Tales from the Tweets

Fresh insights into the world of library consultants and library consulting
Twitter and tweets: Tools to be revolutionary
Be revolutionary!

“This Revolution will be tweeted”
The ABSTRACT:
What is my research about?

#tweets with #narratives about #library 
#consultants #consulting investigated with #narrative #analysis
The complication

Mark-Shane Scale @mscale
that may be of interest to both academics and librarians.

Mark-Shane Scale @mscale
Feel library consulting would be a compelling topic to study, research and publish on,

Mr. Retired Librarian @MrRetireLibrarian
Have done part time library work. Could that qualify me for library consulting? #hungry
Expand

Fellow PhD Colleague @FellowPhD
Wish you luck! @mscale
Expand

Mark-Shane Scale @mscale
Considering library consulting as a full time career possibility.
Library & information consulting consists of both

- librarians offering “skills to a variety of clients (not necessarily libraries)” and
- other types of professionals (e.g. architects, staff training experts)” offering services to “libraries and library-like entities” (vi)

de Stricker (2008)
# Library & information consulting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of service providers:</th>
<th>Librarians (holders of MLIS or related library professional qualifications)</th>
<th>Other professionals (non-MLIS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of clients/customers served:</td>
<td>libraries and library-like entities</td>
<td>Non-library clients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspired from de Stricker (2008)
Library consultants are ‘professional helpers and facilitators bringing about change and problem solving in libraries.

Library consultants ‘may represent...a shortcut...to new, expanded or updated [library] facilities or programs’
Why am I doing this project?

There's a vacuum of knowledge in LIS about library consultants, the work that they do, and their significance.
Available LIS literature

• Academic studies focused on 1 specific type of library consultant:
  – state library consultant
• Professional literature features unsystematic research
  – based on personal experience
  – dominated by voices of library consultants & administrators
• Most dated prior to 2008
Holt (1984) shares

- his own “personal – and therefore very prejudiced views” that he has not gone to any lengths “whatsoever to research or document” the points made (261)

- “one individual’s commentary based solely on a career” of 35 years in librarianship with about one-third of those years as a full-time library consultant (261)
The RESOLUTION:

My objective

As such, the existing literature in turn presents limited understanding of library consulting that may not be generalizable.

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Mark-Shane Scale
@mscale

hope my research can complement professional lit. & dated surveys

9:21 PM - 14 Apr 2015 - via Twitter - Embed this Tweet
_reply_ _delete_ _favorite_
My objective

Mark-Shane Scale
@mscale

want to advance knowledge so that researchers have information to guide future investigations into #library #consulting
My contribution

"My research applies a relatively unfamiliar methodology to LIS for gathering insights on new data sources."
My research questions & Scope of this presentation

1. How are library consultants and library consulting represented in the narratives in tweets?

2. How are they represented positively and/or negatively in tweets?
Data collection from Twitter

Driven by the following assumptions about tweets:

• as current and ephemeral sources of information about libraries & librarianship

• may be sources that contain discussions about library consultants and their work

• are publicly available narrative texts with bloggers as authors or narrators as well as characters
Theoretical framework:

All discourse as narrative

Master-narrative

Personal & conversational narrative

micro-level narrative

Figure 1 varied levels for defining narrative
Some definitions of the terms used

**Discourse** – language/words/writing used to exchange/define thoughts and ideas

**Personal narrative** – narrative focused on a single event in the past told by a single narrator. Usually about one’s personal experience

**Master narrative** – a dominant or conventional discourse/narrative told by institutional narrators or is institutionalized/formalized in the formal and official channels of publishing and scientific inquiry

**Conversational narrative** - produced by multiple narrators and is interactional or co-constructional. Focuses on events of the present (or current events) and on future or hypothetical events rather than reflection on the past.
Theoretical framework:

Narratological analytical frameworks:

• People create/perform narratives about lived experiences (either their own or others) –
  – *Personal or conversational narratives*
Theoretical framework:

Narratological analytical frameworks:

• Narratives performed in tweets draw on pre-existing culturally available discourse/master-narratives

• Narrators perform narratives that either reflect or challenge culturally ascribed identities, values and storylines in master-narratives
Theoretical framework:

Two available scholarly discourses of consulting:

• **Functionalism** – consultant as agent of knowledge transfer

• **Critical Theory** – consultant as a problematic construct
Methodology:

- Twitter’s search engine
- Tweets
- Data entry form
- Narrative analysis
- Data set
- Descriptive statistical analysis
- Research report: Text & narratives
## Sample Twitter data collection

### Twitter Data collection - "library consultants"

Twitter data collection for "library consultants" search query

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tweet URL/ link</th>
<th>username</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Relevant Mention</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Web</th>
<th>Bio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Example: 10/21/2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Retweeted by

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Note: The table above is a template for collecting data from Twitter. The columns include Tweet URL/ link, username, Tweet, Date, Relevant Mention, Name, Location, Web, and Bio. The example date format is 10/21/2015.
Types of narrative analysis conducted

- **Structural analysis** – how are narratives performed or produced using tweets

- **Performative analysis** – how do narrators draw on discourse to perform narratives in tweets

- **Positioning theory analysis** – how do narrators position themselves as characters in relation to library consultants
Narrator – the identity claimed by the person/institution telling the story.

Point of view – narrative told from the 1st person or 3rd person perspective

Point of the narrative: Is narrative used to construct one’s identity or used to make an argument or declaration

Storyline – or plot of the narrative.

Characters - in the narrative and how are they portrayed. (Victim, Villain, Hero, Trickster, Fool etc.)

Some of the analytic devices used
Results retrieved from Twitter (up to Sep. 30, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query term</th>
<th># of tweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Library...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What did I expect to find

• Varied narratives on library consultants and consulting that represent them both positively and negatively from varied individual and institutional narrators.

• Narratives can be linked to the larger sociological theories of consulting

• Can either be a success (epic) narrative or a failure (tragic) narrative
What did I expect to find

• Success (or epic) narratives can be linked to the functionalist storyline of library consultants
  – consultants are agents in diffusing knowledge to institutions and others

• Failure (tragic) narrative maps to critical theory storylines
When library consultants meet or exceed client’s expectations

EPIC NARRATIVES
• The heroic/epic storyline/plot is one where consultants are portrayed positively

• Sometimes as knowledgeable persons that facilitate knowledge transfer.

• Alternately, narrators exult and praise library consultants for possessing particular positive characteristics, traits or qualities.
April 2009, a female educator met a library consultant courtesy of a library school educator. Her tweet outlines the meeting as positive as she describes the library consultant as being "fantastic" and refers librarians to check out his website. She later tweets in the same month that she is coordinating a visit from the “amazing” library consultant and asks if any other regional librarian was interested.
The tweets

| @m** | Just met [Name of library consultant and website] thanks to @h*** Fantastic library consultant! Librarians check out his website! | 07-Apr |
| @m** | Coordinating the visit of this *amazing* library consultant to BKK in Aug: http://tr.im/k4JZ Any other regional librarians interested? | 29-Apr |
The narrative provides evidence that library consultants can have a transformative or positive effect on their clients, to the point where the client begins to promote and encourage others to utilise library consulting services or wisdom.
Narrative praising library consultant (From a student union president)

**Narrator1 (N1)** 19 Jun 2012
• I am irrationally excited by this Library furniture review document... #softfurnishings #desks #lameduck xx

**Narrator2 (N2)** @R***_President
• @[N1] ME TOO!! Just got a report back from @U**R**_Library consultants on study space improvements. #LibraryFurnitureQualityGeeks
The narrators attribute their excitement to a document produced by library consultants. The library consultants are attributed as being responsible for producing a document that causes a positive effect on the emotions of the clients. This narrative indicates evidence that the library consultant can bring pleasing innovation or fresh perspective to clients.
Hero narratives indicate what happens when library consultants achieve success in their work or bring positive change.

However, there are times when library consultants fail to fulfill the heroic narrative expectation.

Tweets also discuss situations when library consultants are represented as deviating from the heroic ideal.
When persons question the wisdom or behaviour of library consultants

CAUTIONARY TALE: TRAGIC LIBRARY CONSULTANT FAILURE NARRATIVES
In cautionary tweet tales

• library consultants fail to impress clients OR

• narrators question the usefulness of the knowledge transferred by these consultants.
Narrative critiquing library consultant

Ms. Self-described Archivist*

- "Library consultant: ‘Maybe have students curate wikipedia articles in the classroom’ -- guess why I wrote that down to share on Twitter."

female (D*) self-described as being into libraries and archives responds

- "bc it's kinda a terrible idea?"

Ms. Archivist (the original poster) replies:

- "There are so many things to pick apart! Curate is my favorite mistake, don't use that word in front of archivists please."
This is followed by a discussion on the problems of Wikipedia as well as the idea that anyone can be a curator or use Wikipedia as curation tool.

**D. responds:**

- "My issue is right now it's a one-time project, not ongoing; no way to assess it, actual teacher doesn't know wikipedia..."

**Ms. Archivist to D.**

- "Totally understandable! Wikipedia is a sticky creature that is misunderstood, I think all reasonable LIS professionals agree"
In Ms. Archivist’s narrative, the recommendation provided by a specific library consultant is represented as being problematic.

In D’s response, there seems to be the allusion that there is no way to assess the library consultant's work to prove how unfruitful it is, as the work of the library consultant is a “one-time” project.
Hence, where the library consultant is supposed to be a wise sage providing useful and beneficial advice to the clients, the narrators represent the consultant as a fool who is also leading unknowledgeable clients blindly astray.
Some institutions employ persons as library consultants.

But sometimes the title of “library consultant” as applied to the person’s actual responsibilities and duties appears to be a misnomer.
I’m a library consultant now! Kind of

**Narrator 1 (N1)** Sep 8
- I start my job as a law library consultant tomorrow. Probably gonna strip on the side to make ends meet

**Narrator 2 (N2)**
- @N1 you're so official now

**Narrator 1 (N1)** Sep 8
- @N2_ lmao its really just the title that's official. All I do is put paper in printers

**Narrator 2 (N2)**
- @N1 lmao awe yeah just stick with the title if anyone asks
Here, in this unusual narrative

• Narrator 1 laments what she deems a low paid employed “library consultant” position that is not very challenging.

It points out that some institutions are assigning the label or title of ‘library consultant’ to work that may not be theoretically defined as consulting.
Idealized library consultants and library consulting

ROMANTIC NARRATIVES
Romantic idealization of tweet narratives are fictional narratives that idealize

• what library consultants should be or how they ought to behave.

• idealize what library consultants could or should do.
# Narrative

**Narrator 1 (N1):** Dec 9
- eliminate scarcity and I fervently hope every single person becomes a PhD. not now though.

**Narrator 2 (N2):**
- @N1 I think some people continue school *because* there are no jobs now and that thing improves in two years. Happened in the 80s recession

**N1:**
- @N2***** ... caused me to stop griping except for griping about YOU, **N2**, who did it before it was common. ARRRRRRRR

**N2:**
- @N1 What we *need* are library consultants who approach companies and non-profits and campaign for library positions within those orgs
This conversation creates a storyline that positions library consultants as being powerful and having influence outside of librarianship.

Belief articulate that library consultants can use influence in getting outsiders to provide more jobs for librarians.
Fresh ideas for practicing consulting

TALES OF ALTERNATE LIBRARY CONSULTING?
Within romantic idealized/hypothetical narratives, there is an unusual narrative that presents what I call an alternative library consulting practice.

In one particular job opportunity tweet, a UK library presents an alternate way of selecting and hiring library consultants.
• Rather than employing or hiring consultants to gauge what library “consumers” want, the Essex library in 2011 took a grass roots approach to library consulting.

• Posted several tweets inviting several teenaged users of the library to become its “library consultants”.
Essex library tweet read:

*Library consultant opportunities for 12 - 16 year olds* [http://goo.gl/oSfRx](http://goo.gl/oSfRx)
In this case,

- the client seeks more than one library consultants rather than one person, firm or entity.
- the client’s approach is unusual, as rather than hiring an adult with the appropriate professional expertise, the client seeks to hire teenaged or juvenile users of the library that are served by the client.
While this seems like an unusual practice for hiring and selecting library consultants, the approach does seem to have some merit.

At least one conversation on Twitter features young adult library users fantasizing about becoming library consultants for the library’s young adult book collection.
Narrator 1 13 Aug 2012
@N3 Wouldn't it be a crazy fun job [to suggest Young Adult books for the library to purchase]? My library is good about YA books but could definitely be better.

@Narrator2
@N1 @N3 I wonder if my library needs one. :D

Narrator 1
@N2 @N3 I wonder if they'd actually consider it. We're the next best thing to 'experts' on YA, you know?

@Narrator2
@N1 @N3 yep! We read plenty of it, have the experience.
**Narrator 1**
@N2 @N3 Exactly! Plus keep up with trends and see what's popular among other bloggers. I'm going to contact my library!

**Narrator 3**
@N1@N2 I think I might give mine a call too and ask!

[@Narrator2]
@N3 @N1 me too! Or maybe email because I have phone phobia.

[@Narrator1]
@N2 @N3 OMG phone phobia! Me too! I think it'd be cool if the 3 of us could be YA library consultants. :-}
Feedback?

• Any questions?
• Comments?
• Criticisms?
Acknowledgements & credits

**Fake tweet generator**
- http://www.lemmetweetthatforyou.com/

**Fake Twitter profile template**
- www.lesesky.com/s/twitter_powerpoint_template-dvaj.ppt
This revolution will be tweeted
The Real Net Effect: Arab Revolutions and Social Media (Harb)
Sunday, May 8, 2011 at 8:44 | Scott Lucas
EAWORLDVIEW

Twitter as a revolutionary tool
The Egyptian Revolution and the FB/Twitter Echochamber
POSTED BY KYLE NEL ON AUGUST 23, 2011
RW Connect
Selected references
