



# Reputational Threats Online:

Social media as a simultaneous agent of crisis and tool for response and resolution in the case study of an American academic library

**Margaret C. Stewart, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies  
Department of Communication**

**Maria Atilano, Marketing and Student Outreach Librarian  
Thomas G. Carpenter Library**

**University of North Florida  
Jacksonville, FL**

# Presentation Outcomes

- Recognize the potential for social media to act as both an agent of crisis and as a means for crisis communication and response.
- Consider possible reputational threats online that may exist for your organization/brand upon review of the presented UNF reputational threat case.
- Identify possible preparation opportunities and solutions for reputational threats on social media using Social Listening.
- Discuss pragmatic implications and recommendations.

# Social Media: Cause of Crisis & Crisis Communication Tool



**Joel Osteen** ✓  
@JoelOsteen

Victoria & I are praying for everyone affected by Hurricane Harvey. Please join us as we pray for the safety of our Texas friends & family.

8:39 p.m. · 26 Aug 17



**Lakewood Church** ✓ @lakewoodch · 11h

Please bring these items to Lakewood Church, Circle Drive off Timmons St. [LakewoodChurch.com/Relief](http://LakewoodChurch.com/Relief)

185 98 186



**Lakewood Church** ✓ @lakewoodch · 11h

Beginning at 12 Noon tomorrow we are collecting infant and adult diapers, baby formula and baby food.

113 217 367



**Lakewood Church** ✓ @lakewoodch · 11h

Coordinating with the city, Lakewood is a collection site for distributing supplies to the Houston area shelters. [LakewoodChurch.com/Relief](http://LakewoodChurch.com/Relief)

74 169 241



**Lakewood Church** ✓ @lakewoodch · 12h

We will get through this storm together. Are you able to volunteer? Help us help others. Click here: [LakewoodChurch.com/Relief](http://LakewoodChurch.com/Relief)

81 80 169

# UNF Case Study: What Went Wrong



Posted to UNF Student Union Facebook page  
on April 17, 2017 at 11:17am  
(two weeks before finals)

“Finals are frustrating, but  
remember...”

#MakeYouSmileMonday  
#LoveUNF #SWOOPLife

UNF Library Facebook Page  
@unflibrary  
tagged by the Student Union

# UNF Case Study: The Fallout

- 24 hours later, the post went viral
  - 189 reactions (Like, Haha, Wow, Sad, Angry)
  - 181 shares
    - “Where is this poster?” “The UNF Library”
    - “Our library is savage AF”
  - University President received “official call of action” from a non-campus organization that advocates for students with mental health/emotional health issues
  - The President forwarded message to Library Dean and other University admins




# UNF Case Study: How We Responded

- Contacted Student Union marketing staff member asking for support in controlling the situation
- Replied to students who commented on and/or shared the photo on Facebook
  - Our goal is to build students up, not tear them down
- Message sent to Library Administration
  - “I’ve responded to the negative comments... the poster is NOT on display in the library, and we do not condone its message.”



# UNF Case Study: Lessons Learned



 **Marielisa Martinez** shared UNF Student Union's photo. 32 mins · 🌐




SO I CAN'T EVEN CRY IN MY OWN LIBRARY? #smh 🙄📖📖📖 I thought my friend Tommy G would be a little bit more empathetic #finals #finalsweek 📖📖📖📖


EDIT: this photo was not taken inside UNF's Library.


I knew it. It didn't sound like tommy at all, [Thomas G. Carpenter Library](#)


[Show Attachment](#)


 Hannah Nicole Simmons 1 Comment 


 Like  Comment  Share


 **Thomas G. Carpenter Library** Hello! Just so you know, this photo was not taken in the Thomas G. Carpenter Library. Although we do agree that it's rather humorous, we would rather support our students with finals week puppies and free coffee. 😊




[Like](#) · [Reply](#) ·  1 · Commented on by [Maria Atilano](#) [?] · 27 mins




 **Marielisa Martinez** Yaaaaayyyyy! That's the Tommy G I know and love ❤️❤️❤️🐶🐶📖📖

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) ·  1 · 26 mins

 **Marielisa Martinez** Tommy G is one of my favorite places in the WHOLE WORLD (and my official crying spot/refuge during stressful times) ❤️❤️

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) ·  1 · 25 mins

 Write a reply...  

 Write a comment...  

- Accentuate the Positive
- Eliminate the Negative
- Plan for future social media crises
- Revel in the small successes

# Importance of Social Listening in Online Crisis Communication

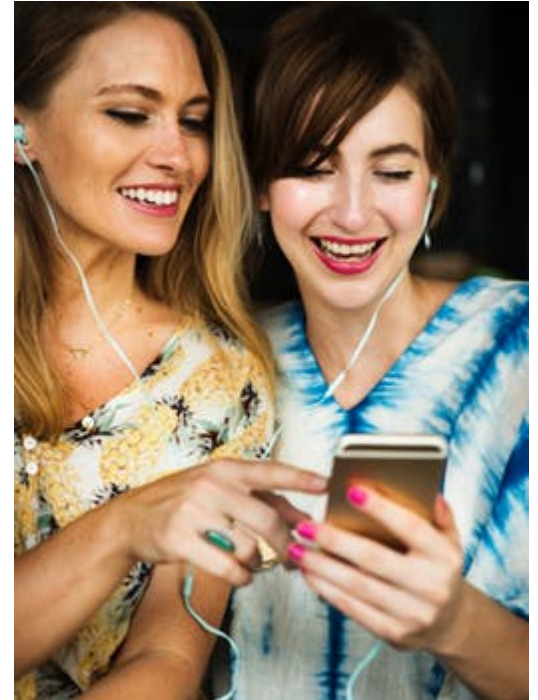
- Stewart & Arnold (2017) define social listening as “an active process of attending to, observing, interpreting, and responding to a variety of stimuli through mediated, electronic, and social channels.”
- Social Listening invites prompt response to online threats.





# Additional Recommendations

- Practice Social Listening routinely
- Prepare for potential crises
  - Identify clear target audiences
  - Maintain a social presence on relevant platforms
  - Readily prepare and adapt messages according to crisis and audience needs
- Be responsive and engage with your consumers online



# Questions?

Contact Info:

[m.c.stewart@unf.edu](mailto:m.c.stewart@unf.edu)

[m.atilano@unf.edu](mailto:m.atilano@unf.edu)

<http://www.unf.edu/library/>



# References

- Coombs, W.T. (2014). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Coombs, W.T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163-176.
- Fearn-Banks, K. (2011). *Crisis Communication: A Case Study Approach* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2017). How to Use Social Media to Better Engage People Affected by Crises. Retrieved from: <https://www.icrc.org/.../57272/icrc-ifrc-ocha-social-media-guide.pdf>
- Seeger, M.W., Sellnow, T.L., and Ulmer, R.R. (2003). *Communication and organizational crisis*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Seeger, M.W. (2006). Best practices in crisis communication: An expert panel process. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 34(3), 232-244.
- Sellnow, T.M., & Seeger, M.W. (2013). *Theorizing Crisis Communication*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Shapiro, E. & Fowler, T. (2017). Joel Osteen's Houston church receives evacuees after backlash on social media. Retrieved from: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/joel-osteens-church-receiving-houston-residents-shelter-backlash/story?id=49489447>
- Stewart, M. C., & Gail Wilson, B. (2015). The dynamic role of social media during Hurricane #Sandy: An introduction of the STREMI model to weather the storm of the crisis lifecycle. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 639-646.
- Stewart, M.C. and Young, C. (March, 2017). Revisiting STREMI: An application of social media crisis communication during Hurricane Matthew; Paper Presentation. International Crisis & Risk Communication Conference; Orlando, FL.