



Intersections and Edges: Twitter and the #CHASHC2013 Annual Meeting

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The use of social media and blogging tools like Twitter, facebook, Tumblr, WordPress, Storify¹ and Instagram to communicate and share our passion and interest in the study of history continues to gain followers in a diversity of sectors. @CndHistAssoc now has more than 375 followers. The CHA/SHC, The Canadian Committee on Women's History, the Public History Group, the History of Children and Youth Canadian Group, the Graduate Students Association² and Active History have FaceBook pages. In Canada, the CHA and historians have had an excellent model to follow in ActiveHistory.ca. Its founding members and followers continue to demonstrate the value of blogging, tweeting and recording podcasts, and to encourage government and the general public to be engaged in history.³

At this year's annual meeting at the University of Victoria conference attendees used Twitter to share observations about panels and research in much greater numbers than last year's conference in Waterloo. Some might ask what is the value of tweeting in general and why at a conference in particular? Live tweeting from conferences engages colleagues not able to attend all the papers they wanted to because of concurrent sessions. Live tweeting can also provide followers (CHA members and many others) who were not able to attend Congress a chance to follow along with presentations, award ceremonies and activities from a distance, extending the reach to their followers as well.

Before Congress, Michel Duquet sent out an email to members letting us know what the #hashtag would be. While there was a little discussion and debate about #CHASHC2013 versus #CHA2013, from an analytical perspective, I am very glad that #CHASHC2013 dominated as there was another event in California, close to the timing of Congress that used #CHA2013, making it more challenging to pull out some data and statistics. At the Annual Meeting in Victoria, 111 tweets used #CHASHC2013 and an additional 18 tweets using #CHA2013 with 36 people and organizations actively tweeting. There may have been many other tweets that didn't use either #hashtag or may have used #Cdnhist or only #Congress2013. Two (2) tweets were from journalists, one the *National Post* and one Radio Canada International expressing interest in the annual meeting. Tweets described paper

¹ I have to admit that I am fairly new to Storify and there is not a lot yet written about this resource. As an application, it allows you to pull posts from a Twitter feed using #hashtags, url links and other sources to create a blog and story. I am just beginning to use Storify and used it to pull together the tweets that related to the Brown Bag lunches on teaching at the CHA and the Presidential Address: <http://storify.com/jomac1867/brown-bag-lunch-sessions-at-chashc2013>.

² See also the Graduate Student Committee's blog/website: <http://gsccecd.wordpress.com>.

³ Since 2008, Active History has been a leader in social blogging, engaging and reaching out to diverse audiences interested in history. See their website: <http://activehistory.ca/about/>.



presentations, the Keynote Address from Natalie Zemon Davis and the Presidential Address by Lyle Dick and included comments on the venue and social meetings like Cliopalooza.

This analysis is fairly basic and has not been assisted by additional on-line analytical tools, as I learned the hard way that most of the free analytical tools are only supported for about one week and after that, you are able to undertake a basic hashtag search, but without a deeper understanding of the reach based on RTs and the number of followers. I had hoped to provide some fantastic analytical graphs and images depicting twitter usage at this year's annual meeting, but I will save this for next year's meeting and keep learning the tools of the social media analysis.

There are a few best practices to consider when using Twitter and other social media sites while attending conferences. If you have a Twitter account, blog or website, let the audience know. For example, with the title of your paper, your by-line can also be your twitter account so that audience members can participate in live tweeting and it saves time searching for your name. If you are live tweeting from a conference, make sure you use the hashtags provided and use relevant ones to your discipline and followers to extend the reach of the conversation. Make sure you identify who is speaking so they may be part of the dialogue and there is a record of your observations. One missed word can make a difference as I found out when I had my comments modified by the speaker to ensure the correct message was disseminated.

A shout out to readers who have blogs, twitter feeds and other social media sites might encourage them to consider posting/sharing on twitter feeds of the CHA and other websites. Ensure that your twitter description includes your website, blog or identifies your areas of interest so that you can be followed by others. Following and being followed extends the reach of our conversations using social media. These resources can be useful teaching and learning resources. The CHA and its followers can retweet (RT and MT), repost, share and Like this information to increase reach and readership of historical analysis, observations and research.