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Writing in the Disciplines

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Social Media in Criminal Justice

Twitter has become one of the most widely used social media sites on the Internet today. There are hundreds of millions of active users using twitter at this very moment. The amount of tweets that have been actually posted reaches somewhere up in the billions. That all being said, due to the popularity of the site most large business’ organizations and even corporations have public twitter accounts. A plethora of different criminal justice organizations use social media like Twitter as a form of free advertisement and a way to inform the public. Many different fields of study have twitter accounts that promote and inform about their discipline. There are also many people that are a part of that field that have their own twitter accounts with the same goal in mind. The field of study that I am looking into is Criminal Justice. I found two very interesting twitter accounts that both offered a lot to learn about the discipline, one being from a professional organization and the other a personal account from someone in the field.

The first of the two accounts was the official page of the [Department of Justice.](https://twitter.com/TheJusticeDept) The Department of Justice is a federal executive department, or in other words is government funded. The Department of Justice is responsible for the enforcement of the law and to make sure justice is carried out properly according to the law. Eric Holder is the current Attorney General, which is the head of the Department. In order to obtain that position he was nominated by the president of the United States.

At a first glance the profile looks very professional. It has a plain white background that fades into a gold color, and on the very leftmost side there is a banner that says “Department of Justice”, with the gold emblem next to it. The immediate things that you notice are the photos. There is a gallery of photographs from a range of different things. The first one is a picture of Eric Holder visiting an FBI field office leading investigation into the recent Navy yard shooting. Other pictures are from meetings with President Obama and other important people. These pictures show that people involved in the Justice Department go about things in a very professional manner. Everyone in the photos is dressed in uniform or a suit and they are all formally meeting with one another. The “industry standard” seems to be very proper and formal. Even the account picture shows the same idea. The sole gold emblem of the Justice Department on a white background shows more of the same formality. Right below this is the biography. It is very short and to the point. One thing that sticks out is that it says that the Department of Justice does not collect comments or messages through the account. This once more shows how professional the account itself is.

Moving onto what the tweets actually consist of, more of the same is prevalent. Many links to other articles on government websites are used. The articles topics’ range anything from strategies to prevent youth violence, to lawsuits that are being filed against different states. Some of the things that are retweeted are posts from the office of the vice president as well as The White House’s official page. Other posts are to blogs about a variety of different topics relating to Criminal justice. All of the tweets are linked to very informative postings. You can tell that the normal discourse for this field of study is one hundred percent based upon factual information rather than personal opinion. All the links talk about facts such as an individual being arrested or a bill proposed or passed. This is a clear indication that for myself as a criminal justice major, I need to keep personal bias out of my discourse in a community such as this. If the Department of Justice started making decisions based on people’s personal opinions the entire justice system would fall apart. The main purpose of this account is clearly to more than anything inform its audience which in this case is anyone looking to be a part of the criminal justice system.

The other Twitter account I took a look at was the account of a man named [Alex Stevens](https://twitter.com/AlexStevensKent). Alex Stevens is a Criminal Justice professor at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom. He is also an author of a book called, “Drugs, Crime and Public Health”, which I found out about while searching into him more and finding a personal social media profile. You notice an immediate difference between Professor Stevens’ profile and the Department of Justice’s. The background is actually the starting background Twitter gives you upon signing up. The second thing you’ll notice is that his profile picture appears to be him in the countryside somewhere with his hair a bit disheveled. This right off the back gives off the tone of a much more laid-back account and much less formal. Upon looking at his pictures and videos, you see a very interesting theme. Professor Kent has videos of himself giving speeches about the decriminalization of certain drugs. He also has a picture of a chart comparing psychosis and marijuana use. It’s interesting to see his views and ideas because he is in fact a member of the criminal justice field just in another country. The differences can be seen between the United States Department of Justice and Professor Steven’s tweets.

The first main difference is that he Professor Steven’s tweets to other people with personal accounts on twitter. There is none of this behavior on the Department of Justice Account. Steven’s also uses abbreviations in his tweets and even cracks jokes. This may seem a bit unprofessional due to the idea that professionalism in this field of study consists of solely factual information, but what I’ve just described only pertains to some of his tweets. The other tweets he posts are actually just as informative as the Department of Justice’s. Steven’s talks about different criminal justice issues such as child drug abuse. Professor Steven’s tweets also consist of promoting the university of Kent, of which he is employed, but also posts about things ranging anywhere from Snowden to speakers on the City Health program in Glasgow. Alex Stevens (AlexStevensKent) “Some great speakers on the programme for City Health 2013 in Glasgow next month [http://www.cityhealthinternational.org/2013-programme](http://t.co/VEu4Pc6VM6" \o "http://www.cityhealthinternational.org/2013-programme" \t "_blank) via [@paddyc1702](https://twitter.com/paddyc1702)“ 8 October, 2013 11:45 AM. Tweet. It’s nice to see actual human thought going into Steven’s posts. Unlike the Department of Justice’s postings, one person only writes the tweets that are on Professor Steven’s Account, himself. This is important because in the Department of Justice page there is no clear-cut author of the tweets being posted.

All this being said, it is very interesting to see how the two twitter accounts create a sort of Venn diagram. There are some complete differences between the two such as the language being used and the personal tweeting, yet at the same time the two also touch on some of the same topics such as drugs and current events. They both show me that though the criminal justice field requires formality and professionalism, there is still room for your own personal opinions and ideals in the discipline.