

Facebook, Twitter serve as tools in times of conflict

Kassondra Cloos
News Editor

Before the Egyptian government cut all Internet access during the protests in opposition of former president Hosni Mubarak, social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter served as tools to spread the message and rally support.

According to Glenn Scott, associate professor in the School of Communications, the Egyptian government was unable to control the use of social media. Turning off the Internet was the only feasible solution to cut communication.

"Egypt essentially said, 'We know we can't stop social networking unless we stop the Internet, so we're just going to stop the whole thing,'" Scott said. "No country has ever taken such a bold move and, clearly, they can't stop it forever. They can't leave the Internet down forever. In the modern, global world, it's too important for commerce. That was a real desperate act."

Rasha Abdulla, associate professor and chair of journalism and mass communication at the American University in Cairo, was in the city during the protests and e-mailed the listserv for the Association of Internet Researchers about the use of social media to promote the protests.

"I can tell you this has been, to a very large extent, an Internet-based revolution,"

she wrote. "Even the illiterate classes who are down on Tahrir Square say this was started 'by the youth of Facebook' and I do agree with them."

Laura Roselle, a political science professor, said she is fascinated by the use of social media as a tool for the protests. She said the protests were not spontaneous but had been planned in advance.

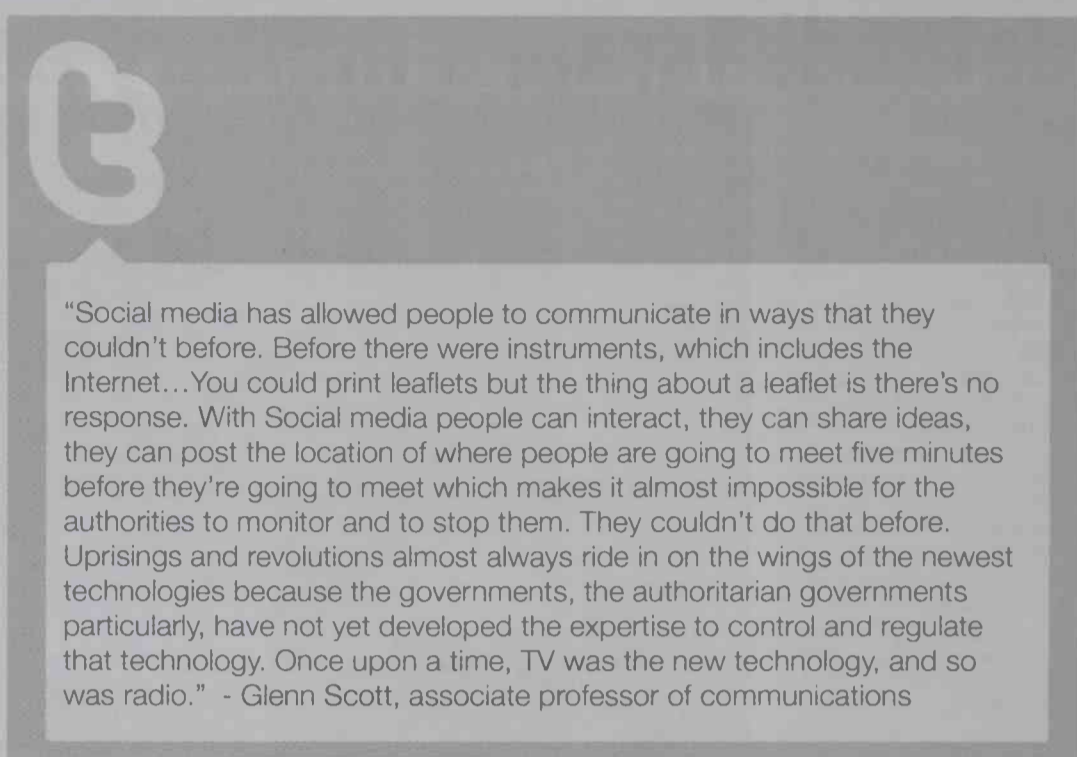
"This was a unique opportunity to use social media to try to mobilize people after Tunisia, sort of like a match to a keg of dynamite," she said.

Roselle said Wael Ghonim, a Google executive from Egypt cited as one of the leaders of the uprisings, has coined the name "Revolution 2.0."

"The Google executive (Ghonim), who was arrested and released, he does say it was sort of planned," Roselle said. "There was a group of people who planned how to use social media to get people out to protest against the government in Egypt."

Scott said the people who led the riots are not the people one would expect to be at the center of protests. They're not long-time established popular figures who had been standing up to the Egyptian authorities, he said. Many of the protest's leaders were very young and more experienced with social media than their government officials, he said.

"Messages on Facebook and Twitter are more effective



"Social media has allowed people to communicate in ways that they couldn't before. Before there were instruments, which includes the Internet... You could print leaflets but the thing about a leaflet is there's no response. With Social media people can interact, they can share ideas, they can post the location of where people are going to meet five minutes before they're going to meet which makes it almost impossible for the authorities to monitor and to stop them. They couldn't do that before. Uprisings and revolutions almost always ride in on the wings of the newest technologies because the governments, the authoritarian governments particularly, have not yet developed the expertise to control and regulate that technology. Once upon a time, TV was the new technology, and so was radio." - Glenn Scott, associate professor of communications

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because of the difficulty in controlling them, the decentralized nature of how the information spreads," Scott said. "The fact that many of the young people are more expert at using these sites than people in power allows them to make more expert use of it. But by itself, a message on a screen doesn't start a revolution. The moment has to be ready for it, and in this case, it was."

Even in the first days of the protests, Abdulla also credited Egypt's younger population

with the inspiration for the opposition movement.

"The youth of Facebook, who have revived this great country," she wrote, "are hanging tight in Tahrir Square, together with hundreds of thousands, at times millions, of people who have joined them, many of them not even Internet users."

Though Facebook and Twitter were previously considered simply social, Scott said the success of the recent riots in Egypt as well as those in Tunisia, which

resulted in the ousting of President Ben Ali, have made the sites into tools which should be taken seriously.

"(Facebook is) not a benign network for linking friends (anymore)," Scott said. "We've been recognizing this, that it's a way to reach people for many different purposes, not just simply for making friends or preparing people for high school reunions or even not only for selling products. It provides a capability for political movements, for subversive activity, as well."

Peer-to-peer program reconnects young alumni to Elon University, recognizes accomplishments

Rebecca Smith
Managing Editor

After students graduate from Elon University, their connection with the school is not over. Top 10 Under 10 is a new program that aims to enrich the relationship between the university and young alumni, who make up 41 percent of all Elon alumni.

The Young Alumni Council, which advises the Alumni Association and university on programs for young alumni and current students, created Top 10 Under 10 as a peer recognition program.

Faculty, staff, students and alumni are eligible to nominate any alumnae who has graduated from Elon within the last 10 years. Nominations were accepted until Jan. 31.

The award will be presented to young alumni who do outstanding things in their personal lives and their community, or to those who have stayed heavily connected to the university. Award recipients will be recognized at a dinner during this spring's Young Alumni Council meeting April 2.

"We want alumni to maintain the love for Elon they had as a student here," said Britten Pund, a member of the Young Alumni Council who is heading the program. "Often times, alumni graduate and get so busy with jobs and life after college that Elon is no longer in the forefront of their lives. An awards program such as this helps show the awardees and other alumni that Elon truly cares about them and helps remind them why Elon is a place to care about, too."

The final set of recipients will be announced toward the end of February. A committee that

includes Sallie Hutton, director of alumni relations, Kiley Moorefield, coordinator of young alumni programs and members of the Young Alumni Council, will make the final decision.

"We are still in the process of planning what the award will be," Moorefield said. "But the awardees will be invited to attend the annual spring meeting, to return to Elon University."

The Young Alumni Council hopes that recognition from the university will continue to remind people of how they felt when they were at Elon, when they were encouraged to succeed in their academic work and community service.

"There has been a pretty diverse group of nominators," Moorefield said. "There has been a mix of nominations from faculty, staff and older alumni, which is great because it diversifies the individuals mentioned. For example, older alumni might know more about people who have found career success, while professors will know who has stayed really involved with the university."

There is possibility for change after the council evaluates the inaugural year, but the program will continue.

"This is the inaugural year of Top 10 Under 10," Pund said. "However, the Young Alumni Council intends to continue to grow this program and recognize young alumni for their contributions on an annual basis. As the young alumni base continues to grow, it will be increasingly important for Elon and the Young Alumni Council to recognize the efforts of young alumni and to encourage young alumni to stay active and engaged in the larger society, as well as at Elon."

First undergraduate research journal to be released in October

Becca Tynes
Senior Reporter

The first issue of an undergraduate research journal at Elon University titled "Perspectives on Undergraduate Research and Mentoring," or PURM, will be released in October 2011.

"The journal will include students' discussions regarding their research, challenges they may have faced and how mentoring works," said Rebecca Pope-Ruark assistant professor of English and managing editor of PURM. "It will be a journal about the process of undergraduate research and how it's done."

The first goal included in the journal's mission statement is "to create a home for scholarly contributions to the process of literature in undergraduate research and mentoring."

"We saw that there wasn't a lot of discussion about the process of undergraduate research," said Victoria Doose, Elon junior and managing editor of PURM. "There are countless numbers of journals that include research, but there aren't too many that include information about how and why it is performed."

The second purpose of the journal, according to its mission statement, is to provide a space for the

voices of undergraduate research and mentoring in order to share experiences and develop professionally.

"We're really inviting authorship from anyone involved in undergraduate research programming," Pope-Ruark said.

According to associate professor of psychology Mat Gendle, also editor-in-chief of PURM, the journal will be open to students, mentors and professors at universities all across the country.

"We are branching out and sending out our information to a wide variety of schools in the United States," Doose said. "We're definitely interested in receiving submissions from Elon students and faculty. We'd love to see that participation in the journal. The more the better."

The third goal included in the mission statement is "to continue to build a sense of community among those involved in undergraduate research and mentoring."

According to Pope-Ruark, the staff's hope is that students, professors and mentors at different universities will work together to produce work for the journal.

"We're trying to be very deliberate in keeping it an open-access journal," Gendle said. He said it is important that faculty members

come to understand the importance of research.

Doose said Elon is very interested in seeing further development of undergraduate research.

The university's strategic plan includes the creation of an undergraduate research journal at Elon, according to Gendle.

"We then came up with the idea to create a journal about the undergraduate research process," Gendle said.

Pope-Ruark said the journal will give students the opportunity to think about and reflect on the undergraduate research process.

According to Gendle, undergraduate research is the most important characteristic of a graduate applicant.

"Research is crucial at an undergraduate level because it helps you frame questions and create habits that will help you figure out how to answer these questions," Pope-Ruark said.

Doose said research at the undergraduate level is beneficial for the person doing the research, as well as for those reading the end product.

"Research helps you learn to ask questions and develop appropriate ways to answer (them)," Gendle said. "It helps you develop important critical thinking and process skills."