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Social Media for Academics

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Steven Boydston: Next we'll hear from Mark Carrigan. Mark is a Digital Fellow at the Sociological Review and has completed three years of a Research Fellow in the Center for Social Ontology at the University of Warwick. He's an Assistant Editor of Big Data in Society, Associate Social Media Editor of The International Journal of Social Research Methodology and a founding member of the Editorial Boards of Discover Society and Journal of Applied Social Theory. Among many other accomplishments, he's also the author of Social Media for Academics. And with that, Mark, if you're ready, please begin.

MARK CARRIGAN: It is great to be here today.

I will give a broad overview of social media for academics with the intention of helping you all formulate an engagement strategy that's right for you and can be integrated into your working life in a sustainable way.

I think recently it has been impossible for research to ignore social media or at least it is becoming impossible. Much as it is impossible for us to ignore our citizens and only in a matter of years it is in our lives, these on the slides, they're estimates of social media use across a range of platforms. In a single day. It is the indications of the scale and size of this, this can be can useful as you saw addressing this topic to take a look at these and think about the amount of activity that this represents and what it means for society and what it means for our role as scholars in society.

These things are developed in a short space of time, it is interesting to spot and remember how recently companies are, the oldest is a little over a decade old. Even among the newer one, some have millions of users and are hugely influential as in spite of the case of Snapchat, only existing 6 years ago. This raises a question of what do we mean by social media, what is it? These questions are ones that we, we ask regularly. It is as very slippery thing in the terms of what we know what we roughly mean with social media but there is a lack of understanding of how it is designed. In a literal sense all media is social in that you have tech with communication for between people. If you look at the academia, you see email and mailing lists that are an example of social media in this broad sense and used by academics for decades and social media rarely takes account of these. This is why it is helpful not to be hung up on definitions. It can be a useful place to start, but we should be ‑‑ you know, we shouldn't be too stressed on what we define as social media and what we don't define. When I do workshops on the topics I'm often asked questions about is so and so social media.

For purposes of thinking through what role technology plays in academic life we should think broadly about what social media is and instead focus on what we can do with it. The idea every day of social media, it is not always straightforward. It usually refers to a particular generation of Internet platforms, software essentially, web browser or mobile application, many were previously described in the notion of 1.0 and these are designed to facilitate the mating and sharing of contents and the development of networks between users.

There were earlier examples of these, some of the permanent ones include the Myspace, but social media came to life with mobile phones, tablet computers and mobile Internet. When talking about social media, these platforms as well as technology it stands upon is a part of most of our lives. Gary King describes this as the largest increase in expressive capacity of humanity in the history of the world because as he puts it, any one person can now write a post which has the potential to be read by billions of others. In one sentence I think he was absolutely correct. This is a huge expansion in human expression and interaction and it is accessible through mostly free, easy to use tools and it is very exciting the millions of people using the platforms.

It is also very challenging precisely because millions of people are using the platforms. It is more difficult to publish your thoughts and more difficult to make your thoughts public to return to the roots of the work that you're publishing. For this reason, the complex ‑‑ it is costly undertaking published and because of that we had access to controls over who was allowed to make what public under what circumstances. It is now easy and increasingly immediate to get thoughts out there. This is why we have a different challenge. The challenge is to ensure that you have ‑‑ that you're discovered and this is a trickier business.

The data I presented here, they're screen shots from the Internet live stats and I recommend looking at it. The automated dynamic side conveyed the rhythm of this and the strene shots do not. I think it is very interactive when I'm writing because I find when I copy and paste them into a word processer in the few seconds it takes me to switch my attention on one window to another the scale of the increase in the small window of time is astonishing and the instant live stats conveys the speed of this activity in a day and the rhythms of it involving and I find this esthetically interesting and I'm not talking about it, the data for that reason. It is useful because it illustrates the three main challenges with academic space when trying to use social media. The first is how to be heard within hundreds of millions of people.

Secondly, how to track the social media so fast and thirdly where to spend your time when social media can be so disruptive because as we have seen with the launch of social media, social media platforms come in being and they change and sometimes they die off. This makes it hard to know which one to spend your time on. Do you try to have a presence on everything? Creating the risk you don't have a significance presence in anything. Do you focus on a particular platform? Pouring energy into it but risking going like my space or do you look at the strategy of improvement which is what I think most people do. Perhaps there are no right or no wrong answers to these questions.

For one thing, they are new questions and they're ultimately one that you have to decide for yourself and by the end of the presentation today I hope it I will have helped you in thinking through the questions in a systematic, practical way and hopefully I'll help you develop work or strategies and techniques to decide what to use, how to use it and when to use it in a way that can make a sustainable part of your professional life. I think that sustainability, it is key here. How to make it part of your routine, how to make it part of your habits, how to avoid it just being another item on the to‑do list that's probably a bit too long for comfort.

The more social media can be how you interact in your scholarship, how you do it, it is part of your daily activities, the more effectively you will use it, the more sustainable you will use it and the more enjoyable the use will be.

The key thing I want to convey is there is so much of this depending on being clear about why you want to use social media. You can be clear on why you want to use it, the question is how to use it and for what purpose will be much more straightforward.

There is undoubtedly a learning you've for any of the platforms. I would also argue it is rarely an onerous one and dependency of o you are discussions on social media and higher education, the focus on how to use YouTube, Twitter, how to blog, it often is in the way of the more important, more interesting questions about what the technologies mean for scholars, what they mean to the practice of scholarship, how can we use them effectively. It can be hard to have these conversations if we see social media as a singular thing to which all research must adapt or be left behind. The debate about social media in the University, it often feeds on this level as arguments about why academics as a whole should or shouldn't use social media as a whole. In reality, academics by grass root, in terms of things like stage, discipline, gender, ethnicity, age, these are all factors that could potentially shape how you approach using social media and so it is hopeful to move beyond seeing social media as a whole category, talking about academic research and instead trying to focus ourselves on particular social media platforms that can be used for particular activities.

To give some examples of my ‑‑ to give examples from my own experience, I use my blog to record my notes when I engage in scholarly literature, it helps categorize and find a way ‑‑ notes in a way that's useful when I'm ready to wry, particularly when I'm away from pie office. It helps me draw out connections between different pieces of work and research ways that are often surprising. The fact that people see it shows that I make an effort to articulate my ideas properly and this was brought home recently when I was looking through my old paper networks I used as a PhD student and found I wrote in shorthand and a slightly indecipherable short form and at risk of stating the obvious, when using a blog, you're typing words longhand and it will be read by others makes it easy to ensure that the notes are accessible to you at the late stage, giving you an extra push to articulate your thoughts at length. Secondly, I use Twitter from events I organized, I made an effort to connect with as many people as I can in the areas I work in. Particularly Twitter is a powerful tool for the summarizing of the information of the events. I have organized a lot of events throughout the PhD as well and before social media it involved endless emails to academic partners and endless posters printed without any clear sense of whether they were working or not. It simply felt like something you had to do because it was difficult to raise awareness. Is social media transferred that experience of organizing for me.

As a third example, I use broadcasts to have informal dialogues with them that I find interesting. Either enriching my thinking, building relationships, I have done this since I was ‑‑ I found a ‑‑ it was consistently a way people enjoyed interacting.

I do appreciate the final product. It puts uniqueness to get you acquainted with someone, a researcher in a short space of time. These are just a few examples and I could list many more. I hope in a discussion later we can hear from some people that find social media useful in how it benefits them. We should try as we can to look at the activities and interests and things that are building networks, looking at applications, managing research and resources, generating impacts through our research. If we can become concrete in this way it makes it easier to think things through. Ultimately social media won't be right for everything or for everyone, but if we approach social media and the opportunities in this concrete way it becomes easier to see what's right for us and when it is going to be right for us and to think about how social media can be integrated into our working lives. There's so many social media platforms though that can be hard to know where to start. Some of these are very familiar. Things like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, others probably much less so. There are new ones constantly being launched and existing ones falling out of view after they failed to make much of a mark.

Scholars have spent a lot of time debating how to define social media and how to categorize social media platforms. What I'm offering here is not intended on that level, but it is a useful way of trying to think through the basic opportunities and at the risk of being overly redundant I'll try to make four key points, if you're interested in publishing and writing, you use a word press program, if you are interested in pictures, you use multimedia, material, you look at discovery platforms and if you're interested in expanding your network you use networking platform.

In reality it is more complex than that. There is the question of how to link the different platforms together. The point that you're unclear about what you want to try first, you think about the outputs you use, are you producing things as part of existing work that you can share. Are you making new things to had share online and then you can have it like this and read back and find the platform is not experimenting with and go from there.

This is the way it works, so for example, my blog and the social media activity, are this is what I do, it has linked to all of my social media platform and it puts all of this together. Even my presence on Twitter, I share things that it post on my blog. So network. So this is a sense of the four options in terms of social media platforms and how they can be tied together effectively.

We have an expansive discussion on any one of these platforms, how to use it effectively, how to use it ineffectively, what are key concerns and challenges that you will face when using it. We'll have a bit of time for questions at the end and hopefully things will be introduced in the discussion later. My concern now is to give an overview of navigating this landscape and how to think about the process of approaching any of these given platforms.

If you really are new to this and you want to know a place to start, one exercise that I found useful in the past is to identify a practical activity or ambition. For instance, do you want to communicate your research findings to policymakers? Convey your research questions in an engaging way to a group participating in the research. Would you like to become more effective identifying new developments in the field beyond the academic literature or do you want to ensure you're visible to a group that you want to do research with in the future. If you have the sense of an ambition, a subject that social media may be useful for, it is the case of linking it up to a particular platform that could be helpful to you. So an example, if you're interested in communicating your research finding to policymakers you could do this by writing a blog post, summarizing journal articles in accessible language and offering it as a guest post to a group blog that has a relevant audience. For instance, something like that the politics and policy blog.

As a second example, if you are looking to convey your research questions in an engaging way to a group that participates in your research then an ambitious aim could be to produce a short film about the research which could be released on YouTube expressing the key ideas and ambitions in a way that gets beyond the academic literature. If you're trying to find a way to identify beyond your field, you can use a reader app and we'll go into that later. You can follow a wide range of relevant websites and blogs and then ensure that you read them regularly. Let's find an example, if you want to show you're advisable to a group, ‑‑ visible to a group you want to do research with in the future, you can find members of the group in Twitter, search them or identify relevant accounts in the area and seeing who is following them and follow them in turn. This exercise is getting started by defining a project where you link a particular ambition to a particular social media platform could seem artificial because obviously it is. I think it is a useful way of getting started. If you give yourself a concrete aim it is easier to begin than as opposed to what a lot of people do which is feeling that they want to stop working or stop posting. Some people tined the easiest way to get started is to jump in and experiment. This can also be quite difficult, it could make the activity aimless. If you want ‑‑ if you have a concrete aim it could really orient what you're doing to make it easier to see how this could be useful and once you complete one of these little projects you can tend to business and the process then could spiral.

In the next section of the presentation I'll go through four sets of considerations for your audience and how to connect with them and why they'll be interested and what resources you have.

If you think through these four steps of questions then you will have a strategy for engaging with particular groups that will guide your activity as you move forward.

Firstly I put public, who are they basically. I think that the key thing here is to be clear about who they are, what you know about them. This could seem like the most obvious question in the world but I think actually when we dwell on it we can realize that there are gaps in the knowledge. We can realize that what we thought was a singular group we actually know to be multiple groups and at the start of any engagement strategy we can have a clear sense of who you're trying to engage with. Are you trying to engage with multiple groups, if so, what's this mean or is there conflicting interests between the groups?

 May you need to use different styles of communication for them? You need to learn more about the groups and if so that raises the question of how you can learn more about them. Social media can be a powerful means of doing this in terms of following blogs, reading websites, watching YouTube videos, following broadcasts and Twitter feeds and this can be an engagement where even if you're only reading it, it helps you learn about what people share and how they see the world, how they see their own life and this can be something really useful as an actual research tool in its own right and it can be a way to facilitate more direct engagement where once you start to build on connections you can talk to people directly about the issues and ask questions, write blog posts calling for questions.

The question is what can you learn from them? What sort of relationship does that necessitate? This is something is that we pay lip service to, but social media has a good experience to do this.

I found social media to be an incredible powerful means to me recently of learning about different groups I was planning qualitative research with before it ‑‑ before I made contact with them. You can learn about terminology, different cultural forms, different Outlook, different ideas, and it could be a very powerful tool for you as a researcher and a third question here, if you want to engage with this audience, what do you want them to do? If you're trying to influence them in some way, if you think that you can generate an impact from your research, your research could make a difference in the world, it is important to render this concretely. What affect do you think is feasible, why do you think it will affect what happened? And a crucial subgroup in bringing about those kinds of affects is stakeholders or gate keepers, how can you connect with them? Again, to be clear, if there are people that already control audiences, people that run influential Twitter feeds or people that run blogs with members of your audience, members of your hopeful audience, these stake keepers are very helpful in gaining connections with the audiences. You have to be clear on why they would want to help you and why they would want to be interested in what you're doing. Think about how to make contact with them on that basis.

The second consideration, how exactly can you connect with these people? This follows from ‑‑ if you have a clear sense of your audience now, do you know what platforms they use on social media? How do they communicate using them? Are these platforms suitable for connecting the research capacity? You know, this is a complex issue but it may be that people are using private Facebook groups or even relative lit close Facebook groups which are not state forward appropriate for people to make contact with as a researcher and it is important to be careful about traversing these sorts of boundaries.

To be clear about demographics as well can be helpful. We don't have much time to go into that today but something like the Internet project has wonderful data about the demographics using different social media platforms. This can be slightly broad‑brush approach planning an engagement strategy but if it is a particular useful group you're trying to engage in, the do we have about demographics suggests platforms like Instagram and Snapchat may be better than Twitter and Facebook. When you connect with people using social media there are some common myths that are important to avoid. Firstly, we often assume that we are talking to the general public and that when we use a platform with millions of users we are at least potentially being read by the users whereas in reality who sees those and engages with what we have posted depending on the decisions we make as we use the platform depending who we follow and who follows us. How does that play out overtime? We have to be realistic in how you post, every Facebook post you make, only your followers will potentially see had that unless it is shared more widely and only a fraction of the followers see it in the first instance. Not everyone sees everything and to have realistic expectations of the power of social media is very important parts of using it sustainably in the long term. If you believe that your research will immediately go viral or the very fact of trying to make contact with the groups will immediately generate a cluster of connection it is you will be disappointed.

These are powerful tools but still the world is a complex overburdened place and social media is a distracted environment and it is hard to go through the clutter and you should be realistic about how much time and energy is required to build the connections. It is important to think about the platform demographics but also to think about geographical and occupational factors. So if you're trying to engage with a professional group, you know you won't use social media in a personal capacity at work, then it may not be the best idea to narrow what your engagement is on the working hours. To engage with people in a particular geographical region perhaps other than your own, it can be important to make sure that you are sending tweets or your posts out at a time when those people are likely to be awake and engage on social media.

It is important to not fall in the trap of seeing online and offline. I think a powerful aspect of the social media for engaging with a particular audience is when you have online connections supplementing offline connections. People describe as ambient intimacy, the kind of background knowledge about people you connect with online, as you just pick up information about their days and lives, this is something that could be helpful in building connections, exactly how it plays out is likely to be kind dependent on the particular project that you're engaged in.

Thirdly, and this is perhaps the most difficult in some ways, be clear about why they will be interested. With academics we often overestimate the interest in our research even if what we do relates to a particular group. It doesn't mean that we'll be interested and I have seen Examples where people discover they're not only as a group not interested but actually for reasons other as a society. They may be skeptical or they may be even outright hostile. You have to think carefully about the possible range of ways in which the research will be interpreted and if you go into interactions in an over enthusiastic way without thinking about the fact that actually there may be a range of opinions within this audience about what you're doing then there is a real possibility you may be disappointed and the more careful you can be about thinking through the issues at the outset in terms of how they unfold.

Distraction, the capacity of social media to distract people. People are busy. This poses a practical question of how you will catch their attention, how will you hold it that attention? How will you build a connection? The dangerous thing about this, the very facts of this being a challenge means there are all sorts of techniques developed by which people are trying to keep hold of the attention of others and this can all lead to an escalation dynamic as people try harder and harder to get the attention of others and it becomes harder to hold anyone's attention as a result.

The example of that is the frequency of which people Tweet. Not using social media in a professional capacity, but the frequency to Tweet to reliably help an audience increases overtime and I suggest that this is an escalating necessity of activity to cut through the distraction. Not only do you need to shout loudly sometimes, you have to do so frequently and I worry that the volume and frequency of which you have to shout may be increasing. If we're thinking why an audience is interesting in our research, that can seem really negative and to take a positive tact to it, can you help the people you're engaging with understand something that's mattering to them better through the knowledge. Can the work be useful in their life, understand the problems that they face?

Could participating in the project of yours help them resolve some issues? Could it be something that mattered to them, useful to them? And of all of the issues I'm raising, this is one that's a difference varying widely in an audience, it is speculating. I think it will be much easier to build an engagement strategy if you have a sense of exactly why this group has been defined and located and will be interested in what you're doing and if you have that sense, then you can build a whole strategy around the awareness or the speculation.

Finally, what resources do you have? Academics are busy and there is literature on the extent that academics are busier overtime and we should be realistic on how much time we have a week to spend on social media even allowing the possibility as suggested that when you get access to social media it could save you time at least on certain tasks. There are various solutions, one is scheduling software which I'm come up to in a short while.

You have to think about the existing material you're producing, a thing that's a real challenge is finding things to share and when you do workshops introducing people to things like Twitter, what is a frequent question is what on earth would I Tweet about. I love this answer, your research, but exactly what about your research. Think about your own activity at a resource that's leveraged to be on social media, are you producing things in the everyday working life? An example, when I taught in the past, if I use slides, I put the slides online and they're popular online. Various academics I know record lectures to release as broadcasts and if you're writing material, it is a blog post in its own right and when it works it is not quite a process that ‑‑ it is the mean's end as many have stated but to be clear about the way in which you are already doing things that people online would be interested in, you are already creating things that people in your network may like to read and it helps in recognizing those things and identifying them and sharing them through your network and others will see them and engage with them. Don't underestimate the extent that people are interested in work and share the buy products that you produce and the standard scholarship could be of value to them. People have different comfort levels on what they want to do. Some ‑‑ you talk about the pleasure of people, how people ‑‑ the pleasure that people take in seeing ideas in motion and I think really there is something to this, it is exciting to see the way that social media can let you see the backstage, they let you see or discuss all that goes into the production of books and articles, and not everyone wants to share anything about this, but it is depending what's comfortable for you. To not see the content creation as something that's a vast additional activity that you have to engage in. Some of this you are already doing and it may be that you have to repurpose things a bit. So if you're preparing lecture notes it may take a little bit of time to make the notes useful for publication on a blog but they're useful resources you're creating. Another aspect to think about the resources is how much familiarity you have with social media already. How much ability for identifying relative platforms and services and you have to learn, explore, experiment what's effective and when you become familiar and part of the routine, you get a sense of what you're interested in and the engagement and the very facts of watching what other people are doing can be very valuable. If you see somebody doing something that ear doing, take a moment to see what they're doing and, see what they're doing that interests you and see what ‑‑ what you find as a problem about it and similarity in the sense of a resource, something that makes it quicker, easier and you can use it with social media.

Another resource is access to established online platforms. So things like existing blogs, institutional social media accounts, online magazines, if you have connections, these are important resources because effectively the people behind the initiatives have already identified an audience, they have already build an audience out of a time and by posting on their platform, by sending them gust blogs, writing articles for online magazines, asking for comments in the feeds and Tweeting the material, they give you access to the audience and this is a powerful resource particularly when you point people back to your own presence and almost evac on the existing audiences to build yourself up online and make that connect with the trust in what you're doing. Finally, an important part of this, to be clear about the digital footprint that you have. It can feel very far cystic but take a moment, think about yourself, Google yourself, think of yourself as someone that doesn't know about you, knows very little about you. If you have an extensive digital footprint this makes it easier for an audience online. Equally if you are split between multiple activities, has multiple points of focus, it could be confusing, making it harder to understand where you're coming from online.

And these are just some of the resource based considerations that I would suggest is worth thinking about at this stage.

This is an overview of kinds of points to consider when undertaking an engagement strategy. This is a different dimension to takeover and we'll use it as a tool in workshops and the more we can be clear about each of the different aspects of the audience, how to connect, how they're interested in and resources. The easier it is to develop a Sustainable Development strategy to take forward without it taking over our lives and we're saying to actually focus on the concerns.

Ultimately, there are lots of methods and techniques to use to access this. Forcing them to cover in the presentation of the lens.

In the rest of the talk I want to point out the two that are most useful before moving on to general issues. Firstly, the social media scheduling software and secondly, when you commute in social media, scheduling software, this is one that is used as a popular alternative. This is something that can save a lot of time. It becomes a Pos ‑‑ possible to engage throughout the week without having to be present at the computer at all times. When used effectively it means that social media can fade in the background and you can have a regular output without being always on.

The screen shot is ‑‑ this allows you to connect a number of social media feeds to find the times of day you want to post and populate the search with the post you want to go out and then this is something that is a pipeline of content effectively what are you going to share with the audiences to fill the schedule that we have with the social media postings.

It is important to be realistic about what you can sustain here. If I Tweet a couple of times a day to keep it going, rather than Tweet 10 # times a day for a week and run out of material and this is an enormously effective tool, allowing you to do a lot on social media without it being an ever‑present concern, without feeling a constant connectivity where this is the always knocking on the edge of your psyche. There are two key practical points that I think is important to be aware of. The first, it is a mundane one, to be careful about scheduling timed specific content. It is easy to adjust the schedule without noticing it and how something got out at the wrong time and or on the wrong day. Usually this is nothing more than a deadline going out after a deadline has past or something of that sort. Possibly it could be more embarrassing. I have seen various examples, none of which in the academic sphere but some really cringe worthy stuff has happened because someone has accidentally set a message to go off at an inappropriate time.

This is a consideration that's ensuring the response of people that are messaging you. Part of what makes social media scheduling software so powerful is that I can leave it up and running and that can be a problem, you can create a presence with time and attention that it doesn't otherwise acquire but you can forget about it and you may find that you're accumulating a lot of attention online through activity but people are trying to talk to you and because you're not logging in you're not noticing and this can seem to a point to be rude and counterproductive. The obvious way of doing this is to simply make a point of logging in regularly ensuring that you're engaging above and beyond the use of the scheduling software itself. Another way of doing this which I like is to set up email alerts for instance in Twitter so when someone messaged you directly you receive an email and you get that kind of email, you know you have to log in and engage with them. Otherwise you can leave it running and you can focus on using scheduling software, for instance one, two, three times a week to really focus on it so half an hour, an hour at a time then you can look at other things the rest of the time.

This is a resource that's invaluable, it is a blog reader. This is because of the sheer weight and resources that social media engages for us. The more engaged you are with the social media the more you're aware of what's out there. Even on one of my research interests I could spend all my time reading material online and still only read a fraction of it. When we're in this constant position of information overload the tendency that we could just retreat from it and I think this is a real problem because there is a massive opportunity here to diversify the range of sources we engage with and access as academics and to do this we need to carefully look at the use of tools that can help us to manage this information and content and blog data is the most useful for managing the information overload. If you're not familiar with them, they're tools that allow you to identify blogs and websites you want to keep track of. You add the website into the reader and it exiles all of the new posts from the sources into a sequential list.

You can organize the resources into themes so the screen shot is from a scholarship list I use where I collected my favorite websites and blogs about digital scholarship and then whenever I want to read about digital scholarship I go into the reader and there is enormous sequential lists, the new west posts and new west articles on all of the ‑‑ the newest articles and posts and I'm sure I won't forget things and miss things and I'm potentially aware of what's out there and I go through it at my own convenience and it saves the necessity of moving in between all of these sites because ultimately you can only keep track of so many things at the same time without this software, you form the habits of the same old sites that we read and if you look carefully, this can be a powerful way of ensuring that you're engaging with diverse sources and you can keep track tough a certain area or field. If you use a blog reader, simply finding favor to ten top sources in that field and aiming to read as much of this material as possible each week can be hugely affective and it means that some things that would have required a lot of time and energy dispersed throughout the working week is something you can do effectively in an hour, two hours, three hours that you set aside during your daily routines.

This can also be very effective with content share of the social media followers, if you follow the right sources, it is surprisingly easy to find a lot of relevant material to share on social media and that's only in an hour or two of reading each week. And this is integrated in most readers so it makes it easier to do this.

Now, to move on to a couple of key issues that I think academics in social media need to find out about, the first is anger, aggression, hostility, harassment online. I and start on the benign end of the spectrum. It can be easy to be dragged into debates online which are going nowhere. For some people it can be exhilarating to have dialogues and debates with a diverse group of people from around the world. Sometimes, those, these debates can be a waste of times. In others it inflames the situation which can turn quickly into something counterproductive and unpleasant. It is important to recognize when you should walk away from online discussions. This cartoon from XKCD is a favorite. It describes the feelings that many people experienced from online discussions. I know I have a lot. If you have this feeling, it is important that if you have the feeling, that it's important that someone on the Internet realizes they are wrong that's a very good moment for you to turn off the computer and walk away. I think there's a paucity of academics participating in the debate that it can sometimes go wrong on social media and be aware of the kinds of dynamics this GIS rise to as people get into the kind of disputes that couldn't really serve a purpose in every day life that might have been avoided. I think this is one set of issues which is important to be aware of. Unfortunately we are also seeing examples of behavior which is much more sinister than this needlessly aggressive propensity of academics and debaters online. It is important to be aware at the outset, academics can be targeted online and women and minority scholars are most like to be targeted. The website I mentioned earlier has a lot of insightful but dispiriting data on this topic. I have been writing quite a bit on this in the last few months if you're interested.

For purposes of the talk today, the key question to start with is be aware of contentious topics. Unfortunately the reality of social media is you need to be very careful at the outset and be aware of the possibility you will be dragged into this kind of cesspool.

One way of approaching this, do research prior to this, other people who work on these politicized or contentious topics and see what issues they have faced, see how people respond to them and adjust your response. Unfortunately, harassment online isn't confined to these instances. These are issues where it's hard to do justice with in a talk like this. They are large issues. It's also hard to do justice to them because some of the issues require more action by social media platforms than we are currently seeing taking place an at risk of sounding slightly vacuous, all I can suggest is that remember you don't owe somebody a response because they messaged you. You have the ability and right to ignore someone, unfollow or block them. There may be something that makes you uncomfortable about what you have been asked. If that is important, ask them for a more formal way to contact you. There is ab sense that we should always respond and shouldn't broadcast. It can leave us to be in a sense overly responsive. I think when there is such a culture of harassment occurring on a platform we should be very careful and possibly adopt a risk a verse strategy. Rather than respond as default, we don't respond as default and we respond when we actually want to engage with the conversation in question.

There are many occasions in which it is best not to engage, particularly since these problems are getting worse on many platforms rather than better.

And a related issue is how mobile Internet can make it difficult to get away from these issues. Using Internet on mobile devices can be a useful way of filling unproductive time. I spend far too much of my life traveling on trains. I gain something from the otherwise boring experiences because I do a lot of that time reading and writing blog posts. It can make it hard to get away from work. Using social media as an academic through mobile devices, think about this from the outset. Think about what is right for you and what you're comfortable with. Some people find it helpful to avoid using social media on the phone because it avoids distraction and a sense of getting away from work.

Use an anti-distraction lap such as freedom which allows you to block certain sites for a period of time on your laptop and mobile device.

There is constant connectivity. It's in the interest of social media companies to draw us into these platforms that help us, encourage us to spend as much time and energy on there as we can. Ultimately they are monetizing our attention. The platforms may be free, but our time is being signed to advertisers and data mining companies. For this reason the architecture of the platforms has such inducements for us to spend more and more time on there.

As academics this can be dangerous. Something like freedom as an app can be useful. Rescue is another one that allows you to audit how you spend time on your computer. This can make it hard to focus again on core research activities in teaching that we are engaged in. This is why I think it's important to look at these issues at the start because social media can prove a distraction as an academic. You need to be careful to use social media and not be used by it. The best way to do this is to be clear about these risks from the outset, about how you will approach them in order to engage in sustainable way and integrate these activities the into your working life.

And finally, it is valuable to keep track of the day on your engagement. The screen shot from the left shows analytics that are available in the booster scheduling software I mentioned earlier. The right-hand side shows that from the Wordpress blogging platform. It can be very enticing to really delve deeply into this site particularly after you have been engaging in social media in a sustained way after awhile.

But I think in some ways we should be cautious because if you cue view ratings too narrowly you will be narrowing your research to a useful response. This can be useful to a point, you can adapt the platform you are using to communicate, but equally it can be a dangerous enticement. Actually you are pursuing attention on social media, attention on social media is based on the ability to provoke a reaction. The reaction when we look at existing social media, the kind of people who are able to really accumulate a lot of attention in this environment are often appealing to the worst basest instincts of those around them.

 This is not an environment in which academic ideas are equipped to maintain attention. As much as I'm an advocate for social media. It is important not to take stats too seriously. One way to approach this is to focus on extremes in your results rather than looking and poring through every item that you've engaged with online in order to see how people have responded to it. So, for instance if you are looking at blog posts, have any done particularly well? Have any done particularly badly? If you find that a particular post has been viewed a lot more than you expected, could you look on other social media platforms and see who shared it? Can you determine why they shared it?

Is something you expected to be popular generates very little attention, could you track the engagement and see if there's something about that post that means or explains why your expectations weren't met. I found that looking at the more extreme results, the outliers can be a useful way of learning more about your audience by tracking the responsive material you shared, allowing you to use the data available to you to optimize the use of social media without falling into the trap of just chasing Twitter followers, chasing blog views in a way that ultimately are vastly, and at lost leads us to bright Bart.

So this is the end of my presentation today. We covered a lot of ground and I've given a broad overview which I hope covers the key issues you would like to hear about today. Obviously there's lots more we can say, lots of resources in my website. I compiled over the years. If you would like to find more. Feel free to tweet or email me if you have questions after the event.

I think we've got a little time for questions now. I also will be taking part in the closing discussion later on today.

STEVEN BOYDSTON: Thank you very much, Mark. We are due for a break starting at 2:55 here Eastern time. We will go ahead and take a break now until 3:25 Eastern and we look forward to answering some more of the questions during the discussion session. I know there has been a lot of chat going on during your session. We appreciate that. Hopefully we will have some time to address some of those comments and questions.

Thank you, everyone. We'll see you after a short break.