Corralling Tweets – Storify as a platform for reporting back from conferences and training events

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Going to a conference nowadays will invariably prove to be a rewarding experience. But, with the ever expanding presence of social media, most notably Twitter, they can often end up causing sensory overload, what with the number of posts from the number of people tweeting. Amid all of the 'white noise', it can be easy to lose track of a post that you found important, while attempting to write a report about the event when you're trying to refer back through hundreds, if not thousands of tweets, can end up being exceedingly difficult.

This is where a resource such as Storify can come in useful. Storify is a freely available, web based social media resource that allows the user to pull together elements from various media sources into a single timeline or "story". The content you are looking for can be dragged into your story from whatever platform you're looking in, and then embedded, creating an aggregate of all of the content you are browsing through and using.

Storify was created in 2010, before receiving its first public outing at the 2011 South by Southwest (SXSW) tech conference, where it was one of the SXSW Accelerator winners (Jansen, 2011). The site subsequently went live in April 2011, before being named as one of TIME magazine's top 50 websites of that year (McCracken, 2011). Since its launch, Storify has become a significant platform for the presentation of events online; a notable early use was by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), who used Storify to provide coverage of the 2011 London riots – this allowed CBC access not just to the 'raw' information, in the form of tweets, images and video, but also to add a measure of the editorial process through the choice of what content to add, as well as being able to add text to the piece to provide a degree of context (Guerrini, 2013). It is this feature that can allow Storify to be used as a means of writing up a report of an event you have attended. By being able to add your own text to the timeline, you are able to add your own thoughts, or any notes you have taken, and combine them with the media you have embedded, creating an overall picture of the event (Barlow, 2014).

The process of using Storify is reasonably straightforward. To begin with you will need an account – this can either be one that is set up within the resource itself, or, if you have one, you can link it to your account on Facebook or Twitter. Once you are logged in, click 'New Story' and you are able to get started. Storify has the capability of searching through a number of different media platforms individually, including Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Flickr and Instagram; the search box will keep the same search term for each platform. Additionally, Storify allows you to search through Google directly which means that, in addition to embedding content from social media platforms, you can also embed

web pages directly, allowing the links from any relevant material to form part of the story. Once you have done as much as you want, or feel you can, the story will be automatically saved. To then make it visible publically, you will need to publish it. Once it is finished and published however, you can continue to make edits to it as and when you feel it necessary. There is also an embed function that allows you to put the whole story on a web page, rather than simply linking to it, while you can also share the story via your various social media platforms.

Increasingly, with all of the things we are asked to do, finding the time to adequately summarise all of the material we may have come across at a training event for the benefit of our colleagues is difficult. There are suggestions that people not having the time to write blog posts is not a new phenomenon (Siegler, 2010). While we may take copious notes, there will invariably be something that gets missed, but that other people may not have. Storify is a free, relatively user-friendly way of bringing together a large proportion of the other stuff that people have commented on at your training event or conference into one place for the benefit of everyone else.

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