AMPLIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC EVENTS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE 2009 BEYOND THE REPOSITORY FRINGE EVENT

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In this chapter I will be considering the possibilities, as well as the practical issues, of using social media to amplify higher education events. These topics are framed by the experience of arranging and moderating amplification for the 2009 “Beyond the Repository Fringe,” an informal annual ‘unconference’ that focuses on innovations and opportunities in repository technology, policy and practice, provides a discussion and networking space for practitioners, and allows practical exchange of experience and ideas. The event takes the form of a physical event with a venue and structure designed by the organizing committee and a program of talks volunteered by Repository Fringe attendees. Participants are drawn from a diverse array of Higher Education institutions, libraries, and technology companies based in the United Kingdom and software engineers, academics and researchers, digital curators and senior library professionals.

I will be analyzing and reflecting on the Beyond the Repository Fringe experience touching on the use of various tools, including Flickr groups and live blogging, and considering the complexities of identity and moderation in social media amplification. In particular I will look at the role that Twitter can play in event amplification and in subsequent reflection on the success of an event. In addition I offer, at the end of this chapter, practical advice and guidance intended to assist event organizers in planning, running, and measuring the success of amplifying academic events.

The experience described in this chapter should be of particular interest to those who plan academic events. Repository Fringe is an unconference but the experiences and techniques could also be applied to traditional conferences, workshops, some training contexts and many medium to large-scale meetings and events. The author has also seen similar techniques deployed in successful pedagogical contexts though here negotiations of identity can be more complex. As the event described is open and public facing these techniques are not as suitable for contexts in which sensitive or private information is discussed.

WHAT IS “AMPLIFICATION?”

In the course of this chapter I will be looking at the process of “amplifying” an event and it thus seems useful to define what I mean by this. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED Online, 1989) defines amplification as *the action of amplifying, extending or enlarging*. This notion of extending and enlarging an event beyond its temporal or physical bounds is key in understanding the productive possibilities of using social media at events. Although technical definitions of amplification have some relevance here, since people and intellectual content are being amplified by social media technologies, the benefits of “amplifying” what is said, presented, experienced, or discussed can be best understood through the specific rhetorical sense of amplification (OED Online, 1989):

4. Rhet. The extension of simple statement by all such devices as tend to increase its rhetorical effect, or to add importance to the things stated; making the most of a thought or circumstance.

Although the term “amplification” is established as a colloquial term around social media for broadcast or extensions of events or experiences (e.g., Kelly, 2010a; Haydon, 2010 or in the naming of the not-for-profit events amplification organization “Amplified,” 2010) I would like to propose a specific definition for the social media amplification of

events as:

The extension of a physical event (or a series of events) through the use of social media tools for expanding access to (aspects of) the event beyond physical and temporal bounds. Such amplification takes place in the context of intent to make the most of the intellectual content, discussion, networking and discovery initiated by the event through the process of sharing with co-attendees, colleagues, friends and wider informed publics.

Experiments around event amplification (sometimes referred to by different but connected terms) have been taking place in many interesting and innovative ways for at least the past two years. There is, however, very little literature on this topic, though early work on emergent communications technologies for conferences (such as Kelly, Tonkin, & Shabajee, 2005) and recent work on transliterate approaches (McGill, 2010) are useful and notable exceptions. The rise of transmedia approaches to entertainment also provide many inspiring examples which may be applied to event amplification and hybrid virtual/physical events (Cheshire & Burton, 2010).

#RF09: A CASE STUDY OF AMPLIFYING AN ACADEMIC UNCONFERENCE

In July 2009 the “Beyond the Repository Fringe” unconference took place in Edinburgh organized by EDINA, the Digital Curation Centre (DCC), and the University of Edinburgh School of Informatics. This was the second “Repository Fringe,” with both having run on an informal “unconference” format. The term “unconference” refers to various nontraditional event formats, most often associated with a physical event with a fixed location and date but with a structure and/or program defined by volunteer speakers and attendees. In the case of the Repository Fringe the format is an informal, participant-driven facilitated physical event, with no fee for participation or attendance, which is intended to draw in a wide selection of participants and encourage active and enthusiastic participation. In order to provide structure, the organizers provide a draft timetable and keynote speakers are selected and confirmed before the event is publicized. The majority of speakers and workshop facilitators identify themselves by responding to a call for participation circulated through various repository email lists and websites. Potential speakers are encouraged to add proposals for talks and workshops directly to the Repository Fringe wiki, <http://wiki.repositoryfringe.org/>. The format for the event changes somewhat from year to year but the core idea of an open, accessible, inexpensive event that

encourages active dialogue between a self-selected audience from the UK repository community remains core to the event.

The Repository Fringe events have both received healthy levels of interest with around 80 participants attending the first event in 2008 and 92 participants registered for the 2009 Beyond the Repository Fringe event (via EventBrite, an online event booking system). The maximum capacity of 100 free places on the event was made possible by funding from the JISC Repositories and Preservation Programme (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/reppres.aspx>), which supports innovation around digital repositories and preservation for education and research. Since the Repository Fringe events take place in Edinburgh the organizers are aware that there are further potential participants who, even when not paying a conference fee, may not be able to secure time or funding to travel and stay in the city for several nights. Some participants will, of course, be able to disseminate experiences and information to colleagues but there remains a sense of a wider audience interested in the events but unable to attend in person. Many of the potential attendees are, however, adept and enthusiastic about the use of new technology and the event thus provided an excellent opportunity for experimenting with social media amplification in order to reach out and extend the event beyond its physical boundaries.

Following successful use of an event wiki and a Flickr account for the previous Repository Fringe event, the core organizing team had already identified video streaming and live blogging as useful amplification tools for the 2009 event. During discussions over the role of live blogging in the event, we identified a wider variety of additional amplification tools that could be trialed at the Repository Fringe 2009.

ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AMPLIFICATION AT REPOSITORY FRINGE

The participative nature of the unconference model used by Repository Fringe is such that the organizers were confident of some level of participation around the event. In addition, social media mentions of the first Repository Fringe (in 2008) were known of but had not been related back to official web presences. The goals for social media amplification were therefore to:

1. Provide access to the presentations of Repository Fringe 2009 to those unable to attend through video streaming and live blogging.

2. Enable rich networking opportunities for attendees (physical and virtual).
3. Collect attendee images of the event in lieu of access to professional event photographers.
4. Provide an accessible backchannel for attendees to comment on the event.
5. Ensure any follow up social mentions were available to organizers for use in assessing the success of the event and planning for future events.
6. Gain experience in using multiple social media tools for event amplification with a view to feeding this experience into future events and project work.

SELECTING SOCIAL MEDIA AMPLIFICATION CHANNELS

In discussing possible social media spaces for use in amplifying Repository Fringe, the organizing team drew on their own experience as representatives of the repository community. The repository community is demographically complex – individuals tending to use tools according to roles, interests, or technical experience rather than age, location, or similarly easy to identify dimensions. With this in mind we considered the spaces we knew were already in use by our audience: popular blogs, microblogging activity, wikis, photo sharing sites, etc. Although we could have deducted that most attendees would (demographically speaking) be on Facebook we excluded some such sites as unlikely spaces for productive or public discussion.

The *DISC UK DataShare Blog* (<http://jisc-datashare.blogspot.com/>) was identified as the best location for live-blogging the event as this project was hosting a meeting in a parallel theme within the Repository Fringe and therefore had a strong and specific association with the event and many attendees. *Twitter* was also felt to be an important amplification channel as the Repository Fringe followed several months of events and reports in the UK Higher Education community that had benefited from ongoing discussions on assigned hashtags (e.g. JISC, 2010). Visible Tweets (<http://visibletweets.com/>) was also identified as a tool that would enable a simple hashtag-based visualization of Tweets for a “Twitter Wall” (a projection of incoming Tweets around the event) although this functionality was little used during the day.

The organizers were aware that Twitter usage could not be assumed of all participants, we were also aware that the number of social channels in use might cause some confusion unless they could be coherently combined. *CoverItLive* (<http://www.coveritlive.com/>) was therefore identified as a suitable tool, enabling the combining of event streams including tweets, comments, pre-populated event information, and images in an embeddable interface and combined RSS stream. The CoverItLive stream could also be retained after the event for replay (via the website) or archiving. The existing Repository Fringe *Flickr* account would be used to share images of the event and a Flickr group (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/repofringe09/>) was also set up to enable easy pooling of both organizer and attendee images of the event.

All social media channels were listed (and linked to) on the Repository Fringe wiki so that any interested participants or online viewers would be able to find and access the blog, images, and hashtag easily. The CoverItLive event was also embedded on the front page of the Repository Fringe web presence, <http://www.repositoryfringe.org/>, and on an additional live coverage page hosting streaming video of the event. Over the course of the event a further page (http://wiki.repositoryfringe.org/index.php/Coverage_of_the_event_online) was created to track both official online coverage of the event and postings by attendees, interested colleagues and viewers on their own blogs and websites. This page has subsequently been updated to reflect the online impact of the event, connecting to all known mentions and postings about Beyond the Repository Fringe.

SET UP AND MANAGEMENT OF AMPLIFICATION TOOLS DURING THE EVENT

Wherever possible the selected social tools were branded with the Repository Fringe 2009 logo – an image of the annual Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the inspiration for the event ethos and name due to its reputation as the energetic, creative, irreverent, and informal antidote to more official events. Before the event the logo was also uploaded to the Flickr group so that it could be used by organizers and both official and independent bloggers. The “event” in CoverItLive began several days before the in-person event started allowing early comments to the Twitter Stream to be collated and published. Before this launch the template was populated with short information texts about each scheduled item in the program (which

included keynotes, Pecha Kucha (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pecha_Kucha) sessions, “Show & Tell” sessions, workshops, round table discussions, and a developer competition) ready to be instantly published to the CoverItLive stream at appropriate times during the event. And indeed these prepared announcements made up most of the 40 alerts and notes posted by the organizers to the CoverItLive stream during the 2-day event.

A Twitter “hashtag” (a single tag for related comments which is preceded by the # sign to enable easy filtering of tweets) was identified as important for effective amplification but selecting the *right* hashtag proved challenging. There is no official way to register a hashtag despite the existence of websites like <http://hashtag.org/>, which was set up as an attempt to register all hashtags as they appeared on Twitter but has now become a community site, built on the Ning platform, around hashtag usage. The unofficial way to check a potential hashtag is to run a search on Twitter (or a third party Twitter application such as Tweetdeck (<http://www.tweetdeck.com>), Brizzly (<http://brizzly.com/>), or Soda.sh (<http://soda.sh/>)) for existing mentions of the chosen word. Initially “#RepoFringe” seemed like a good choice as it was not in use already and is the commonly used abbreviated form of the event name (also in use on the official Flickr account). However it was felt that #RepoFringe might, at 11 characters, be too long for the 140 character limit Twitter imposes. #RF09 was selected as a more suitable and more concise alternative and initial search found only a small amount of activity associated with the tag. By the time of the event it became clear that the hashtag was also in use for a motorsports event, a World of Warcraft contest and the Roskilde Festival, a Danish music festival. Since #RF09 had already been publicized the hashtag was used despite these clashes and, over the course of the event, most tweets to #RF09 were directly related to Beyond the Repository Fringe. Visual inspection allowed the removal of a small handful of tweets intended for these other events from any further analysis.

Although there are continuing discussions and experiments around the use of additional Twitter hashtags to identify specific sessions or themes at events such as Beyond the Repository Fringe we did not choose to identify any additional hashtags for specific workshops or parallel discussions. Even for this relatively small event this decision led to some confusion in marrying up tweets to different simultaneous sessions and is a technique that will be considered again in planning the 2010 Repository Fringe event.

In addition to the online set up process a physical inspection of the Beyond the Repository Fringe venue took place in order to assess the availability of electrical sockets, wireless internet and presentation facilities.

For amplified events, access to power and internet connections is particularly important both to support official live blogging and to support attendees wanting to contribute to amplification channels.

METRICS

Credible social media metrics are still emerging (e.g., Owyang, 2010). Many existing measures relate to commercial objectives (such as lead generation and impact on sales) which can be difficult to relate back to the goals and practice of academic organizations. Identifying useful impact measures that reflect the (generally) not-for-profit nature and academic tone of Higher Education events can therefore be challenging. However, as in a commercial setting, identifying the desired outcome is important to designing appropriate metrics. In the case of Beyond the Repository Fringe the main goal was to generate discussion and feedback around repositories so assessing the level of participation, the extended online discussion and the key issues highlighted by commentators was important for us. Because we were also trialing a variety of social media amplification tools we were also looking for useful reactions and reflections on these tools.

ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS

1. Provide access to the presentations of Repository Fringe 2009 to those unable to attend through video streaming and live blogging.

The video streaming provided at the event was useful for remote participants but a number of technical issues prevented remote participants from seeing all of the sessions available. The live blogging was, however, a significant success. In addition to being used by both the closing keynote speaker and remote participants the blog posts were also subsequently used as a core record of the event by a number of attendees who blogged their experiences. The live blog thus allowed these bloggers the space to reflect and discuss the Repository Fringe rather than describe the presentations seen. Additionally, the live blog has provided a long lasting record of the event that is easier to access and understand than the more dense Twitter or CoverItLive records of the event.

2. Enable rich networking opportunities for attendees whether attending in person or virtually.

Twitter worked well as a networking tool for attendees whether or not they were on campus. It retrospect the addition of a delegate list including twitter identities (and linking them back to real names) might have been useful. We also received feedback via Twitter, and paper feedback forms, that some attendees would have liked for some social activity to be arranged for the night preceding the Repository Fringe. This has been noted for the 2010 event and the new website includes an area to post any updates or notes about entertainment and social activities, additionally several light early evening Repository Fringe social activities are build into the 2010 program.

3. Collect attendee images of the event in lieu of access to professional event photographers.

The use of a Flickr group built on the 2008 Repository Fringe's use of Flickr. The group attracted only a small number of participants but enabled the collection and use of a large number of very high-quality images. The number of contributors did seem to reflect the number of photographs taken at the event but there is scope to develop this further, and to perhaps integrate images from mobile phones, in the future.

4. Provide an accessible backchannel for attendees to comment on the event.

Twitter worked well as a busy and engaging backchannel for Repository Fringe with both those attending in person and those participating remotely finding great value in the use of an event hashtag for networking and discussion. It had been initially hoped that the backchannel could be highlighted through displaying visualizations of recent Tweets on LCD and/or projector screens which are in place around the venue though this was, in the event, not possible. One of the challenges of an individual engaging in the Twitter stream and the live blogging of an event is the competition for attention between these two channels. A solution to this, where feasible, would be to split the task between two individuals with one committed to updating blog postings, the other to monitoring and updating Twitter comments.

CoverItLive did not prove to be a successful backchannel for those without Twitter accounts – one of the reasons it was initially used – as the tool was not as familiar to the Repository Fringe attendees and most of those who wished to make real-time comments elected to do so through their Twitter accounts. CoverItLive did, however, provide an attractive and simple way to archive and replay the Tweets from the #rf09 hashtag.

5. Ensure any follow up social mentions were available to organizers for use in assessing the success of the event and planning for future events.

The use of TwapperKeeper, CoverItLive, and the JISC DataShare Blog all successfully allowed the organizers access to comments and feedback made during the Repository Fringe event. Follow up blog postings, tracked through Google and social search tools, also provided invaluable feedback to compliment comments gathered via paper feedback forms at the end of the on-campus event.

6. Gain experience in using multiple social media tools for event amplification with a view to feeding this experience into future events and project work.

Repository Fringe was an extremely useful event for trialing a rich mixture of social media amplification tools and techniques. Although the audience for this event includes an unusual level of engagement with technology the experiences have already fed into further thinking around event amplification and recent events such as the first Open Knowledge Scotland meeting (<http://wiki.okfn.org/OpenKnowledgeScotlandEventPage/>) in May 2010.

PARTICIPATION LEVELS

One of the most simple measures is the extent to which each channel is used – both in terms of the level of participation and the volume of content (e.g., number of comments) produced. In the case of Beyond the Repository Fringe some channels were clearly more successful than others. Around 40 people watched the CoverItLive aggregated feed during the event but no comments were submitted via the tool despite this functionality providing a way for those without Twitter accounts to take part in the live stream. The stream was embedded on a special live feed page of the Repository Fringe website with little interactive content so it may be that viewers did not realize that they had the ability to actively comment or it may be that all of those who wished to participate, contributed directly via Twitter (which fed into the CoverItLive stream). The CoverItLive event did, however, have impact beyond the event with 80 people viewing the replay since Beyond the Repository Fringe took place.

The Flickr group (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/repofringe09/>) was a more mixed experience. Only one participant joined the group but he shared a large number of high-quality images and, like the organizing team, posted

images under a Creative Commons Licence allowing reuse. The Flickr group enabled sharing, whilst ensuring that photographers, including individual organizers, retain credit (and ownership) over their images. The group also allowed individual organizers to use existing storage space and settings associated with personal “Pro” accounts (which, unlike free accounts, allow unlimited upload and sharing of high resolution images) when contributing images to the official coverage. The use of personal Flickr accounts, potentially introduces substantial blurring of personal and professional identities and whilst this blurring is commonplace there are privacy and organizational policy complexities associated with such ambiguity. I will reflect on this recent form of tangled identities and roles in professional and quasi-professional contexts later in this chapter as I consider broad considerations for the use of social media amplification.

The live blog of Beyond the Repository Fringe, though one of the less innovative social media channels, demonstrated some of the most tangible benefits. Producing detailed timely blog postings was extremely labor intensive but they allowed remote participants to follow the event in some depth. The closing keynote speaker, Clifford Lynch, was one such participant as he was traveling from an event in the United States on the first day of the Repository Fringe and was only able to attend a few sessions before his own keynote brought the event to a close. In his presentation he indicated that he was able to follow the event via the live blogging and went on to make specific reference to earlier speakers and the content of presentations which the blog coverage had allowed him to experience from afar. The blog has also had currency since the event as it has provided a core record for attendees and other repository bloggers to link back to. At least nine blog postings about Beyond the Repository Fringe have appeared since the event and most link back to the live blog coverage as well as the website for the event.

TWITTER

Twitter was by far the most active channel at Beyond the Repository Fringe with over 300 tweets posted to the #rf09 hashtag over the course of the 2-day event by a total of 45 Twitter accounts. Additional tweets appeared over the following days offering feedback or linking to blog postings and follow up content. It thus warrants further attention since comments provide a rich archive of feedback on the event as well as revealing social connections between participants.

TWITTER ANALYSIS

For Twitter usernames that contributed at least one tweet to the #rf09 hashtag a new entry including name, username, and an anonymous form of attribution (Tweeter1, Tweeter2, etc.) was created in a spreadsheet. The username was looked up using the Twittergrader tool (Shah, 2009) which queries Twitter profiles (via the API – the Application Programming Interface) for information including the number of people who subscribe to a user's updates, the number of updates they have posted, etc. This provided a snapshot of the Twitter activity, popularity and personal networks of each Beyond the Repository Fringe Twitter commentator.

The usernames were checked against each other in order to analyze how many participants “follow” each other and are connected on Twitter. This check was performed using two methods: the DoesFollow tool (Clinkscales, 2010) and a direct call on the Twitter API which can be made with the following command (where NAME1 and NAME2 are both Twitter usernames):

`http://twitter.com/friendships/exists.xml?user_a=NAME1&user_b=NAME2`

(via Morrison, 2009).

As this analysis of connection has taken place some months after the event it is impossible to gauge how many of the participants began following each other during or after Repository Fringe 2009. However, many of the connections found through this analysis do support patterns of users quoting or “retweeting” (forwarding) each other repeatedly during the event which suggests that connections may have already been established in July 2009.

Of 42 active (nonautomated) Twitter commentators only 2 individuals lack connections to any other participant. Around half of those who tweeted have 10 mutual connections (where they both follow and are followed by other participants) within the participant group – so they are connected to a quarter of those posting tweets to the event hashtag. The most popular Repository Fringe Twitter participant is connected to more than half of the other participants. A visualization (Fig. 1) compares total popularity of Twitter participants with mutual and unrequited/fan relationships within the #RF09 group. As might be expected those with high follower (500+) counts have more “fans” than mutual connections.

The UK repository community is relatively small and well-connected but the dense Twitter connections between Repository Fringe Twitter commentators gives insight into the enthusiastic uptake of this channel. Participation in the #RF09 hashtag may well have been boosted by pre-existing social

Fig. 1. Visualization, Created using the ManyEyes Visualization Tools (<http://manyeyes.alphaworks.ibm.com/manyeyes/>), Comparing the Number of Mutual and One Directional “Unrequited” Connections (Followers Who are Not Followed Back) between Beyond the Repository Fringe Twitter Participants. Each Dot Indicates a Different Twitter Username with the Size of the Dot Scaled According to the Total Number of Followers that Participant Has.

relationships and comfort with the site. These relationships could be explored further through techniques including digital ethnography (e.g., Bardzell & Odom, 2008; Gatson & Zweerink, 2004; Hine, 2000). This can be an extremely useful method for understanding the relationships and impact of an event but for a group as large and densely connected as the #RF09 Twitter group this would be a very substantial undertaking.

TWITTER COMMENTS

Twitter offers a rich time-stamped archive of feedback on the content and organization of the event since many of those participating in the Twitter stream were attending Beyond the Repository Fringe in person and reporting on their experiences of presentations, workshops, etc. The Twitter participation rate was particularly high with a third of all event attendees (based on Twitter profiles, event registrations, and tweet content) posting at least one tweet. This may not be representative of Twitter usage across the sector but is in keeping with the Repository Fringe’s focus on new

technology and active participation. A more interesting distortion can be seen when looking at the number of tweets per username with over 100 of the tweets posted by a single user who commented regularly throughout the 2 days and subsequently posted a number of reports on the event to his personal blog. The advantage of this level of real-time commentary to provide information that could never be collected via traditional feedback forms (which were also used for Repository Fringe 2009) can be seen in the following comments posted only an hour apart by this same prolific inperson attendee (Tweeter8):

Pre #rf09 thoughts. An event of shock and awe but thin on practicality. Hoping I'm wrong.

This session has set a very high point for the conf. I could probably go home now and the trip would have been worth it.

Even if this participant gave detailed and honest responses on their feedback form (presuming they completed one – only 23 attendees returned feedback forms) it would be hard to capture such a clear snapshot of expectations and to so easily identify the talk which triggered such a swift change of heart. In this case, I can immediately compare the timestamp of the tweet to the presentation schedule and see that it was the opening keynote, “A sneak preview at the A-list stars of future repositories: blockbuster technical developments and the cultural drivers behind them” by Ben O’Steen and Sally Rumsey of Oxford University which entirely shifted this participant’s expectations. For assessing the success (or failure) of topics, presenters, and format the tweets are a very powerful analysis tool. However, the sequence of comments by Tweeter8 also indicates how challenging it can be to moderate comments in real time. For a moderator, it is tempting to reduce the risk of negative comments by intervening with reassurances. However, this could have stifled honest discussion particularly as the critical tweet was posted early in the event as activity on the Twitter stream was just gaining momentum. It was, of course, pleasing to see the risk pay off when the positive contradictory comment from the same tweeter appeared just an hour later.

The time stamping of tweets also offers more sophisticated potential for amplified events. In the case of Beyond the Repository Fringe we provided a webpage that showed the embedded video stream alongside the CoverItLive stream (including all Twitter comments) and made both artifacts available for viewing after the event. However more direct integration of Tweets with video feeds has been explored in a variety of experiments – using

pre-recorded rather than live video streams – notably in the work of Tony Hirst (Hirst, 2010) and Martin Hawksey Hawksey (2010). The value of linking commentary with presentation footage lies partly in the wealth of referrals to further reading, relevant URLs, and additional information that is supplied in Twitter comments. For instance at Beyond the Repository Fringe several tweets referred to resources that were under discussion at the event:

Hugh Glaser now demonstrating RKBExplorer (<http://www.rkbexplorer.com/> at #rf09 (Tweeter26).

The ability to match public Twitter comments to each item on the program can be extremely helpful for organizers no matter what the tone of the Tweets but for speakers this feature means immediately seeing and taking on board comments no matter how critical or fair they may be. This potential for upset or conflict is particularly worth noting if public tweets are being shown alongside individual presentations since Twitter hashtags can become a very disruptive and unmanageable form of heckling. One possible solution is to display comments via a tool which allows the editing of tweets pre- or post publication. One of the drivers for using CoverItLive for Repository Fringe was the fact that it allowed editing and/or removal of comments at any point though for this event the functionality was used to remove a single tweet, on the basis that it related to another event using the #rf09 hashtag.

Viewing the Wordle (Fig. 2), it is immediately apparent that “data,” “repository,” “repositories,” and “deposit” stand out as the most tweeted words. Terms including “Need,” “like,” “now,” “good,” and “interesting” also feature very strongly reflecting the tone of talks for this event, many of which were position papers and presentations on innovative projects and initiatives. More interestingly “Pecha” and “Kucha” are also mentioned very frequently. The terms refers to the short “Pecha Kucha” presentation format, in which presenters show and explain 20 slides for 20 s each. As this is challenging and relatively novel, it was of particular interest to those attending the event in person:

@tweeter13 Well done on your pecha kucha! (Tweeter12)

pecha kucher session is really funny! Trying to grasp all concepts in 20 secs is also a challengey (Tweeter24)

Glad I didn't volunteer to do one of these sessions with my tendency to waffle (Tweeter8)

SOCIAL TOOLS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UNPROVEN

Photographs and video can be extremely powerful tools for amplifying academic events but, particularly for events taking place over several days, the timeliness of posting and sharing links and materials is crucial. Participants only engage fully in the conference whilst it is taking place so capturing their interest and participation then is key. In order to speed up the process of taking and sharing images, it is important to secure agreement from attendees for their images to be used at or before the point of registration on the day. This can raise some challenges since the easiest systems for doing this – requiring use of an attendee's image as part of the

agreement to take part in the event, with the option to request that specific images are taken down – can be perceived as invasive to participant privacy. The Repository Fringe followed practice at many unconference events in explicitly encouraging participants to document the event and thus, implicitly, requiring attendees to personally opt out of images or avoid being photographed. However to remove any doubt about the use of images it is likely that a short note specifying this situation will be included in the information for the 2010 event. For smaller or more politically sensitive events (such as focus groups) it may be much more appropriate to provide more explicit consent forms on an opt-in basis.

Video can be a particularly sensitive area as it makes permanent both formal and informal comments made at an event so it is important to gain agreement from speakers to capture and use their performance. This allows content to be uploaded and/or streamed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Written consent that waives speaker performance rights will also help secure rights for future re-use and archiving. In some cases the balance between privacy and public access is met by recording formal presentations but not informal, panel, or networking elements. This is a practical solution that will reassure speakers but compromises the experience of participation for remote attendees.

IDENTITY ISSUES

The digital identity (or digital identities) of participants is often a secondary thought in the promotion of social tools at events – invitations to tweet, blog, etc. do not require any particular context to be set so participants may choose to publicly post under professional, personal, or blended personas. For the participants this may not be an issue but for the event organizer to be able to analyze, quote, or publicize comments the issue becomes more complex. Social media communications (particularly Twitter and in-person discussions captured on video) are believed to be inherently ephemeral so presenting these comments in the context of permanence enables a different type and degree of scrutiny and accountability (Chun, 2008). This can have real consequences for those quoted and therefore attempts to quote, publish, or disseminate comments in permanent (particularly print or broadcast) formats risks breaching the trust of participants and, ultimately, reducing participation to banal statements of fact. The decision to share and blend social identities is deceptively complex (e.g., Lundblad & Masiello, 2010) and is an issue under increasing scrutiny in social and cultural (e.g., danah

boyd, 2008), pedagogical (e.g., Hemmi, Bayne, & Land, 2009) and professional (e.g., Williams, 2009) contexts. However as the impact of social tools increases, so do moves to store, analyze, and archive comments made in these spaces, for instance the Library of Congress has recently announced plans to archive all Tweets (Library of Congress, 2010), whilst JISC, the major funding body for the United Kingdom further and higher education technological innovation, is supporting development to the TwapperKeeper (<http://www.twapperkeeper.com/>) service (Kelly, 2010b).

MODERATION

One of the inherent risks of integrating real time social communications into an event is the possibility of erroneous, offensive, or irrelevant content being published under the auspices of your organization. There have been several notable cases of respected media brands incorporating live comment streams into their publications or broadcast streams only to have posters add offensive, silly, or libellous comments (e.g., Jones, 2009). Indeed, personal liability for social media comments have resulted in significant consequences for some with teachers, political candidates (Siddique & Carrell, 2010), and journalists (Heinz, 2010) all finding contracts terminated for social media comments either explicitly or implicitly tied to their professional identity. Meanwhile academics are engaged in complex cases stemming from social media and user generated comments (e.g., Service, 2010) whilst celebrity feuding, offensiveness or upset (Cofield, 2010; Siegler, 2010) are common across various social media sites. Some see a level of offence and noise as an inevitable and perhaps acceptable feature of social networking usage (e.g., Buchanan, 2010) but many organizations have or are developing guidelines specifically with the unintended consequences of casual spaces in mind (e.g., IBM, 2010). However monitoring and light moderation should, in most cases, be suitable for most academic amplification contexts.

ASSESSING SOCIAL TOOLS

Kerawalla, Minocha, Kirkup, and Console (2009) suggest a useful framework for the use of blogging which, although intended for distance and e-learning contexts, may be useful in considering the comfort and likely behaviors of an academic audience's engagement with social media amplification tools. They propose a model for designing courses that

address prior participant experience of social media tools (see also Clark, Logan, Luckin, Mee, & Oliver, 2009) and their comfort with technology and the comparison of organizer and participant expectations. Although this framework is not explicitly designed for use with academic events I believe it offers a constructive starting point to planning a blend of social amplification tools.

There is, however, no substitute for experimentation with social media tools but this can be done in a variety of ways. Attending virtual events as a participant will immediately help highlight both positive and negative qualities of various amplification tools and these experiences can then be built on for future events. It can often be quite strange and disembodied to experience an event as a remote participant as a break in the video stream, an unexplained comment and events as insignificant as a coffee break can appear confusing to a participant who has just logged in to view the coverage of a conference. Attending physical events and participating in the Twitter and blogging back channels can also be a valuable experience for judging the balance, integration, and filtering implications of these tools. I have personally found that trialing more unusual and unproven social media tools for local or personal social events can also give useful initial indications of future usefulness.

PRACTICAL CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING AN AMPLIFIED EVENT

Based on the experiences of Beyond the Repository Fringe 2009, the planning process (currently taking place) for the 2010 event, and reflecting on substantial experience of participating in the social media amplification of academic events I have attempted to distil the social media planning process into the following practical guidelines:

1. *Begin your amplification planning by carefully considering the needs and expectations of the event audience as well as the desired goals for your event.* Ensure you use tools and communication methods that will be familiar and of interest to your audience. If many speakers and attendees regularly update blogs then this may be a suitable method of communication whilst if few organizers or expected participants use Twitter then it is unlikely to be useful. Judging the mixture of channels to use will require speaking to peers, fellow organizers, colleagues and,

when possible, attendees or speakers to assess their interest and usage of social media tools and their expectations for the event.

2. *Prepare your participants.* Events arranged online will benefit from printable elements of traditional delegate packs – local transport, restaurant, and entertainment information for instance – will still be worth distributing online. Even if social events are not part of the official program facilities for participants to arrange meet ups may also be expected.
3. *Prepare the physical event space.* You need to support and enable bloggers or event attendees to participate and making sure there is access to power and internet connections will make a substantial difference to participation levels.
4. *Prepare the virtual event space.* Ensure that the online presence for your event is clear and consistent. Links to all amplification channels should be easily found and checked throughout the event, particularly if you are using streaming video or audio. If you can share presentation materials ahead of the event this will help ensure that those participating solely online have good access to the core content of the event as it is presented or discussed. If your event is likely to feature many acronyms or niche references consider creating an online glossary of terms that will help clarify terms for remote participants in particular.
5. *Ensure there are clear roles for updating and monitoring amplification channels throughout the event.* Curating engaging social media amplification is labor intensive but will be more manageable if responsibility for each element of the amplification is clearly planned. If there are multiple parallel themes, ensure one person will record and amplify each theme. Ensure there is a mechanism for registering and responding to technical problems or urgent queries. A short list of contact details held by all organizers may help with this.
6. *Request consent from participants.* This will help ensure that materials can be shared in a timely and relevant fashion. Permission may need to be sought for capturing still images, streaming and/or recording video or audio material, and for sharing presentation materials or public comments (particularly if publication of any type is planned). Issuing a waiver as part of the registration process and on the website will be a practical compromise at some events (especially larger events) for alerting participants that their image, contributions, comments, or presentations may be made available or publicized by the event organizers.

7. *Moderate social media channels lightly.* Although comments in these spaces are public and comments may occasionally prove inaccurate or inappropriate it is important for organizers to inhabit and engage in social media as honest and human voices rather than over formal or censorious presences.
8. *Monitor social media coverage regularly.* This should begin before the event takes place so that any erroneous links can be corrected and all mentions can be recorded as they appear so that supporting evidence of the event's impact is readily available to organizers, funders, etc. Tools such as Google alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>), Tweetbeep (<http://tweetbeep.com/>), Collecta (<http://collecta.com/>), and RSS readers such as Feed Demon (<http://www.feedException.com/>) can all be useful in monitoring social media mentions.
9. *Consider feedback from social media channels alongside traditional feedback methods.* Blogs, Twitter, comments, and any other social channel your participants may use will all provide valuable feedback on an event but they should not entirely replace traditional feedback forms as some attendees will not be participating online and others will be keen to make anonymous comments on paper rather than traceable comments online.
10. *Reflect and learn from social media experiences throughout the event.* It can be hard to assess which social media channels will be most appropriate to an event ahead of time and it is therefore important to assess how the blend of tools is working throughout the event. If a particular tool or channel is immediately problematic or unused you can then discontinue use early in the event in order to focus energy elsewhere. If comments from one channel are particularly helpful, that can be promoted or highlighted to participants in the physical event space.

What has become clear through the experience of managing the Repository Fringe amplification, and the experience on leading or advising on the amplification of subsequent events, is the centrality of understanding your target audience. Social media tools should be deployed in concert with relevant traditional communications in ways that genuinely speak to and connect with your potential or identified attendees. It is therefore crucial to adapt and target any social media amplification work on the needs and expectations of the audience, with an appreciation of the skills and experience of the event organizers themselves. When used successfully social media amplification can not only increase the impact of an event online but can also enrich the experience of the whole event.

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