Implementing Twitter in a Small Academic Library: The Triumphs and Failures

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About the Project

Before this project was started in the middle of January, 2015, the University College Library only had a small online presence. It was determined that creating a Twitter account for the UC Library would not only allow us to engage with the student community but would also provide the perfect platform to observe which strategies worked in engaging the community. Due to the Library's small size, it enabled us to track the strategies that we used by staggering the times that we used them and then observing the interactions we received. While we can never be 100% sure what strategies produced various interactions, they still provide interesting and insightful results.
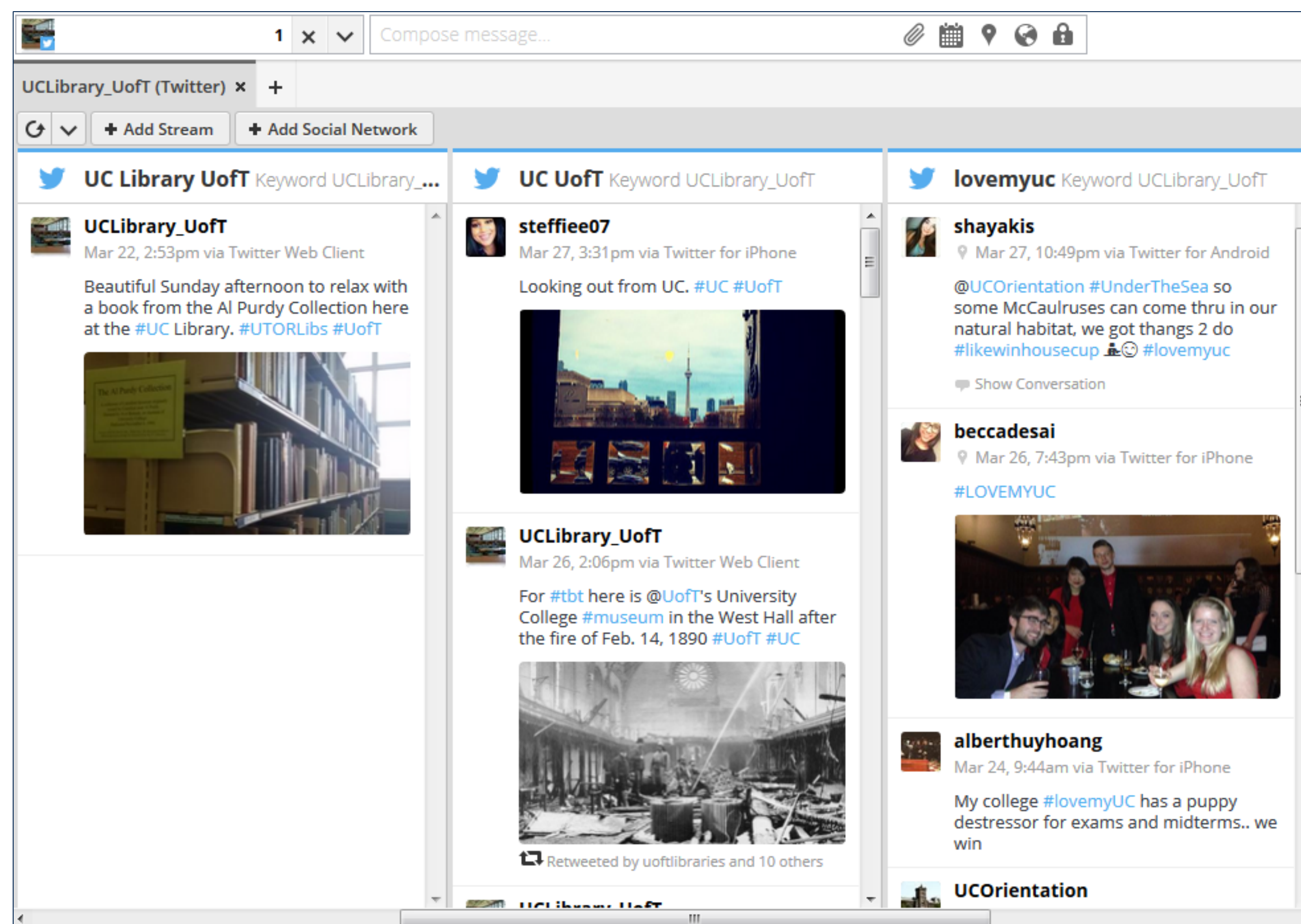
Hootsuite: Triumph

Figure 1: Screenshot of UC Library's Hootsuite account, with three different keyword streams

- Started using Hootsuite on January 30th. It is used to keep track of up to three keyword phrases.

- Benefit: allows us to see when students are tweeting about University College so that we can respond and interact with them.

- Labelled as a triumph because we have had quite a few successful interactions with students, even offering congratulations to future students who have recently been accepted to UC. Increases the library's visibility on social media.

Twitter Sign: Failure

- Put Twitter Sign on all large tables of the library on January 21st.

- We hoped that it would catch the attention of students using laptops and phones at these tables.

- As far as we could tell, there was no increase in activity on our Twitter page as a direct result of these signs. Signs were largely ignored.

Find us on Twitter!
@UCLibrary_UofT

Figure 2: Example of the signs that were placed on tables at UC Library.

Mentions and Retweets: Triumph

- By far the best method for increasing the visibility of the library on social media.

- Mentioning and using hashtags that are related to the UofT community catches the attention of students and the UofT community as a whole.

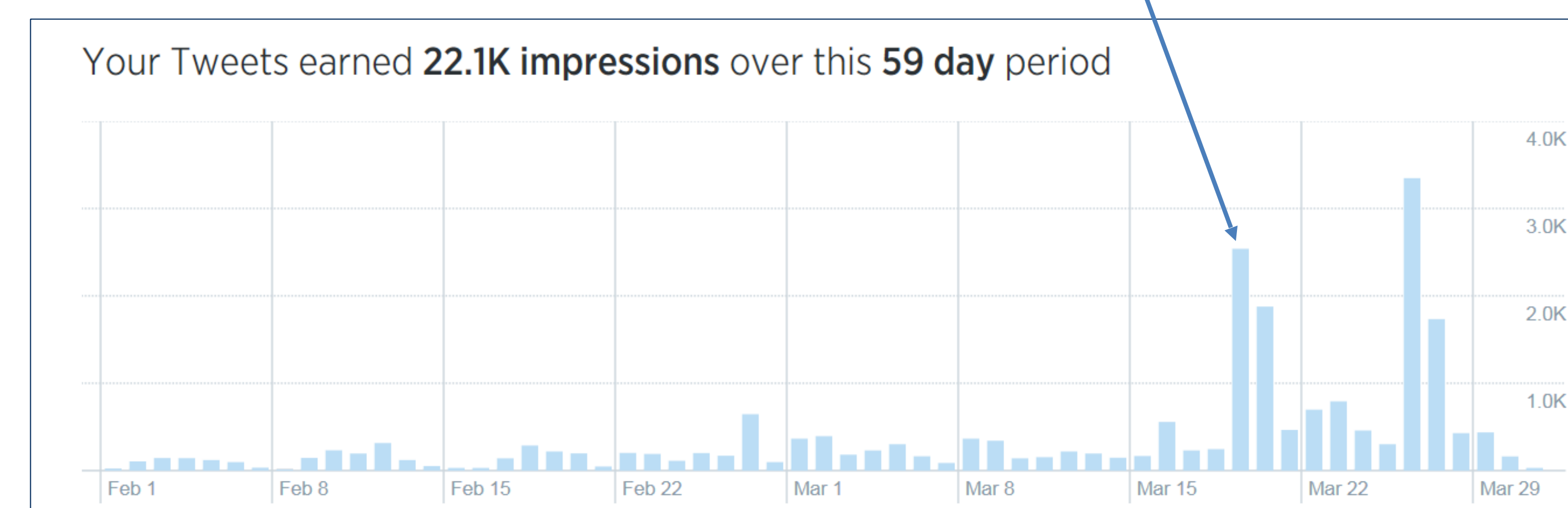- Good example is the tweet below, which has gained over 5,000 impressions so far!

Your Tweets earned **22.1K impressions** over this **59 day period**

Figure 3: A graph of our daily impressions over 59 days with the first tweet with the mention of UofT and its corresponding impressions
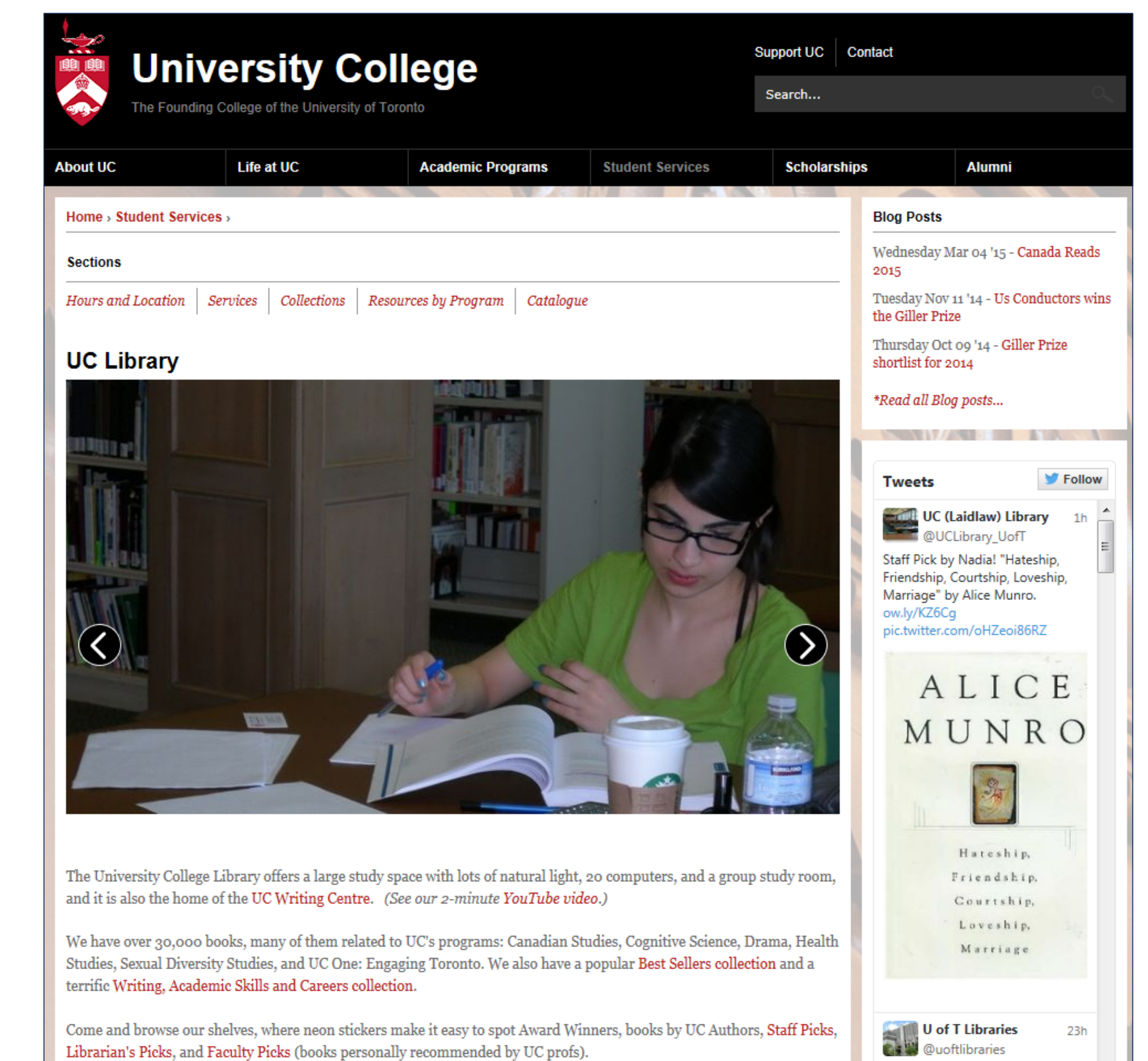
UC Website: Unknown

Figure 4: The UC Library main webpage with an imbedded Twitter Feed on the right side.

- Twitter feed was imbedded into the UC Library's main webpage on March 23rd.

- Have gained followers since implementation but it is hard to discern whether or not this is a result of the website.

- Hard to determine the impressions received from the website because it does not seem to be included in Twitter Analytics data.

- Twitter feed is still beneficial because the website is the home page for all UC Library computers.

Conclusions and Next Steps

While it is hard to draw definite conclusions so early into the project, we do notice some trends. It seems that physical signs do not draw the students' attention. Likewise, activities done outside Twitter itself, such as the UC website, are not as visible and are harder to track. It is only when you engage the student through Twitter or a social media platform like Hootsuite that you begin to see meaningful interactions.

We hope that at the beginning of the next term we can begin to add more strategies of engagement, such as notifying students during orientation and information literacy instruction.