

## Twitter for artists and arts organisations

(NB, for any unfamiliar jargon see the end of the document for a quick glossary!)

**What is Twitter?** Twitter allows you to send out a short message about what you're doing to your 'friends'. Likewise you can receive messages sent by people you 'follow'. This produces an ongoing dialogue (or stream) of messages ('tweets') which you can view as and when you want to. Twitter is a 'micro-blogging' service. It's a combination of instant messaging, blogging and social networking rolled into one small 140 character space.

**What is it for?** As with any social network, the answer is 'whatever you want to make of it'. Twitter's immediacy makes it ideal for spreading news. Some people find it useful to follow people and topics which they're interested in, whilst others ask questions and offer opinions. A lot of people do all these things and more.

**Why should I be on Twitter?** Well this is the important question isn't it?

In our hyper-connected world, traditional ideas of marketing and artist/organisation-to-public relationships are increasingly obsolete. In a world of millions of people vying for your attention, it's not your presentation; it's your *connection* to your target audience that's important. This is where social media comes in. Web 2.0 holds invaluable tools in accessing the hearts as well as the minds of your audiences. To people bombarded every day with over-cooked advertising and 'brand' it's the accessibility and reality of organisations that draws interest and loyalty. Put more simply, social media tools aren't about you, they're about the people you want to speak to. Twitter is an important tool in the social media toolbox.

Here are just a few ways in which Twitter can help you communicate:

**Complete the picture:** Microblogging is instant, relevant, easy to digest, powerful and immediate. It is the personal and day-to-day side of your organisation, free of pomp, it completes the picture behind the front-facing form of a website, and is quicker and easier to digest than a blog.

**Break down the barriers:** The immediate and intimate view that Twitter allows into the day-to-day running of your company/projects helps to break down the pedestal that 'art' and 'theatre' is placed on. It shows the nuts and bolts as well as the finished piece, allowing you to make your art accessible and interesting to young and new audiences.

**Collaborate:** Twitter can act as a more efficient search engine, delivering you relevant information you never knew you needed, it can help you make connections to people and groups, it can garner immediate responses to questions, act as an instant audience-survey, it helps you see into other people's worlds in the same way they can access yours. It connects you to people all across the country, and all across the world.

**Make contact:** as well as introducing yourself to a potential new audience, you are meeting people from a new world - there are new ways of loving, laughing and communicating being created every day, stay ahead of the curve, understand the people you want to tell stories to. Because that's our business really, isn't it?

**People who tweet are active, and loyal:** Twitter is an active pastime, the people who get the most out of it listen as much as they speak – they *participate*. The mobile nature of Twitter means that if you're tweeting well, you're interacting in real-time with other people's ideas, sentiments, links. People from Twitter meet up, hold events, raise money. The personal nature of Twitter means that these people are more likely to actively support you and your work. Why?

**Because Twitter is powerful** On 12 February 2009, 202 cities around the world held Twestivals, bringing together the [Twitter](#) community for an evening of fun and to raise money and awareness for [charity: water](#), raising over \$250,000. The [twitchhiker](#) hitched from Newcastle to NZ in 30 days only through followers, raising £3,000 in online donations. There are Twitter book-clubs (Jonathan Ross [@Wossy](#)), Twitter comedy gigs [@tweetcomedyclub](#). What's more Twitter has revealed itself as a powerful and new way to absorb the on-the-ground news -from the G20, to the Mumbai attacks, and the recent Iran elections, the news came through first, thickest, and from the ground via Twitter. An American student was arrested in Egypt, and managed to send a brief tweet with a single word - "ARRESTED" - which was picked up, and led quickly to his release. As the Iranian government locked down on internet access and mobile communication, Twitter, accessed through proxies, was one of the only ways for people to communicate. Obama was the most followed user on the whole of Twitter during the US election. In our hyper-marketed world, Twitter is powerful, because it's a dialogue, not a 'sell'.

### **Applications and etiquette:**

#### **Finding people to follow:**

**You can find people to follow by searching names through the website's search page, but after you have a few followers and friends, the best way to find new people to talk to is to see who everyone else is talking to – look out for interesting re-tweets, read other people's @ replies, or search a trending topic to see who else is talking about what you are. Don't forget to ask people in real life if they're on Twitter too!**

The easiest way to learn how to use Twitter is to get on and start using it, but here are a few tips and basic etiquette:

- **Be nice!** – say hello to your new followers or people you have followed, thank people for retweets and recommendations.
- **Be funny** – humour, for me, is what holds Twitter together. It's the perfect outlet for that one-liner you thought of on the bus or the daily ridiculous-but-true things that happen to you and the people around you.
- **Listen** – Twitter is not about you, it is about the people you follow, and the people who follow you. *Social* media- you see? If you're sensible about who you follow your timeline should be full of interesting, weird and wonderful things other people have to say. Listen to them.
- **Interact with people** – ask questions, reply to them, add to the discussion.

- **Inform** – link to useful and interesting information, useful software, articles and news items that you come across.
- **Tweet!** - tweet reasonably regularly, otherwise people might not see your updates (it's a busy timeline out there)
- **Credit, link and promote others**- use the @ to link in Twitter users that you think will be interested in a tweet. Retweet and always credit people for the funny, interesting and relevant things they've said that you want to share.
- **Don't spam** - it is fine to promote your projects and work, but don't spam, one link to a picture, a blog entry etc. is fine, but make it genuine, exciting and relevant -otherwise people will turn off and un-follow .
- **Be human** - not always obvious but very important, being a "real" person, rather than tweeting from an organisation, or promotion point of view is probably the most important trait of any successful Twitter user. If you are a company of many, it's nice to preface a tweet with the initials of the tweeter, and elsewhere (on a blog or website) have more info about the different members of the team.
- **Have fun.** Since joining Twitter I have laughed more, learnt more, and heard some amazing stories, I now find that it's where I get my breaking news, recommendations, and a strange kind of micro-entertainment. Yes I have made some very useful contacts, but more importantly I have met some wonderful people, people who I may never have met otherwise. So get out there! Enjoy.

### ***Tweet free***

Twitter is best used mobile, the text message-length "tweets" can be sent/received on a mobile phone or PDA/iPhone/Blackberry device. Being mobile is an important way of taking your followers with you and your company. Here are a few links easy to use programs to help you on your way

#### **Mobile applications:**

**iPhone:** [Tweetie](#), [Twitterfon](#) [Tweetdeck](#) and [Twitherrific](#)

**WinMob:** [Pocketwit](#) and [TinyTwitter](#)

**Android:** [Twidroid](#) and [Twitta](#)

**Blackberry:** [TwitterBerry](#)

**Desktop applications:** these 'clients' make Twitter easier to use on a PC or Mac, enabling you to use Twitter outside the browser and swap easily between accounts whilst maintaining full functionality.

**[Tweetdeck](#):** For PCs and Macs, Tweetdeck runs on [Adobe Air](#) software. Tweetdeck is quite a 'heavy' program (if your technology is a little old, you're better using another option), but most people swear by it. Nice user interface. Includes options to post pictures, shorten URLs, post tweets to facebook and more.

**[Twhirl](#)**: Another desktop application that runs on Adobe Air. Lighter than Tweetdeck, includes a spell check, URL shortener, picture uploader, nicely organise tabs/favourites. Customisable user interface. My choice of application.

**[Twitterfox](#)**: An add-in for the [Firefox](#) browser, with notifications, and full functionality, nice, functional and light. URL shortening for links that exceed the character limit.

**[Twitterbar](#)**: another add-in for Firefox, which lets you tweet from the address bar of your browser, good for easy tweeting of links.

**[Twitbin](#)** another add-in for the Firefox browser, similar to Twitterfox but in a sidebar.

**[Tweetie](#)**: a Mac desktop application version of the popular iPhone client. Nice and simple but the ads can be annoying.

**[Nambu](#)**: a Mac application with a 'mail' style interface with 'inboxes' for updates, messages, mentions etc. You can create groups, which act like filters for the main stream of tweets. It has three views- normal stream, the 'mail'esque layout, and group columns like Tweetdeck. It supports URL shortening, and Identi.ca accounts. Facebook and FriendFeed support is 'coming soon'.

#### **Others useful things:**

**[Twitpic](#) / [yfrog](#)** and other websites host images for posting links to on Twitter.

**URL shorteners** such as [is.gd](#) , [tr.im](#) and [tinyurl](#) allow you to substantially shorten links in order to fit them into the 140 character limit.

**[Audioboo](#)** – short audio podcasts posted to Twitter through an iPhone application.

**[Skitch](#)** – An invaluable program for anyone running a Mac – allows you to grab any screen and easily add notation, arrows and captions before sharing a link of the end image.

**[Spotify](#)** – a free music streaming program, best used on Twitter to share music and playlists by right clicking and copying a link

#### **Fun!**

**[Twitstori](#)** – if any one tweets the words 'I love' 'I hate' 'I like' 'I believe' 'I feel' 'I wish' twitstori collates them. Fascinating, often banal, occasionally breathtaking.

**[Tweetstats](#)** – have a look at the habits and stats produced by your tweeting, arranging them into graphs or wordles (clouds of often used words)

## **Twitter Jargon:**

There's not a lot of it, and it is very easy to pick up, but here's a quick guide for ease of use:

**Tweet:** a short, 140 character message.

**Follow:** To follow someone is to subscribe to their tweets

**RT or Re-tweet** - when you forward on someone's tweet – it's good etiquette to structure a RT roughly: RT @<insertuser>: Followed by their tweet. People often append their own comments in brackets.

**@reply** An @reply connects a particular user to your tweet, it is mostly used for replying to people, or including someone, example

@user1 I was in town and ran into @user2 today, said we should meet up, you fancy it?

Both user1 and user2 will be notified about their inclusion, and people who follow both of you will also see the exchange

**D reply** this is a direct message that you can only send to someone who is following you. Only you and the recipient can see these. Useful for exchanging phone numbers and email addresses.

**Favourites** Most clients, as well as the web interface, allows you to 'favourite' tweets. This is very useful in preserving useful links or ideas before the stream of a new day washes them away.

**Trending topics:** words or phrases most used throughout Twitter.

**Hashtags:** searchable tags used to identify tweets discussing particular events or topics, IE #iranelection #G20 (people also subvert/play with them) you simply type a hash # and then the identifying text #Shift2

**Memes** internet memes are repeated jokes or ideas, on Twitter they are often hashtagged, i.e. #followfriday is people's follow recommendations. People also participate in jokes this way EG #nicerfilmtitles 'Apocalypse next Tuesday' 'There Will Be Milk'.

This document was written by [@hannahnicklin](#)

Thanks to the following people for their help with proof-reading and Mac/Android clients:

[@caffeinebomb](#) [@toodamnninja](#) [@urbanfly](#) [@MarcusRomer](#) [@imascientist](#) [@rdouglasjohnson](#)