ANATOMY
OF A
Historical "Live Tweet"

The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

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Coming Up with the Idea

• Spawned from the live tweets from NWA/AMS conferences
  – #NWAS13  #AMS14  #NWAS14
• Thought it would work out well with the Edmund Fitzgerald
  – But with the short turn around, saved for the following year
• Focused on Twitter due to its chronological timeline
  – Maintained the ability to see the tweets as they occur and the real-time
Why the Edmund Fitzgerald?

• Worst marine incident in the Great Lakes in the last 48 years
  – 29 crewmembers lost
  – Integral part of Upper Michigan history

• Always a lot of interest in the Edmund Fitzgerald
  – “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” – Gordon Lightfoot
  – Some mystery in what exactly happened

• Goal: provide an interesting and informative timeline of the last few days of the Edmund Fitzgerald
Developing the Live Tweet

• Had a great foundation with the paper by Hultquist-et al. (2006)
  – Supplemented with information from:
    • National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) report
    • Past NWS forecasts and other facts
• Stuck to general information and weather observations
  – This was to avoid providing any opinions on the reason it sunk.

NWS Forecast – Nov. 10, 1975 at 4:39am

LAKE SUPERIOR
STORM WARNINGS IN EFFECT
WEST HALF... NORTHERLY WINDS 30 TO 50 KNOTS BECOMING NORTHWESTERLY 25 TO 40 KNOTS TODAY AND NORTHWEST TO WEST 23 TO 35 KNOTS TONIGHT. CLOUDY. SNOW SQUALLS. WAVES 8 TO 16 FEET.

EAST HALF... SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS 28 TO 35 KNOTS SHIFTING TO NORTH TO NORTHWEST THIS MORNING AND INCREASING TO 38 TO 50 KNOTS THIS AFTERNOON. WINDS BECOMING NORTHWEST TO WEST 25 TO 41 KNOTS TONIGHT. RAIN OCCASIONALLY MIXED WITH SNOW TODAY. SNOW SQUALLS TONIGHT. WAVES 8 TO 15 FEET.
Developing the Live Tweet – cont.

• Developed the tweets based off the most important items
  – Gathered appropriate images

• Determining HashTag
  – May have been one of the harder things
    • Due to length of Edmund Fitzgerald and character limit of Twitter
  – Kicked around several options
    • Settled on #EdmundFitz1975

• TweetDeck
  – Used to schedule all of the tweets
  – Had 65% of the posts time to the exact time they occurred 39 years earlier
Brief Overview of the Live Tweet

- 85 Tweets issued over a 4 day period from November 7-10, 2014
  - 4 advertisements
  - 26 informative
  - 55 were timed to the exact time as 39 years earlier
Tweets

**NWS Marquette**
@NWSMarquette

The Edmund Fitzgerald left Superior, Wisconsin on its final voyage at 2:15 pm on November 9, 1975. #EdmundFitz1975
2:15 PM - 9 Nov 2014

**NWS Marquette**
@NWSMarquette

The Edmund Fitzgerald launched on 07/19/1958 Lakes Engineering Works in River Rouge, MI
2:15 PM - 9 Nov 2014

t  144  112

**NWS Marquette**
@NWSMarquette

The Fitzgerald, with 29 officers and crew members, sank approximately 17 mi from Whitefish Point, MI.
#EdmundFitz1975
7:15 PM - 10 Nov 2014

t  110  36

**NWS Marquette**
@NWSMarquette

Weather Map update. At 7 AM on 11/10/1975 the strong low of 963mb was located near Marquette, MI. #EdmundFitz1975
6:50 AM - 10 Nov 2014

t  16  20

**NWS Marquette**
@NWSMarquette

A closer sketch of the bow and stern of the Edmund Fitzgerald from the NTSB report. #EdmundFitz1975
10:00 PM - 10 Nov 2014

t  31  17

**NWS Marquette**
@NWSMarquette

The #EdmundFitz1975 (blue x) is encountering the worst winds of its trip, which can be seen in this model simulation.
pic.twitter.com/RY1P41i0pp
6:45 PM - 10 Nov 2014

t  47  20
@NWSMarquette Thanks for this. Literally gave me chills. The real time aspect really illustrated 'when the waves turn the minutes to hours'.
11:05 AM - 11 Nov 2014

@NWSMarquette Thank you so much! A wonderful tribute, and a great way to engage a new generation with history and weather!
11:17 PM - 10 Nov 2014

@NWSMarquette I've read a lot about the Fitz but the time between tweets adds context for how the time really passed.
10:48 PM - 10 Nov 2014
Immensely Popular Event for @NWSMarquette

• 56% increase in followers during the event
• > 100x the impressions normally seen during a 5 day period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>During Event</th>
<th>Normal Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMP’s</td>
<td>&gt; 918,000</td>
<td>~53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT’s</td>
<td>2710</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fav’s</td>
<td>1640</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Great Gov Tweets – via

• 39 tweets in the Top 50 Government Tweets during the event (11/7-10/2014)
  – 12 on 11/9/2014
    • Highest #5
  – 24 on 11/10/2014
    • Highest #7

• Never reached #1, but tough to compete with these images:
A Quick Comparison to Other Events
Events that Aided Distribution

- Early promotion helped get the word out
  - Email to Great Lakes Offices

- Picked up by several news organizations (TV/Print)
  - WGN, Weather Channel, MLive, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
  - Aided the viral nature of the tweets

- @NWS account retweeted a few tweets around 8:50pm on the 8th
  - Retweets took off after that point
Complicated by a Snowstorm

- Had go/no-go date of November 6th
  - Storm originally forecasted to go south (Chicago Area)
- By the 8th, it had shifted into the U.P.

- 3 day snowfall totals from the event
  - 30.2” at NWS Marquette
Live Tweet Aided Winter Storm Awareness

- 11 storm tweets sent during the event
  - Staff fit them in gaps with the live tweet
- >110,000 - Twitter Impressions from posts dealing with the storm

This tweet had our highest impression in 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>3 Day Snowfall</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>Dec 07-09 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>Dec 16-18 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>Apr 04-06 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>Nov 30-Dec 02 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>Mar 12-14 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>Nov 26-28 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>Mar 13-15 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>Nov 22-24 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>Jan 02-04 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>Mar 01-03 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This storm will likely bring the highest storm total snowfall for many areas across Upper Michigan in the past 3-6 years.
Recent Live Tweets in NWS

Palm Sunday – 50th Anniversary – NWS IWX

1965 Twin Cities Tornado Outbreak – NWS MPX

50th Anniversary: 1965 Twin Cities Tornado Outbreak May 6th, 1965

We will be live tweeting this event on the evening of Wednesday May 6th, 2015

- Follow @NWSTwinCities and hashtag #msptornadoes65 as we tweet the details of the outbreak as they occurred 50 years ago
- We will begin live tweeting at 6 PM and conclude at midnight
- We will be tweeting very frequently at times, to simulate the reports as they came in on this evening 50 years ago
- You can utilize the ‘mute’ function in Twitter if you don’t want to see these tweets, just remember to unmute us afterward!
Lessons Learned

• Make sure staff is aware of the live tweet event possibly going viral
  – Ops staff calling SM Focal Point because TweetDeck “wouldn’t shut-up”
    • Tied to @NWS retweet on the evening of Nov. 8, 2014

• Have a set template

• Two Minor issues with TweetDeck
  – Occasionally scheduled tweets wouldn’t show up
    • They were still issued at the proper time
  – Unable to schedule animated gifs
Summary

• Extremely successful event for @NWSMarquette
  – 56% increase in followers
  – ~17 times the normal monthly Twitter Impressions/Retweets/Favorites
    • In just 5 days

• Great way to raise awareness
  – Of past weather events
  – For Preparedness
  – For the office

• You can view all of the tweets that were sent on Storify:
Aknowledgements

• Big thanks to Tom Hultquist (NWS MPX) and Michael Dutter (NWS MQT) for the raw images from their paper (Reexamination of the 9–10 November 1975 “Edmund Fitzgerald” Storm Using Today’s Technology)