

# *Seismic Shift: Metrics, Media and Marketing and the changing world of journals*

Taylor & Francis Workshop

1st October 2013, St Hugh's College, Oxford

## *“Everything Everywhere”: An Academic's Life on Social Media*

*Andy Miah, Director, Creative Futures Institute, University of the West of Scotland; Fellow, Institute for Ethics and Emerging, Technologies; Fellow, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology; Global Director, Centre for Policy and Emerging Technologies*

---

### TRANSCRIPT

#### **Andy Miah**

[START] I'm going to give you a kind of author's perspective on using some of this stuff in the course of their work, but I wanna do a quick poll with all of you. If you could all just kind of reach into your pockets and your bags and hold aloft your mobile phone so that I can see it. 'Cause I wanna get a sense of how many of you actually have the tools to allow you to use social media. And, actually looking around, it's pretty much... well, you're all kind of wealthy academics so of course you've got the latest smart phones! So, all of you have the capacity... apart from you... There's always one! So all of you have the capacity to use social media but a show of hands, how many of you are using Twitter, for example? Oh wow, that's not bad though... That's like 40%, I'd say, so that's pretty good going. I guess with this fifteen minutes I want to kind of give you a sense of where I kind of came from and what I see as the kind of requirements to really engage with this as an author. And the title for my talk is 'Everything Everywhere' because, as an author, I really want

to make sure everything I produce can be found wherever people are, whether they're on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, whatever the platform might be, and especially whatever the next platform might be. I want to ensure people have access to... And I became very frustrated as a PhD student with the way in which universities kind of respond to that kind of broader public intellectual role of academics, and how we rely on virtual learning environments, which don't allow us to get stuff out there. We have antiquated websites designed by people that charge us lots of money for them and don't have much functionality. So I ended up starting to design my own websites. And that really was quite a crucial part of what really lead me to being, I guess, engaged with this agenda but also interested to see how it fits within my own research working life. So I kind of really began designing my own websites as a PhD student. And it's really kind of like, y'know it's a bit like the television in your sitting room; it's much easier to engage with the television when it's in that place that you inhabit. And similarly, it's easier, I think, for you to engage with things like social media when you're already part of that world. It's very hard to do it, I think, when you're not. So having a website was, for me, a crucial way of being able to allow others to reach my work when I was a PhD student. And it grew from there. Very early on in that development it was clear that as people were going to... as people were getting online, that the impact of that was quite substantial in different ways. Y'know, I went, I did a lot of work on the Olympic Games and the first Olympics I went to was in Sydney. And I managed to get accreditation as a journalist back in 2000 just by having a website, which at the time was still quite novel. So, again, in terms of what sort of things you can do as an academic, I think having this other publishing space can be quite helpful. But it's also true that the kind of things that I did online were broader than just working as an author, as a publisher, as a researcher. I also got into photography and photography became of way of me inhabiting academic environments in a very different way. I would photograph events I'd go to, conferences, and those become [sic] additional ways in which you can produce content around them, and additional ways in which you become a part of that world. So I think one of the crucial, kind of, steps for me was to immerse myself within the world of the internet very early on, and participate not just within the aspects of it that are intimately connected to my research but also that broader environment that is the internet.

So that was important towards getting to where we are now with social networking, which really came online around 2004-2005 when many of the big platforms began: YouTube; Twitter; Flickr. And at this point, these are by far the most important

vehicles for me to drive my research; beyond conferences, beyond many of the academic resources I have, they are what brings new ideas to me. And that's partly because what's different about these environments, compared to the earlier version of the web, web 1.0 as people refer to it as... Is that, whereas in that world we would go out and look for information, now the information comes to us. And it does this in quite different ways. But it was a turning point, I think, when academic associations and academics themselves got online with this and became much more aware of its potential to allow us to find others, connect with people and really organise around certain topics that we're interested in. And one of the challenges is that, of course we start these platforms with very little awareness, we might not know how to use them most effectively. When we gradually hone those skills and become aware of ways in which we can use them to great effect. Now as academic... as a kind of academic social media user, I don't tend to publish a lot of stuff about my personal life on this, so it does tend to be quite focussed around my work. And that allows me to communicate things that I'm doing on a quite frequent basis. So, here's one tweet at the top there that's a book, actually published by T&F, that was re-published, or translated, by a Russian publisher and sharing that information is the sort of thing that I would tend to share. So, one of the problems people have about social media is negotiating that kind of personal/public, personal/professional divide, and feel a little bit uncomfortable about some aspects of that. But, again, I think that you can dive in and start using this in ways that are quite accessible, quite easy, and actually allow you to take part in things in quite different ways. To give you one example, in fact when I saw that we had a hashtag for today, 'T&FEditors' – is that right? So if you are using Twitter you might have seen on the site earlier that 'T&FEditors' hashtag was used. Last weekend I was at a conference in... actually a festival, in London and we used the hashtag 'FutureFest', which was again a way of participating in the event without even being there. And I've found myself using hashtags of conferences, tweeting content related to them, sharing content from others and have had colleagues that thought I was at the event when in fact I wasn't. And they said "let's meet up for coffee at 4", and I said "that's going to be quite a challenge, although we can give it a go"! But I think that that's, again, when you think about your own networks as an editor the kinds of ways in which people operate around your content, the use of these tools, the use of these techniques can be really helpful. The number of people that can potentially engage with your... with your identity is far greater today.

So, this is all part of the journey towards publication and I think that the way, the kinds of trends we see online also, kind of, inform us of how important it is to think about how we translate our content into other forms. I have a YouTube channel which just does this partly for me, and I post videos of lectures that I've done, or I embed videos from other producers. So, for example, if T&F put this on YouTube I can embed this video within, or this audio within my accounts. But also, earlier in the year, I just saw actually today, T&F have re-released some of their content from the 'T&F Sport' account. They've had, kind of, thematic things every month and they're releasing some of the content for free. Earlier in the year I did one of those monthly editorials, and in addition to writing an intro for T&F, I produced a video as well. And again, partly by seeing how the web develops... and we heard about Gangnam style earlier, the kind of currency of video is, I think, an important thing to take hold of, as an author and a publisher. And that title at the start, 'Everything Everywhere', translating your ideas, your content into some of these, kind of, other digestible forms can be an additional way for people to engage with your work. So videos become a crucial way for me to add additional presence to the words I write.

At the time, I use a number of environments at the pre-print stage to kind of communicate what I'm doing. So, one nice example is Issuu: which really allows you to share PDFs in a very aesthetically engaging way on your own sites. And that becomes another way of getting feedback at the review stage as well. So what I've found is that there are other websites: Chapter Swap is one. Chapter Swap.com, which is a kind of a new start-up, which, as the name suggests, you submit your chapter or your article to the website and your peers will review it, in a kind of informal way, giving you some feedback on the work before you even get to the review stage. So these are ways in which, I think again, additional processes are built into that peer review system that allow your work to kind of develop more effectively.

At the publication stage... This is a, an article from the Journal of Sports Sciences that I published a couple of, a few years ago. But I've also found myself engaging with publishers through social media in a way that I didn't before, and I think that's something that T&F has really taken on board. And one of my primary routes is the sport list, so, I guess, working with people there has allowed me to see how T&F are working. But it's become a way of understanding what capacity social media has, especially for young authors who are starting off and want to understand how to get into publishing. And the Journal of Sports Sciences, which I get to, you can see this is

the sports list, which at the bottom has a tweet referencing the Journal of Sports Sciences. If you go to the into the Journal of Sports Sciences you then get additional content and ideas about what you might do, you can learn about other people who are in your network, people who you might follow, you might know personally but you aren't following on social media. But also there have been quite helpful campaigns about how to get published in journals that can give you some insights, as an author, into a journal. So those are the quite important ways in which my own research has developed around these accounts. And one of the nice things that they produce is these 'Twinterviews', interviews with academics on the social media accounts about how to get published or about specific topics. So these are quite creative ways in which you can engage your authors. And I think what's partly crucial about it is you're not just engaging with an audience any more, it's not about just a readership, but the people within your community can co-produce these environments now. That's what's partly so rich about it.

At the post-publication stage there are a handful of platforms that I use to kind of drive the content and to engage with others further, and we heard a bit about those from James earlier. But just to give you a glimpse of how they look for me. So, Academia.edu, which I don't use a great deal but does house the publications that I have and again provides additional people who I can follow and get to know them as part of my network. Amazon has author accounts now, which, amongst other things, allow... allow users to upload their own videos to it. So again these platforms are providing additional functionality from authors to get their presence out there. GoogleScholar I like because I can monitor my accounts and monitor others' accounts, and so it feels like a more social environment. And I think again, one of the things to get across, which I've heard in Catriona's and also James's talk [sic], is that the currency of social media is providing additional value for people. And in fact the most successful things I've tweeted online have been about social media. So it's interesting to see what kind of contribution that can make.

But similarly, there's a sense that this process feeds back into itself. So, Mendeley holds my bibliographies and my... the articles I want to remember, and these eventually feed back into the system and I'm allowed to, I'm able to... ultimately, I guess, enrich my own social research discovery process. And it goes back, again, to that point about not going out there to find stuff but stuff coming to me. So in terms of your own journals, how you think about that and how you think about your authors engaging with it... I think it's crucial to bear in mind that being within social

media isn't a kind of an end point, it's actually part of a loop of research discovery now that I think many more people are using.

And so to come towards... I've got a couple more minutes until I have to finish... to come towards some kind of principles that, I guess, guide my own work. Some things kind of occur to me. One is this shift to the individual, which James mentioned as well. There is a sense in which we're kind of building work around individuals rather than institutions and journals. And how do journal editors respond to that, how do journals respond to it? The beauty of Twitter is that you can broadcast to individuals, there is a conversation going on there that people value and... you know, you can read around other peoples' conversations too if you're a bit nosey too, which is quite good fun. But I think it allows people to reach a lot more people than they would otherwise be able to.

As I said earlier, I think that the... what I like about GoogleScholar is its openness. As an author you can engage with it in a very simple way. Just this morning I received a Google alert notifying me of new citations to my work, and I've already tweeted... in fact a colleague of mine just published something in *Leisure Studies* and was able to tweet that this morning. So there's a kind of immediacy and, I guess, 'connectiveness' with the other social media values that I appreciate, that allow me to feel more inclined towards things like GoogleScholar.

There's also a, kind of, strong driving force... we may hear more about this later, I guess, around impact. And with my school certainly we're very public-facing, we, kind of, want to make sure our work gets out there. And social media's been a crucial part of our strategy to do that. But I think it is about recognising the value of that broader role as a public intellectual. What contribution your work has beyond your peers I think is something you really need to take on board to really see the value of this.

It's also I think about... and we've heard from Catriona a bit about this, that kind of DIY PR is somehow more authentic, that there's something about an individual rather than an institution that people value. And certainly I've found, in the research I've done on social media that the highest kind of impact, the highest level of engagement you get, is when people feel they're having direct conversations with others. When it's via a middle man or a kind of mediator it's not as effective.

And again being able to be discovered, which was a word we heard earlier... being 'discoverable' was crucial... Y'know it's... In the time that I've given this talk you could have setup your own website, your own Twitter account and be half way there towards publishing content. It takes just a few minutes. Ten years ago to setup your own website was a lot harder but... and if you don't know how to do one, go to About.me and there you have a place where you can setup a website within seconds. So being discoverable is crucial. And it goes back to this title that I have: 'Everything Everywhere'. We need to be able to respond to the changing environment of social media, which is a challenge for universities because they are very good at it. In fact... I tend to just bypass the university and setup our own stuff independently. Other universities do the same... Y'know, the kind of university systems don't really allow this. But I think why it's nice to see... Y'know, I've followed Routledge since it had its arenas back in, a decade ago and I think that's, that fluidity, that ability to move with the times is crucial to really being able to capitalise on this. And so you have to think not just as an editor 'what are the big platforms that we should be using' but 'what are the new ones that we want to be using next'? And that's where I want to end. Thank you. [FINISH]