Using Twitter to Promote Your Work:
A Guide for Modern Languages Open Authors and Editors

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a popular social media platform that allows users to post and read short 140-character messages called 'tweets'. The site has around 270 million active users, and while many use it to keep up to date with the things they care about and stay in touch with friends, it is also an incredibly useful promotional tool.

Users can build a network of people and organisations that they 'follow' and who 'follow' them. This is effective for promoting academic work because if your message about your article (with link to its location on MLO) is of interest to your followers, they will 'retweet' it to their own audience (who can then do the same, and so on) – a form of sharing that helps spread the message to what is likely an ideal audience of scholarly colleagues.

This is why MLO asks for tweetable abstracts when accepting articles and encourages authors to use the service; with a wealth of potential research available at all times via the internet, colleague curation is becoming increasingly important in raising the visibility of published work in targeted sectors of the academic community.

Getting Started

- **Account Creation**

Firstly, you'll need to sign up for an account before you can begin using the service. This can be done directly from the Twitter homepage: https://twitter.com. Simply enter your details in the box marked *New to Twitter? Sign Up* and click *Sign up for Twitter*.

On the next page, you'll be prompted to select a username. While your real name can still be displayed on your profile, the username is a unique identifier that people will use when mentioning and connecting with you on Twitter, and also acts as the URL for your Twitter profile (e.g. www.twitter.com/username).

Many people also use their real name as their username – if your name is taken, you could consider an alternative such as 'DrTomSmith' or 'TomSmithFrench'. Alternatively, you could add underscores to create a username like 'Tom_Smith' or 'TomSmith_French'.

Once you've double-checked that your information is correct, click *Create my Account*. A confirmation message should arrive at the email address you provided. Once you've logged into your email and clicked through the confirmation URL, you're ready to begin using Twitter!

- **Profile Enrichment**

Once you're set up, you'll want to add content to your profile so that colleagues and interested parties can quickly figure out who you are.

Adding a profile high-quality picture and bio are essential in establishing a recognisable personal brand. You can do this by clicking the *Edit Profile* button on your Twitter profile and filling in the sections as appropriate. It is important to keep your bio clear and concise, and to use a high-resolution image for your profile picture that people can recognise you by it. Your bio is your chance to "sell yourself" to potential followers, so it should be used to let people know who you are and what kind of content they can expect from following you.

Please note that some employers require their staff to disclose that any views expressed through Twitter are their own and do not reflect those of their institution – please check your university's guidelines on social media for clarification on this. Many feel that it is good practice to make this distinction clear in the first instance, as a precaution to avoid any confusion; this can be expressed in the bio section with a simple caveat such as: 'All views are my own and retweets are not endorsements.' Regardless, please bear in mind that all Twitter posts are publicly viewable unless your profile is set to private.

You can also add a link to your website in the *Edit Profile* section – if you have a personal webpage or blog, this is the place to highlight it; alternatively, you could simply link to your research profile page on your departmental website. If you wish to change the appearance and colours of your Twitter profile page, you can do this by selecting *Settings>Design* from the top-right drop-down menu.

Using the above tools to create a profile page that is a clear reflection of your professional and personal identities will help drive traffic to your page and attract followers.

Building an Audience and Posting Tweets

- **Audience Development**

The people who you follow on Twitter determine the posts that appear chronologically in your *Home* feed. Similarly, tweets that you post and retweet will appear in the *Home* feeds of your followers.

You can begin building a following on Twitter simply by posting regularly and following individuals and organisations you have a relationship to or interest in (simply click the *Follow* button on any profile); many Twitter users reciprocate when you follow them, so you could find your follower count growing in no time at all.

Twitter accounts that lack regular activity generally have low visibility and rarely gain new followers, so be sure to tweet regularly. Things that you could post about and discuss on Twitter might include: your current research and teaching activity, projects and initiatives you are involved in, your forthcoming publications, conference papers you are presenting, congress attendance, seminar and panel participation, and any public-facing or media appearances.

While many institutions and organisations understandably prefer a formal tweeting style where messages can be understood as self-contained units of meaning, and most individual users adopt a relaxed conversational style, most academics prefer to occupy a comfortable middle ground

between the two. This offers the flexibility in that you can act as an individual while still promoting your activities.

You can use the *Search Twitter* box at the top of the page and the *Who to Follow* sidebar to find friends and colleagues, but don't feel the need to limit yourself to people who you already know; Twitter is about connecting with people from all over the world, so why not search for peers working in similar or related areas internationally. You can do this by searching for keywords like 'researcher', 'professor' and 'French literature' and then browsing *Users* on the results page. Twitter will also suggest make suggestions in the *Who to Follow* sidebar based on who you have followed previously.

In addition to following individual academics, some examples of the sorts of accounts you might like to follow include: university departments, research units and projects, learned and professional societies, academic conferences, specialist libraries, online academic subject forums and specialist websites. Once you've found some accounts that are of interest to you, you can find more people and organisations to follow by seeing who *they* are following (simply clicking the *Following* box on their profile page will bring up a list of accounts).

Additionally, you could drive people to your Twitter profile by including a link to it in your email signature, on your blog, and/or on your website. If appropriate, you might also want to alert people to your Twitter presence in the offline world by including your @username (sometimes called a 'handle') on your business cards and on slides for any presentations you are giving.

- **Mentions and Hashtags**

'Mentions' and 'hashtags' are the two chief ways that people interact with one another on Twitter. When posting tweets using the *What's happening?* box, you can 'mention' someone by placing the **@** symbol before their username (with no space in between), or you can 'hashtag' topics in your tweets by placing a **#** in front of the desired words (again, with no space between).

Users are alerted to the fact that they have been mentioned in a tweet (via the *Notifications* feed) and have the option to respond using either the 'reply' icon displayed below each tweet or by composing a new one that mentions (by @username) the intended person. Using the **@** function makes the username it is attached to a clickable link that leads to that profile, so other Twitter users can identify those involved in the conversation.

Hashtags also turn their attached words into clickable topics. When users click through a hashtag, Twitter will chronologically collate tweets by all users using the specified hashtag, allowing people to follow topics and conversations in real-time. Simply put, including hashtags in your tweets is another way of enhancing their discoverability.

Using the above techniques, a tweet like:
'My latest article on nineteenth-century French Literature, co-authored with Dr Sarah Jones, is now available on Modern Languages Open'
becomes
'My latest article on #19thC #FrenchLiterature, co-authored with @username is online on @ModLangOpen here: [link] #openaccess'.

Remember that mentions and hashtags can also be incorporated into the bio section of your profile, for example:
'Lecturer in French at the University of Liverpool and Section Editor for Modern Languages Open'
becomes
'Lecturer in #FrenchStudies @LivUni and Section Editor for @ModLangOpen'.

- **Retweets and Favourites**

In addition to the reply icon that is displayed below every tweet, there are also icons for 'retweet' and 'favourite'. Retweeting a post will mean that it is re-posted to your own feed, and is then visible to your followers. This is one of the most powerful ways of quickly sharing information on Twitter – the more people who retweet a post, the more people will see its content. Favouriting a tweet will let a user know that you like their message (this is a useful way of acknowledging posts that you might not necessarily want to retweet).

As with mentions, when a user's tweet is retweeted or favourited, they will also be alerted to this via their *Notifications* feed.

- **Links and Images**

Links to webpages and images can both be included to add variety and substance to your tweets. To add a link, simply paste the desired URL into the *What's happening?* box along with the rest of your message and send the tweet as usual. You may wish to use a URL shortener such as https://goo.gl to ensure that links will fit into the 140-character tweet limit. Images can be uploaded from your computer by clicking the *Add photo* button that appears below the *What's happening?* box when composing a tweet.

Across most content sectors, tweets with images enjoy greater clickthrough and retweet rates (retweets are said to be around 35% higher on average), and including links to relevant media and content are great ways or providing material for your followers and boosting overall engagement.

MLO and LUP Twitter Feeds

You can follow both Modern Languages Open and Liverpool University Press on Twitter at:
https://www.twitter.com/ModLangOpen
https://www.twitter.com/LivUniPress

Combined, our accounts enjoy enjoying a highly engaged audience of over 3,200 followers – many of whom are academics, researchers, librarians, students, and other key decision makers.

Our feeds keep our audience informed about new content, conferences we are attending, reviews, prizes, special offers, commissioning news, and special events. A regular stable of editors, academics, associations and other stakeholders are happy to share LUP and MLO content through Twitter, further increasing our reach.

If you would like us to retweet a post relating to your work on MLO, or on any item of similar interest, please do not hesitate to mention us with in your tweet with @ModLangOpen and @LivUniPress.

Find Out More

The Twitter website offers a variety of guides and FAQs for beginners and more advanced users through its help centre: https://support.twitter.com. A glossary of Twitter-centric terms and phrases can also be found here: https://support.twitter.com/articles/166337-the-twitter-glossary.

If you have any specific queries about using Twitter, or require further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact Jonathan Branney, our Digital Publishing Executive, at: jonathan.branney@liverpool.ac.uk.