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## Do you Tweet?

If you keep up-to-date with celebrity news or the technology pages of any news paper or website, then you are probably already aware of the phenomenon that twitter. Twitter is a social networking tool that encourages communicating, in 140 characters or less, with an ever expanding client base of twitterers.

A study by Sysomos Inc. (Cheng et al, 2009) claims over 11 million users and that 5% of the users account for around 75% of the activity on the site. The idea of twitter is simple: sign up for a free account, find people to 'follow', often from existing networks, and start posting to develop your own group of followers. Twitter only asks one question "what are you doing?" and can therefore be a way of updating friends and family of your daily routine, or on a more professional level it can be a way of disseminating your research or ideas or routines to other twitter users. Your imagination and the 140 character message are the only limits to what you can use twitter for.

So why am I writing an article about twitter? Information services has recently begun to use twitter as another means of communicating with our users. The web team and members of the academic teams have been tweeting updates including, but not limited to, changes to service provision, new items in Nectar and letting followers know about new resources. As the most frequent twitterer, the writing of this article has fallen to me.

Other universities have been twittering – a simple google search for twitter and universities reveals many lists of institutions tweeting, so we are not alone in embracing this method of communication. Although press coverage relating to twitter is not all positive (Warman, 2009; Sparkes, 2009) it does seem to work in terms of alerting users who might not engage with other communication channels. Uptake of twitter might not be high, in terms of the number of people you reach with your updates, but I think it is important to consider twitter as an additional method of communicating your message rather than it being your only method of communication.

Personally I think Twitter is a valuable tool to use, so long as it's being used for the right reasons. Twitter is not just a way of letting people know about your resources or services; it is intended as a social networking tool. Therefore it needs an investment of time in order to build up a network, and then it requires time for the interactions to take place. This does not mean simply posting your message, but responding to things that other people in your network have tweeted about.

If you are interested in finding out more about twitter I would recommend signing up for an account and simply trying it out. It's free to sign up and you can start using it immediately, it need not take long as you only have 140 characters to work with. This makes you think about what you are communicating in order to fit the character limit! If you find you don't like using it, you can disable your account or simply stop using it, so it's not a

waste of time trying it. You never know what networking opportunities you may miss out on unless you give it a go.

If you want to see how the teams in information services are using it I've included the addresses for our twitter feeds; so why not become a follower of one, or indeed all of the tweeters mentioned below, and we can then become your follower and help build useful networks, if you add your twitter feed address to your email signature, you can let other contacts know you are on twitter.

Username	URL	Details
fionaunis	<a href="http://twitter.com/fionaunis">http://twitter.com/fionaunis</a>	Fiona MacLellan, Academic Librarian
helenauon	<a href="http://twitter.com/helenauon">http://twitter.com/helenauon</a>	Helena Beeson, Academic Librarian
hannah_uon	<a href="http://twitter.com/hannah_uon">http://twitter.com/hannah_uon</a>	Hannah Rose, Academic Librarian
Charlotteuon	<a href="http://twitter.com/Charlotteuon">http://twitter.com/Charlotteuon</a>	Charlotte Heppell, Academic Librarian
Gillian Siddall		Gillian Siddall, Academic Librarian
jo_is	<a href="http://twitter.com/jo_is">http://twitter.com/jo_is</a>	Joanne Farmer, Academic Librarian
georgeunis	<a href="http://twitter.com/georgeunis">http://twitter.com/georgeunis</a>	George Payne, Academic Support Manager
katelittlemore	<a href="http://twitter.com/katelittlemore">http://twitter.com/katelittlemore</a>	Kate Littlemore, Academic Support Manager
Ajrlib	<a href="http://twitter.com/ajrlib">http://twitter.com/ajrlib</a>	Alan Rosling, Academic Support Manager
Librarycupcake	<a href="http://twitter.com/Librarycupcake">http://twitter.com/Librarycupcake</a>	Heather McBryde-Wilding, Academic Support Manager

NickWebteam	<a href="http://twitter.com/NickWebteam">http://twitter.com/NickWebteam</a>	Nick Dimmock, Web developer
NECTARQueenBee	<a href="http://twitter.com/NECTARQueenBee">http://twitter.com/NECTARQueenBee</a>	Miggie Pickton, Research Support Specialist
NECTARresearch	<a href="http://twitter.com/NECTARresearch">http://twitter.com/NECTARresearch</a>	Nectar repository feed
LTatUoN	<a href="http://twitter.com/ltatuon">http://twitter.com/ltatuon</a>	Learning Technology feed
UniNorthants	<a href="http://twitter.com/UniNorthants">http://twitter.com/UniNorthants</a>	Official University feed
Uonis	<a href="http://twitter.com/uonis">http://twitter.com/uonis</a>	Information Services Publicity feed
Alison_Brook	<a href="http://twitter.com/Alison_Brook">http://twitter.com/Alison_Brook</a>	Alison Brook, Deputy Director Information Management
Weshr	<a href="http://twitter.com/weshr">http://twitter.com/weshr</a>	Wes Homard- Roy, Information Systems Developer
elsmithUN	<a href="http://twitter.com/elsmithUN">http://twitter.com/elsmithUN</a>	Emma Smith, Web Team
Rjhowe	<a href="http://twitter.com/rjhowe">http://twitter.com/rjhowe</a>	Rob Howe, Learning Technology
heatherINS	<a href="http://twitter.com/heatherins">http://twitter.com/heatherins</a>	Heather Dimmock, Information Services Assistant
Yocis	<a href="http://twitter.com/yocis">http://twitter.com/yocis</a>	Yvonne O'Connor, Information Services Assistant

BBC, (2009) *Twitter hype punctured by study*. [Online] London: BBC Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8089508.stm> [Accessed: 06/10/09].

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Warman, M. (2009) The web revolution that's going nowhere; the etiquette of social media. *The Daily Telegraph*. 20<sup>th</sup> August, p. 24.

Sparkes, R. (2009) Education: the twitterati and the twits: further education colleges are starting to catch on to social messaging. Sort of. *The Guardian*. 3<sup>rd</sup> March, p. 8.