

“Museums that are not engaging in the online space are the only ones who doesn’t know what their visitors are saying about them, both good and bad.” - Landon, 2010, p.11

With the emerging use of social media in our daily lives and its ever-growing potentials, many museums have entered the world of social media. However, whether they are using it effectively is still debatable. The poster explores Twitter as a platform for participatory culture and presents how museums can use it to create two-way communications. Twitter has been selected for its conversational nature over Facebook or Instagram. Twitter fosters the emergence of online communities worldwide, transforming the traditional one-way media communication into an active conversation (Espinós, 2014; Giaccardi, 2012) that improves visitors’ impressions, participation, and enthusiasm (Charitonos, 2011).

Cultural institutions no longer possess the authority of knowledge but are the platform for knowledge-building and collaborative experience for visitors to explore their own ideas and reach their own conclusions (Russo et al., 2008). Twitter and its comment, retweet, and hashtag features are avenues for visitors to create complex layers of communication and share them as an expression of inspiration (Gerrard et al., 2017). The poster explores how direct and rapid communication and engagement on Twitter are transforming the museum experience. Consequently, “citizen curators” and “user-generated content” are reconciled with the traditional roles of curators and museum educators.

Amongst popular hashtag campaigns (i.e. #AskACurator, #MuseumSelfie, #EmptyMet, #MuseumWeek, and #museumsnowballfight), I chose two exemplary cases of effective two-way communications to support my argument. The #AskACurator breaks the barrier that makes curators seem inaccessible to the public. Additionally, the recent #museumsnowballfight campaign encourages borderless collaboration between museums to build a richer digital community by showing off their snow-related collections. In the poster, each case study includes the description, the hashtag, the start year, the name of the founder and the country of origin.

The poster does not include some limitations of the Twitter identified in the research. According to Giaccardi (2012), “the restriction of 140 characters does not provide a significant amount of space to exhibit and juxtapose compelling content” (p. 49). As a result, the quality of the interactions may be restrictive to reach an enhanced shared understanding (Charitonos, 2011; Giaccardi, 2012). On that note, Twitter has also acknowledged that some users are removing words that convey an important meaning or emotion, or doesn’t send the Tweet at all due to the character count constrains. As a result, as of November 2017, the character limit increased to 280 (@alizar, 2017). Furthermore, the study by Espinós (2014) reveals that the main pattern of relationship between museums on Twitter is bounded by countries mimicking the offline relationships. The case study with #museumsnowballfight demonstrates the museums’ ongoing attempt to increase engagement internationally.

The poster concludes with tips on effective two-way communications for museums. The tips evolved through synthesizing general recommendations (INTK, 2014; King, 2014; Simon, 2008) with findings from the literature review. The six tips aim to help museums leverage Twitter from mere marketing tool to two-way communication tool as a way of building a community of active cultural participants, engaging people in content and shedding light on life behind the scenes in museums.

References

- @alizar. (2017, November 7). Tweeting Made Easier. Retrieved December 1, 2018, from https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/topics/product/2017/tweetingmadeeasier.html
This article announces that the Twitter has doubled its character count after it has identified that some users are removing words that convey an important meaning or emotion, or don't send the Tweet at all due to the need to cram it within the limited character count. This increase in character count is an important response to the limitations identified by the researchers on the Twitter's limitation on compelling engagement and content sharing.
- 5 Great Examples of Museums Using Social Media - Eventbrite. (2017, April 19). Retrieved December 2, 2018, from <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/blog/social-media-campaigns-cultural-ds00/>
This article discusses museums' acceptance and justification of using social media. Some excellent case studies are listed. However, they were eventually not selected as they are not focused on Twitter.
- Charitonos, K. (2011). Museum Learning via Social Media: (How) Can Interactions on Twitter Enhance the Museum Learning Experience? In: Learning, Media and Technology Doctoral Conference, 4/7/2011, London, UK.
Similar to Russo et. al (2009), this paper studies young people and meaning-making from a school field trip using Twitter. This was helpful in supporting the tip on encouraging tweeting during visits.
- Dixon, M. (2013, September 05). What would you ask a museum curator? Twitter can help. Retrieved December 2, 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2013/sep/05/ask-a-curator-twitter-museums>
This news article explores the #AskACurator campaign, its history, and effectiveness. The article is written for the general public as well as the institutions on how they could get involved and the benefits of getting involved.
- Espinós, A. (2014). Do Museums Worldwide form a true Community on Twitter? In *The Annual Conference of Museums and the Web* (pp. 1-37). Spain: La Magnética.
This research paper offers an in-depth statistical analysis of the museum's use of Twitter and how they are using the tool to form an online community. The research reveals that the main pattern of relationship between museums on Twitter is bounded by countries mimicking the offline relationships.
- Gerrard, D., Sykora, M., & Jackson, T. (2017). Social media analytics in museums: Extracting expressions of inspiration. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 32(3), 232-250. doi: 10.1080/09647775.2017.1302815
Social media is being used to analyze and collect evidence of inspiration. While inspiration is subjective and constructive, Twitter does contain potential expressions of inspiration contributing to participatory culture. However, it does not provide much of the functionality to monitor longer-term, slow-building engagement.
- Giaccardi, E. (2012). *Heritage and social media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture*. Abingdon: Routledge.
The book explores how social media reframes our understanding and experience of

- heritage. It provides useful insights into the aspects of the limitation of Twitter to the research.
- INTK. (2014, October 21). Museums & social media. Retrieved December 2, 2018, from <https://www.intk.com/en/ideas/museums-social-media>
This webpage offers three tips on best practices for museums on Facebook and Twitter. Tips on posting regularly and with photos and videos have been adopted.
- Jaramillo, S. (2017). *Talking with Tweets: An Exploration of Museums' Use of Twitter for Two-Way Engagement* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 2017) (pp. 1-63). Seattle, Washington.
This paper acknowledges the potential of Twitter and the limitation on its use for museums. Statistics on the type of tweets, contents of the tweet, and intent of tweet are particularly useful to evaluate effective engagement and interactivity.
- Kennedy, J. (2018, January 25). Tweeting in a Winter Wonderland: How the #MuseumSnowballFight Was Born. Retrieved December 2, 2018, from <https://museumhack.com/tweeting-winter-wonderland/>
This news article explores the #museumsnowballfight campaign and the story behind how it came to be.
- King, R. (2014, June 25). 11 Ways Your Museum Should be using Twitter. Retrieved from <https://npengage.com/nonprofit-marketing/11-ways-your-museum-should-using-twitter/>
This webpage offers 11 tips on how museums should be using Twitter for museum professionals. The tips on being relevant, including pictures, promoting followers, encouraging visitors to tweet during the visit, and tweeting consistently have been borrowed.
- Kinney, L., & Ireland, J. (2015). Brand Spokes-Characters as Twitter Marketing Tools. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 15(2), 135–150.
Although the focus of my research was not on the use of Twitter as a marketing tool, this source shares the understanding of Twitter's potential to be a very personal and intimate form of communication. The research on gender stereotype and Twitter use are also interesting.
- Landon, K. (2010). Why Use Twitter? In K. Landon, C. Wallis, & P. Davies, Eds. (Ed.), *Twitter for Museums: Strategies and Tactics for Success* (pp. 10-21). Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc.
With the specific focus on Twitter, this chapter from this book introduces what museum users need to know to have a successful Twitter presence. The tone of the book which actively promotes the use of Twitter supports my research.
- Langa, L. A. (2014). Does Twitter Help Museums Engage with Visitors? In iConference 2014 Proceedings. iSchools. <https://doi.org/10.9776/14130>
This paper evaluates how engagement is being practiced from the kinds of dialogue museums are conducting with online users using Twitter. The research reveals how American museums are currently using Twitter. Interestingly, the lowest of all activity is live-tweeting.
- Nerenberg, J. (2010, August 31). "Ask a Curator" Makes Museum Twitter Feeds Fun Again. Retrieved December 2, 2018, from <https://www.fastcompany.com/1686047/ask-curator-makes-museum-twitter-feeds-fun-again>

This article also explores the #AskACurator campaign. This article focuses on the role and expectation of curators with such a campaign. The article incorporates direct quotes from Jim Richardson, the campaign founder, and discusses his inspiration and frustration with the movement towards more open and engaging museums.

Russo, A., Watkins, J., Kelly, L., & Chan, S. (2008). Participatory Communication with Social Media. *Curator*, 51(1), 21-31. doi:10.1111/j.2151-6952.2008.tb00292.x

As museums use social media like blogs, podcasts, and content sharing via participatory communication, the institution's attitude towards cultural authority needs to shift accordingly. The article explores participatory communication in relation to the sharing of cultural information through online communities. It also includes recommendations for social media implementation.

Russo, A., Watkins, J., & Groundwater-Smith, S. (2009). The impact of social media on informal learning in museums. *Educational Media International*, 46(2), 153-166. doi: 10.1080/09523980902933532

Similar to Charitonos' article, this paper focuses on participatory forms of museum learning for young people. The authors do not make the demographic "young people" clear. The focus on learning and young generations provide some insights. However, as it focuses on social media in general, it can only provide a broad perspective on social media and learning.

Simon, N. (2008, December 30). An Open Letter to Museums on Twitter. Retrieved December 2, 2018, from <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2008/12/open-letter-to-museums-on-twitter.html>

This is a letter of suggestions from a member of the public on how museums can improve their use of Twitter. Tips on making interesting tweets, sharing unique contents, and responding to followers have been adopted.

Stewart, E. P. (2010). Twitter and Your Organisation In K. Landon, C. Wallis, & P. Davies, Eds. (Ed.), *Twitter for Museums: Strategies and Tactics for Success* (pp. 44-63). Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc.

With the specific focus on Twitter, this chapter from this book gives guidance on a maze of organizational and policy issues. Many other sources highlight the needs and benefits of effective use of Twitter. However, it does not demonstrate an understanding of complex organizational and policy limitations of which museum operates under. This chapter is useful in providing tips that are valid and appropriate for the museums.