



Breaking News Via Twitter

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Information is the preferred coin of today's digital realm. However, data must also be timely and fresh to maintain its worth. Twitter has gained an edge in this endeavor, with both professional journalists as well as citizen observers providing updates about the latest newsworthy events transpiring around the world. A prime example of this was the death of Osama Bin Laden on May 6, 2011, when Twitter experienced the greatest sustained post rate of its history, averaging over 3400 tweets/second for almost two hours just prior to the U.S. presidential address confirming the story.

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A controversy exists amongst industry observers as to whether Twitter has in fact been quicker than traditional media outlets for breaking news, yet when the devastating Japan earthquake left residents without any other way of keeping in touch with relatives, Twitter proved to be an invaluable tool. During the riots and unrest in the Middle East, Twitter was peerless in both information dissemination and protestor organization, establishing itself as an essential communications aperture to the rest of the global community.

Following breaking news events via Twitter is a fairly straight-forward undertaking. In the search box, located in the toolbar at the top of the interface, enter a hashtag character (#) and the trending term: #trend. Current trends are located to the right of the Twitter feed in the sidebar section, and may or may not include the hashtag (most often it is included).

Once the search term is accessed, the user is presented with a Results feed for the search term. A link to an advanced search page (located at the top right of the feed) allows the user to refine the parameters with headings of Words, People, Places, and Other. An option to save the search results is also available. Trends can be changed for geographical area, if needed. Tweets can be filtered by Top, All, or With Links, selectable from the top left of the feed. Any tweet selected will be amplified to the right in the sidebar, with options to Favorite, Retweet, and Reply. In addition, other users that are mentioned in the tweet are presented with user name, avatar icon, bio information, and the option to follow.

While Twitter's founders no doubt didn't plan for the SMS to be a breaking news outlet, its many users have adopted the site to utilize its ability to provide up to date information on the

latest newsworthy information from around the world. This feature enhances the ROI of Twitter usage, an important consideration when accounting for the time spent in its employment.