6 TWITTER TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

Create a Twitter dashboard

1 Organize and manage your Twitterverse by selecting an app to work with throughout the day. Your top choices are two downloadable desktop apps – **Tweetdeck** or **Seesmic Desktop** – or **Hoot-suite**, a configurable Web-based app. All allow you to customize your Twitterstream into groups (or, if you prefer, beats).

Find local tweeps

2 Twitter's a great way to connect to the local community. A handful of tools let you suss out who's in your area. First try **Twitter's advanced search** feature. Go to search.twitter.com/advanced, enter a city or zip code into the "Near this place" field and choose a search radius. The results are based on the location people enter in their Twitter bios. Other tools worth a try: **TwitterLocal.net**, **NearbyTweets**, **Localtweeps** and various iPhone apps, such as **Twinkle**, **TwitterFon**, **Tweetie** and **Twittelator Pro**. **Happn.in** is a new local Twitter app that lets you track trends and conversations in specific metro areas. We also like **Twellow** (and **Twellowhood)** – the Twitter Yellow Pages – **MrTweet** and **Justtweetit**, three tools to help you discover folks relevant to your interests.

Follow breaking news

3 Use **Twitterfall** to follow the real-time Web. Create a custom search to follow topics you specify – and save them for later retrieval. Type in an address into the geolocation panel to see what people are discussing in that area. Use this app to follow breaking news stories. You may also want to follow hashtags on topics of interest, like #health, #obama, etc. **BreakingTweets** is a site where reporters curate and organize news stories around Twitter. **TweetBeep** lets you receive hourly email alerts of topics you specify.
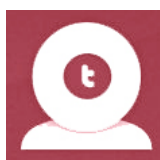
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Measure your grandiosity

4 OK, at some point you'll want to take account of how you're doing in Twitterville. Fortunately, there are lots of tools to asses your Twitter chops. Type your Twitter ID into **Twitterholic** (you can also see the most popular Twitter users in your city), **Twinfluence**, **TwitterGrader**, **Twittorati** or **Twitalyzer** to see the power of your profile. Use **Retweetrank**, **Tweetmeme**, **Twitturly** or **Retweetist** to measure how often you get retweeted. For metrics, **Bit.ly** and **TweetStats** are good ways to see how many Twitter followers have clicked the url shortener to read that story you polished to a sheen.

Find a source

5 **@helpareporter** connects journalists with more than 100,000 news sources. Peter Shankman (**@skydiver)** posts tweets with instructions on how to respond. Journalists submit queries using an online form, and sources can get up to three emails a day with 15-30 queries per email.

Report on location

6 **Twitcam,** a new service, combines the simplicity of Twitter with the ability to stream live video, thanks to a partnership with Livestream. You could report live from the scene of a speech, a fire, a protest or another breaking news event. Chat with your viewers via Twitter right from your broadcast page. All Twitcam sessions are archived and can be embedded on your news site.

– JD Lasica, Socialbrite.org   Download this handout at http://bit.ly/6twittertips