

# Top 5 social media platforms for research development

**LSE** [blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/07/26/a-to-z-of-social-media-for-academia/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/07/26/a-to-z-of-social-media-for-academia/)

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*Social media outlets are becoming essential for academia, not just for the promotion of research but for research development as well. **Andy Miah** provides an overview of his top picks for the social media newbie and argues that if used well, these platforms will allow academics to digest more content, more quickly. We must figure out how to use social media in a way that enriches academic working life, but in a way that also provides some added value.*



In December 2012, the **LSE held an event** about the future of academic impact. One chunk of the discussion was dedicated to social media and it made me think about what researchers should be doing today, to prepare for tomorrow. While a lot of the conversation was about how social media can *promote* research impact, I also want to claim that social media is fast becoming a primary vehicle of research *development*. In so doing, this brief essay offers an overview of where we might need to focus our attention in the rapidly expanding world of social media.

These days, I receive more invitations to speak and collaborate via **Facebook & LinkedIn** today than I do by email. I'd even go as far as to say that email is moribund. I mean, really, who has time to read all the emails they receive, let alone reply to them? I find more resources through **Pinterest** and **Google Scholar** than I do via my library. I meet more people with whom I share common research interests through **Twitter** than I ever did at academic conferences. I co-author and edit university documents in **Google Drive** saving hours of time spent sharing versions of drafts, sometimes working in real time on one document with over 10 people. I am also one of those people who has switched from Endnote to **Mendeley**, preferring the convenience of a multi-platform application, which I can install onto my home machines as well, without having to go through university IT.

What about journals or conferences, I hear you ask? Are these not still primary vehicles of research development? Certainly, they remain important, but the point is that they are each increasingly being delivered by social media as well. Furthermore, we can digest a lot more content because of these platforms, if we use them well. I no longer visit journal websites or bother with email alerts about new issues. Instead, the RSS feeds of journals go straight into my social media environments, as soon as they are published. The content comes to me, saving hours of search time.

So what is next for the social media newbie? The first thing to realise is that there is no single way of doing this well. We each have to figure out how to use social media in a way that enriches our working life, but in a way that also provides some added value. That said, there are some smart principles worth adopting. Setting up an ongoing 'future media' working group in your School will help you keep abreast of what's hot and what's not. So will joining the '**Social Media News**' list on jiscmail, which I set up just for this purpose.

We had 350 members subscribe within the first month. And who says email is dead? Understanding which virtual worlds your peer community and audience inhabit is also crucial. However, by far, the most important thing is just getting out there. Experience shows that social media is one of those things that requires practice to really understand why it matters. Or, more accurately, once you start using it, you will begin to discover the value,

This doesn't mean that all academics need to tweet or use Facebook to benefit from social media. However, with more publishers, research, and peers occupying these places, deciding to opt out of social media is akin to opting



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out of email in the 1990s. If you really don't know where to start, then the following platforms would put you in a good position to expand your reach.

1. **Twitter** – Don't just follow people, curate your own thematic lists and follow hashtags to get the most out of this, start with #loveHE
2. **LinkedIn** – if you don't have a website, this social CV space is also quickly replacing discussion groups.
3. **Google Scholar** – Set up an author profile to track your citations and receive alerts whenever your work is cited.
4. **Slideshare** – Upload your presentations and start building your followers around the content you've already created.
5. **YouTube** – 2013 is the year of video, so no top 5 would be complete without some video platform. There are many others now – and micro video-blogging on such platforms as Tout and Vine are worth keeping an eye on, but YouTube remains a good place to start.

If you want to go even further, then check out my [A to Z of Social Media for Academia](#) . I know – it even rhymes!

*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [Comments Policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.*

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