



## GeekSpeak

### Twitterpated

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The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost also publishes a free technical newsletter for translators ([www.internationalwriters.com/toolkit](http://www.internationalwriters.com/toolkit)).

**What can be said** about social media that either has not been said before or is not just another platitude? Let me opt against being overly clever or witty (as if I had the choice to start with!) and simply share with you how I use social media professionally.

Yes, I do have a LinkedIn and a Google+ account, but I really do not use them very much. You may also have noticed the glaring omission of Facebook on that short list (or as my kids would say in shocking Orwellian fashion: “He doesn’t have a Facebook!”). I follow some discussions on LinkedIn and my co-author and I have used it successfully to locate a few interesting folks for our current book project (including the publisher!), but it is Twitter where I invest my budget of social media time and energy. Here is what I use it for:

- **As a news aggregator for things that are relevant to me in our industry.** I follow only a small number of Twitter users, but those are people who truly have something useful to say (not the “Oh-I-feel-like-taking-a-long-hot-bath-after-a-long-day-of-translation” kind of folks). It is hard for me to imagine that something important might happen in the world of translation on any given day that would not be picked up by my little army of news gatherers.
- **As a public post-it note system.** Oh, I know there are many clever ways to collect your best ideas or interesting discoveries and make them accessible at a later time. It is just that Twitter not only allows you to do that, but if it hits someone else’s nerve as well, your followers might take your idea or noteworthy find to the next

level. The first thing I do when I start to compose my monthly newsletter is to read through my own Twitter stream to find the little gems that might be worth mentioning.

- **As an opportunity to locate quick feedback or resources.** Just a couple of weeks ago I was frustrated about not having a tool that would make entering non-English quotation marks easier. I asked on Twitter whether someone knew of such a tool. No one did—instead, someone actually wrote a tool for me. No kidding!
- **As a channel for announcing any of my activities that might be relevant to others.** The emphasis here is on relevant, of course, but I like to post information about newsletters or articles I have published, talks I am giving, or other resources I have developed. You learn very quickly the difference between relevant and self-serving. It is easy to unsubscribe from someone’s Twitter posts, and that is exactly what will happen if you err too much on the self-serving side—you will lose followers. If you do it right, though, you will have a thankful group of followers who are only too eager to re-announce what you posted to their own followers. Where else can you get something off your chest to thousands of readers within minutes?
- **As a place to contact folks.** I mentioned previously that I sometimes use LinkedIn to contact specific people—especially those I learn about through their LinkedIn profile. But if I want to “meet”

someone I already know, I have found that I am much more likely to make a successful connection with that person on Twitter.

- **As a cheap and low-stress way to participate in industry events.** Although I do participate in person at some conferences and meetings throughout the year, there are many more that I follow through their “hashtag”—that is, the specific Twitter handle that lets you follow many of the different discussions happening at the event. Of course, you do first need folks who will post to Twitter from the events, but that is typically not a problem. You might want to save the hashtag for this year’s ATA conference, #ATA53 (not to follow it from afar, mind you, but to participate yourself by posting from San Diego!).
- **And lastly, as a business opportunity.** I have found some interesting and high-paying jobs on Twitter, either through someone who posts a search on Twitter or, more often, because someone has followed me on Twitter and thinks that I have what it takes to help him or her.
- **Oh, and I do also post the latest and greatest Jeromobot videos on Twitter.** It is no coincidence that my Twitter handle is @jeromobot.

You may have noticed that so far I have been very careful to avoid using Twitter lingo. There is a reason for that. The word “Twitter” has suffered from some overexposure these past couple of years, and its derivatives are legion, including terms like “tweet,” ➡

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## GeekSpeak Continued from p. 29

“retweet,” “tweeps,” and many others. What is really fascinating to me is that Twitter’s founders apparently assumed that they could coin more than one term—and failed. We all know that English has no problem turning a proper noun into a verb (just google that if you do not know what I mean), and many

other languages are more than happy to follow suit. “To twitter” would have worked just fine, but “to tweet” was asking just a bit too much. Even Twitter-savvy English-speaking folks really have to concentrate to say that they just “tweeted” rather than “twittered.” And in the official (and, of course, crowd-

sourced) translations of Twitter in 20+ different languages, most have discarded the multi-term policy altogether or are in the process of doing so.

And, hey, I think I was able to communicate what I wanted without making your head spin in all kinds of twirections, right?

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