



UNIVERSITY
of York

CENTRE FOR
MODERN STUDIES

Countervoices @cmodspgforum1

The Secrets of Organising a Twitter Conference



Introduction

In June 2020, we, the committee members of Countervoices, the PG Forum of the University of York's Centre for Modern Studies, organised a Twitter conference called *Pandemic, Crisis, and Modern Studies*. The following sections roughly fall into these categories:

- 1. Advertising:** how to reach a broader audience not only via email and website but also through multiple social media platforms
- 2. Conference preparations:** how to make the Twitter conference format work, accommodate international participants joining in from different time zones, and facilitate good presentations and a well run conference
- 3. Conference management:** how to manage a Twitter conference and deal with issues that come up during the conference
- 4. Pros and cons:** the positive and negative aspects of a Twitter conference

We genuinely hope you will find this information useful and inspiring. Please check our full blog post if you want to know more.

Advertising

1. E-mail

- Sending CFP emails to **the majority of the humanities departments in the UK**

2. Social Media

- Circulating a **memorable poster** with an **interesting title**, a **one-page CFP**, and some **eye-catching images**
- Engaging with **the official Twitter accounts of our keynote speakers**, a number of **centres, associations and departments in Modern Studies** and **other interdisciplinary academic Facebook groups**

3. Website

- Publishing our CFP on **H- Net**, **Upenn** and **MLA profession**

Conference Preparations

1. Contributions

- Creating a **spreadsheet** to record the **names, Twitter accounts, email addresses**, and other **relevant information about the contributors**
- Releasing the final name list according to the **programme length** (how many speakers, lengths of papers)
- Using a **questionnaire** to collate speakers' **time zones** and **schedule preferences**

2. Paper Lengths and Time Allocation

- It is worth scheduling in **breaks for problems and downtime**
- **10-15 tweets papers** worked well
- Allocating time for papers and Q&A

Conference Preparations

3. Division of Labour

- Drafting the **conference poster** and advertising the **event on social media/inner network**
- Contacting **panelists and keynote speakers**
- Producing the **guidebook, programme, and questionnaire to determine the prizes**
- Managing the **Twitter accounts**

4. Giving Guidance

- How to format papers (e.g. drafting and numbering tweets, attaching images)
- What to expect during and after the conference (e.g. time slots, panel structure, creating a Twitter thread, criteria for the awards)

Conference Preparations

5. Preparing the Script

- Preparing a **tweeting rota**
- Working according to the conference programme to write **introductory tweets** for panels and speakers
- Keeping the tone upbeat, engaging, and humorous to create **a positive atmosphere**



Conference Management

1. Always connected

- Using a messaging service (**Facebook Messenger** or other) to communicate with team members during the conference

2. Twitter via TweetDeck

- Using **TweetDeck** to schedule tweets in advance and to ensure the management of the multiple Twitter accounts responsible with running the conference

Pros and Cons

Pros:

1. Organisers

- **Cheaper and easier:** no need to manage a budget, provide catering service or book conference rooms
- **Fewer requirement:** less bandwidth (both internet and mental bandwidth) and privacy required in comparison to video conferences

2. Participants

- **More accessible:** national and international researchers as well as the general public
- **Long-term accessibility:** the content will remain on Twitter long after the conference ended

Pros and Cons

Cons:

1. Organisers

- **Twitter banned in some countries**
- **Limited submissions:** Those who may not be familiar with Twitter **or do not have a Twitter account** are not involved
- Difficulty in arranging the speakers **thematically**

2. Participants

- **Format:** Tweeting and academic writing are two different genres
- **Inevitable technical problems:** internet disconnections, disruptions, and some images being flagged (erroneously) as sensitive content
- **Fewer spontaneous interactions:** no face-to-face conversations and less opportunity to celebrate and have casual chit-chats with other speakers

Reflection

- **Do as much of the work as possible before the conference:** this will give you time to solve any technical difficulties on the day
- **Embracing the platform to its full extent:** in the form of the conference and in advertising it
- **Timing is everything:** we managed to coordinate this conference in 3 months and it took place while debates about the Pandemic were still happening. If the issue is relevant it is worth working quickly to make it happen at the right moment
- **Keynotes matter:** our keynote speakers really elevated the profile of our conferences