"What Would I Tweet?"

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Introduction

Twitter, the social networking platform, is a tool many libraries use to connect to and communicate with their users.

However, little research has been done to date on librarians' attitudes to and perceptions of Twitter as a tool for their own professional development.

Method

An exploratory qualitative study was carried out (n = 37), based on a workshop activity delivered at the inaugural New (LIS) Professionals Day in Ireland, March 2013.

Workshop participants were asked to rate their "**Twitter temperature**" as cool, warm or hot by selecting an appropriately shaded sticky note, stating the reason for their choice.

Conclusion

Many librarians have still not warmed to Twitter, and remain unsure of its value or how to integrate it fully within their professional workflows.

Those who actively use Twitter are typically vocal advocates for the tool as a resource for networking, discovering information and learning.

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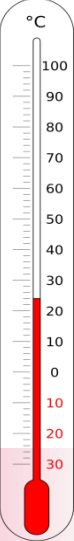
Cool

"Don't know how to use it effectively"

"What would I tweet?"

"It has just never appealed to me"

"I don't have a Twitter account or follow any accounts"

"I know very little about it"

"Passive user"

"Am concerned about "time wasting"!"

"I don't understand how to use it"

"Just started a Twitter account so yet to really get started"

"Word count – 140 characters"

"I get random tweets that are possibly due to the fact that I do not know how to use it properly"

"Just never bother with it"

Warm

"Time pressure"

"Information Overload"

"I follow people and feel it's a really good resource but I don't tweet myself"

"I have an account but don't use it too much professionally at the moment"

"Time"

"Not sure how to use it"

"Not sure if people are interested"

"I check and retweet but want to try harder"

"Building a Twitter family"

"New to it – just exploring"

"Started using it and enjoying the conversation"

"Liking it more and more"

Hot

"Always someone who can answer a question"

"Use it all the time now – tweet every day and use links from Twitter a lot"

"Read it last thing at night and first thing in the morning (should maybe ease off!)"

"Love Twitter because it's a 24/7 source of up to the minute info, news, opinions etc. of my interests (libraries, reading, books)"

"Build relationships – lists"

"I use it for professional development"

"I follow colleagues and people of interest to me in the profession"

"Discover, connect and find information"

"You can observe a lot just by watching Twitter"

"What Would I Tweet?": Exploring New Professionals' Attitudes Towards Twitter as a Tool for Professional Development

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Abstract

Twitter is a relatively common platform through which libraries can connect with their user communities. However, it also represents an innovative tool for professional development by allowing library and information sciences (LIS) professionals to communicate and share information across distance and time. Using data gathered from a workshop activity, this article explores the attitudes of new and emerging professionals towards Twitter, including barriers to usage and how these can potentially be reduced.

The results indicate that some librarians are still reluctant to fully utilize it as a continuing professional development tool for a variety of reasons. Promoting strategies that specifically address these concerns may help to increase the level of engagement with Twitter by the LIS community as an innovative learning and development resource.