Module 2 video 1: Searching Twitter

[00:00:00] OK. Welcome to the first lesson of week two: Searching Twitter.

[00:00:06] Twitter is a really great tool, and this lesson will focus on all the different ways you can use it for monitoring, not for searching a specific tweet or a specific account. We're going to use different keyword combinations and advanced searches for discovery. We're going to be folding that keyword knowledge for setting up TweetDeck and live monitoring. We're also going to learn how to copy lists on Twitter. And we're going to be finding removed tweets using archives and advanced search.

[00:00:40] Now, this is a lot to get through, and I hope you guys find this very useful. So let's get started.

[00:00:49] First, a quick note about the advantages and limitations of Twitter. Twitter's user base includes a lot of public figures, academics and influential accounts that are really handy for breaking news situations, but excludes non-technical people, the moms and pops, they sort of don't hang out on Twitter very much. This makes it ideal for a live event monitoring it, and it can really be handy in identifying sources during a breaking news event. It's great for discovery or MIS or disinformation. But an important limitation is that it's very rapid pace, so it hosts a lot of junk and it's not a video first platform. Unlike Snapchat or TikToc or YouTube. So while there is video on Twitter, you might need to go elsewhere to find video for your work.

[00:01:44] Now, when we're thinking through Twitter usage, we have to get into that creative mindset, into that investigative mindset. Think through how different users would experience the platform. Is somebody asking for help during a disaster? Different than a right wing provocateur trying to profit from a tragedy? Absolutely. So beware of different attempts of manipulating you as well. We've seen that happen a lot to reporters, but at the same time, be open to your audience. Ask them for help. Tell them what you're looking for so that they know that you're a person to call if they come across something strange.

[00:02:28] These are some of the advanced Twitter search operators. I'm not going to go through them all one by one right now, but we are going to see them in practice in just a second. So "until" and "since" lets you set a date range and all of the other ones are sort of there to tweak and play around with. And remember, you can set notification alerts on any particular account that you find interesting and you will get notifications straight on your phone so that you are able to be the first person that knows when that account tweets.

[00:03:05] When you're thinking through the key words cast a wide net. Think, about states, cities, districts, key terms get really creative, use titles and use synonyms. For example, during an attack, you want to use different terms like gunman, shooter or attacker.

[00:03:27] You also want to use more general words to combine with your searches, for example, including the term breaking is really helpful because reporters use it to signal new information or terms like fundraising and crowdfunding can really help you zero in on a community that's trying to get help that maybe is sidelined by other media.

[00:03:52] OK. So enough talk. Let's give it a try. And I'm gonna give you a second to type in this url so we can click around.

[00:04:09] So when you type in that, url here's the Twitter search that would ideally open. This Twitter search, as you can see, you can't quite see it here, but if you click into it, you'll see the full search and you have landed on the photos tab. You can look through different tabs and different ways that Twitter is presenting information to sort of filter through some of those some of those different types of posts. So as a quick explanation, here's what I did. I included a few general terms, but I also included the words qasem soleimani, because we're monitoring for content that has to do with his deaths or really wanted to make sure to get his full name in there. I've also included Iran and firing in brackets because I want those terms, because I want those terms to be read together by the search. I took out the word Democrats because it was causing a lot of junk, a lot of chatter that I didn't want and I set a very specific date range. But if you look at the search,

I've also made a mistake. If you look closely, you can see that some of the OR qualifiers are in capitals, but one is in lower case. Twitter will only read these qualifiers if they're in capitals. So why don't we fix this issue and see what we come up with?

[00:05:46] Great. So what this did is it narrowed down our search. It showed us. It shows us completely different results. As you can see, and the photos, videos and top results are all very different. Now, I would highly recommend you go to photos first as well as videos, because we tend to see photo and video based false information the most. As a matter of fact, this image here that you're seeing, the top image that's being served to us is actually a fake image. But we'll get into that a little bit later in the week. So this is what a Twitter search looks like in practice. Now, let's get a little bit more creative with it.

[00:06:37] All right. So I wanted to show you this very quick way that we can use Google to find things on Twitter. I'm going to give you a second to replicate this one in your browser. And please do go to this Website's project.noahliebman.net/listcopy. This is going to be really, really handy tip and don't worry, it's not too technical.

[00:07:05] So let me explain a little bit about what's happening here. When we type in site, we limit the Google search to the Web site that we're specifying in this case, it's Twitter.com. But as you can see, there's an asterisk here and the asterisck is a wild card. It means I don't care what goes in there. You figure it out. It's it's for Google to search through. That's what Google is gonna be searching for.

[00:07:38] And then we're going to include the name of the list that we're talking about. So why don't we give this a try? So let's just go to Google.com and type in Twitter lists.

[00:07:51] And now let's stick with our Qasem Suleimani attack example. If I am somebody who hasn't necessarily followed the story a lot. It's a breaking news story and I'm trying to stick with it. I'm going to need some sources, some base knowledge. So why don't I type in the abbreviation for national security, natsec. And the word "iran." Maybe that will glean some interesting results. Alright. So as you can see, there's a few different lists that we can look at. NPR is doing something. A firm called Rethink Defense is doing something my colleague Hayes Brown as well. I as I browse through, you can browse through these lists to see which ones the most useful for you. I like the one called Iran nuclear deal reporters on Twitter because it's going to include people that have already spoken a lot about Iran. So let's just click on that one.

[00:09:01] Fantastic. So we can look through the members here and see that it includes a lot of news agencies, which might be handy for us. It includes reporters on this beat, which might be handy for us, includes some commentators as well. So it seems like a good list that would get us started.

[00:09:23] Now, I'm going to give you a second to open projects.noahliebman.net/listcopy and sign into your Twitter account when it prompts you. This is a really simple tool. It's been around for a really long while. So here's how you use it. First, we have to know who the list is from. And we can see here it's from ReThink Defense. So let's go ahead and copy that and paste it into the Twitter List Copy. And we're going to click "Get lists."

[00:09:59] Now, you're going to want to create a fresh list, not add to a new one. And if you want to do that, here's where you do it on your left hand side. You have a little list option. Just click this button with a plus sign on it. And let's name this one: mooc.

[00:10:25] You want to make your list private. That way people who are added to it don't know that they've been added to this list. And we're going to click next. We're not going to add anybody that Twitter is suggesting we're going just gonna click done.

[00:10:49] So if you're refresh the page, your new list will appear here. You can throw everything defense back in here and what it will do is it will populate all of the lists that a single user has. For us it's the "iran-nuke-deal-reporters" that we're interested in. So we're going to pick that one and we're going to click copy.

[00:11:12] It's going to work for a second. And then it's going to tell us that we've added eighty five people. And now if you refresh your list here. You're going to be able to see that same list. Now hang on with this for a second and I'm going to show you how to use this to monitor for live events using TweetDeck.

[00:11:41] OK, TweetDeck is a really great tool that allows for live monitoring, filtering through keywords and for building out lists. You can filter by engagement. You can set separate columns out by topic. But just keep in mind that the TweetDeck searches follow a little bit of a different format. So let's give it a whirl with the list that we just created.

[00:12:05] OK, so let's see how TweetDeck works in practice. Type in tweetdeck.twitter.com. And mine is empty, but you might already have some columns in your searches, in your TweetDeck populated for you. So I'm going to show you how to do a general search. And then how to do a list search, which is very handy.

[00:12:28] So with the general search, we can type in one single term, like Iran, for example, or we can type in several terms like Iran, Iraq, Suleimani. Note that these are separated by commas, not by the word or.

[00:12:57] Twitter allows us to also exclude words, and TweetDeck allows us to set a specific date. So let's set that date to January 7th. And January 8th of this year.

[00:13:13] You can include or exclude retweets. I do like to include retweets. You can also search by engagement. And this is a really great way to filter out a lot of junk from your searches. So I don't want to see tweets that got no engagement at all. So what I'll do is I'll just say if it has one retweet and one like that, I'm interested in this. And this way you're able to monitor for live tweets as they're coming in. But what if you wanted to monitor something more specific, like, for example, the Twitter list that you just copied. Well you click the plus button? And we're going to choose the lists option and we're going to type in, "mooc." Here's the list that I am selecting here, and I'm going to add the column.

[00:14:12] Now this is really where you can have a little bit of fun. You can type in the word "breaking" and see what everybody's talking about. Looks like just one tweet here that's populating is breaking. But you can also include or exclude retweets, which for me is definitely a favorite term, because by excluding retweets, we only get what the author is saying. You can also exclude terms. So, for example, our top tweet here has the words "Sailor" in it, so let's try to exclude it to see how this works. Great. And instantly the tweet disappears. This is a great way to filter for news during breaking news situations. I really like to throw throwing, "breaking" to see what happens on ones that have to do with reporters, for example.

[00:15:15] And if you notice, even though these two columns are on the same subject matter, they have completely opposite results. Part of it is because of the date that we set. But part of it is because we're looking at different sections of Twitter that we've set.

[00:15:31] Alright. So there is also a lot of ways to find tweets that have been deleted. I highly recommend the Go Back In Time Chrome extension. The Archive.is Web site that's widely used for social media archiving. The ThreaderApp Web site that's searchable and includes video which Archive.is or Archive.org will not get you. Polititweet focuses on public figures specifically. And you can also search replies with an image. But it's a really imperfect method and we prefer the Archive because replies with an image can easily be faked.

[00:16:13] Why don't I very quickly show you the Go Back In Time Chrome Extension so that we understand how it works. Alright. So very quickly, let's check out the Go Back In Time Chrome Extensions, which is one of my favorite chrome extensions. So if you have installed it, please do so now. Here's how it works. Here's a tweet that has been deleted. It's by Eric Trump. And it has caused sort of a bit of a kerfuffle when it was tweeted. So it's very easy. All we can do is right click and we can search various archives for image. You can search Google. You can search Bing, which is always very useful. In this case we're going to go with the Internet Archive.

[00:17:01] Then what it does is it opens a new tab. And if there is a result, it will show you that result. And if there isn't one, you can move on and try another method or another archive. So in this case, we can see that it was archived twice. Let's go to the earlier one. It might be more of a sure thing.

[00:17:20] Click on this here.

[00:17:25] And with just a few clicks, the Go Back In Time Chrome Extension found us the tweet that has previously been deleted. You would also be able to find this tweet on the Polititweet.org Web site, which is very, very handy. Other outside tools that you might want to use for Twitter is follor.me, tweetbreaver, followwonk. All of them are extremely useful and I encourage you to look them up. They're all free. They might help you in investigating different accounts.

[00:18:00] OK, so final notes is keep a cheat sheet and past searches for Twitter. Put yourself in the tweeter shoes and think through the terms that they would use. Coordinate with your social team to ask your audience for tracking information about an event. And remember, always remember Twitter's limitations go to other platforms.

[00:18:24] Remember that not everybody is on Twitter. So you might not be seeing the full picture of the breaking news event. OK. Thank you for joining. I hope that that was useful for everybody. And I'll see you in the next module for Week 2: Searching Facebook.