

# **TWITTER: A PROMISING TOOL FOR GENEALOGY MICROBLOGGING**

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## **Overview**

Creating a genealogy blog can dramatically energize your research efforts as you share your discoveries and challenges with others online. But generating satisfying blog posts with any frequency remains a daunting task for many. One attractive alternative is *micro-blogging*, in which individual posts are reduced to the size of a text message, perhaps containing only a single thought, a quote, a web link, or a photo. This presentation will introduce you to the most celebrated micro-blogging service—Twitter.com—and explore its relevance to your family history research.

## **Five Interesting Facts About Twitter**

- Founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams
- All features are completely free; no advertising currently
- Posts are limited to 140 characters and answer the question “What are you doing?”
- Posts can be submitted using SMS, instant messaging, e-mail, Twitter.com and third-party services
- Twitter users were among the first to post reports on such noteworthy recent events as the Chengdu (China) earthquake, Mumbai (India) terrorist attacks, and US Airways Flight 1549’s landing on the Hudson River

## **Twitter Terminology to Know**

- Tweet
- Follow
- @Replies
- Direct Messages (DM)
- #Hashtags
- Re-tweet (RT)

## **Cool Features**

- Find People
- Search
- Trending Topics

twitter

Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out

What are you doing? 140

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Latest: Working on my presentation to the South Davis Family History Fair on Twitter for Genealogists. #genealogy about 12 hours ago

update

Familytreeman UK 1911 census: <http://ping.fm/xKBzQ> about 2 hours ago from Ping.fm

Familytreeman I'm back - great wedding, brilliant couple. Going for a sleep! about 2 hours ago from Ping.fm

mjasay Installing Windows 7 on my Mac. Want to see how the other half lives/survives :-)) about 2 hours ago from TweetDeck

mjasay Just hit 173 (pounds). Down from 191-193 in mid-October. The power of running...a lot about 3 hours ago from TweetDeck

jdive Dim Sum at Tropical Chinese in Miami - Overall, B. But for Miami, best one can hope for. I liked it. Liked Prime Italian too. Home soon. about 3 hours ago from web

mytwigs <http://twitblogs.com/> about 3 hours ago from TwitterFox

hikari17

119 following 86 followers 206 updates

Home

@Replies

Direct Messages 3

Favorites

Everyone

Following add

View All...

## Third-Party Applications Built on Twitter

- Twirl
- Twitteriffic
- TweetDeck
- Twitterfox
- TwitPic
- Twitterberry

## Using Twitter for Genealogy Research

- Discover and follow other genealogy enthusiasts on Twitter
- Get genealogy news from well-known sources (EOGN, *Family Tree Magazine*, etc.)
- Follow genealogy sites (e.g., Footnote, Ancestry) to hear about their latest databases
- Search for tweets with the #genealogy hashtag
- Join the Family History Twitter group [<http://twittgroups.com/group/genealogy>]
- Share your genealogy discoveries with your followers and the twitterverse
- Post a cemetery photo or an inspiring genealogy quote

- Post a question and ask your followers for help answering it
- Link to an insightful genealogy blog post you read or to one of your own!

## Noteworthy Genealogists to Follow

- Schelly Talalay Dardasht @tracetribe
- Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak @megansmolenyak
- Dick Eastman @dickeastman
- Randy Seaver @rjseaver
- Mark Tucker @marktucker
- Thomas MacAntee @geneabloggers
- Cyndi Howells @cyndihow

## Summary

- 140-character limit gives a “liberating constraint”
- Format lends itself to “always-on” streaming of your genealogical life (and the way it connects to the rest of your life as well)
- Spontaneity is encouraged... so there’s not the pressure to always create something whole, complete, or profound
- There’s something very satisfying about casting your thoughts into the “twitterstream” and waiting for responses from those who find a connection to your tweets
- Genealogists are colonizing Twitter, just as they did Facebook, with positive results

## Selected Bibliography

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- Pogue, David. “Twittering Tips for Beginners.” *The New York Times*, January 15, 2009.