Learning More About Business Topics When You Have Limited Time
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I am a business librarian, but I am also a liaison librarian to nine departments ranging from engineering to history. Additionally, I administer our website and manage our distance learning services. I know many other business librarians also have wide ranging responsibilities. I want to know as much as possible about business resources and do my best work for my business stakeholders, but it is a challenge to maintain currency in many disciplines. I wonder if others feel that way too.

This article describes the learning strategies that I use to develop my knowledge. I’ve found methods to keep up with business pedagogy, databases, and other resources, without committing much of my time to the process. My hope is that my ideas will help you keep up, too, despite all the demands on your energy and time.

I follow several social media outlets for business learning purposes. However, I find it easy to squander my time on social media. To avoid wasting time, I use tools customized for each network so I can get in, learn, and get out.

I use Twitter’s “Lists” feature. I don’t subscribe to any person or organization without putting that feed into at least one list. You can create lists on any topic such as business librarianship, business vendors, business writers, etc. Otherwise, I find Twitter to be a firehose of posts if I don’t curate feeds into lists.

For LinkedIn, I subscribe to hashtags to follow posts. Hashtags allow me to learn from people outside the bubble of my immediate connections. You can follow a hashtag by searching for a #topic in the search box or by clicking on a hashtag in a post. One caveat, some hashtags are more popular than others. I’ve found that words I may want to search aren’t used often as hashtags. So, I’ve had to be creative when I choose the hashtags I follow.

Finally, I feel like I should mention Facebook. Many professional associations have a Facebook page. Sadly, I find Facebook to be an inefficient way to learn. Primarily, I use Facebook to connect with my family and friends.

I watch videos when I have more time or want to explore detailed features or ideas for research guide development. Typically, I view YouTube videos. However, video platforms may differ depending on the organization’s choices, so I don’t always get to watch on YouTube. However, YouTube appears to be a popular platform. Typically, I learn about YouTube videos from other outlets like social media and email lists. I will “Subscribe” to a YouTube channel if I want to go back to the video producer later or be notified of more recent videos. I also keep a list of videos in a Google document. I keep this list because I don’t often have time to watch a video until a later date. Instead, you may want to use YouTube’s “Watch later” feature to store
videos. I want to suggest one specific source as an example: There are many great free business sources discussed in the YouTube channel titled *Help! I’m an Accidental Government Information Librarian*. I recommend exploring when you have a bit of extra time.

RSS is my main continuing education outlet. I want new ideas delivered to me rather than having to search for them. I use Feedly for my RSS reader, but other readers are available. I know that RSS seems like an old technology, but I find that many authors and organizations still offer RSS feeds. I subscribe both to business librarianship feeds and to discipline feeds. I’ve found that it’s important to go outside of librarianship, particularly for business topics. This applies to any platform already discussed, but it is certainly easy in RSS readers. I use my reader to find related feeds off of a useful feed. In Feedly, you can discover related feeds with the feature “You Might Also Like”. You can also search by keyword and other less dominant social media feeds, for example, Reddit. I suggest following a social media outlet in your RSS reader to avoid checking it separately. However, I’m ruthless with my RSS subscriptions. I unfollow if the feed post too little, too much, or offers posts that don’t interest me enough to read further.

Email is my last choice for subscriptions, but email alerts are too helpful to skip completely. For instance, I subscribe to key business librarianship lists such as BUSLIB-L and various BRASS groups. I also create alerts to a few business disciplinary journals via my library’s article portal. I use ACRL’s Instruction Section’s tool *A Selective List of Journals on Teaching and Learning* and Google Metrics discipline pages to identify journals and other important periodical titles. I create alerts based on my online access or when I would be willing to request readings via interlibrary loan. I get a lot of email, as I’m sure you do, and I want to maximize the value of my email alerts.

I’ve discussed several options, and I realize that these choices may feel overwhelming. I want us to be efficient and be aware of our limited time, so we maintain energy to create instruction, guides, and other tools. I recommend exploring just one of these tools to build awareness of new concepts for your business librarianship goals. You may want to add on other options as you discern your time constraints and personal bandwidth. The BRASS Business guide *Business Reference Essentials* offers more ideas, too.

I truly believe in lifelong learning. I suspect that most business librarians share this value, as they want to be effective researchers and teachers for business patrons. I hope these tools will help you incorporate ideas more easily as we all try to do our best to serve a diversity of needs.