Social Media for Scientists and Science Organizations

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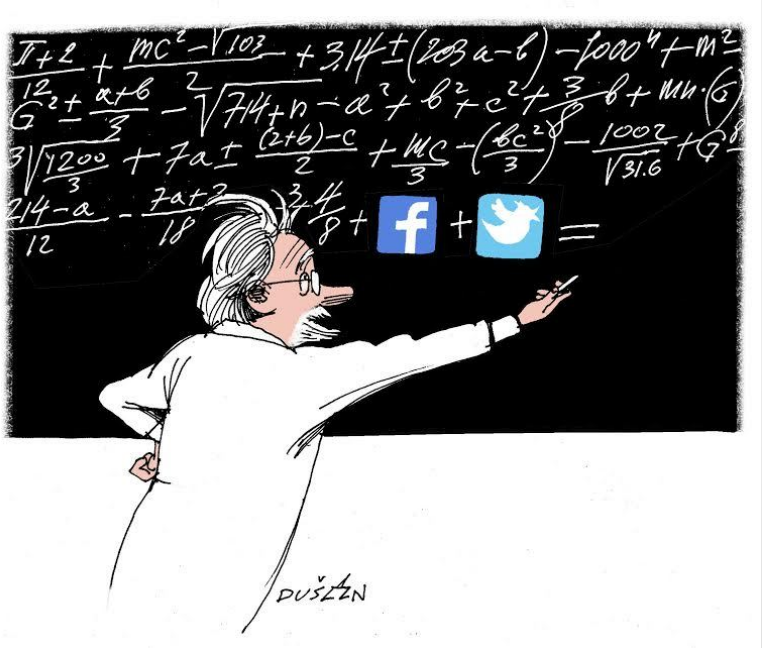
Modified for Communicating Science for Impact Short Course at the EarthScope National Meeting and Delivered by Beth Bartel, UNAVCO

May 15, 2017

Outline

- Why social media
- Social media options
- Best practices
- Exercise



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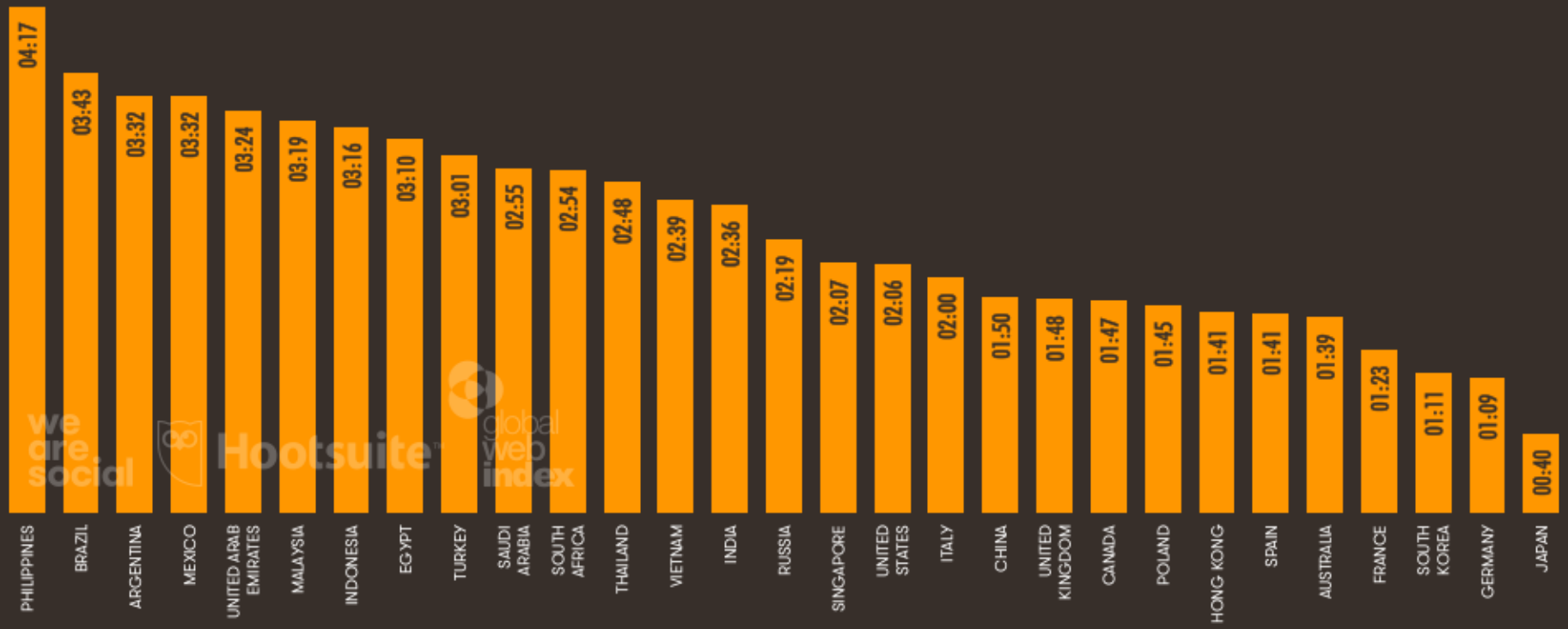
TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

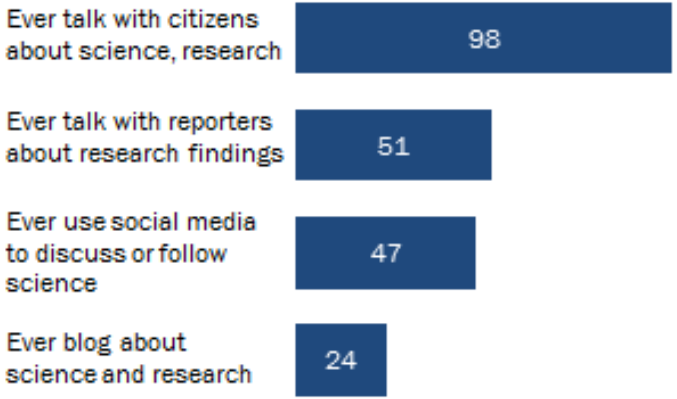
AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS THAT SOCIAL MEDIA USERS SPEND USING SOCIAL MEDIA EACH DAY [SURVEY BASED]



SOURCES: GLOBALWEBINDEX, Q3 & Q4 2016. BASED ON A SURVEY OF INTERNET USERS AGED 16-64.

Nearly All Scientists Talk with the Public; A Sizable Share Use Social Media, Blogs

% of AAAS scientists who ever do each of the following



AAAS scientists survey Sept. 11-Oct. 13, 2014. Q50a-f. Ever use social media based on combined responses to Q50d,e. Ever blog based on combined responses to Q50a,f. Responses of never and no answer are not shown.

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Social Scientists and Earth Scientists Are the Most Publicly Engaged

% of AAAS scientists in each discipline who do each activity

Primary discipline	Often talk with citizens	Often/ occasionally talk with reporters	Ever use social media	Ever blogs
Biomedical	35	19	48	21
Chemistry	24	11	45	21
Earth science	53	31	50	31
Engineer	34	15	43	24
Physics and astronomy	40	26	40	24
Math and computer science	32	11	45	30
Social, history, policy	50	35	53	38

AAAS scientists survey Sept. 11–Oct. 13, 2014. Q50a-f. Ever use social media based on combined responses to Q50d,e. Ever blog based on combined responses to Q50a,f. Those giving other responses or no answer are not shown. Those with some other primary discipline not shown.

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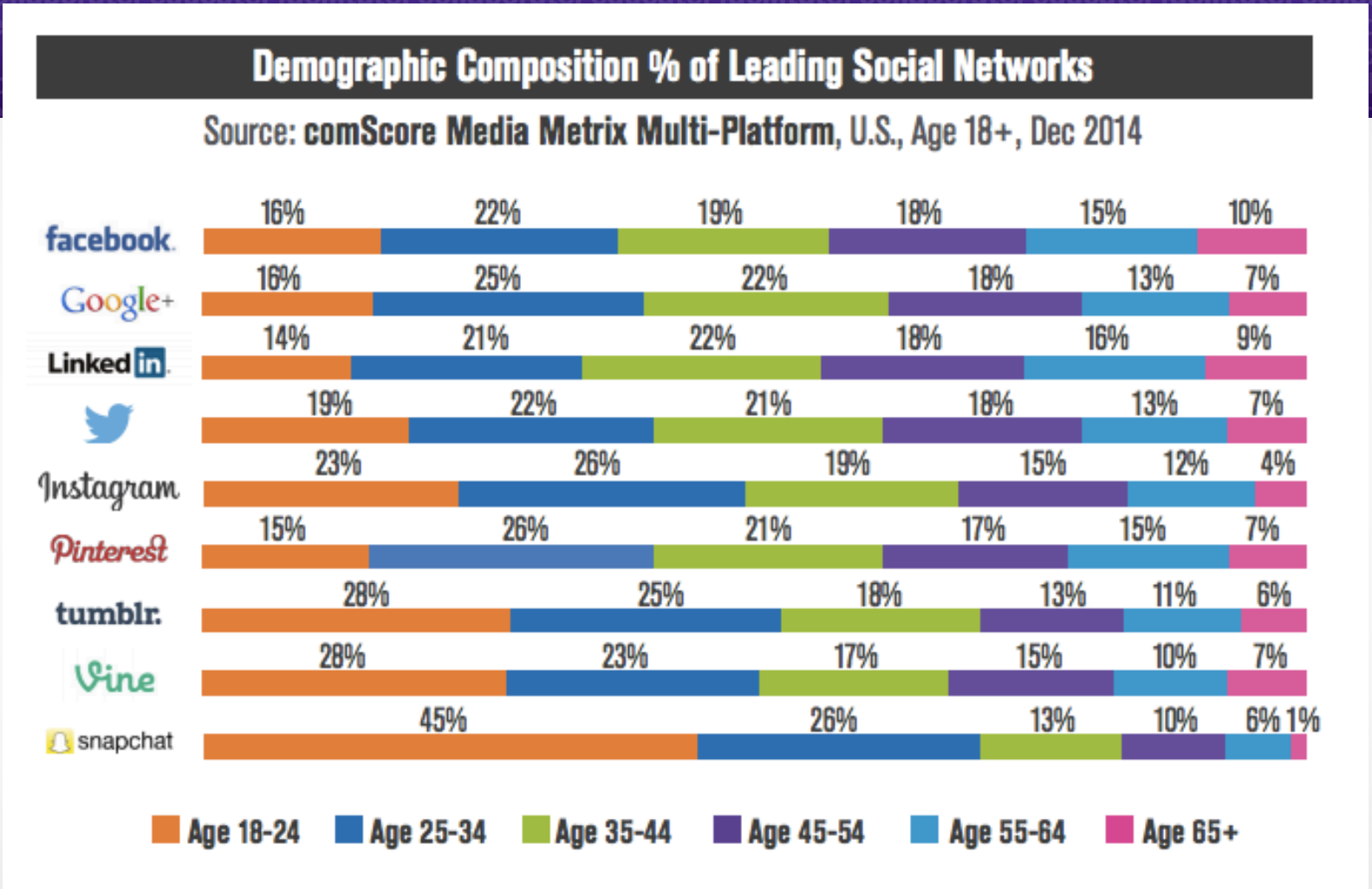
SOCIAL MEDIA
EXPLAINED WITH coffee
I Like Coffee
Here is a collection of pictures & recipes of coffee drinks.
I am drinking #Coffee
Watch me as I drink coffee.
I am a Google employee who drinks coffee
Here is where I drink coffee. I come here a lot, I am the Mayor.
I am good at drinking coffee
Here is a vintage picture of me drinking coffee.
socialab

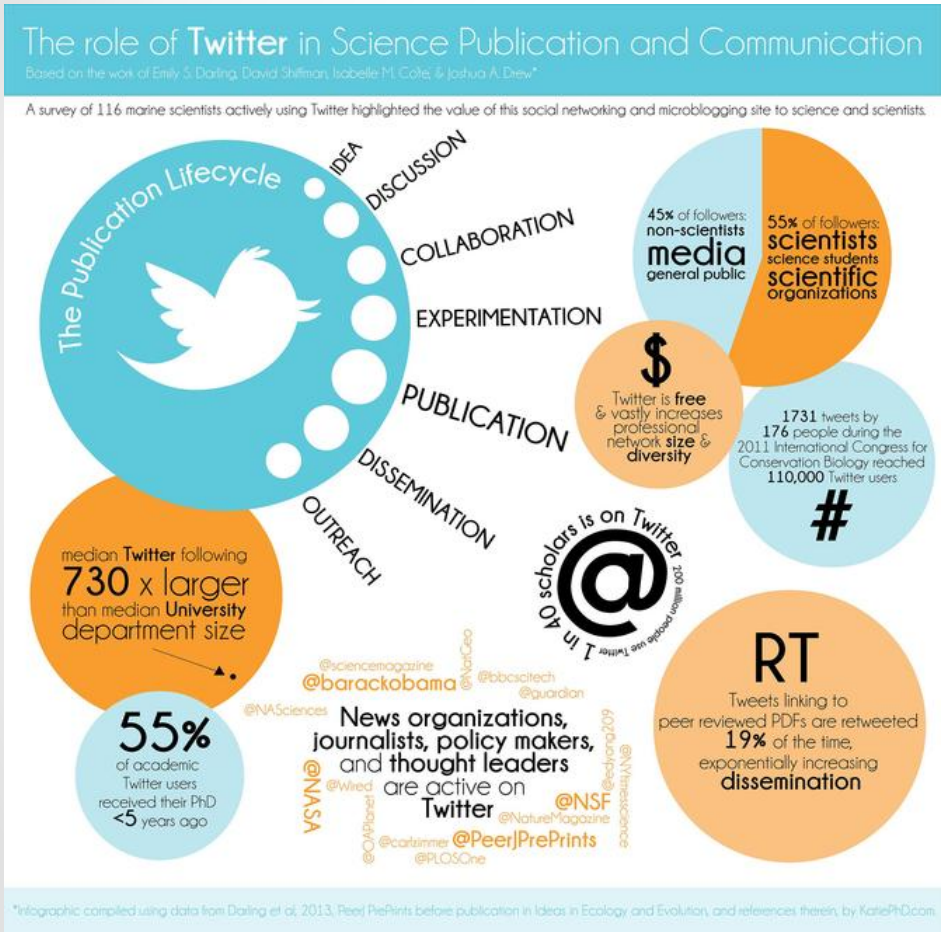

Demographic Composition % of Leading Social Networks
Source: comScore Media Metrix Multi-Platform, U.S., Age 18+, Dec 2014
facebook
16% 22% 19% 18% 15% 10%
Google+
16% 25% 22% 18% 13% 7%
LinkedIn
14% 21% 22% 18% 16% 9%
19% 22% 21% 18% 13% 7%
Instagram
23% 26% 19% 15% 12% 4%
Pinterest
15% 26% 21% 17% 15% 7%
tumblr.
28% 25% 18% 13% 11% 6%
Vine
28% 23% 17% 15% 10% 7%
snapchat
45% 26% 13% 10% 6% 1%
Age 18-24
Age 25-34
Age 35-44
Age 45-54
Age 55-64
Age 65+

Facebook for Science Organizations

- The most ubiquitous (1.86 billion users)
- Likely already have experience
- Can share all types of content
- 62% of Americans get their news from social media, most from Facebook
- 23% of users check their accounts at least 5 times per day
- Already extensively used by science programs

Individual scientists:
Reach friends and family

Twitter Uses



- **Disseminate science**
  - Tweets about peer reviewed PDF's are retweeted 19% (Priem and Costello, 2010)
  - Extensively used by media
- **Build a network**
  - Median Twitter following 730x larger than the median university department size (Darling et al., 2013)
  - 55% of academic Twitter users received their PhD <5 years ago
- **Educate the public**
  - 55% of followers are scientists/science orgs, etc.; 45% public, media, non-scientists (Darling et al., 2013)
- **Influence policy**
  - Extensively used by policy makers (all members of Congress have a Twitter acct)

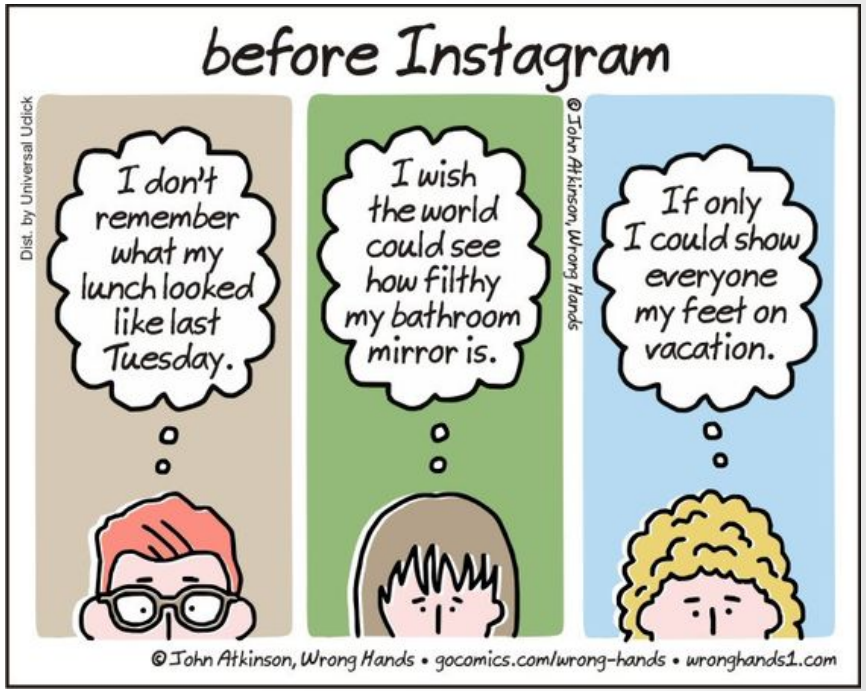
Twitter Best Practices

Twitter Tricks and Tips

- Use key words and #hashtags
  - Hashtags double your engagement (but only use 2)
- Use images
  - 150% increase in RT
- Short and sweet
  - 110 or less gets 17% higher engagement
- Tweet between 8am and 7pm for 30% more engagement
  - Peaks of engagement are 10am-12pm and 8-10 PM EST
- Tweet on Sat/Sun for 17% more engagement
- Include links
  - 86% more RT
- People love stats
  - 5.4% more retweets
- Understand Twitter "trends"
- Retweet experts...with feedback
- Stagger content – don't microburst
- Don't put @username at the beginning unless it's a reply

Instagram for Science

- Share the day-to-day life of a scientist
- Share the scenic stuff, like field work
- Give an audience **access** to experiences they may not have
- Post data visualizations as well as photos
- Searchable through #hashtags
- Give supporting information in captions

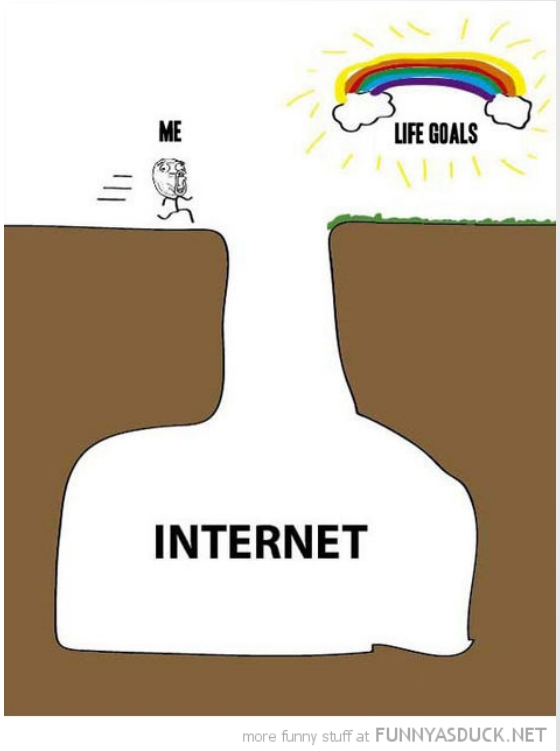


General Best Practices

- Follow fellow scientists and science organizations
- Short on text, big on visuals
- Interact through @
- Respond to comments, and comment on posts of others
- Use #hashtags where relevant (Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest)

FAQ

- **How much time does it take?**
  - **For individuals**
    - Allow 1-2 hours upfront
    - Maintain over coffee breaks / news breaks
    - 1-2x/month spend extra time looking for new contacts / thinking about messaging
  - **For organizations**
    - Allow 3-4 hours to create your strategy
    - Set aside ~1 day per platform for set-up / intro / exploration
    - Expect to spend ~20-30 min/day per platform
    - Once a week set aside 1 hour for analytics
    - Quarterly, set aside 2-3 hours to summarize analytics and revise your strategy



- **How much personal / professional?**
  - Don't say anything online you wouldn't say at the company Christmas party
  - Be yourself
  - Share your thoughts and interests as well as your science – HUMANIZE SCIENTISTS!
  - A good read on the subject - Timothy D Bowman, (2015) "Differences in personal and professional tweets of scholars", Aslib Journal of Information Management, Vol. 67 Issue: 3, pp.356-371, doi: 10.1108/AJIM-12-2014-0180

Conclusions

- Effective social media can be used by scientists and science programs to reach large numbers of people, including the general public and other scientists
- Different channels will reach different audiences
- Social media can be a networking as well as a dissemination tool