



YALE DIGITAL CONFERENCE 2019

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Social Media

Yale Office of Public Affairs & Communications

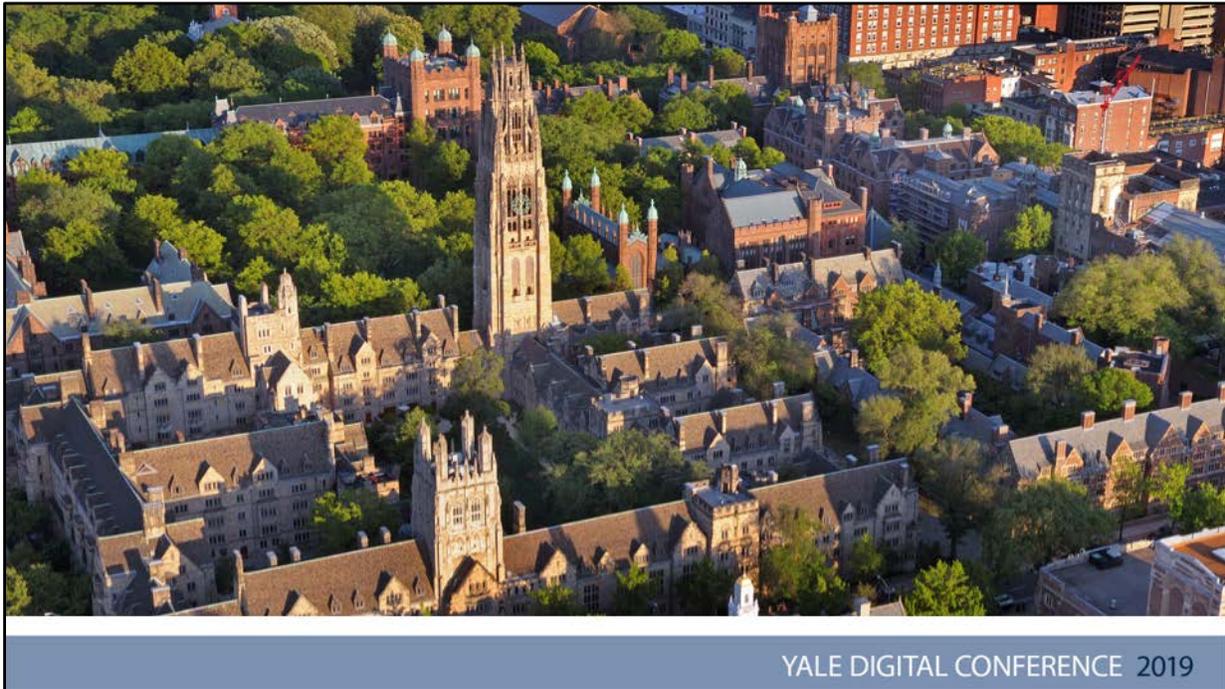
Delete Your Account

The Surprising Benefits of Consolidating
Your Social Media Presence

Zoe Keller

Social Media, Yale Office of Public Affairs & Communications

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Let's say you don't know anything about Yale and you want to learn more. Maybe you're considering moving to New Haven for a job or to enroll, or maybe you're a reporter. The only thing you know about Yale is from TV and movies



The only thing you know about Yale is from TV and movies — and there is plenty to draw from there. But not relevant

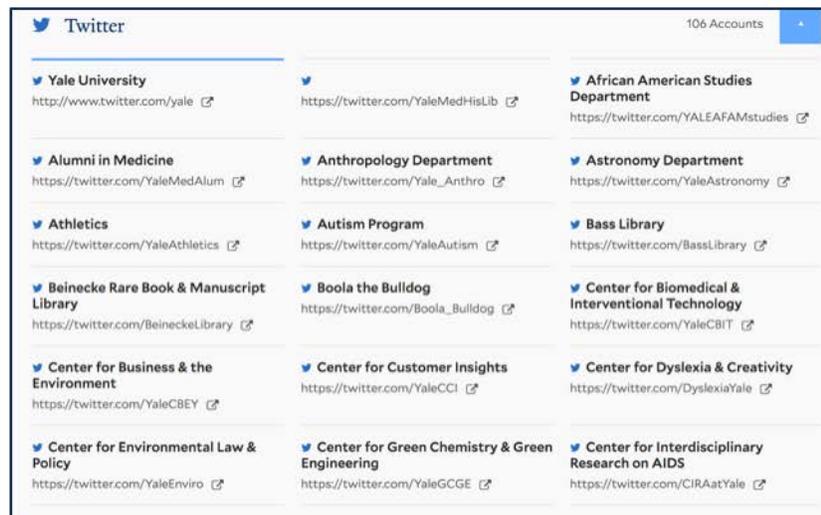


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But you want to know more about the character of the place and the community there. Social media is a natural place to turn.

Yale Social Media Directory

yale.edu/social-media



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But which Yale social media accounts would you turn to? Yale.edu has a listing of top-level institutional accounts

Top level: Grad schools, major centers

Institutional: Not people -- not students or faculty members, but Yale or depts within Yale

Yale Social Media Directory

Official listing of *primary* accounts → **334**

Facebook 104

Twitter 106

Instagram 74

YouTube 26

There are many more Yale
institutional accounts

Many ... many... more

How many?



It's a bit like trying to count the stars in the Milky Way. And I found out in the process of working on this that many comms colleagues are addressing the same question simultaneously. In terms of counting, it's early in the process for all of us.



AJ Hudson

F&ES Class of 2019

Student worker, Comms

Instagram & Photography

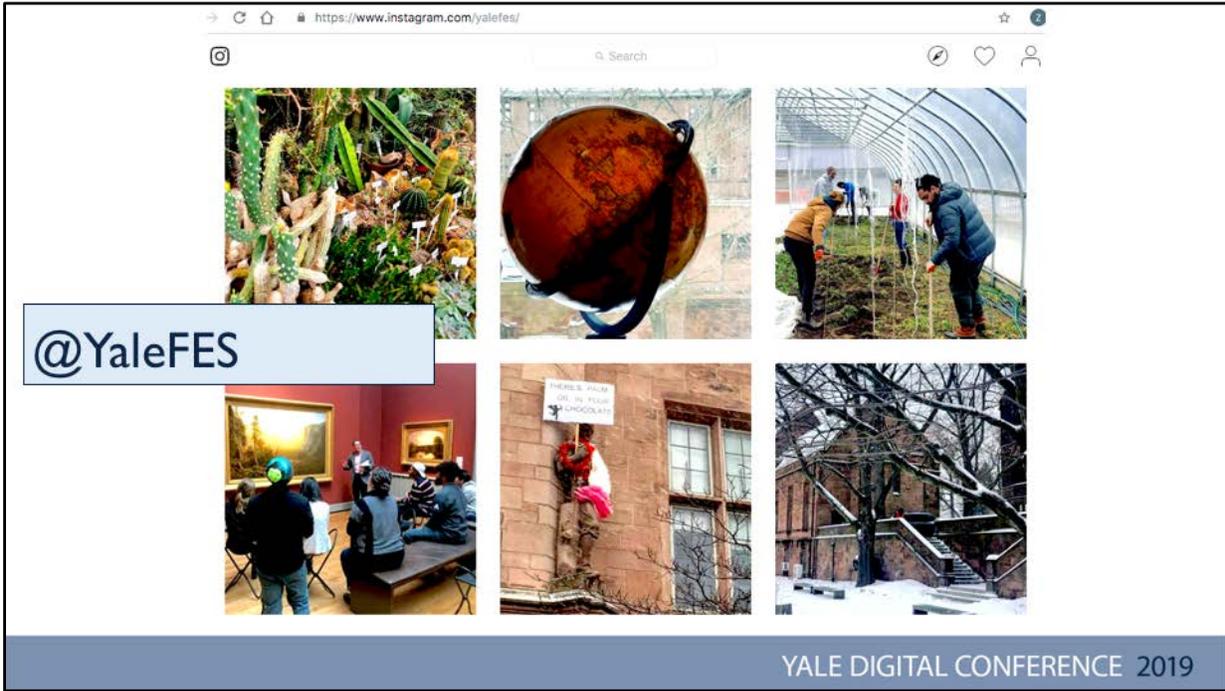
Aug 2017-May 2019:

1400 to 3600 followers

250% growth

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I want to focus today on F&ES as our case study, because it has a happy ending. This is AJ Hudson. For the past two years, AJ was a student worker in the comms dept at FES. His background was as a public school teacher and community organizer. In his FES work, he focused on Instagram. Since Aug 2017, AJ has grown the FES account 250%, from 1400 followers to 3600.



AJ's approach was primarily about a conscious selection of images representing the diversity of FES's students and work.

Institutional accounts:

School of Forestry: 40+ *Instagram alone*

Representing F&ES's 19 centers and programs, annual conferences, film festival

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F&ES hired a consultant who conducted a survey of accounts. Found more than 40 accounts just on Instagram, and they had missed some. These are not individual students or faculty. They are institutional accounts representing F&ES's 19 centers and programs, annual conferences, EFFY

Institutional accounts:

School of Forestry:	40+ Instagram alone
School of Management:	50+ FB, IN, TW, LI, YT
School of Medicine:	80+ FB, IN, TW, YT, LI

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It turns out this is probably typical. I have started reaching out to comms colleague, and it turns out many of us are in the process of assessing the number of accounts.

If each of these professional schools has dozens of accounts, it's hard to imagine how many exist across campus. What are the challenges that come with this?

Examples:

School of Management:	50+ FB, IN, TW, LI, YT
School of Forestry:	40+ on Instagram alone
School of Medicine with related practices and hospitals:	80+ FB, IN, TW, YT, LI

Outcome: Low engagement

Accounts created for very narrow audience

Accounts created for finite time period

Overestimate need or desire for dedicated channel

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Problem: Low engagement

Accounts created for very narrow audience such as a specific research unit within a school

Accounts created for finite time period, such as a conference or special event

Overestimate need or desire for a channel dedicated to this unit / conference / project

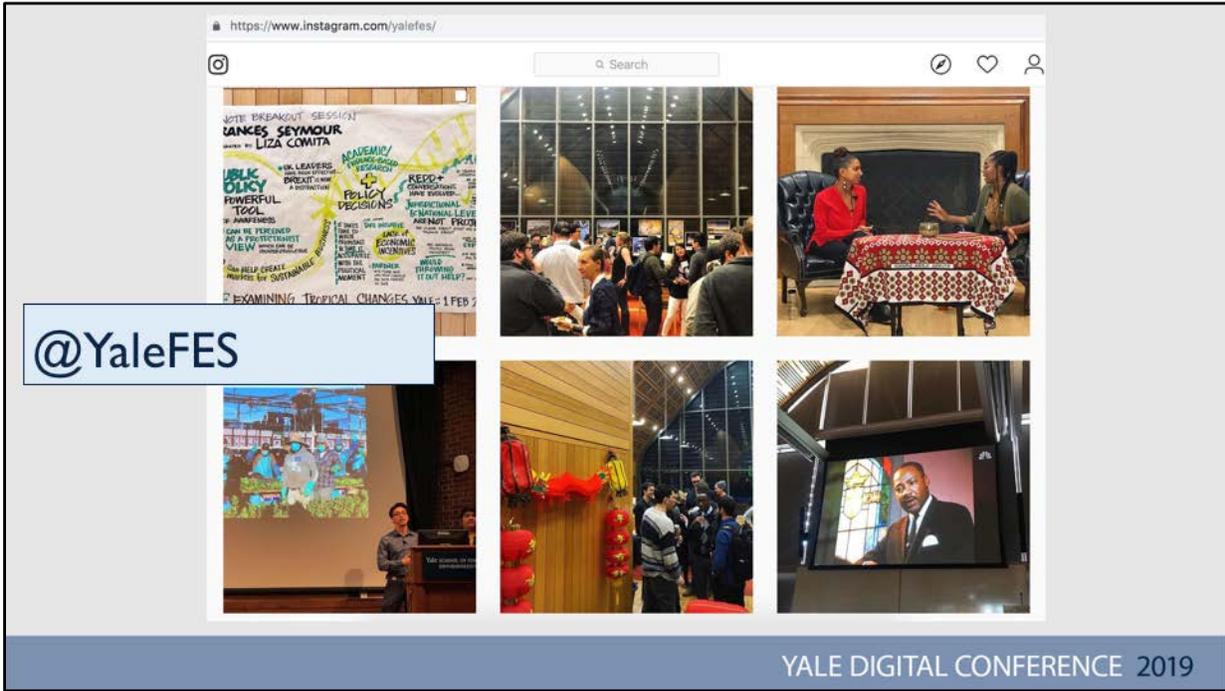
Institutional accounts:

School of Forestry:
40+ *Instagram*



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Going back to F&ES: As AJ looked at institutional accounts, he found that several had been inactive for years, so he worked to shut them down.



AJ targeted 8 accounts specific to conferences. These events happen once a year, so they're inactive the other 363 days a year. They're often student-run, which means there is a lack of institutional memory – such as logins.

For those, AJ made them a great offer. He would come take photographs, and he would post those photos and captions to FES's main account. Rather than a sense of loss, those conference organizers gained substantive content and a much wider reach.

Other student organizers saw the success and wanted to do the same.

**Yale has about 200 fulltime
communications professionals**

**100s of social accounts run by
students or admins without a
comms background**

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Yale has about 200 fulltime communications professionals, and you can prob count on one hand the number who are primarily focused on social media.

100s of Yale's social accounts are run by students or admins without a comms background



Anecdotally, I hear from many staff members, including admin assts who say, the manager of their department or clinical practice or project has told them to launch a social media account, in addition to their normal duties as research assistant, tracking the budget, booking travel, etc. So they created an account that has 3 followers – the 3 people who sit next to them – and every post has 3 likes. They want advice about how to grow their following and engagement.

The problem isn't how they're running the account, but the premise of having one. Every one of those units is connected to some larger unit which already has an account. For example, the Yale Library system consists of 13 libraries. F&ES has 19 centers and programs. The Law School has 27 Law Clinics. Do we need a dozen or two dozen individuals in the same building stressing over building a following? No – they can instead get to know the communications professional for their larger department. Maybe your unit has one big event each year or, about once a month, a one terrific image or article to share. Cultivate a workflow with your colleagues to share to the parent account.

Outcome: Abandoned accounts

MED estimates of its 80+ accounts

at least $\frac{1}{4}$ are defunct

Duplicate accounts also common

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Defunct and duplicate accounts are two sides of the same coin. Login credentials are lost, the old account is abandoned. A new account is started and has to build a following from scratch.

Problem: Abandoned accounts

How does it happen?

Student workers graduate

Staff leave

Login credentials lost

Resources and priorities change



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How does it happen?

Student workers graduate [One exception is A], who did document carefully]

Staff leave

Login credentials lost

Resources and priorities change

Solutions: Abandoned accounts

Plan for succession training

Require documentation (logins, reg. practices)

Instead of accounts:

1. Takeovers
2. Hashtags
3. Share content via larger account

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Plan for succession training

Require documentation EARLY (logins, reg. practices)

Instead of creating new accounts, use

Takeovers, Hashtags, or contribute your content to a larger account

I. Takeovers

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Account takeover – SOM Instagram



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Let's start with takeovers. This is when you hand over the keys to an account to a someone else. It usually means a student, but some universities will use faculty or even the president.

At SOM, Amy Kundrat has been very ambitious with student takeovers of their main Instagram account. It's a process that requires a lot of trust and a good deal of planning

Account takeover – SOM Instagram



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But the result is a view of the school through the eyes of a student — a POV and a vitality that none of us can fully replicate.



EFFY

Oldest student-run film fest

3 days a year

Duplicate accounts

F&ES is all-in!

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One goal that Aj did not achieve was convincing Environmental Film Festival at Yale to quit their own account and instead do a takeover of F&ES's. His reasoning:

EFFY is a big deal! It's the oldest student run film festival. It's amazing. It doesn't get as much attention as it deserves because...

They want to run their own account, which is only active for 3 days of the year. It has duplicate accounts, so starts over from year to year.

Almost everyone at FES is already fully engrossed in EFFY, so a takeover is an accurate depiction of what is happening at FES

2. Make Hashtags, Not New Accounts

Hashtags create:

An archive by aggregating

Narrative over time

Sense of permanence & significance

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2. Another approach AJ took was to encourage others to create a hashtag instead of an account.

That way it has an archival purpose. *Hashtags create:*

An archive by aggregating

Narrative over time

Sense of permanence & significance

2. Make Hashtags, Not New Accounts

Gives you less control but more depth

Other accounts share in creating content

Create an instant image collection with that hashtag, useful for building albums or websites

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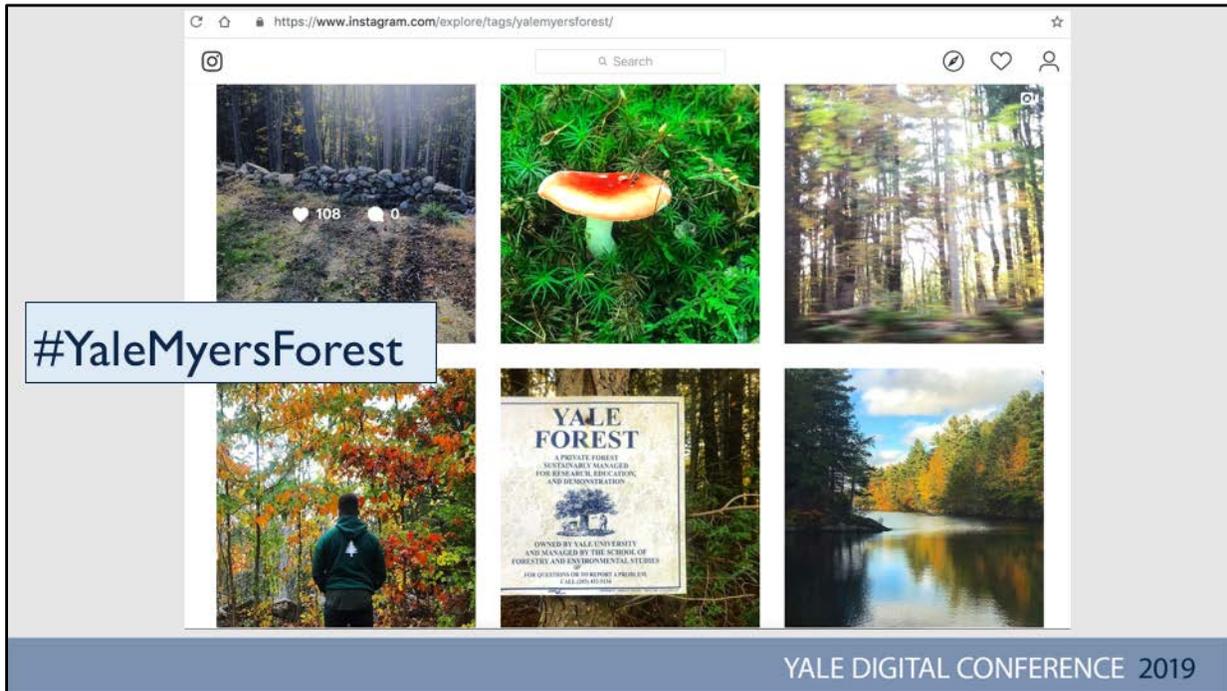
Gives you less control but more depth

Other accounts share in creating content — includes institutional and personal accounts

Create an instant image collection with that hashtag, useful for building albums or websites



So let's do a deep dive into diff between accounts & hashags. This is the official FES Instagram account, with content selected or photographed by AJ.



This is a selection of photos posted to Instagram with the #YaleMyersForest

Yale Myers Forest is 7K acres in the northeast corner of Connecticut, the largest asset owned by Yale. The Forest is operated by FES, serves as the training ground for students and a research site for faculty.

Hashtag pulls in photos posted by a variety of accounts, which work together to create a view of this beautiful place.



As another example, #YaleWomen has been in use 2011 and aggregates content for a wide range of users and purposes. Including the launch of a newsletter, a gathering of alumnae, and profiles of women from a century ago, and today.

Again, hashtags create:

- A collective archive by aggregating posts
- Narrative over time - in this case, over a century
- Sense of permanence & significance -

We all know that this year we will be talking a lot about the history of women at Yale, and with this hashtag it is immediately evident that Yale has been celebrating that history for almost a decade on Twitter.

2. Make Hashtags, Not New Accounts

Use an existing # to become part of conversation

Start a new # and recruit others into using it

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Use any number of tactics to your advantage, because it truly helps everyone.

Use an existing # to become part of conversation

Start a new # and recruit others into using it — appropriate for campaigns, anniversary years, conferences

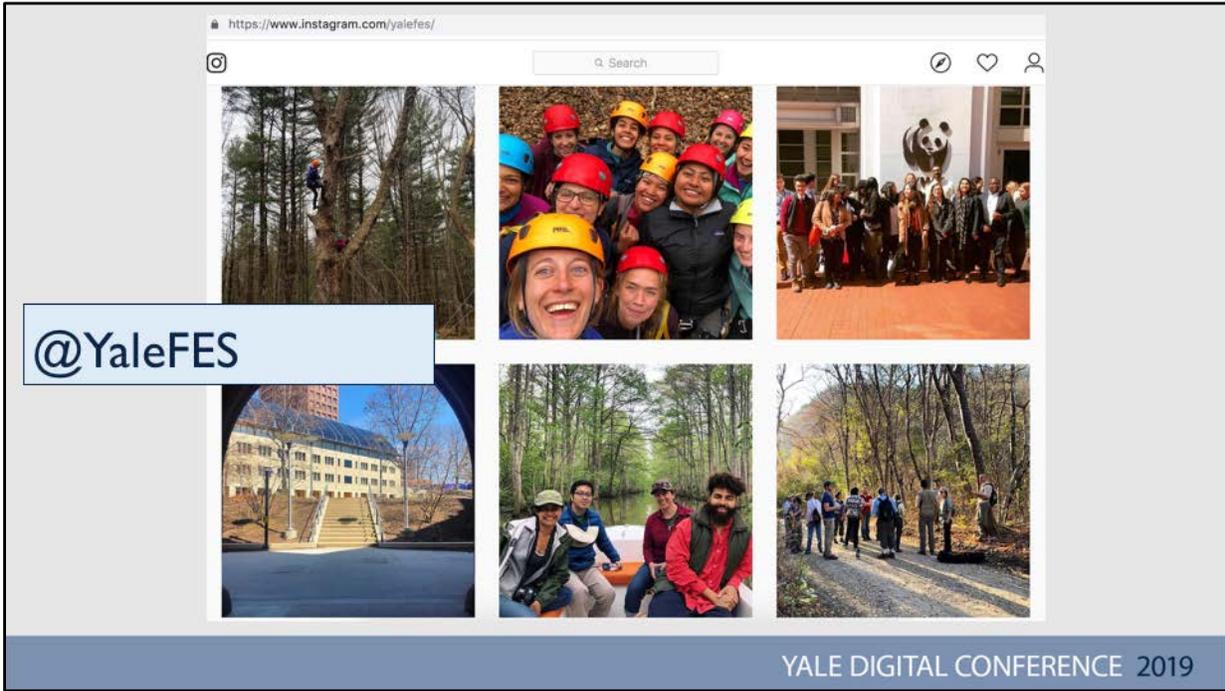
.

Yale hashtags

#YaleAlumni
#Yale2019
#YaleWomen
#YaleBlackAlumni
#BoolaBoola

Beyond campus

#TBT
#BookFaceFriday
#FossilFriday
#FacultyFriday
#NHV (New Haven)



@YaleFES

Another part of AJ's focus was to reach out to the leaders of student groups once a month to ask for content. Students were traveling to the world's most beautiful natural places and then not sharing photos, unless they were reminded.

3. Contribute to established accounts

Those accounts need your content!

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Which brings me to point 3: Share your content via an established account.

Find out how to better contribute to established accounts. People running those need content! Learn their workflows. Some depts have more resources than others, so take advantage of those.



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So back to AJ: While in the process of shutting down some Instagram accounts, he explained his reasoning with a metaphor: Think of having a great big museum with empty walls, because all the great works

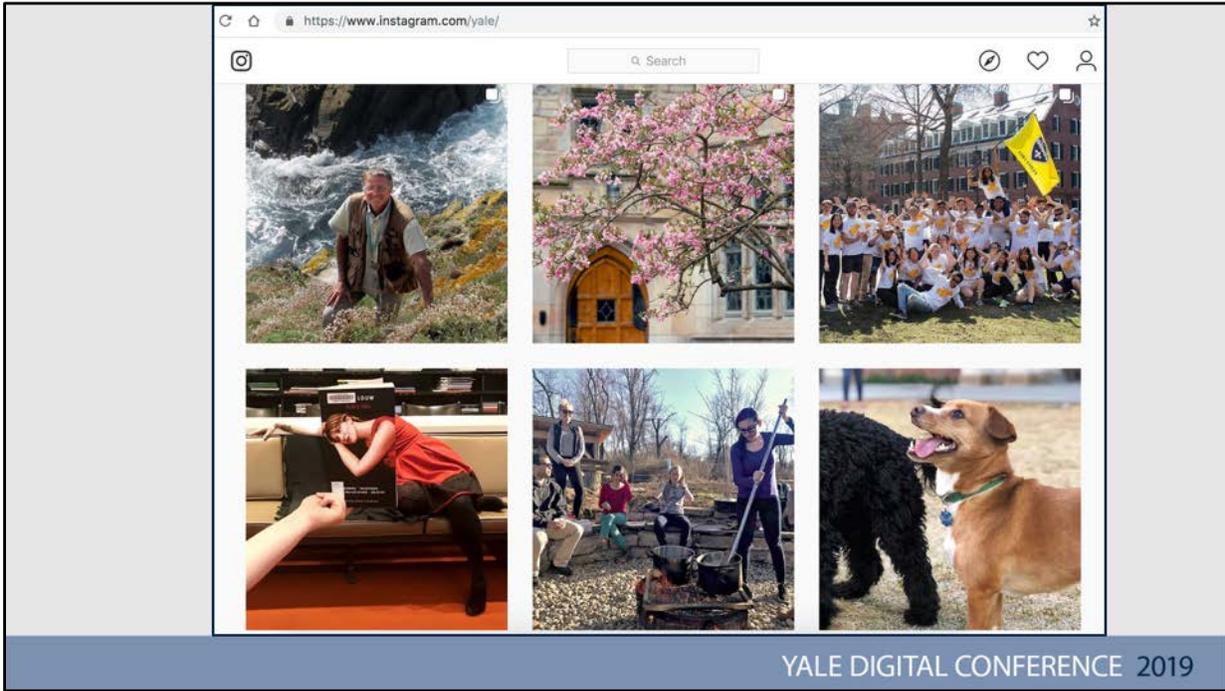


are spread out one by one in galleries around the city. Think of the effort we're expecting people to make to find them all...



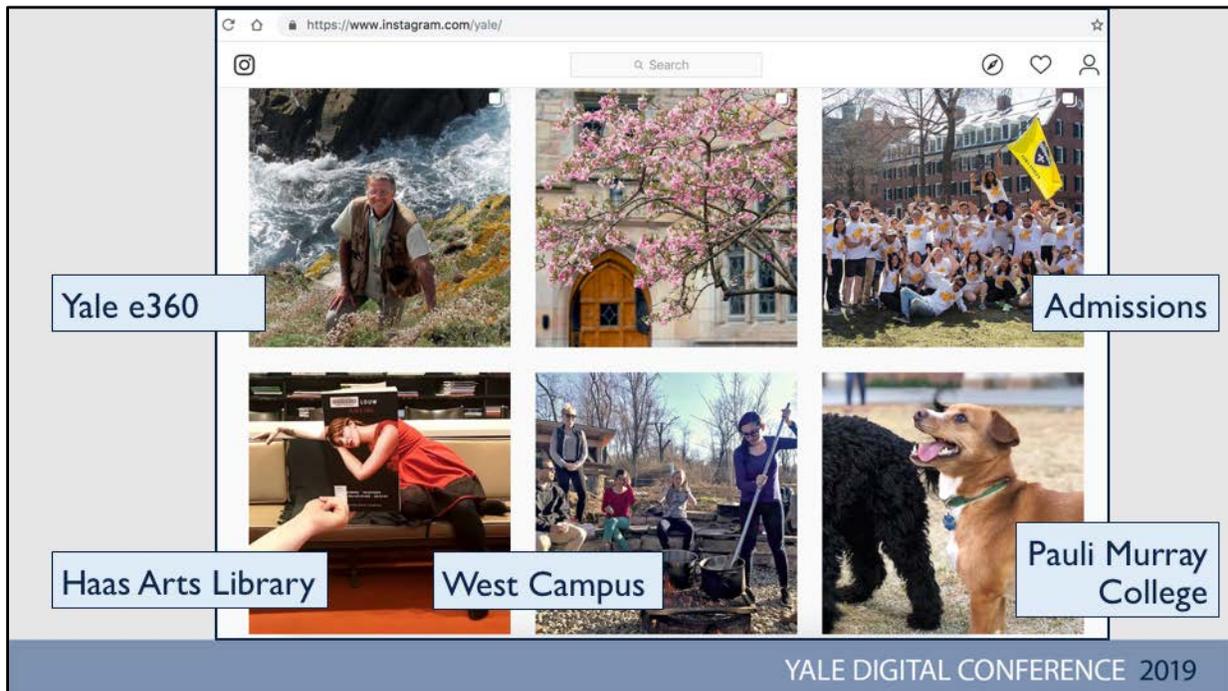
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Instead of gathering them together. With all of these forms of collaboration, whether it's hashtags, takeovers, or sharing content to another— this is the result.



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And so here's a real example from Yale's Instagram account. I took a screen grab from a recent week. Only 1 of these images resulted from our student photography team.

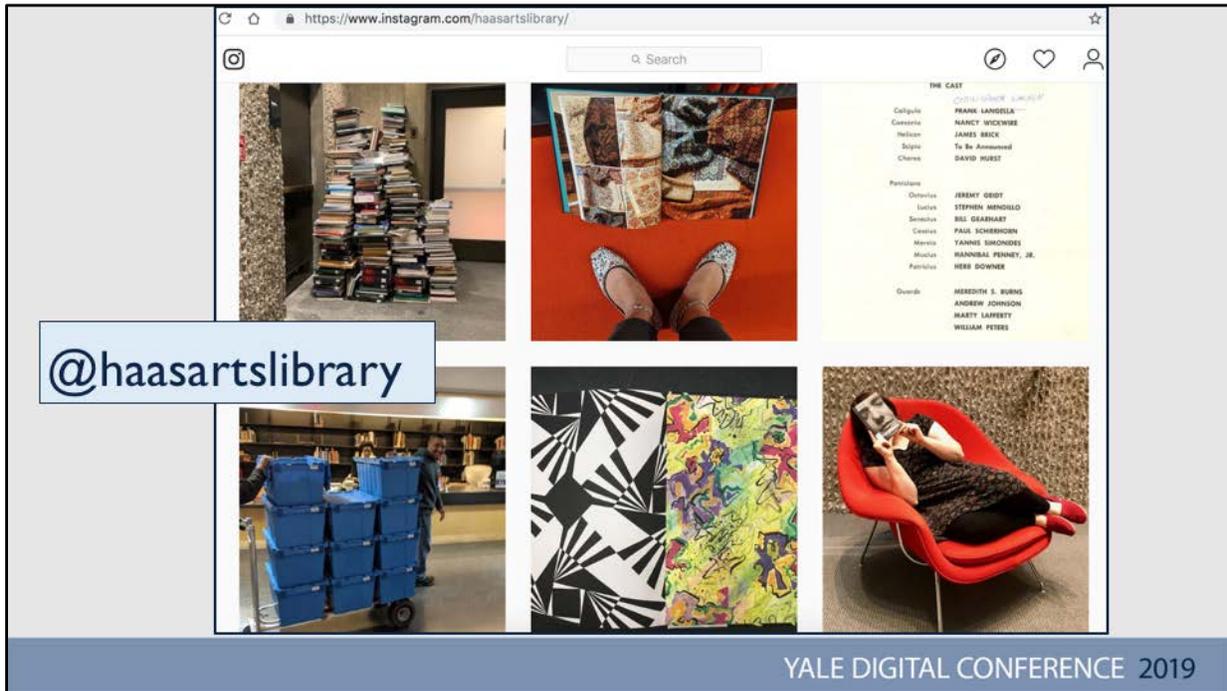


The other 5 come from a variety of Yale accounts. And here's why it's great for everyone.

Yale's account has 340K followers, so each of these other accounts gets a giant boost whenever we share their content and @-mention their account.

The main account has great content to share because of the good work of our colleagues.

And now, when someone comes to the Yale Instagram account, they're getting a wide ranging view of life at Yale. Everybody wins!



By the way, I don't mean to say that only communicators should be running social media. Some individuals have great instincts and taste, and some professions are ideally prepared. Example: Yale's Haas Arts Library is brilliant on Instagram. This is in part because their staff have come to every social media brown bag and followed up with detailed questions -- and they've clearly been paying attention to their counterparts at other institutions. They have mastered



b/c they've mastered the popular Instagram trend #BookFaceFriday -- this is a selection from Haas

It's also because in their particular profession, they deeply value outreach to the public, and they have an understanding of visual beauty

Problem:
Channel with terrific content,
few followers



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Problem: Your channel is like a [Brilliant unknown indie band] with terrific content and few followers. How does this happen? Managers of larger accounts unaware of this content or have obstacles to collaboration.

Bigger problem:
Channel with poor content,
few followers



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Bigger Problem: Channel with few followers AND poor content – think, [Your brother-in-law's garage band]. They try very hard but aren't getting very far.

The solution to both:



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Solution to both: Collaborate! And then... If appropriate...

**DELETE YOUR
ACCOUNT**

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Solution to both: Collaborate! And then...



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A few words of advice about how to collaborate

Solutions:

Provide & seek out resources to / from others

Communicate person to person rather than interacting between accounts

Collaborate well ahead of time

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Solutions:

Provide & seek out resources to / from others

Communicate person to person rather than interacting between accounts

Collaborate well in advance of an event

Advice from Yale communicators:

SOM Comms holds office hours with themes

Reach out to colleagues / fellow student workers to demonstrate how you could help

Planning: weekly content calendar. Meet regularly with colleagues

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Solutions:

SOM Comms holds office hours with themes

FES – AJ reached out to fellow student workers and demonstrated how he could help

Planning – Weekly content calendar. Meet regularly with colleagues

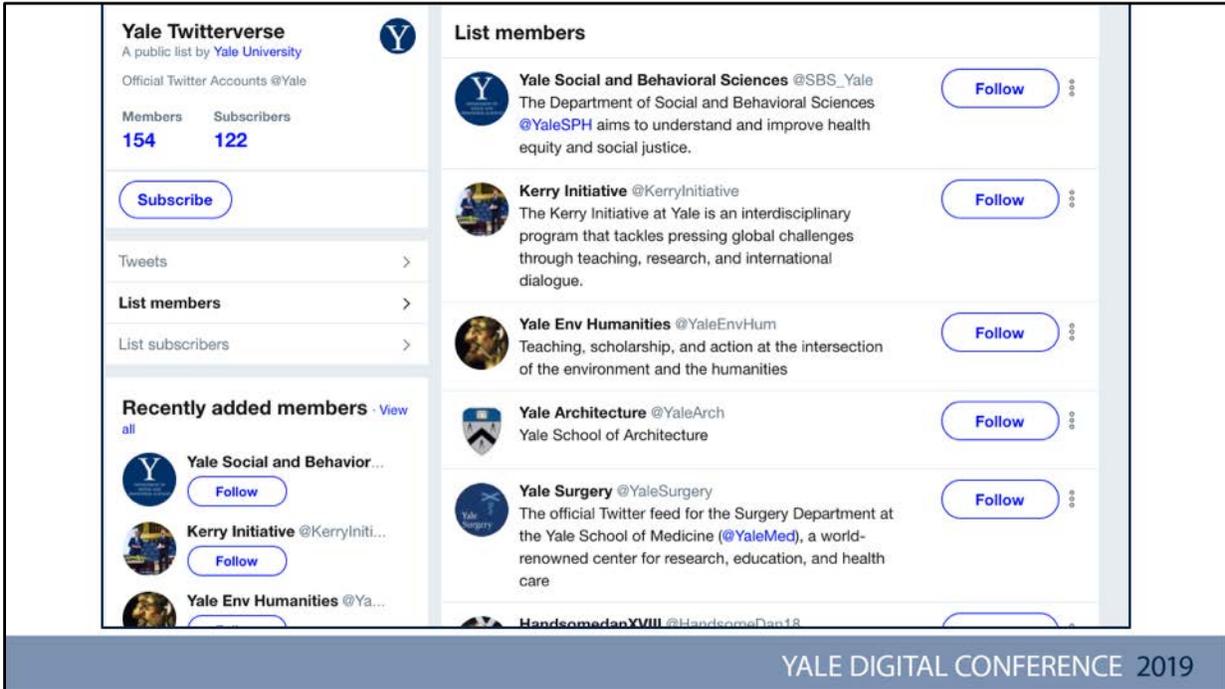
@Yale Twitter mentions for May 2019

Stats by Keyword

Twitter Keyword	Average per Day	Total Volume
 @yale	1,296	40,161

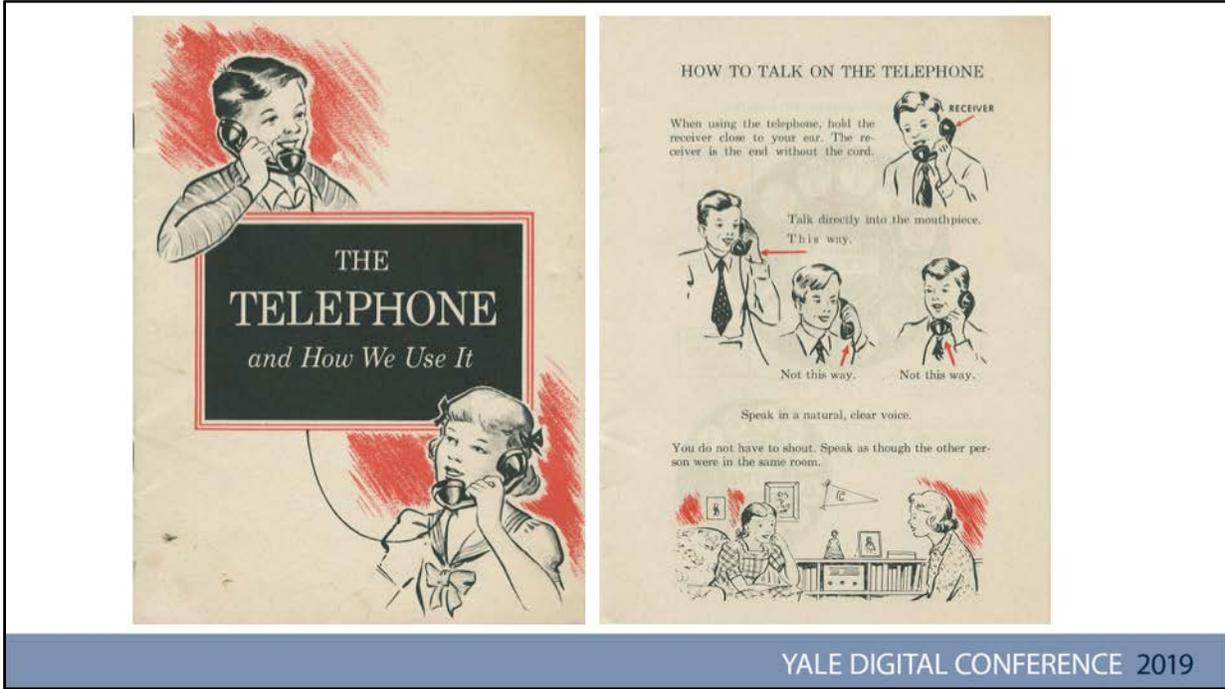
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If you're trying to get the attention of a larger account, do not @ mention the account and assume they will see it. Yale twitter acct averages 40K @ per month, and over 1K per day.



I do pay attention to what other Yale accounts are sharing, and Twitter is the easiest to follow because we have a Yale Twitterverse list that I watch several times a day for things to amplify

However, I urge you not to think of this as two accounts talking to one other. They're run by human beings.



So if there's something important going on — including things you hope will *not* be shared — get in touch with your fellow human being across campus. If you have a big campaign or event you're planning, tell people in advance and ask for their help before your plans are finalized



Yale Computer Lab, 1973
image: Manuscripts & Archives

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Or, if you don't like phones, send an email! The more detailed the better.

Promoting events via email:

Include suggested text — of correct length

Date and time (not “tomorrow”), e.g. June 26 3pm

Attach relevant poster / image

Include # and @

If asking colleague to share a tweet or FB post, send the permalink

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If you are asking another dept to help promote your event on social:

Include suggested text — of correct length

List date and time (avoid “tomorrow” or “3 days away”)

Attach relevant poster / image

Include # and @

If asking colleague to share a tweet or FB post, send the permalink

Email list for updates
(Sign up via
socialmedia@yale.edu)

Attend / host social media
brown bags

Admin for dept's top
account



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And get to know your colleagues! If you are an administrator for a social media account, sign up for the email list through socialmedia@yale.edu

Attend social media brown bags – or convene a meeting of the social media admins in your own dept – there might be a lot of you!

Talk to the admin for dept's top account to ask about their workflow

Admin for account you like

Solution for managers of larger accounts seeking content:

Monthly or weekly schedule to ask for content

Email or meet in advance of big events or other opportunities

Host open hours

Offer your services

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TO SUMMARIZE

Solution for managers of larger accounts seeking content:

Create for yourself a monthly or weekly schedule to ask for content

Email or meet in advance of big events or other opportunities

Host open hours

Offer your services or resources

Solution for managers of smaller / newer accounts seeking a boost

Take an assessment of your account

Look at peer institutions

Niche must connect to parent account

Articulate your goals. What need is the account fulfilling?

Ask for advice or feedback

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Take a look at your dept's accounts. Do you like the content? Is it performing well? If it's a current account, can you fold in those efforts into another account?

Niche accounts are necessary, but they must connect intrinsically to the parent account. If they don't, something is broken.

Articulate your goals. Is there a need for this in your world? Before starting a new account, explore whether you could instead help create occasional content for a parent account.

Ask for feedback



In closing: We get so focused on our own worlds that we lose sight of the big picture. Collectively, we've created an array of hundreds of accounts. One of the stated values of this university is a multiplicity of voices. It's not about uniformity. But the goal should be to communicate our org's values, its work, its people, and values. Social media can connect people — for instance your alumni and scholars — across generations and across continents. But without an organizing principle, these many hundreds of accounts are just noise.



Yale is a big, complicated place, and we do make room for many voices. But if the goal is to paint a clear picture of the purpose of our institution's work, we have to choose our messages with that purpose in mind. Paring down our messages, paring down our channels, means less noise, so the intended message will come through.