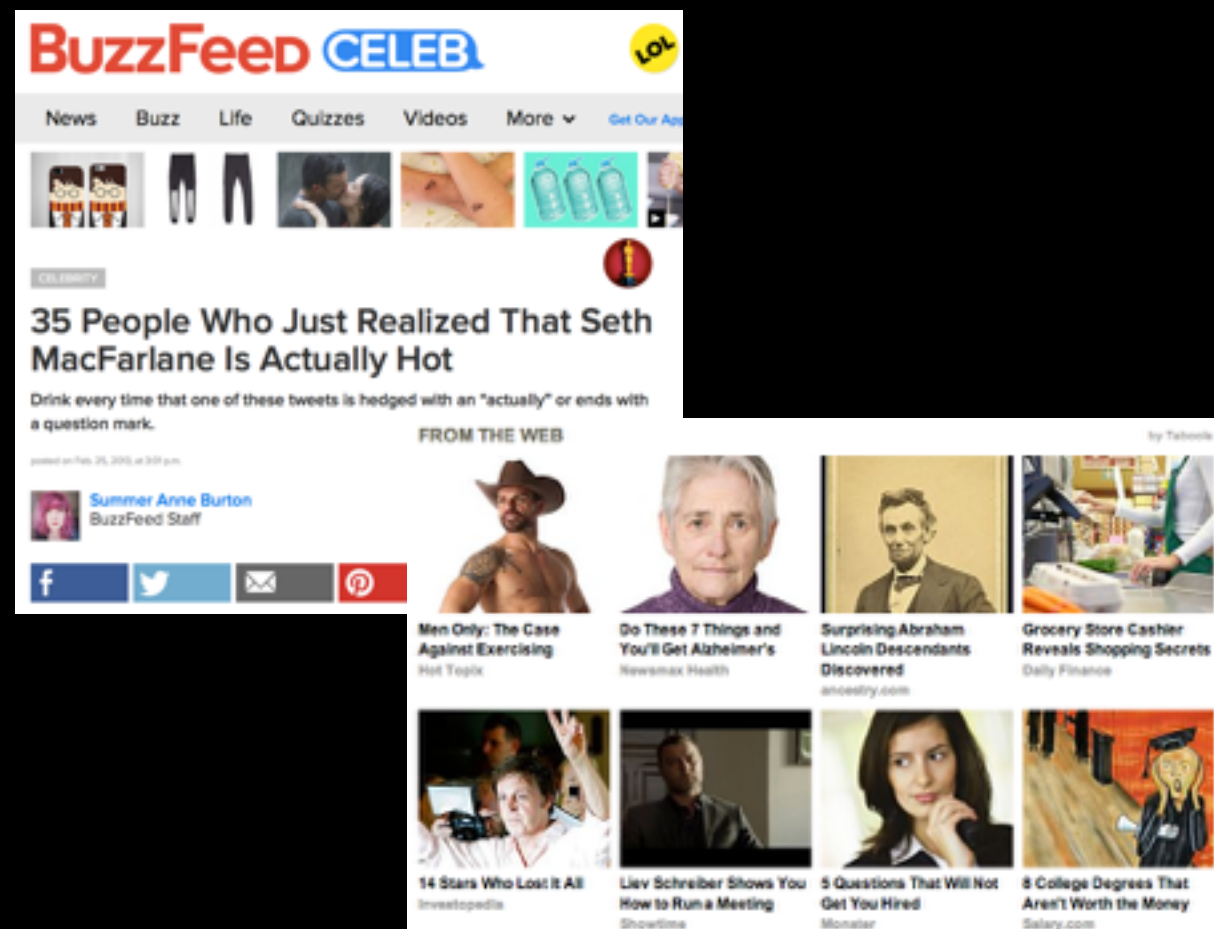


Be a better publisher

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Kia ora everyone. Thanks for having me here.

I'm just going to fill you in on some of what I've done and learned at the National Library, and hopefully give you some good starting points for getting your own stuff up and running, in a sustainable and interesting way.



There's a ton of junk online. There are also a lot of ways to put more junk online, quickly and easily and without thinking about it.

Social media and online publishing often seem like the things that'll solve our organisations' outreach and audience engagement problems. Each new platform is *the* thing to do, and there's a compulsion to get on board.

Usually, if we do get a channel up and running, it does make us very urgent about sharing, connecting, and upping numbers, but it also often turns into a grind of perfunctory, last-minute postings without any real connection to our goals.

Aside from the trouble it causes us as we burn resources and put forward our worst face, we're making it harder for our audiences to find *good* stuff, wasting their time and mental resources.

“But if it's ‘content’ designed solely to suck people in (‘7 ways to be OMG awesome!!’) for the chance to ‘convert’, we're hurting people. If we're pumping out ‘content’ because frequency, we're hurting people. I'm hurting some of you now. That's on me.”

– Kathy Sierra, *‘Your app makes me fat’*

I’m a big fan of this article by Kathy Sierra. It comes at content and apps from the user’s side of things, and focuses on how hard we often make it for them. I think about it a lot when I’m deciding what goes in and what gets left out.

Apologies to anyone I’m hurting right now with my content.



You're a publisher

[Pause]

If you're putting stuff online, you're a publisher. The definition's good enough for Legal Deposit, it's good enough for me.

Publishers plan. Publishers understand their medium. And, of course, publishers proofread.

As a publisher, you need definite goals. You need well-embedded workflows. You probably need organisational support. And you need to know your platforms.

Know why you're doing it

[Pause]

Why do you want to publish online?

Because it's what everyone's doing isn't a good reason. Because it'll look good on the annual report is definitely not a good reason. Because everyone's on Facebook, by itself, isn't a good reason.

Do it because it's good for your institution and your audience. Just because it's online, because it's social media, doesn't mean it should be cursory or detached from a larger purpose.

When you've decided you want to kick something off, there's a bunch of questions you have to answer.

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

[Pause to let audience read]

These questions matter a lot. Answer them, and you've got a pretty good plan.

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

[Pause]

What's the gap you're filling by starting up a new channel? What's new and different about it that makes it worth giving yourself a whole extra stack of work?

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

[Pause]

Who's the audience? How specific can you be? That's going to affect a lot, from the platform you choose to the language you deploy.

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

[Pause]

It's a big internet. Why should people check out what you've got when there's a gif of a monkey riding a pig to watch? How are you going to prove to them that you value their time and attention?

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

[Pause]

To keep this thing going, you'll need to be able to show how it benefits your institution too. What strategic goal is it attached to? What are the flow-on effects?

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

[Pause]

What's the content? Is it a specific collection? Is it interpretive material? Is everything digital-ready? Does it need editing or to be transformed in some way?

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

[Pause]

Specifically, *who* is going to do it - today, in a week, six months from now. Establishing your processes, including who takes care of what, will save you a ton of time and make your channel far more consistent. That's pretty valuable.

What do I want to accomplish?

Direct collection surfacing our blog doesn't handle well

Who is this for?

Format specialists and enthusiastic amateurs

Why should they care?

Access to items at a good size. Context

How does this help us?

Meet the open access goals in our reuse policy

What is my source material?

Digitised images from the Rare Books collection

How are we going to do it?

Rare Books Curator will post to Tumblr

When we started on Tumblr a while back, the answers looked something like this:

What do I want to accomplish?

Direct collection surfacing that our blog doesn't handle well

Our curators had been wanting more ways to share their collections online, but our blog is too in depth to dash off a quick 'look at this awesome thing' post. We needed a middle ground between that and something super short like Twitter

Who is this for?

Format specialists and enthusiastic amateurs

Because we had a particular collection area in mind, we could focus on those people who are particularly interested in the format. The objects themselves are the main point

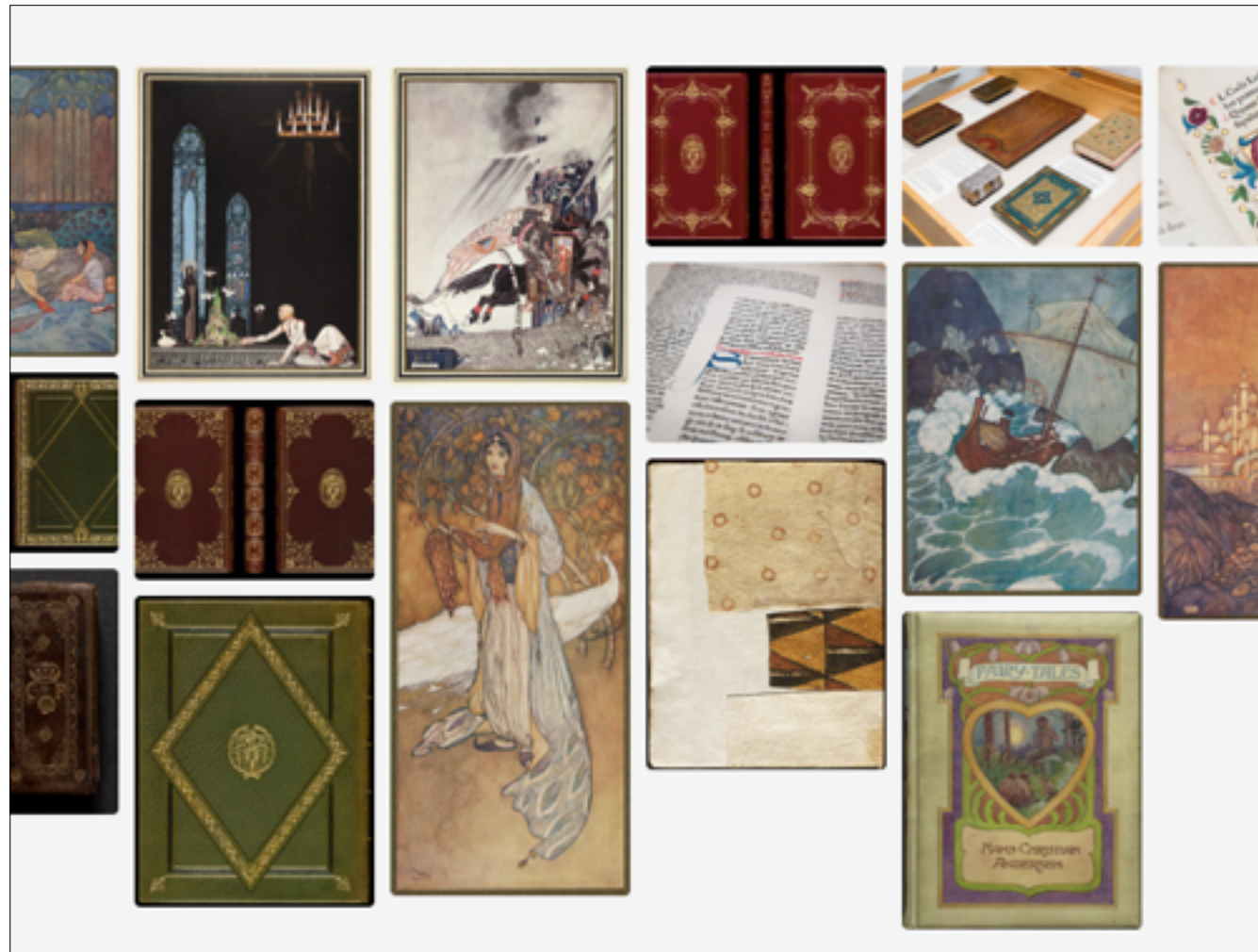
Why should they care? What do they get out of it?

Access to visually impressive collection materials at a good size. Everything posted is nice and big, and looks good when it's fullscreened.

They also get context and the possibility of getting more involved if they want it. We provide enough reference information and a link back to the source so if something really resonates with the reader, they can go find out more.

How does this help us?

We free up our open access material, as required by our reuse policy. We've agreed, on an organisational level, to proactively push material out into the world if it's open access. I can point you at that policy if anyone's keen to check it out.



The end result is something that I think is solid, manageable, and worth doing.

The audience likes it - we've got almost 5000 followers with almost no promotion, a second Tumblr for ephemera, and interest in yet another for photographs. The curator was able to keep it going without adding a ton of extra work. It helps us achieve our broader goals regarding open access.

Still, with each new account we're still going to be asking those earlier questions to make sure they're worth publishing.

turnbullrarebooks.tumblr.com
turnbullephemera.tumblr.com

Check them out, by the way, they're really good.

Show your work(flow)

[Pause]

I touched on the running of the platform, but it needs a bit more attention. Because it's not just about one person posting now and again. You need a workflow.

People running social media accounts need time to make selections, write content, edit images, coordinate schedules, answer questions or find people to answer questions, monitor activity, defuse problems, follow trends, plan theme weeks, convince others to share stuff...

The ideal is for staff to have online publishing in their job descriptions. It's a big part of mine, but web writing is also required for several Turnbull staff - without that I'd be hard pressed to publish anywhere near as much as I do.

We also have a lot of less formal support built up through years of conversations, gradual accumulation of successes, and individual or group training. That's helped get people interested in contributing, and seeing the value in spending their time on it.

When you're just starting out, especially when you don't have the whole organisation behind you, you've got a couple of main options. Scope down, or find ways to share the load.



KBR, small boy in trolly, natlib.govt.nz/records/23158503

To scope down, you'll want to do some picking and choosing. Use a collection that's already online so you don't have to arrange any digitisation. Pick an end date so you don't have to commit to doing it forever. Probably don't try to jump straight into video, unless you're already super good at making six-second videos on Vine.



Netball team, natlib.govt.nz/records/23010981

Or, build a team and split the workload. Get someone who knows the platform involved so you understand the constraints and possibilities - you'll skip a bunch of time you would have spent on trial and error posting.

Have multiple posters and trade off days. Or specialise - have one person source material, one person prep it for posting, and one person fire it out. Just make sure you stay in touch with each other and stay on the same page.



When we started on Twitter way back when, we kept it small and we had a team.

The people who kicked it off, Courtney and Chelsea, decided to just post a couple of images a day. They were both also familiar with Twitter, allowing them to avoid a big part of the learning curve, and they split the work between them, one on mornings, one on afternoons.



Tasman Empire Airways Ltd motor boat
launch,
natlib.govt.nz/records/23114971

[Pause]

Support from up the chain is really, really helpful. If the people who plan schedules and measure performance are on board you'll get more time and more contributors. Maybe not more budget...

I don't really have any guaranteed techniques for getting that support quickly, though. At the Library, conversations, persistence, and evidence of success have just gradually built up our management's willingness to support it over the last several years.

NLNZ on Twitter started under the radar, and our Rare Books Tumblr was a semi-open 'prototype' for quite a while before being made official. Their success came before the stamp of approval, but that stamp is useful for expanding on what we're already doing.

The tools you *need* to use

Tools.

Short of posting to the internet with your brain, you're going to need some tools. My advice...



Use the ones you find helpful

Use the ones you find helpful

I think the only question you need to answer is: What's easy to use? If you and your colleagues already have a preference, don't force yourself to use some other 'standard'.

There's a world of 'how to do social media' guides out there, many full of software and web apps they say you definitely absolutely have to use. Ignore that, and go with what puts the fewest barriers between your audience and your stuff.



Network Access Message: Access Denied

Explanation:

TMG error message:

This site has been categorised as a website that you are not allowed to access.

If there is a business need to gain access to this site, please log a call with the Service Desk. You

If you believe you are getting this message by mistake, try contacting your administrator or Help

Technical Information (for support personnel)

- Error Code: 403 Forbidden. Forefront TMG denied the specified Uniform Resource Locator (URL). (12232)
- IP Address: 119.81.66.220
- Date: 18/08/2015 3:21:30 a.m. [GMT]
- Server: WLGPRTMG02.dia.govt.nz
- Source: proxy

The more common issue you'll come up against is that the tools you want have been blocked or unsupported by your IT department. No access to Twitter, Tumblr, or just wifi does put a crimp in the whole thing, and it's another area where you might need buy-in from higher ups.

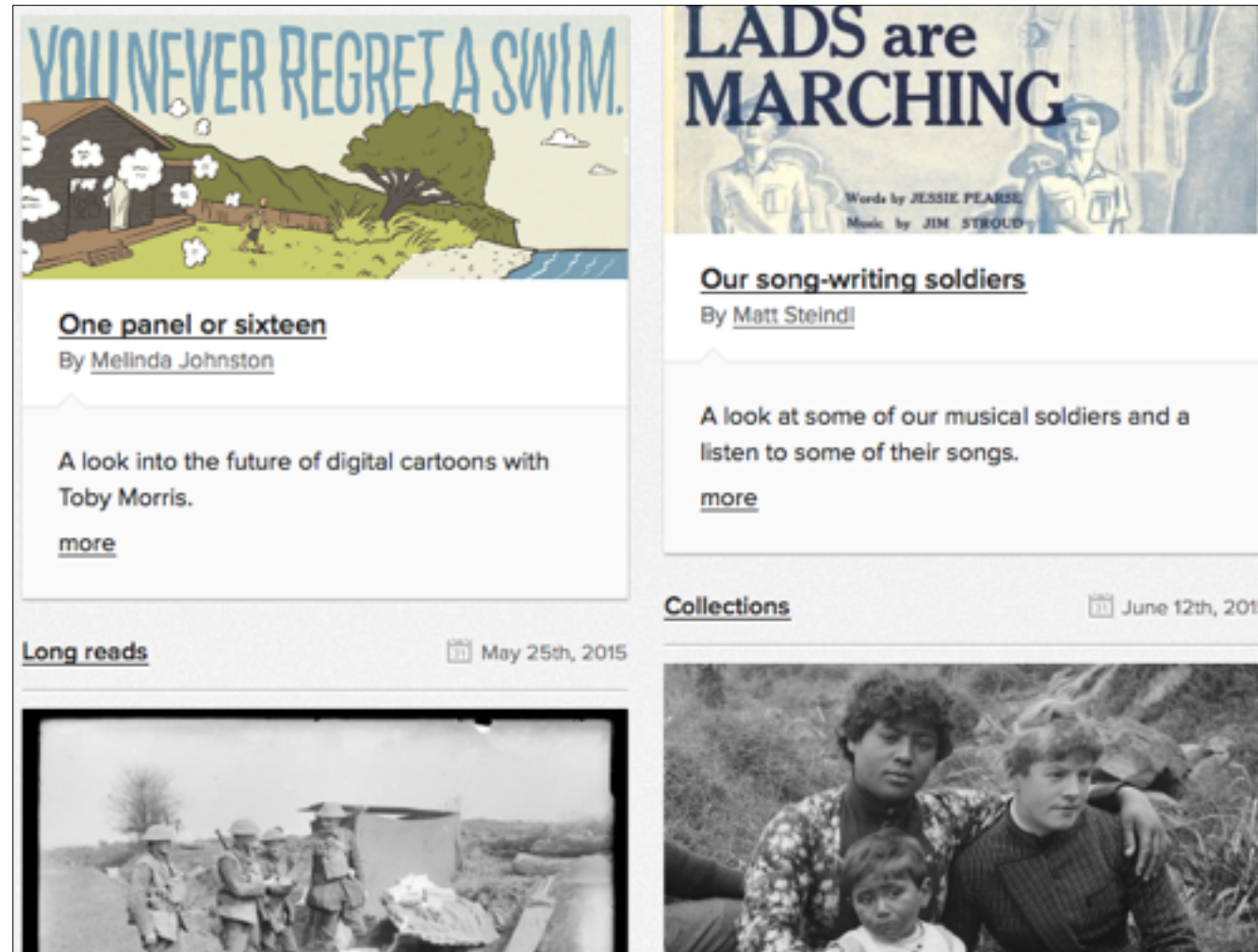
If you need to argue the case for unblocking with your management, drop me a line and I'll tell them about the time one of our videos got nearly half a million views. It's kind of worthwhile being out there.

Picking a platform

[Pause]

Though most of the available platforms are pretty flexible, certain things will work better on Tumblr rather than Facebook, or on a blog rather than Twitter.

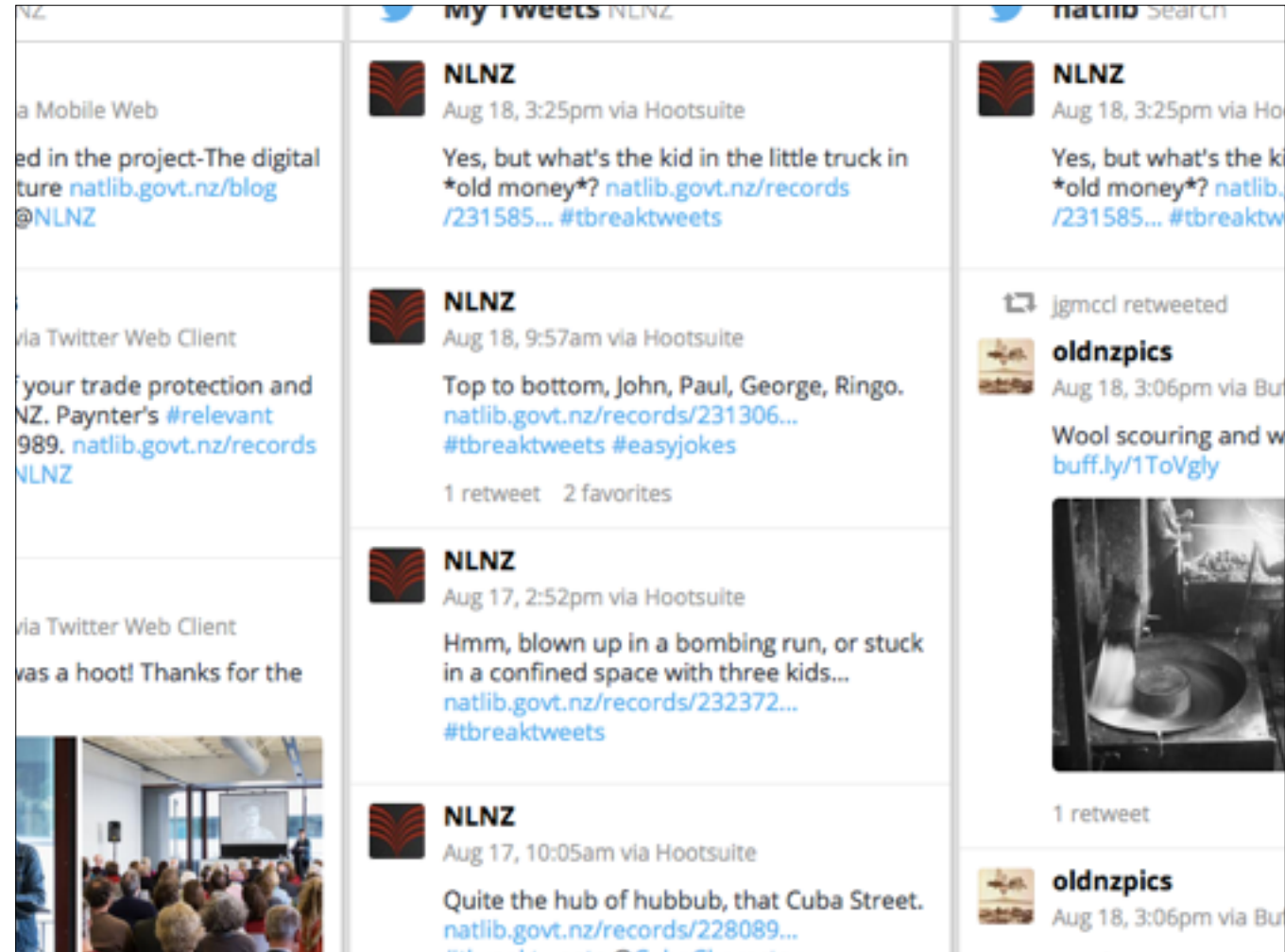
I'm going to go through some of the channels we use, and what they work well for. It's not the only way of doing it, but it is one good way of doing it.



Our blog is where we go deepest, really digging into the history of our collection items and the professional practice surrounding them. We treat it more like a magazine than social media.

Our blog posts are for people who already know who we are, but maybe don't know what they want to do with us. Each post shows them a way to get in and do something at the Library - a lot of them are almost mini research guides or examples of how to get started.

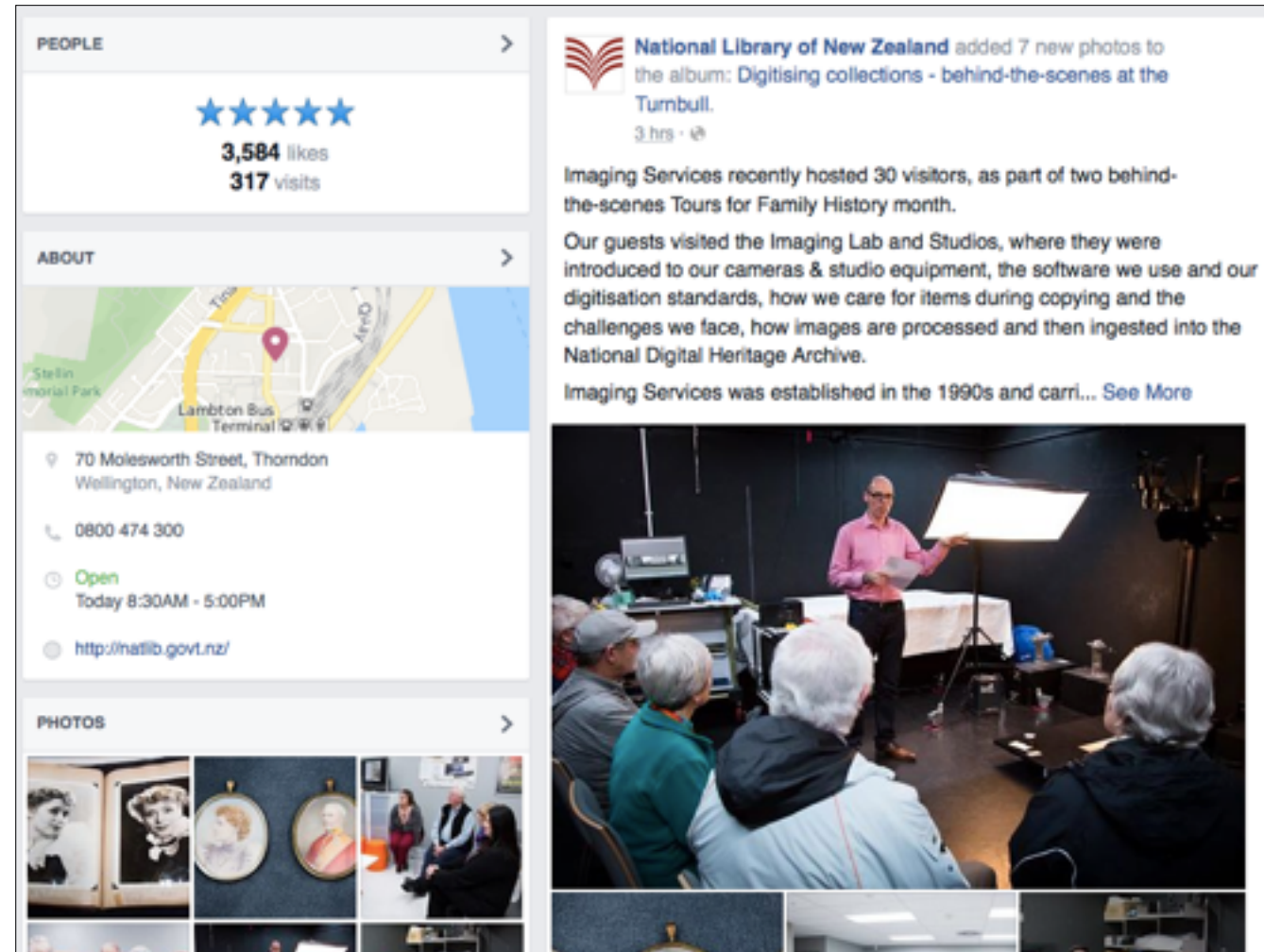
They take time and a lot of involvement by subject matter experts, and pretty much every post needs to have a purpose and audience in mind.



Over on Twitter, we keep things much lighter, from the activity to the tone.

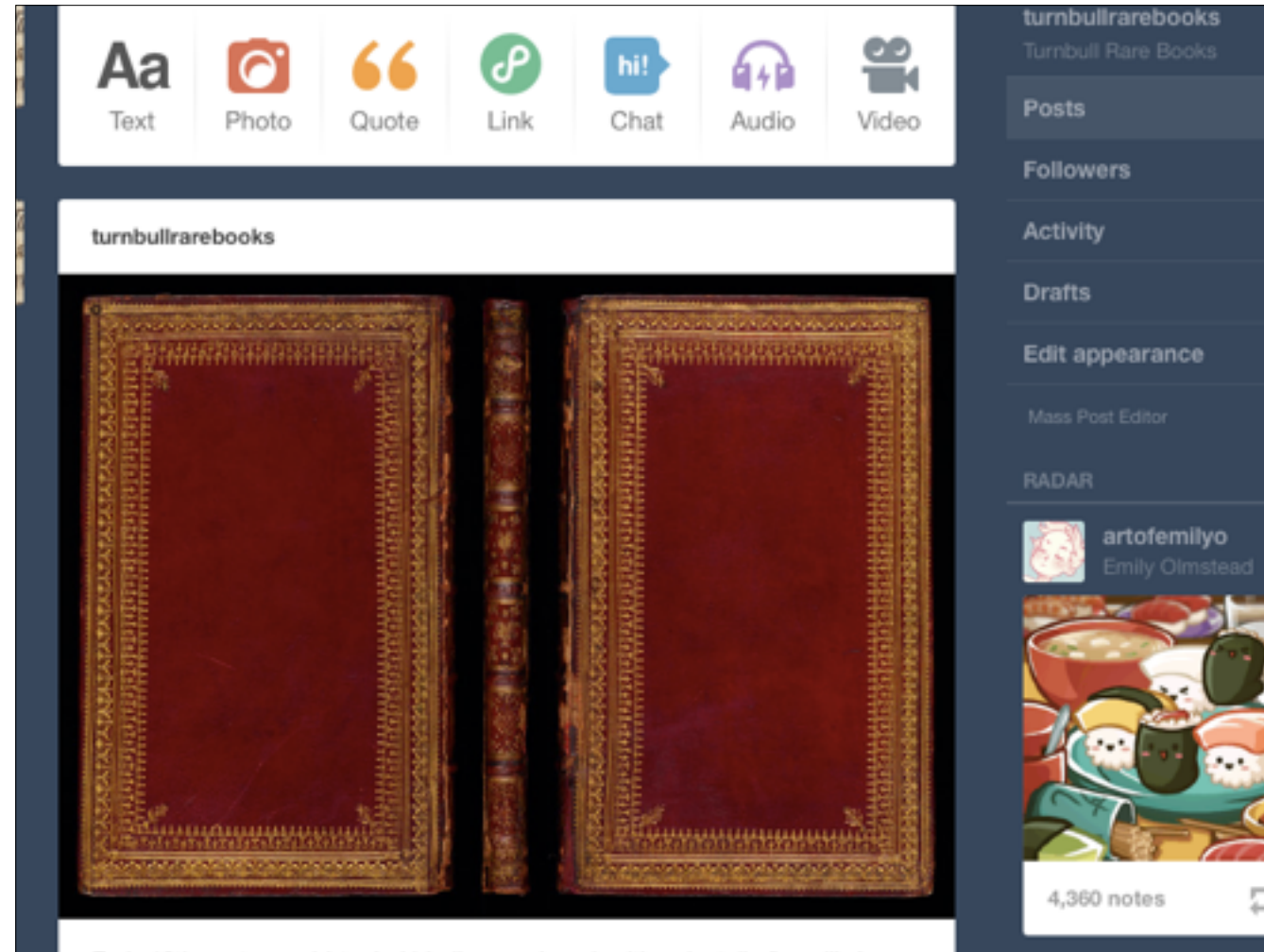
We’re still doing two collection images a day, but our use of the channel’s also grown with the audience’s expectations. We link to our new content and our events. We answer questions and take metadata corrections. We ask for feedback on policy documents.

We aim to be enjoyable, but not invasive. We’re showing up in peoples’ feeds effectively at random, so we want them to be glad they’ve followed up.



Our Facebook page is event-focused. We post our listings beforehand, and we post photosets of occasions after the fact.

We've branched out a little more widely since we launched there, but to really use it well I think it'd require the sort of resourcing we give the blog. It's a behemoth, people, and I think it needs some real dedication and knowledge of the platform to get the most out of it.



And Tumblr's my new best friend. It lets us easily show off some of our most beautiful collection material, the interface is straightforward enough to get our curators up and running quickly, and unlike Facebook they don't assert any and all possible rights over what we post there.

The community of professionals and enthusiasts on there is huge and friendly, and I reckon Tumblr has a ton of potential for us.

That's not everything by a long shot - there are other twitter accounts and blogs. We're on YouTube, but more as video storage than community-facing activity. Our Flickr activity is gradually ticking up again as we release more open access images. We used to be on MySpace.



I'm an old man

I realised while doing this presentation that we're only on platforms that are several years old. This isn't because we're aiming for the tried-and-true channels, in the face of all these whippersnappers. It's because that's what I know about, and what I know how to use.

If you've got enthusiastic people who want to use Instagram, kik, or... Spotify playlist comments? Is that a thing? to communicate, great. If that'll reach an audience and give them something they want, go for it.

[Pause]

Where do I start?

That's what we've done, but the important thing now is what can you get going with?

Maybe you've got a specific collection that has your interest? Something like:

- Large recent photographic donation from local family being actively digitised
- Ephemera collection, not digitised
- Letters and other manuscripts, some photographed but not transcribed
- Broad range of musical scores, digitised

What do I want to accomplish?

Who is this for?

Why should they care?

How does this help us?

What is my source material?

How are we going to do it?

Using that collection, take these questions from earlier and figure out how to turn it into an active project.

If you've got a collection in mind, you already have the source material worked out, but what about the other questions?

As you think through it, aim for specificity. Making the project's aims more specific makes it more measurable, and you'll be able to prove that it's working to people upstairs who need convincing.

You could pick a niche audience you want to engage with deeply, or tie the new account closely to work that's already going on at your place.

What are the barriers?

And how do we burn them to the ground
and salt the earth?

Once you've got all these cool plans, I don't want to you just run headfirst into trouble the moment you start putting them into action.

Do some more brainstorming - if you try to get this new channel up and running, what are the barriers you face in your institution? What ways can you think of to negotiate them?

Nice, now publish some sweet heritage

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And that's what I have for you right now. I hope it's helpful, and to see your new ideas up on the web soon. If you want to chat, just drop me an email anytime.