

# Intrinsic plurality: how to increase your sources without trying (hard)

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/02/17/intrinsic-plurality-how-to-increase-your-sources-without-trying-hard/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/02/17/intrinsic-plurality-how-to-increase-your-sources-without-trying-hard/)

2011-2-17



What are the three things you need to know today?  
What source will provide them?

For me today, it was the updated train times to Brighton [for US readers – a rather louche English seaside town], a live football score [for US readers – soccer] and the latest information on the protests in the Middle East [I'll assume US readers are familiar with that].

I got the train times from an iPhone app, the football score from a website on my laptop at lunchtime and the latest 'real' news from Twitter.

The iPhone app is just a data portal, and the website is a book –marked page. Only Twitter affords the opportunity for serendipity.

Twitter works as a news source medium because it can be personalised and interactive. It is instant and hyperlinked. But because of re-tweeting it is also a way of connecting your news-gathering networks into contiguous or new circles of knowing.

This is what a student of mine recently called Intrinsic Plurality. The medium itself encourages you to extend your sources.

All of you on Twitter know this. It's networked journalism. But can you replicate that expansion of sources elsewhere?

Other formats that are like this are the live blogs run by the BBC and the Guardian, for example. These lack the personalisation of a platform like Twitter. They are also still rather centred around the sources traditionally accessed by mainstream news rooms. But when done well they can tap you into a reasonable range of sources that are generally filtered for reliability if not variety.

But for the personalisation of sources to produce real plurality, you must link beyond your prejudices. One of the biggest barriers to increasing sources is simply our own understandable human desire to flock to birds of a feather. So if you really want Twitter to produce more than familiar songs, go follow a hawk.

The best kind of networked journalism has this intrinsic plurality built in. It should be added to all the other qualities of good journalism such as speed, accuracy, authority, interactivity, transparency and relevance.

[This post is part of the [Carnival of Journalism](#) – an international blogging collaboration that links different authors writing about the same topic]

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