Twitter 101
Useful Tools and Resources
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So you've created a Twitter account, entered your profile information, and uploaded a photo. Now what? Here are a few tools for making the most of your time with the service. You'll be one of the shining Twitteratti before you know it!

Finding Friends and Followers
Twitter works best when you have a healthy crowd to talk to and share ideas with. Here's a few suggestions for expanding your network.

If you build it, they will come: Many people will find your account by virtue of their own searches. Be warned that not all of these people are actually interested in what you have to say, or are possibly even real people.
Raid your address book: Twitter can scan your address book to see if any of your contacts are on the service. This is a quick and easy way to see who's out there.
The Kevin Bacon method: Once you've found a few friends, you can look at their friends, and their friends, and their friends… Discover the tangled web we, um, tweave!
Lists: Similar to the Twibes and WeFollow directories listed below, Lists are user-compiled directories of Tweeters based around a well defined subject. How many lists are there for your community?

Search Tools
If you've gone through your immediate contacts, there are a few web tools for finding like minds.

Twitter Grader (grader.twitter.com): Once you've found out your grade, click on the Elite buttons to find out who the BTOCs (Big Twitterers on Campus) are.
Twibes (twibes.com): Users can join a Twibe based on their interests. Knitters, librarians, gardeners, foodies, athletes—they're all there.
WeFollow (wefollow.com): Use this to find Twitterers in based on the primary subjects they tweet about. You can also declare your own topics of interest!

Twitter Power Tools
Create a robust Twitter control panel with more features than the main Twitter website.

TweetDeck (tweetdeck.com): and **Twhirl** (twhirl.org) Desktop clients for Twitter that allow you to search your friends, followers, and favorite topics all at once. These require installation of Adobe AIR (adobe.com/air).
TwitterFox (twitterfox.net): A Firefox extension that puts a Twitter panel right on your desktop.
HootSuite (hootsuite.com) and **Brizzly** (brizzly.com): Web-based clients for accessing Twitter from anywhere. HootSuite allows for statistic monitoring, setup of multiple feeds, and helps facilitate multiple users monitoring the account. Brizzly runs fast, works with multiple Twitter accounts, and also integrates with Facebook.

Get Mobile
If you're dying to be connected to Twitter 24-7, you can text from your phone. Access the **Settings** page to link your account to your phone. Once you've set that up, send a text to 40404 any time you want to tweet. You can also download one of the following tools onto your smart phone:

iPhone: Tweetie (atebits.com/tweetie-iphone/), **Echofon** (echofon.com/iphone), **TweetDeck** (tweetdeck.com)
BlackBerry: TwitterBerry (orangatame.com/products/twitterberry/), **UberTwitter** (ubertwitter.com)
Google Android: Twidroid (twidroid.com)
Others: Consult the **Twitter Download Page** (twitter.com/downloads)

Monitoring Key Topics
Use the **advanced Twitter search** (search.twitter.com/advanced) to identify people and tweets coming from your geographic area. Look for key terms indicating locations unique to your community. Schools, businesses, parks and other hangouts are all fair game. Each search has an RSS feed that you can add to your feed reader, HootSuite, or TweetDeck. Treat these as you would use a Google alert, and take the opportunity to respond to relevant Tweets.

Enhancing your Tweets

One cannot live on 140 characters alone. Here are a few useful tools for adding extra content to your tweets.

Photo Services (twitpic.com, yfrog.com): Post images from the web or your mobile device and send them straight to your Twitter account. No separate login necessary—just use your Twitter profile!

Video Services (twitvid.com): Just like above, but for moving images.

URL Shorteners (bit.ly, is.gd, tinyurl.com): This are essential for those long Web addresses. Most Twitter clients (including all of the ones mentioned here) do this automatically. Bit.ly also shows clickthroughs for your links.

Screencasting Tools (screenjelly.com): Create an instant recording, and post it to Twitter. This is perfect for all those times when you wish you could take control of the screen and show users specific links.

Archive Tools (snapgrid.com, backupmytweets.com, twapperkeeper.com) Your tweets never quite go away, but Twitter's search function only goes back 8 days at the most. SnapGrid provides a much deeper search. BackupMyTweets allows you to save past tweets to disk, and TwapperKeeper creates an archive of all conversations built around a given hashtag.

Selective Twitter Status (apps.facebook.com/selectivetwitter/): Update your Facebook status with a tweet adding the #fb hashtag to your update.

TwitterFeed (twitterfeed.com): Integrate existing RSS feeds (blogs, event calendars) with your Twitter account. While this will track your clickthroughs (it uses bit.ly), be careful not to overdo this.

Track Your Success

This wouldn't be a program for libraries without a mention of statistics, would it? Fortunately, there are a number of ways (including the aforementioned bit.ly)

FavStar (favstar.fm): Track how many times your tweets have been favorited. This is a great way to find new people in your community. Once you've logged in, you can generate an RSS feed of your favorited tweets.

TweetStats (tweetstats.com): General trends and nice graphs of your Twitter patterns. Look for patterns, such as the best time and days to tweet, or

TwitterAnalytics (twitteranalytics.com): The most robust of the Twitter analysis tools, TwitterAnalytics provides in-depth analysis of just how well you connect with your audience.

Klout (klout.com): More charting of your Twitter influence. Still growing, but may become even more robust than TwitterAnalytics.

Have Some Fun

There are also a number of tools that allow you to look at the mass of Tweeted information in new and Interesting ways. While not directly useful, it can be fascinating to see the patterns that emerge.

Twistori (twistori.com): Strangely hypnotic, this is a live tracking of primary emotions on Twitter.

TwitterVision (twittervision.com): This Google Maps mashup shows where tweets are coming from.

CurseBird (cursebird.com): What's the most commonly-Tweeted profanity out there? Probably not work-safe.

There are approximately eleventy bazillion (that's scientific notation, folks) other widgets out making use of Twitter's API. For a continuously updated list of what's Tweeting, consult the **Twitter Fan Wiki** at twitter.pbwiki.com.

Keys to Twitter Success:

It's easy to treat Twitter like digital signage, but to do so neglects the vibrant, active community at work here. Take advantage of everything the service has to offer, and you'll reap great rewards for your library.

Be a service desk: You're likely to find lots of questions out there that would fall under your job description. This is your chance to be excellent in public, and draw more people into your sphere of influence.

Be Responsive. Twitter makes it easy to air out petty grievances, and your organization may be susceptible to this. This is an opportunity to see your services through the eyes of your patrons. If you can respond effectively, it can help build much stronger relationships. Having a strong RSS setup can help streamline this.

Be Giving: Use RTs to highlight interesting tweets in your network. If you scratch their back, they'll scratch yours.

Be Human: This is your chance to put a real live face on your Web content. Don't be afraid to share a little of yourself along with your organization.

Happy Tweeting! For more background resources (as well as the slides from the accompanying workshop, please visit my **Delicious page** at www.delicious.com/tgreenwalt/mlstwit.