

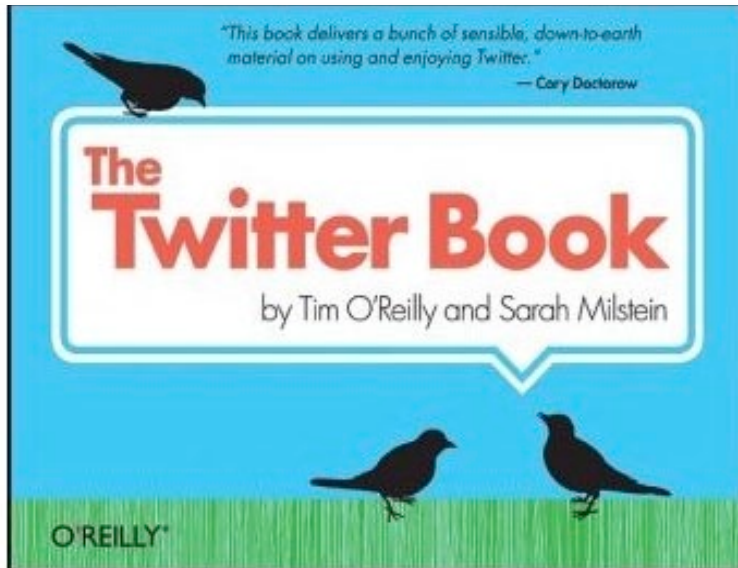
# The Twitter Book

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I signed up for a Twitter account last December in order to take advantage of a SitePoint PDF book give-away. I really didn't know much about it at the time, just that it was a tool for broadcasting brief messages, but not a spam generator.

Since that time I've been hearing terms like "tweet" and "retweet" on the local news and in real-time conversations. However, I still didn't really get it. *The Twitter Book*, by Tim O'Reilly and Sarah Milstein, to the rescue! They very neatly break down Twitter into easy to digest concepts and features in this O'Reilly publication. The service is explained succinctly in large type on the right page and illustrated by a variety of screen shots on the left page; no information overload.

What is Twitter? Briefly and simply put, it is a communication service. It debuted in March of 2006 as "twtr" and a "Big Bang" of users and



messages has since followed. Messages sent and received are limited to 140 characters, including spaces. At last, a way to force folks to get to the point, any point!

Your messages are public, meaning that everyone on Twitter can see them. So, think before you tweet. You choose whether or not to receive other's messages (called "following"). Messages can be sent and received using a variety of technologies.

From the authors;

"Twitter poses the question, "what are you doing?"

What's Twitter good for?

Breaking news and shared experiences.

Finally, Twitter is emerging as a key business channel ..."

So, what more is there to know? Admittedly, I felt I wasn't quite getting into the "meat" of it by just signing up at [twitter.com](http://twitter.com) ([accessibletwitter.com](http://accessibletwitter.com) for assistive technologies). That's what pages 19 through 231 are all about. For those of us of the not-quite-now-gen, not to worry, you won't think that you're Alice entering Wonderland. However, joining in at Twitterland does involve learning some Twitter jargon and syntax and learning to use shortened vocabulary.

This succinct insight into Twitter is divided into six chapters. **Getting Started** introduces you to some Twitter basics and key terms. **Listen In** provides some search skills for finding the "good stuff" to listen in on. **Hold Great Conversations** is about contributing to conversations using a secure, clear, respectful and helpful approach.

**Share Information and Ideas** presents suggestions for making the most out of those 140 characters messages. Sub-title this section "How to get noticed for being interesting." There are tips for broadening your audience such as using links to your advantage, posting your picture, the best days to post, get the book for more!

**Reveal Yourself** describes ways to create a sense of "meaningful intimacy." My favorite suggestions here are "Spiff up your background:

Part 1 & Part 2," which are about the visual tweaks you can add to your Twitter account page.

Lastly is **Twitter for Business:** Special Considerations and Ideas. The intro page lists links to companies on Twitter and suggests two providers for facilitating internal micro-messages for organization networks.

This section builds on everything already discussed and enhances points of particular pertinence to a business setting. It seems to me that being encouraged to communicate in a clear, concise, and uncharged manner (covered in the previous sections of this book) can only enhance an organizations efficiency and effectiveness.

There are gobs of links for extending Twitter functionality and curiosity. You can "tweet up," or to put it another way, organize an in-person gathering using [twtvite.com](http://twtvite.com). Follow the most currently popular words or phrases being twittered about.

Using a site such as [whatthetrend.com](http://whatthetrend.com) gives a quick blurb on why a word is trending. At [twopular.com](http://twopular.com) you can view the hottest trends over a variety of time periods. Icons indicate a rise, fall or static standing and for more info, there are links to Twitter Search, Google News and Yahoo! News.

Here are two personal "best pics" that caught this newbie's eye:

(pg 91) Life-changing program #1: Twirl

This is a free desktop appliance that streams tweets with built-in URL shortening and automatic searching for your username in any posts, a very nice interface and great documentation accessed through the [twhirl.org](http://twhirl.org) website!

(pg 370) Shorten and customize your links with Bit.ly

In addition to shortening URLs this service also tracks click-throughs. And, there's an extension for adding a bit.ly button to the Firefox toolbar!

## In Summary

Do you sense your life twittering into cyberspace? That 140 character limitation does a great job of curtailing excessive and time-consuming posts. However, limiting how many people to follow is up to you. You'll find

this brief volume is the best way to get up to speed with Twitter and have some fun with it.

**About:** *The Twitter Book*

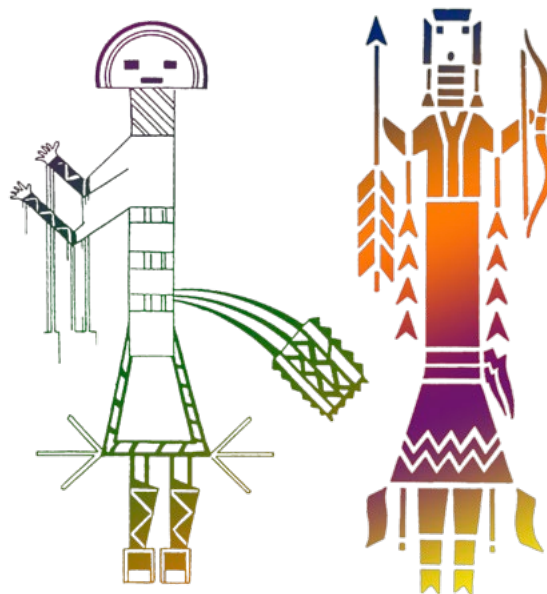
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