

How journalists can use social media to make their journalism more 'relatable' (Guest blog – #PolisSummer)

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In the first of our Polis LSE [Summer School](#) guest talks, the Wall Street Journal's EMEA social media editor Sarah Marshall explained how social media is helping journalists to make news more relevant to readers. Polis Summer School student Eleanor Hudson reports.

The idea of social media as a way of communicating news to people is developing fast so a young person especially is more likely to hear of a news story through Facebook or Twitter than through the traditional newspaper or magazine.

So for Sarah Marshall, Social Media EMEA for the Wall Street Journal hashtagging and retweeting has become part of the journalist's everyday life. Social media is cheap, it is effective, but the technology is constantly changing. Even social media experts can be outdated in a month when a new trend emerges.

Social media has affected journalism from two entirely different positive aspects: reporting the news and investigating the stories.

In terms of reporting the news, Marshall said that although the numbers of followers and shares on a post matter, it is the engagement with the people that is the real goal for journalists in social media.



Sam Dagher

@samdagher



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How the WSJ reporters use social media to make their journalism more social

Social media connects not only news organizations, but also, more importantly, individual reporters directly to people. In the past, through straightforward print journalism, “a journalist’s job was done after they hit print” says Marshall. Now, the journalist not only has to find the story and report it, but they must engage the listener through tweets, images, video chats, Q&A sessions via video, and any other inventive way that could reach someone on a personal level. Every news story and post has immediately become more personal, and now journalists must tap into that personalization that social media provides to reach people.

Social media is an effective way to distribute a story, but it is also a good place to find content and gauge reader ‘sentiment’ about narratives or issues. However, since social media is so vast, and the volume of information that constantly streams through feeds is endless, journalists struggle to find the time or the resources to sort through these to get a snapshot of lifestyle, emotion, violence, etc. Marshall showed there are ways to sort through these masses of tweets, updates, images, and stories. With Tweetdeck, Storyful Multisearch, Twitter lists, Facebook interest lists, and engagement filters, journalists can effectively use social media as a tool to develop stories that are relative to what people choose to look at in their feeds everyday.

Journalism is about relating to people. Sarah Marshall made it very clear that she relates to people every day, and that she works to make sure news stories are ‘relatable’ through social media. Again, it’s not about the numbers

game, but it's about engagement. If people are engaged in news stories, then journalists have done their jobs.

You can see Sarah's presentation [here](#).

This article by Polis Summer School student Eleanor Hudson

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