

# Does Twitter Matter?



## TWITTER

A deep moving river of education and pop culture  
conversation goodness with amazing & generous people.

Drink deep, my friends - So refreshing! - [thedaringlibrarian.com](http://thedaringlibrarian.com)

Twitter is not the Gutenberg Press. The 'Big Data' revolution is over-hyped. Nevertheless, Twitter is significant in a number of ways:

- For identifying trends.
- For rapid, near real-time dissemination of news.
- It has been used to track the progression of the flu and other infectious diseases.
- It has played a mobilizational role in the Arab Spring and other social movement activities.
- For on-the-ground reporting of news and events.
- It allows you to decentralize research; what Nigel Cameron calls *mutual curation* and others call *social curation*.

- For looking into the global cocktail party that is Twitter.
- Allows one to take the pulse of the community on almost any given topic.
- Twitter is *the* Big Data source.
- It constitutes a coordination and communication tool for post-disaster mobilizations.
- Twitter facilitates the rapid diffusion of ideas, rumors, opinion, sentiment, and news.
- For professionals and organizations alike, it facilitates *networking, relationship-building, and exposure.*
- Twitter is proving to be a powerful *dialogic* tool – for initiating and engaging in conversations.
- Unlike other social media (e.g., Facebook), Twitter has a largely *open* model, allowing anyone to follow anyone else.
- *Social chatter* has become a powerful tool for
  - Hedge fund managers listen in on social media conversations in making their decisions.
  - Tracking and identifying terrorists and extremists.
- Facilitates the leveraging of what Granovetter (1973) calls *weak ties*.
- Can be a force for good (e.g., *Twestivals*).

In short, Twitter is not just for sharing pictures of your lunch. In addition to all the silliness, Twitter has come to be the world's premier *message network*. It These messages are used in a wide variety of settings and for a broad range of purposes. And researchers are able to listen in – a boon to anyone interested in messages, conversations, networks, information, mobilization, diffusion, or any number of social science phenomena.