter helping to increase the usefulness of these more specialised networks. One advantage to using social networks that only becomes apparent when joining a service like Academia.edu is the role played by the 'social graph'. This term was popularised by Facebook but it has meaning beyond that service, in essence referring to a map of the relations which exist between users. By accessing your social graph from another service (such as Facebook, Twitter or your e-mail contacts) a new social network you sign up to becomes immediately of use in a way that would not otherwise be the case, incorporating your existing connections into ones that can be used as part of the new service. As well as helping to abate the spiralling numbers of usernames and passwords most internet users will be forced to deal with (or the security problems that can ensue from using the same password for all services), the social graph helps underwrite the usefulness of other services by leveraging your existing network to your activity using this new tool.

The service LinkedIn usually gets included in discussions of social networks for professionals. While some people report finding the discussion groups on the sites useful, it is far from clear how widespread the uptake of LinkedIn has been within academia, with their incisive deployment of new users' social graphs (see above) perhaps going some way to explaining the spread of the service. The vast majority of readers have surely received an 'I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn' e-mail at some point. Undoubtedly, the value of LinkedIn varies between disciplines and it may serve a useful purpose for those seeking to build and sustain networks amongst practitioners and policy makers. Nonetheless, it's easy to fall into the trap of assuming that a lot of people being *signed up* to a service means a lot of people are *using it*. There's no need to join LinkedIn just because a lot of other people seem to be using it.

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Social networks can be an extremely effective way of publicising your research. At the very least, announce your new publications and share a link for those who will be interested. It can also be fascinating to see ‘ideas in motion’, reading and talking to people *during* the research process. This is a theme we’ll return to multiple times later in the book. But Dave O’Brien offered a prescient warning when I discussed his use of social media with him: ‘imagine if you were in conversation with someone and all they did was robotically, every two or three hours, tell you they were speaking at a seminar or had a new book out ... you wouldn’t want to speak to those people would you?’ In other words – don’t overdo it.

New forms of academic publishing

Thus far in the chapter we’ve considered ‘traditional’ forms of academic publication: monographs, edited books, book chapters and journal articles. These are integral to scholarship and seem likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, though of course their relative importance varies across disciplines and will likely change over time. One of the key factors driving such a change will be the way in which ‘new’ forms of publishing reshape the visibility and influence of ‘traditional’ forms of publishing. But what are these ‘new’ forms of publishing we’re referring to? These are things like:

- Tweets
- Blog posts
- Podcasts
- Videocasts
- Curated collections
- Shared files

While many of the new publishing opportunities which social media afford can be seen as ‘free standing’, it is likely that most will be connected in some way to your research process more broadly. An important part of using social media effectively as an academic involves reflecting on this connection and ensuring it is best suited to meeting your prior goals, tweaking it if this is not the case. Some instances of this can be very trivial – for example if you are using Twitter to try and connect with others in your field but rarely tweet about specialised issues relevant to that field then you’re unlikely to get very far! But as we’ll see, the new

opportunities which social media present us with raise some very non-trivial questions which reward further reflection. For instance if you have a new book being released, how could you best use social media to raise awareness of it? The rest of this section will consider some of the ways in which 'old' and 'new' can be linked to maximal effect.

There are many ways in which these new forms of academic publishing can be associated with more traditional modes of scholarly communication. One running theme throughout this book is the importance of rejecting the view that there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways for academics to use social media. Certainly, the things we can do online are likely to elicit varying degrees of approval and disapproval from the professional communities and networks within which we are embedded. But it is important to remember that social media are not the source of these professional norms. While they can complicate them, in ways that have important implications for the future landscape of social media, this should not be a reason for seeing academic social media use as somehow cut off from everyday life in a 'virtual world' of Twitter, blogging and Facebook distinct from the 'real world' of seminars, lectures and meetings. While using Twitter as an academic for the first time can *feel* very different from, say, attending an academic conference, it is worth being critical of this feeling. How is it different precisely? There are other academics, some of whom are known to you but many probably are not. There are existing networks between them that can help and hinder you in different ways. There are differing identities and interests, different ways of conducting and discussing research. We'll discuss in the next chapter how social media can enhance your participation in academic events but the point here is simply to stress that the novelty of these tools doesn't render your existing ways of doing things and evaluating their worth irrelevant. In short, *go with what works for you* but also recognise that 'what works' may have to be thought out a little more explicitly than usual when it comes to social media because of the novelty of the subject matter.

It is for these reasons that it is worth thinking in detail about how to link up 'old' and 'new' media publications. Differing interests and standards will tend to manifest themselves in divergent senses of what would be an appropriate or inappropriate way to use social media to further the reach of your publications online. Go with these feelings! While it can be extremely useful to consider the things that other people are doing, it's too easy to infer from trends we can witness that this is the 'right' way for academics to use social media or that what we were considering is the 'wrong' way. The key thing is to figure out what works for you

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and pursue this strategy in an enthusiastic and sustainable way, while avoiding the small number of objective pitfalls, by which I mean things which are errors in virtue of the properties of a platform itself (and are signposted in the 'Potential Pitfalls' boxes throughout the book).

In the rest of this section we'll consider four possible ways in which 'old' and 'new' can be linked in publishing. What they all have in common is using social media to enhance the visibility of an academic publication. These connected publications can take on a life of their own, circulating across online networks and potentially leading to a vast increase in the number of people who stumble across your book or journal article. We tend not to think of how it is others find our publications, either because the publisher takes responsibility for promoting a book or we assume being in a journal ensures the capacity to be found, but social media invite us to take a much more active role in this process.

Publicising

The simplest relationship a social media publication can have to a traditional publication is to *publicise* it. On the most basic level this can just be a tweet or a short blog post to announce a new publication. This can sometimes feel like a slightly awkward thing to do, particularly for the first time, given the connotations sometimes attached to 'self-promotion'. But if you're an academic who is blogging or tweeting then it is par for the course that one of the things you will blog or tweet about will be your publications. So let people know when you have a new publication. Explain what it is, where it's been published, and how they can access it. If it's a book then share any discount codes your publisher has given you. There's absolutely nothing wrong with circulating this information more than once. Twitter in particular is a medium that moves at a fast pace and the fact you've posted the same announcement a few times is much more readily apparent to you than it will be to most of your followers. Ideally space out the announcements over a certain time period and vary the wording to highlight various aspects of the announcement.

It's important to remember that *other people* will be publicising your work as well, though it's rather unlikely they'll see it in those terms. By using curation tools, discussed later in the book, it's possible to collate and present engagements with your work. For a book this might involve searching for reviews and collating them into a package with a permanent URL which can then be linked to from your own website. For an article this might involve using altmetrics and social search to collate

links to the URL and curating these references, as well as the associated discussions, into a Storify which can then be included alongside the article in your catalogue of publications.

Furthermore, if you find people talking about your work online, why not talk back? To feel a certain reticence here is understandable, particularly when you found the discussion through searching for yourself, but this is much more likely to be your reading of the situation than it is theirs. For instance, one of the most enjoyable aspects of Twitter can be to suddenly find yourself in dialogue with a person whose work you were discussing. After all, if someone cares enough about your work to discuss it online then why wouldn't they want to talk to you about it? Engaging them in conversation doesn't commit you to any sort of ongoing dialogue but it can sometimes prove an immensely valuable experience, offering new perspectives or new insights that can contribute towards your future work. I've written about my own experience of this in Carrigan (2014b) when encountering a community newsletter discussing my work prompted a dialogue on my blog, a host of comments from community members, and recognition on my part of a significant oversight in a previous publication.

Summarising

Summarising our work is a familiar challenge. In many cases the summary we are asked for will be brief and functional, for instance an abstract for a presentation or paper. But social media open up new possibilities for 'extended abstracts' which have their own aesthetic and intellectual qualities, circulating independent of the papers or chapters they are connected to and encouraging the reader who encounters them to explore more deeply. They could take the form of a blog post which lays out the key arguments of your paper or the key findings, referring readers to the paper itself for the necessary methodological or empirical detail. It might be tweets of your paper which attempt to summarise it in 140 characters or less – no doubt a challenge but it can be an interesting one. It might be a micro-podcast between yourself and your co-author, discussing the main points addressed in the paper, personalising yourselves as authors and inviting readers to explore it more deeply. There are many ways in which social media can be used to summarise scholarly work and doing this isn't repetition, even if it feels like it. It helps make your paper more accessible and gives it a parallel existence in a much more fast-moving space, while nonetheless retaining its own existence as documented scholarship.

Contextualising

Behind every publication is a story. It might not always be an interesting story, but it's a story nonetheless. Why has the author written *this* paper? Why have they written it in *that* way? Why does the topic *matter* to them? One way to approach the relationship between a traditional publication and supporting forms of digital engagement is to see the former as being contextualised by the latter. For instance a journal article could have a video abstract or an edited collection could have an accompanying blog post submitted to a multi-author blog (more on this later). To blog about the work while it's in progress can accomplish the same thing. The political theorist Stuart Elden described to me how he would blog *about* his work, but not blog *the* work. His posts would cover the process of writing, things like chasing down references and copy editing, as well sharing resources he'd compiled in the process of undertaking the research. In one case, he collated past posts which tracked an entire book project from inception to completion (Elden 2015).

Constituting

This might be the least intuitive but also the most interesting way in which social media activity can be connected to academic publications. The philosopher Daniel Little has described this as being an 'open-source philosopher'. After six years of maintaining his Understanding Society blog, he reflected on the way he had seen the project and how it had unfolded over time:

The blog is an experiment in writing a book, one idea at a time. In order to provide a bit more coherence for the series of postings, I've organized a series of threads that link together the postings relevant to a particular topic. These can be looked at as virtual "chapters". This list of topics and readings can serve as the core of a semester-long discussion of the difficult philosophical issues that arise in the human sciences. It roughly parallels the topics I cover in the course I teach in the philosophy of social science at the University of Michigan. (Little 2013)

The blog allowed his readers to 'observe ideas in motion' long before they would have otherwise found expression in print. I talked to Daniel at length about his experiences, something which we'll return to more than once later in the book. For that matter, this book itself has been constructed, in part, through a series of postings in a category on my own blog. To a certain extent this was just a matter of habit, with the blog providing a useful place to collate research

and ideas while I was in the process of working on them. But it's become habitual because I've found it such an enjoyable way to work, inviting dialogue and discussion far earlier in the research process than would otherwise be the case and enlivening it as a result. This sort of 'continual publishing' – namely doing as much of the research process as possible 'out in the open' – may not be for everyone, but it's an interesting possibility which social media have afforded (Carrigan 2013a).

What are the risks of publishing your work online?

Notoriously, as the adage goes, *the internet never forgets*. There's some truth to this and we discuss the potential implications for how you communicate online later in the book. Making copies of what you post online is integral to how search engines work and it is unlikely that the economics of online search would remain functioning if the burden was on Google and other search engines to proactively gain permission to produce these caches (Vaidhyanathan 2012: loc 1266). Some platforms make it possible to restrict access to search engines, for instance there is such an option buried away in the Wordpress settings, but doing so has obvious consequences for the functionality of the blog in question: it makes it much more difficult for people to find it. I had a reminder of how unnerving this can be during the process of writing, as I discovered that an open letter I wrote after a spat with my professional association was, seemingly uniformly, being returned as the third Google result when you searched for the name of the association. While I have no desire to rejoin the association, the sense of animus had long since dissipated and the discovery of how prominently the letter was displayed left me feeling as if I'd been egregiously and unnecessarily rude, albeit algorithmically so.

I immediately deleted the letter from my blog, while leaving an associated note (easily discoverable by anyone who searched for the name of the professional association on my site) in order to make sure that anyone searching for the letter was able to find it. However 24 hours later it has still not been de-indexed by Google, although my understanding is that it will be. The entry remains prominent, though anyone clicking on it now gets a 'page not found' error from my blog rather than an indignant tirade. This experience reminded me of another occasion, on which I'd written a post about the writing style of a philosopher I admire immensely upon reading that his composition method was to dictate his books and then have these transcribed. I was surprised to find this incorporated into a

Wikipedia article, cited as evidence in a section about criticisms of his writing style. This wasn't my intention at all. Both incidents were useful reminders of the dangers of making things public online. They might become much more prominent than you would expect or be comfortable with. They might also be misunderstood and/or deployed to bolster a case with which you might be immensely uncomfortable. In a sense these risks aren't new – the same things were possible, if rather unlikely, when academics published via journals. But the characteristics of social media make these risks much more likely.

In fact digital technology as a whole creates new risks for existing publications, as the astonishing case of Andrew Feldmar makes clear. This Vancouver psychotherapist was stopped at the US border by an agent who searched his name, soon discovering an academic paper he had written in which he spoke of having used LSD as a student in the 1960s. He was prevented from entering the United States, despite having no criminal convictions or being flagged as suspicious in any way, other than the border guard had found a piece of academic work from *half a decade* earlier that described personal experiences *four decades* earlier which were deemed to be problematic (Vaidhyanathan 2012: 177).

It's undoubtedly an extreme case, but as Vaidhyanathan observes 'Even ten years ago we did not consider that words written for a specific audience could easily reach beyond that group and harm us at the hands of an ignorant and malicious reader' (2012: loc 3153). In the case of academics, it was probably a safe assumption that readers would share at least some degree of intellectual orientation and socialisation which introduces a degree of predictability into how things would be interpreted. It is not so much that this has now gone but rather that it has been supplemented by an infinitely diverse range of *potential* readers, with all the unpredictability that implies. Dwelling on this could prove rather inhibiting, to say the least, leaving the online world appearing as replete with an endless array of unknowable threats. But making your work public without considering these changes would be every bit as problematic, as well as being much more risky. The crucial thing is being clear about what you take those risks to be, as related to what *you* are publishing online and the work *you* are doing more broadly. Lupton's (2014a) findings offer some really useful insights into the anxieties, some much more concrete than others, surrounding publicising (and publishing) one's work online.

Perhaps the issue foremost in academics' minds when discussing the risks of making work public online is *plagiarism*. Without wishing to minimise the real risks that can be attached to publishing your work online, there seems to be a

tendency to focus much more on the risks of plagiarism than on how a well-established online identity can guard against it. If your research forms an important part of your online identity then it can actually help establish your ownership of particular topics. For regular bloggers, it becomes possible to point to a time and date-stamped trail of engagements with particular issues, dramatically extending the range of outputs that can be pointed to as evidence of one's work. The risks involved for someone writing so openly might be said to have increased, in that there are more pieces of work online which could be plagiarised, but so too has the scope of the evidence which can be invoked to identify and pursue claims of plagiarism. That said the risks *are* real. There have been a number of cases in which journalists have reproduced the work of researchers without meaningful citation. In one case I spoke to the researcher soon after she'd made this discovery and it left me newly aware of how upsetting this experience could be, as well as how eager the publication in question was to resolve the situation in order to avoid a controversy. In part this needs to be understood against a background of change in the interface between journalism and academia, as well as within each, something which we turn to in a later chapter. I think there's a danger of overestimating the risks, but I'd also encourage you to read the account offered by Williams (2013) of her experience in order to make up your own mind.

As with being clear about the risks that concern you, specificity will always help. In this case one response to these concerns would be to consider carefully what you're willing to share online. How might you differentiate between the following categories?

- Speculative thoughts relating to your research
- Analysis of current affairs in terms of your research
- Interpretations of scholarly literature relevant to your research

Of course sharing speculative thoughts opens up the parallel fear that people might hold you to them. As Stuart Elden put it to me, 'I hope nobody would think my blog posts were of the same status as a journal article'. But there's also less risk involved in Stuart's strategy of blogging *about* his research but not blogging the research itself. The key thing here is to come to a conclusion that you feel comfortable with, informed by an understanding of the potential risks.

Furthermore, breaking down the possible things you might share online like this can help with thinking through precisely *what* the risks are. In the case of plagiarism described above, the researcher drew upon their ongoing research in

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order to offer an astute analysis of a high profile case in the media, prompting the journalist to reproduce it and pass it off as her own. I have no idea what the motivations were in this case: it might simply be a matter of the journalist having been in a rush, searching for ideas to feed into an article, and failing to attribute ownership correctly. While norms about citation online are still in their infancy, it's nonetheless the case that there are established systems for citing social media sources and these should be adhered to in order that ideas can be properly attributed. Exactly what form this takes obviously varies between referencing systems but various standards have now been well established. The challenge emerges because it's much easier to recall a journal article you read six months ago than an interesting idea someone presented you with in a brief conversation on Twitter. This is one of the things we'll discuss in a later chapter – how to make best use of the many discoveries that can so easily be found on social media but can just as easily be forgotten.

Further reading

- *Tales from Facebook* by Daniel Miller (2011) is a fascinating ethnography which highlights the way social media intertwine with everyday life, rather than constituting some 'virtual' sphere opposed to it.
- *Digital Sociology* by Deborah Lupton (2014b) offers an expansive overview of interdisciplinary literature on a whole range of related issues, as well as an extensive discussion of her own research into use of social media by academics.
- *The Googlization of Everything* by Siva Vaidhynathan (2012) is an extremely insightful account of the changing information environment, dominated by Google, encountered by academics when using social media to publish and publicise their work.