

# Using online social networking services like twitter to measure the impact of the Olympics before and during the Games

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The increase in user generated content on the web via social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter, provides researchers with a view into people's online and offline activity. Twitter, a micro-blogging service that allows people to post and read other users' 140 character messages currently has over 15 million users per month<sup>1</sup>. Twitter allow third parties to search messages and return the text along with information about the poster in a format that can be easily stored and analysed. A potential use for this is to return messages that contain keywords relating to the Olympics, to identify locations in the UK where people are mentioning these keywords along with their context, frequency and timescale.

In this presentation/paper we detail the information that is accessible via services such as Twitter and a process that can be used to access it that was introduced by de Quincey and Kostkova<sup>2</sup> to evaluate the impact of swine flu. We will also present preliminary results from a pilot study that has investigated references to the Olympics on Twitter and the potential use of this information for measuring the impact of the games. The relevance and value of data available from other sites such as YouTube (video sharing) and Flickr (photo sharing) will also be discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.crunchbase.com/company/twitter>

<sup>2</sup> de Quincey, E. and Kostkova, P.. (2010). *Early Warning and Outbreak Detection Using Social Networking Websites: The Potential of Twitter*. In: Electronic Healthcare. Berlin Heidelberg: Springer . p21-24.