

## Is it safe to assume you may live-tweet at academic presentations?



**YES**

### Live-tweeting engages nontraditional audiences

BY ALEX HANNA

LIVE-TWEETING IS THE FUTURE of scholarly engagement. New media allows us to present our research to people who can't attend academic presentations, either because they can't attend the venue, are not part of the particular research community, or are not part of academia at all. In higher education, where funding for research is already subject to conservative attack, it seems counterproductive to restrict when, where and how we disseminate the fruits of our research.

In the social sciences, researchers usually use conferences to present work in progress. Exposing work at this stage to broader audiences allows more voices to inform where the research could go. In the hard sciences, conferences are often the chief publication venue for groundbreaking work. Linking this work to Twitter allows scholars to engage, to question the author on theory and methods, and to generate scholarly and popular buzz around that work.

There are, of course, places in which this can be inappropriate. A dissertation workshop and a lab group meeting are not places to broadcast ideas still in formation. But ongoing or completed work that strangers are already seeing presents an opportunity to engage a wider audience and seek feedback.

Take my own experience with live-tweeting: At the last meeting of the American Sociological Association, Twitter not only reached a community of scholars who were co-present at the conference in Denver but also reached those who couldn't attend the conference. I participated remotely at another conference where organizers made an effort to engage with those on Twitter, by assigning each panel a "backchannel moderator" who could read the stream of tweets surrounding the panel and field questions that he or she asked presenters.

As new media technologies keep evolving, we will be able to have our research reach new audiences. We should embrace this new reality.

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**NO**

### Conferences are not strictly 'public' spaces

BY ADELINE KOH

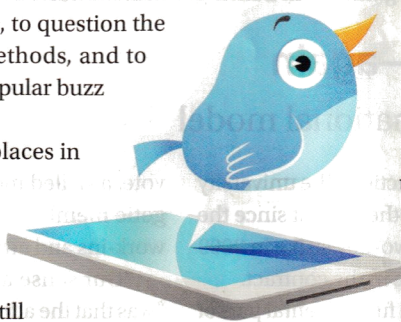
LIVE-TWEETING AT ACADEMIC CONFERENCES is a double-edged sword. Many feel that one's professional visibility may be increased by people live-tweeting your work. But a substantial part of the academic population is wary of live-tweeting, being concerned that conference papers or closed workshops are not strictly "public," but rather, closed venues for ideas that are not fully ready for such a large audience. These people feel there is a distinct difference between a completely "open" space such as Twitter, and more limited spaces such as conferences—which often charge people to take part and attend workshops and panels.

Additionally, others worry about their ideas being misrepresented by live-tweeters. Some people fear that live-tweeting may lead to intellectual property theft. Erin Templeton, a *Chronicle of Higher Education* columnist, has argued that automatically live-tweeting someone's talk might presuppose the speaker's consent, and that if a speaker were genuinely interested in being live-tweeted, she would be capable of live-tweeting a talk by herself. Accordingly, Templeton has warned that automatically live-tweeting without permission may cross professional boundaries.

However, champions of live-tweeting have countered that there is little difference between someone live-tweeting a talk, and someone writing down notes and emailing them to colleagues after the event. Social media commentator Roopika Risam has pointed out that much of the debate over live-tweeting centers around the issues of control and access, particularly around "who controls conference space, presentation content, or access to knowledge."

All in all, I would advise that if you are at a conference and would like to live-tweet, you should try your best to secure permissions beforehand from the presenters. This may not always be possible, but people are usually grateful you asked and are generally excited by the prospect of their work reaching a larger audience. Simply put, asking in advance will put your mind at ease.

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**20%** NO

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