Presented at the conference of the Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians/L’Association canadienne des bibliothécaires académiques professionnels, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON, May 25th – 26th, 2014.

#saveLAC

Information Workers, Digital Activism and Discourses of Resistance
A bit about my librarian self...

- Communications and Liaison Librarian
- Tweet @ryersonlibrary
- Monitor social media
HootSuite dashboard with various tweets and messages. The screen shows mentions and the home feed with tweets from different users. The tweets include discussions about library resources, essay help, and general updates from various accounts.
Why this project?

- Social media = text
- Never done it before
- Professional guilt? Lurker’s guilt?
2009: Daniel J. Caron appointed Librarian and Archivist at the LAC.

April 2012: LAC eliminates the National Archival Development Program (NADP); presents 450 members of its staff with affected notices, with 215 of those positions to be eliminated.

May 2012: LAC staff confirm that the current Inter-Library Loan (ILL) service will end February 15, 2013

March 2013: LAC Code of Conduct leaked

May 2013: Daniel J. Caron leaves his post at LAC as Librarian and Archivist.
Hemphill, Otterbacher and Shapiro’s 2013 work on Congress’ use of Twitter

Manually coded 791 tweets by members of Congress

Modified a schema to identify the desired ‘action’ behind the tweet:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrating</td>
<td>Telling a story about their day, describing activities</td>
<td>“headed up to the Fox News camera for an interview”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning</td>
<td>Situating oneself in relation to another politician or political issue, may be implied rather than explicit</td>
<td>“A9: Theoretically, not realistically. HC spending is growing 4x inflation and driving our debt. Let’s tackle the real threat”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing to Information</td>
<td>Pointing to a resource URL, tell you where you can get more info</td>
<td>“Harkin announces more than 300,000 for Housing in Tama County <a href="http://1.usa.gov/lf6Aem%E2%80%9D">http://1.usa.gov/lf6Aem”</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting Action</td>
<td>Explicitly telling followers to go do something online or in person – look for action verbs</td>
<td>“RSVP to my Immigration Forum with Rep. Louis Gutierrez this Saturday in Brooklyn <a href="http://t.co/qTcWugs%E2%80%9D">http://t.co/qTcWugs”</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking</td>
<td>Says nice things about or thanks someone</td>
<td>“@rmartindc Thank. MoC’s handwriting is probably on par with M.D.’s”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Doesn’t it in any other Action category, or can’t tell what they’re doing</td>
<td>“@jfor441 Will do!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopted similar coding schema to Hemphill et al., but with some modifications

Looked at tweets with #saveLAC, dumped into a Word doc, began coding in Excel
Tweets could be coded as multi-purposed, i.e., falling into more than one category

Requesting Action category refers to effortful activities, rather than ‘slacktivism’ activities

Also coded author affiliation, e.g. information worker, politician, etc.

Recorded associated hashtags, and whether it was a retweet (Y/N)
Historical research on Twitter is difficult compared to real-time data gathering through an API.

- Intercoder reliability lacking
- Excel can do the job, but...
- Author affiliation fuzzy
- Coding for retweets unnecessary
Examples from the corpus


- **Political Positioning**: “The path we are headed down?... [#CDNpoli](https://twitter.com/search?f=has%3A%23CDNpoli) [#SaveLAC](https://twitter.com/search?f=has%3A%23SaveLAC) pic.twitter.com/VHlCQTWAK4”
Examples from the Corpus

- **Directing to Information**: “New criteria for LAC positions managing description & client services #pathetic #saveLAC
  

- **Requesting Action**: “Solidarity: BC Library Association has written the Minister #saveLAC #nadp - have you? Write, call, visit your MP this summer!”
Highlights from the Stats

- 741 tweets
- Directing to Information (DI): 211
- Narrating Value + Directing to Info = 176
- Political Positioning + Directing to Info = 99
- Narrating Value + Political Positioning + Directing to Info = 97
- Low incidence of Requesting Action
Who was Tweeting?

- Academic/Scholar – 51
- CAUT – 77
- Information Workers – 346
- Library Affiliate – 34
- N/A – 177
- Politician – 18
- Other – 21
Some Final Thoughts...

- Primarily used to convey information about LAC crisis, provide examples of the value of libraries, as well as critiquing gov’t of the day
- Action-oriented tweets low – Discomfort with this role? Use of Twitter for this purpose?
- Is it fair to describe hashtag activism ‘slacktivism’?
References


Questions?

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