



Research Meets Social Media

Essential guidelines to help you create meaningful research communications with social media.



Acknowledgements

This guide has been put forth by the Office of the Vice President for Research at Colorado State University. It is a culmination of dozens of Internet articles, website tutorials, scholarly articles, and publications along with the professional experience and input from the OVPR communications staff. A special thank you to the OVPR executive leadership whose feedback helped guide and mold the final copy of this guide.

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Why Have a Presence Online?

Why is this guide of use to a Colorado State University researcher? As a leading research institution, CSU is home to researchers whose work has global implications. As a university with a goal of addressing global challenges, it is vital to engage in the ubiquitous tool of the internet to foster collaboration and understanding crossing disciplines and boundaries.

Beyond opening doors for collaboration and information sharing, social media develops your name as a researcher. Much like a business or organization, a researcher develops a product—his or her research body of work. In this way, a researcher moves beyond being an average internet user to a creator of content, someone who adds to the greater knowledge sharing of the internet. Given this role, a researcher has some responsibility to manage his/her web identity.

In this guide, an overview of tools will help you to increase your research impact in the following areas:

Reputation

When your research reaches publication, there can be conversations around it on the internet immediately. In fact, nearly 10,000 scholarly links are shared on Twitter every day (Dalton, 2013). By making yourself part of the conversation, you are keeping an eye on your reputation by giving yourself a voice in the discussion.

Presence

Your presence on the internet refers to two distinct things. First, it is the multiple access points where information about you is shared. Second, it is your very being on the internet as a watchdog over those access points. If your work is published and available on the internet, you likely already have an internet presence.

Information Dissemination

As a part of the research cycle, monitoring and taking part in the dissemination of your research through personally sharing and tracking of citations helps you facilitate and view the impact of your work.

Engagement

By engaging with researchers in your field, you can develop new ideas, as well as make meaningful connections with potential collaborators and funders. By broadcasting to a wider net of internet users who have interests in your field, you can have an impact on the growth of general social understanding.

Impact Tracking

Outside of being a participator and content creator, a researcher should be tracking his/her citations and mentions in others' works. Through strategic tracking via appropriate platforms, it is easy to track who is using and reading your work.

Social Media and the Sciences

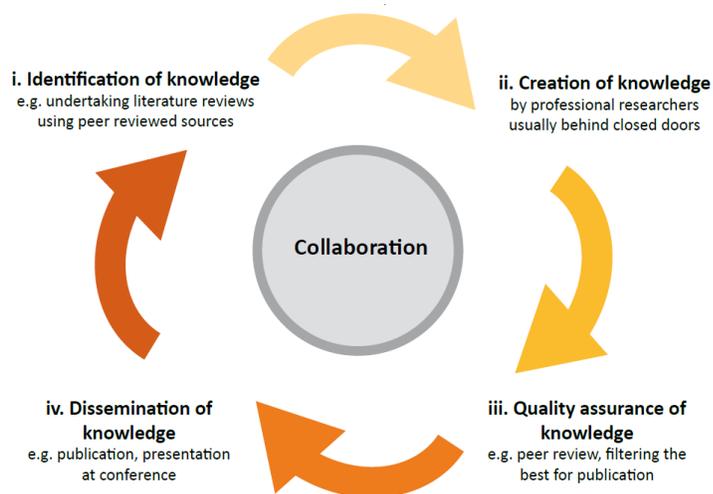
“Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.”
-Dr. Carl Sagan

Welcome to the social media guide for researchers put forth by the CSU Office of the Vice President for Research. The driving force behind this guide is the question, “How can researchers best share their work to spur collaborative projects and disseminate knowledge through social media?”

Social media is an important technological trend that has big implications for how researchers communicate and collaborate. In this guide, social media will refer to Internet tools and platforms where content is shared in activity streams to an audience for purposes of engagement, discussion, and action.

Researchers have a lot to gain from engaging with social media in various aspects of their work. Because research involves production and consumption of information and knowledge, broadcasting platforms like social media are ideal for amplifying your research quickly and simply.

Here is the typical research cycle:



Traditionally, each of these steps happens off-line through social interaction—on-campus collaborations, scholarly article collection, peer review through journal editors and colleagues, and inclusion in journals or conferences. Social media can aid in each of these steps digitally and globally.

In this guide, each step will be discussed addressing how social media can optimize this process. In this way, social media can change the way a scholar undertakes his/her research in terms of collaboration and idea sharing.

Social Media

Developing & Sharing Content



Social media is a two-way street. Users consume content and are expected to give back. As a user on any given site, followers expect meaningful content from you, and to gain new followers, content must be fresh and up to date.

Social media users have access to content 24/7. What can make your social media content stand out? While a researcher can contribute his/her own research articles and writings, other content is needed to grow engagement and foster relationships. This is where content curation and creation come in to play.

Created Content

This is the content you bring to the table. It's your research article, your writings, and other self-promoting materials.

When a user only shares from his/her own creation, their site can appear boring and one-sided. By peppering in some curated content, a researchers can keep their content fresh and engaging.

Curated Content

This is third-party content that you can share to your followers. It is important that it is on-message with your current use of the site. That is to say, it closely simulates the content you're creating. Assuring the content is valid, reputable, and from a safe site (no click-bait sites full of ads before content) is a premier concern for a researcher on social media.

By sharing and curating content written by the subject matter experts you wish to align with, you not only show you're interested in sharing other views of your field, you're also willing to promote other researchers, which may help foster collaboration and engagement from those researchers.

Content Sharing Strategy

While each social media site is different, it can be useful to develop a creation/curation strategy to help manage your content output. For instance, a 70/30 approach may work for your blog.

The majority (70%) of content should be curated content. These post should are purely social. This means that it's outsourced content that creates a conversation that you can participate in as an objective user. This content should be field-related. These posts should come from content "buckets." These are sites, blogs, wikis, and pages you consistently pull from to keep consistency in your curated posts.

The remaining 30% is reserved for self-promotional, created content . While this is still conversational, you are not a non-biased commenter and will likely be explaining and discussing your work to others.

Tips on making a winning combination in this area will be covered in the content curation/creation guide on the next page. Also, some management sites to help centralize your output will be discussed.

Reputation Management

Remember, you are establishing yourself as an expert/professional online. Creating consistent interactions and an expected set of behavior can be helpful in carving out your distinct presence online.

Before jumping in, an exercise in branding can help. First write a sentence or two about what you wish to accomplish on the site. Next write a sentence or two about how you would like to be perceived by your audience on any given site. This is called a brand positioning statement. It sets the tone for your interactions and posts online. When posting content, ask yourself, "Does this fall in line with my brand positioning?"

Developing & Sharing Content

Content Curation and Creation

As discussed, a variety of content is key in keeping your social media sites up to date and fresh. Moreover, thoughtful content that is both created and curated can help build trust in your research and expertise. Below are some ideas in curating and creating content.

Content Creation Ideas	Content Curation Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behind-the-scenes photos: Take candid shots of yourself or your work in the lab or in the field. These don't have to be stuffy--your research is relatable to those following you. • Link to a guest post: Share (or re-share) a link to a post you contributed to another site. • Post a Slideshare presentation you've created: This is a feature on LinkedIn and is like a small, share-able PowerPoint. • Detail an award you've received: Just do this carefully...the idea is to build trust and confidence, not to be overly promotional. • Offer expert insights into a research topic: This helps establish you as a thought leader in your field. • Host a Google+ hangout: Promote it through all your social media channels • Post an excerpt from a blog post: Rather than just posting a link and summary of the post, cut and paste a particularly intriguing excerpt to pique your readers' interest. • Post your scholarly articles or excerpts from them. These can work as teaser posts. Then add a links to the full text/ download site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics or data: Share new, relevant industry statistics (these perform great in terms of retweets and shares) • Infographics: Find an infographic your followers would appreciate. • Recommend a tool: Share a (preferably free) tool or resource you think your followers would find useful. • Recommend a colleague on LinkedIn: Encourage your connections to reach out to someone who acts as a valuable resource for your business. • Share breaking industry news: Stay on top of what's going on in your industry or niche by using Google Alerts. • Share industry research: Post a link to and synopsis of research your fans would find useful. • Get your employees to guest post: Have your employees take turns posting a 'fun fact' on Facebook or Twitter.

Developing & Sharing Content

Social Media Management Tools

In the next few pages of this guide, you'll be introduced to several social media platforms. Some overwhelming questions are, "Where do I start?" and "How much time will I need to devote?" The fact is, social media management should not be a full-time job. Luckily, there are social media management tools to centralize your communications.

Social media management tools act as hubs for all outgoing and incoming social media communication. By logging in to one single management account, you have access to each of the social media sites you use through a dashboard system. You can schedule posts, respond to comments, messages, and replies, and look at other users' activity. With this streamlined system, you can block out times in your schedule to share meaningful, consistent content across platforms. Though there a variety of services, two leading *free* services will be discussed below.

Before getting started, you will need to make individual accounts directly through the sites you choose (LinkedIn, Tumblr, Google+, etc.) Then you will log on through the management service.



Hootsuite

FEATURES

- Cost: Free (other plans available)
- User Limit: 1
- Social Network Limit: 3 (more on paid plans)
- Supports: Twitter, Facebook Profiles & Pages, LinkedIn Profiles & Pages, Google+ Pages (not personal profiles), Foursquare, Instagram, WordPress blogs, Vimeo, tumblr, evernote, flickr, mailchimp, slideshare, storify
- Scheduling and Automation from RSS feeds and other Platforms

REASONS TO USE

- Cross-platform app and online: The mobile app works for iPhone and Android. An online site has equally good usability.
- Get Free Reports by Email: Each week, Hootsuite sends you an email with a pdf attachment of your analytics. Hootsuite gives you graphs showing:
 - Number of clicks per day, Top referrers, Most popular links



Buffer

FEATURES

- Cost: Free (other plans available)
- User Limit: 1
- Social Network Limit: 10 (more on paid plans)
- Supports: Multiple Twitter accounts, personal Facebook profiles and business Facebook pages. It also supports personal LinkedIn profiles, LinkedIn company pages and LinkedIn groups, Google+ pages and App.net
- Scheduling and Automation from RSS feeds

REASONS TO USE

- Cross-platform app and online: The mobile app works for iPhone and Android. An online site has equally good usability.
- Buffer analytics show only the information about posts you've shared using their service.



Social Media Tools

You should consider “social media” as an empowering umbrella term for:

Collaboration, Interaction, Sharing, Creating, and Learning—yes, you as a member of the community on social media will learn from other scholars.

Social media tools are therefore catalysts and highways to these abilities. The term “tools” relates to platforms and websites you can use to share information to targeted audiences, generate and organize content, meet other users in your field and across disciplines who have similar interests to yours. Each is explained in more detail below.

Social Networking Platforms

Social media platforms help to facilitate these steps because of their diversity in audience, tools, and sharing capabilities.

In this guide, they are separated in social networking and professional networking. These services create spaces where you can:

- Create a profile with information about yourself
- Post short text messages as statuses or updates
- Post photos, videos, or files
- Comment on other people’s content
- Engage in one-on-one conversation
- Engage in discussion with multiple people in a group
- Create private discussions/groups for conversations

As you learn the social media terrain of your field, you will narrow your social media use to the most effective channels with the most relevant peers. Until then, it can be good to maintain several accounts sharing the same messages and interacting with others using those tools.

Listed on the next few pages are select tools to get you started on sites that will best suit your professional needs.



Research Impact

What Tools Work?



People most often think of Facebook when learning about social networking platforms as it is the industry leader, but there are range of other services that can provide great opportunity for researchers.

Strategically utilizing social media can amplify your research reach. This means greater impact in your field (collaboration and peer review), in the public (knowledge building), and potentially in the media (news coverage). The following tools work in various ways to help you express your research.

Within this portion of the guide, we will detail two types of social networking tools that can optimize the experience and impact of a researcher online. Learning the difference between platforms can help you make informed decisions about what to share where.

A quick overview of the two types of social networking platforms discussed in this guide are as follows:

• Social Networking Platforms

These sites allow peer-to-peer communication. There is rarely exclusion to non-professionals, as in anyone can join. The downside is it may be harder to target your core audience. The upside is you may want to collaborate with non-researchers, which includes the general public and media.

• Professional Networking Platforms

These sites are designed to match users with other people in their field or in related fields, but they often exclude the general public and media. This invites collaboration and idea sharing among professionals and experts.

First, we'll discuss social networking platforms and later, professional networking sites.

SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS

BLOGS

Blogs can be a good way of finding out about recent developments in your field. Many charities and societies list blogs in their area, or try a search engine such as Google. Creating your own blog about your research is easy. Popular hosts include:



Wordpress



Blogger



Research Blogging

Blogs create an opportunity for in-depth reporting of your research and you can provide links to your other platforms (see content curation/creation p. 7).

When you add content to these sites, you are making your writing available on the web. By design, these sites allow for long text and the addition of media throughout the text. The ability to comment allows others to ask questions and leave feedback.

You can create a private blog or you can make it public. A great feature is your ability to link back to your blog on other social and professional networking platforms. Keep messages short there and give more information on your blog.

The differences between the functionality of the blogging platforms listed here are small. Before starting a blog, browse each site to find similar researchers to connect with on that blog site.

Research Blog Inspiration

- <https://scienceblogs.com/>
- <https://scientopia.org/>
- <https://plos.org/about/>

Research Impact

What Tools Work?

SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS

MICROBLOGS

Like blogging, microblogging is a means to share your writing; however, given the fast-paced nature of the internet, this type of social networking platform asks for shorter, more concise text. Microblogs typically have character limits that only add up to about 1-2 sentences—less if you include pictures, videos or links. Popular sites include:



Twitter

While simplicity is a challenge, society is moving toward expecting shortened interactions and messages. Aside from that, small messages can act as a “teaser” to draw in more conversation or lead followers to click on an in-text link you’ve provided (one that perhaps leads back to your blog).

Like blogs, comments are enabled to help you create conversations around your limited posts. By following others with similar research interests, you can gain followers and create meaningful interaction with your followers and those you follow.

Highly tweeted research articles are 11 times more likely to be cited than less-tweeted articles.

Your posts live on your personal page where people can view them in reverse chronological order, which means the latest thing you post

appears first. In this way, microblogs are great to use as the story of your research as it unfolds.

By using hashtags in your posts on microblogs, you can target a message toward an audience who looks for that particular content.

A “hashtag” or “tag” is a word or phrase preceded by a

hash or pound sign (#) and used to identify messages on a specific topic. On these microblogs, users can follow interests and passions by tracking hashtags. Hashtags are a great way to maximize your reach. Here is an example of using hashtags in a Twitter post:



On Twitter, you strive for re-tweets (content sharing), favorites (saving your content for later), and replies. These are the ways others can interact with your content and heighten your “impressions”—how many people see your content in their feed. The more interactions, the more impressions you will receive as Twitter pushes popular content into followers’ feeds.



- ### Twitter Microblog Inspiration
- <https://twitter.com/matthewhitt>
 - <https://twitter.com/ophastings>
 - <https://twitter.com/michaelseman>

Research Impact

What Tools Work?

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS

As discussed, Professional Networking Platforms are designed to match users with other people in their field or in related fields, but they often exclude the general public and media. This invites collaboration and idea sharing among professionals and experts.

In the next few pages, those sites with the most promise for researchers will be discussed.



As a professional, you may already have a LinkedIn that details your professional body of work and curriculum vitae, but have you taken on the LinkedIn platform as an academic, a researcher? Listed are three ways you may not be using it to optimize your research impact.

Join Groups

LinkedIn groups are a great way to meet other professionals and engage in communication about your research. To find groups with interests similar to yours, use the LinkedIn Groups Directory and search for key terms. Broad terms will get broad results, so be specific. Consider what you hope to get out of the groups; to get the results you want, you may want to add a few groups.

When you become a member of a LinkedIn group, participate before posting. What gets the best responses? What has the group already covered? What is missing from the discussions? When you're ready, post a discussion topic you know you're prepared to engage in--after all, you'll be talking to other experts.

When thinking of groups, think small. Don't overwhelm yourself with group memberships. Join a few small groups and work on making connections before moving on to new, larger groups.

Use SlideShare

LinkedIn SlideShare is a web-based slide hosting service. Users can upload files privately or publicly in the following file formats: PowerPoint, PDF, Keynote or OpenDocument presentations. Slide decks can then be viewed on the site itself, on hand held devices or embedded on other sites.

The point of slideShare Show is for users to show what they know through a quick presentation, infographic, document or videos. When presentations are uploaded, they search-able through LinkedIn's targeted search. This can help you build your reputation with the right audience and cultivate more professional opportunities.

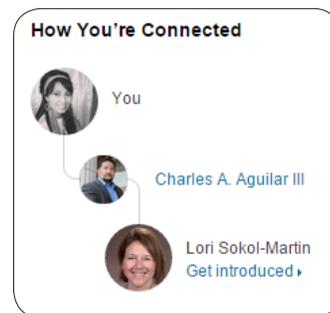
SlideShare is a content's curator's dream. Access others' SlideShares to share on LinkedIn and other social media platforms. Make your own when a new research article is published to cover the main findings and discussions.

Get Introduced

Introductions are where collaboration becomes possible. Creating a strong group of first connections is key. First connections are a network of all the people you know personally--your colleagues, peers, fellow researchers, former graduate cohort, etc.

From there, you'll be given access to second connections--those who your closest connections are connected to. Through your first connections, you can request introductions.

In this way, you can extend your professional network to reach others like you. Because this is a professional social interaction, follow three rules for respectfully requesting an introduction.



Be specific: Say exactly why you want to meet the new connection and what you have in common.

Include a "pitch" as to why an intro would be valuable: Perhaps the chance to learn about a future NSF grant opportunity.

Show appreciation/ provide an "easy out": Be thankful, but state that you understand if it's not the right time.

Research Impact

What Tools Work?

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS

The following two sites are research-focused professional networking platforms. They offer similar services and cater to similar needs, so a run-down of the sites' capabilities will be discussed then general best practices for research impact will be detailed.



ResearchGate is a social networking site for scientists and researchers to share papers, ask and answer questions, and find collaborators. The site has over 3 million users who have uploaded over 35 million scholarly papers. Some of its best features:

- ResearchGate links researchers around selected topics and specializations—these can be chosen or edited at any time by members.
- Members can track/follow the research publications of others in their field.
- Members can upload copies of papers (either pre- or post-review) and the associated raw data. All will be search-able.
- ResearchGate offers the ability to search and filter on a variety of topics: author, institution, journal, publication, and so on.
- Members are automatically subscribed to a co-author's feed, so that they can see work from and connect with their co-authors' co-authors.
- Members can request a copy of a paper from the author if it is not freely available.
- RG contains useful information about journals, such as impact factors, metrics and some details of open access policy – in this respect it is useful for bringing information together into one place.



ACADEMIA.EDU

Academia.edu allows you to post your articles, your abstracts, your syllabi, your CV, calls for papers, and other materials. It promotes your work to other academics in your field. When you first log in, Academia.edu asks you what your interests are and what your research is about. Then it tries to connect you to other people who have those similar interests. It also promotes the work of other people who have interests similar to yours.

This site allows you to affiliate with your university and department. Often times, entire departments will migrate onto Academia.edu to begin networking similar to LinkedIn. Check with yours.

Be aware that Academia.edu restricts downloading of PDFs to people with Academia.edu account logins. Though it is free to create an account, this extra step blocks people from downloading papers. Therefore, this may not be the best content curation source. Find alternative ways to link your papers on other sites.

Best Practices

On these sites, it is useful to upload "gray literature" (conference papers, interim reports, thesis, dissertation); information that people tend to cite, but can be next to impossible for other people to get a hold of. This creates a more comprehensive database of your work. Even if you can't be an active member on the sites, the views of your work are tracked by it and the documents become highly search-able on Google, so it's worth putting yourself out there.

These sites aren't integrated into social media management tools, so you cannot schedule posts or manage this account off site.

The best feature of these two sites is your ability to reach out to other researchers and follow their work. This is a captive audience of the people you are hoping to lure on social networking platforms. Invite users you find on these sites to follow you on your other platforms.

Check with your journal publication or book publisher before posting all content.