

Threads: When My Personal and Professional Words Collided, with a Bluesky Detour

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In early July 2023, a new social media platform was born. “Let’s do this. Welcome to Threads. [flame emoji]” And with that, Mark Zuckerberg sent the very first Thread onto the Interwebs and sparked an immediate sensation. Zuckerberg and his Meta team had done what I had been anxiously awaiting. They launched the first platform that I personally found to be the most like my beloved former Twitter. In a few short days, users from 100 countries flocked to the site.¹

It was in these early days that my mom started texting me: “Jenny! Are you on Threads yet?” “Jenny, what do you think about this new Threads?” She knows I love me some Insta, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Twitter/X. I didn’t think I could handle one more platform, but in the name of *Science Editor* research, I couldn’t resist the siren call of a sleek new place to gather virtually. I decided to take the plunge and get an account. Also, note that my mom calls me Jenny because that will be important later in the article.

Since its purchase by Elon Musk, Twitter has evolved into what is now known as X. With these changes, the impact that has affected me the most is the exodus of my scholarly publishing soulmates from the platform. I have been struggling to find my professional social media ever since. I have written multiple articles for *Science Editor* at this point about the importance of Twitter to what we do, but my professional interactions with important colleagues had taken a nosedive in some cases and vanished in others. Although I do believe that X still is valuable to disseminating content from our American Urological Association journals, IMHO, it’s simply not the same any longer for our professional publishing community.

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So you can imagine my delight when my mom lovingly nudged me onto the platform. Maybe I finally would find the new professional social media home I had been searching for!!

How Do You Get a Threads Account?

It’s not as easy as logging into Threads and creating your user account. Before you can have a handle on Threads, you need to be on Instagram. Once you have an Instagram account, you download the Threads account and connect it to your Instagram handle. Once your Threads account is activated, you cannot delete that account unless you delete the associated Instagram account. You are only able to deactivate it. Only in the last week did Meta add a web browser option. It’s important to note that Meta is continually updating the user experience, so details about how to use Threads probably will be updated by the time this article is released.

After I figured out how to get an account and operate it, I was ready to run home to my scholarly publishing world. With eager anticipation, I decided to go for it and start Threading (Threadsing?).

Caution: Where Things Got Oogly for Me

Oogly is not a word you will find in the dictionary. It’s from the Jennifer Regala Dictionary® and is defined as a sensation of vague concern, uncomfortableness, and weirdness in one’s inner being.

With the intent of an immediate and glorious reunion with all of my phenomenal publishing buddies the minute I got on Threads, I hopped onto my Instagram account to get launched on Threads.

Annnnnnnnnnd that’s where the ugly part began. I didn’t read the fine print carefully enough. I chose to set up my Threads account through my Instagram account, which is decidedly unprofessional and entirely for my personal use. My handle there is “mommyjennyblog,” and I share lots of insider Mommy Jenny day-in-the-life scoop: my four kids, date nights with my husband, my recent adventure to the Barbie movie (GO SEE IT), new pink clothes, you get the picture. I

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mean... nothing is BAD. I am very proud of this account, but it does not portray me in the least as some pillar of scholarly publishing knowledge. In fact, I doubt that any of my followers on Instagram, with the exception of my boss, could explain my job to you with 100% assuredness (and yes, I include my wonderful husband, Pete, on that list). And remember I said to pay attention that my Mom calls me Jenny? That's my name for outside of the office. At work, I am Jennifer.

What I quickly learned when I made it to the Threads side is that I could not have a separate Threads handle. It was mommyjennyblog or nothing. What I should have done was set up a NEW Instagram, with a professional-sounding handle, and then made my Threads. There is no chance I could handle ANOTHER Instagram (yes, I manage my dog's personal account, too). I was in too deep.

At this point, I decided to let my personal and professional words collide (Figure 1). If you sign up for this Threads, PROCEED WITH CAUTION. It might be worth it to you to set up a new Instagram so you can keep your personal life separate. And follow me with a grain of salt—you are going to see the full Jenny on Threads! This Threads thing for me feels like I am not following my own advice about considering your social media voice,² but I'm not looking back now.

What Has My Threads Experience Been Like So Far?

I love Threads. It is exactly like 2010 Twitter to me—back when the people I saw on the platform were kind, wholesome, educating others, and the vibes were immaculate. I remember tweeting Kurt Warner (yes, the Superbowl-winning NFL quarterback superstar), and he responded and had an entire conversation with me. Another time, I told Carly Rae Jepsen via tweet that I loved her hit song, “Call Me Maybe.” She responded personally to thank me and followed me! Yet another time, I mused about how



Figure 1. Welcome to my Threads! Follow me at the incredibly professional handle @mommyjennyblog. Threads is a no-judgment zone, which includes looking the other way when you read my handle name. I look forward to connecting!

much I loved Arby's Horsey Sauce. They wrote to me to ask for my address and sent me a year's supply!

What I am describing is Threads now. I interacted with Slim Jim (yes, the beef jerky company), and they responded to my post and followed me, with Toys R Us (back in business apparently) and Lowes Home Improvement then independently reaching out to me. Lots of Barbie movie tweets, lots of happy kind people, Paris Hilton posting “11:11! Make a wish!” You get the idea.

But are my PROFESSIONAL people on there? Yes, a few of them. For instance, many iconic female urologists are on there, and they post frequently about female urological health. Because I have so many personal followers on the platform, they've started following these urologists, too. My next-door neighbor reached out to me to say she is so grateful to be connected with Dr. Rachel Rubin (@drrachelrubin) because of her informative and compassionate posts about menopause.

And there are a few publishing individuals, but I haven't found everyone yet. As for associations and societies, again some are joining, but not all. And I haven't found any journals effectively using Threads yet. Will this change? Maybe. As of this writing, popular social media scheduling platforms, such as Hootsuite, CoSchedule, and Sprout, do not support Threads. This inability to post to Threads alongside other platforms is a barrier for most busy communications and publications teams and organizations.

Will I stay on Threads? Yes, indeed. I do appreciate the new, unexpected, hybrid personal/professional community I've found. I am uncertain though that it will develop into a significant platform for scholarly publishing. Since the app's launch, the active user count of Threads is down approximately 82%.³ Those numbers seem a bit dismal to me. In the meantime, I will still be lurking. You can find me checking out American Girl's latest posts for a good laugh of the day.

But What about the Platform Formerly Known as Twitter?

I'm still there for professional reasons. There are many scientists and researchers, for instance, who continue to hang on over there and share their good work, publications, and initiatives with the world. Journals continue to share articles in the hopes of increased Altmetrics and even citations to boost their Journal Impact Factor. I check in frequently still each day to keep up with what's going on in the publishing, urological, and scientific worlds. It's simply not as fulfilling and organic of an experience as it once was for me.

Is the Mastadon Extinct (Again)?

Mastodon, an open source software launched in 2016 as a networking platform, came onto my radar in 2022. Many of my professional colleagues seemed to be signing up for it in droves. The urological community even called their presence

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there “Mastadong.” Alas, I have never met a social media platform I don’t understand, but Mastodon was beyond my level of comprehension. I have an account but somehow put myself on some mysterious sliver of that platform where nobody ever seemed to find me. Although many individuals have found fulfillment from Mastadon, I did not and must confess my user handle (forgotten at this point) is collecting dust and cobwebs. Anything that complicated should not be considered social media from my perspective.

Blue Skies Ahead?

I have also started dabbling on the platform Bluesky. Thankfully, I have maintained my professional-ish persona there (Figure 2). I am cautiously optimistic that maybe, finally, I’ve found everyone who fled Twitter from our scholarly publishing world. Bluesky has a sleek platform that is very reminiscent of Twitter. You do need an invitation from a user to join, and the invitations available are limited. I will keep you posted on how this platform progresses, and I am happy to share invitations (I have only one at the moment) with anyone interested!

Why Does Any of This (Waves Arms Wildly) Matter? And Why Should You Care?

1. Community matters to scholarly publishing. In our recent history, virtual connection became more



Figure 2. When a dear scholarly publishing friend offered me a Bluesky invitation (hi Alexa Colella), who was I to decline? Follow me on Bluesky, @jenniferaregala.bsky.social, and I will follow you back if I remember to check the account.

important than ever when we were all social-distancing during the height of the COVID pandemic.⁴ I argue that social media was a way for all of us to maintain communication when in-person meetings and conferences disappeared. Community is what makes our unique world so special.

2. Accessibility to opportunities and content you never would have even known existed is vital to what we do. Without social media, I would not have an eye into conferences I can’t afford the time and/or money to attend.⁵ I would not know about resources that provide valuable insights into what I should be paying attention to in my job. As one example, I would not have subscribed to the invaluable newsletter, *Journalology*, written by James Butcher, if I hadn’t learned about it on social media. Pro tip: subscribe at <https://journalology.ck.page/>.
3. Inclusion in so many places in the world that never would have been possible in the past. I argue that I have a seat at so many tables that I never even knew existed because of social media. And I believe it is my responsibility to bring others to those tables. Social media helps me do that.
4. Impact! This one is clear. Your voice is heard when you share your thoughts where people are gathered to listen. This matters to your journals, your organization, your constituencies, and most importantly to YOU!

I look forward to your feedback. Where are you hanging out these days on social media? What do you think about Threads, X, Mastodon, and Bluesky?

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