

The Shorthorn's Approach to Social Media Reporting

Prepared by spring 2021 engagement editor Arianna Vedia



Introduction

Social media grows more and more as a reporting tool each year. During the winter storm in February 2021, keeping the community updated was more important than ever. The Shorthorn was a central news source for many in the city during the storm and made sure readers were constantly informed.

The Shorthorn engaged with readers through Twitter, Facebook, Reddit and Instagram. Through UTA Unfolded, our reader-led initiative that focuses on answering and unfolding any questions readers may have about campus, we were able to see what readers wanted to know on top of what they needed to know.

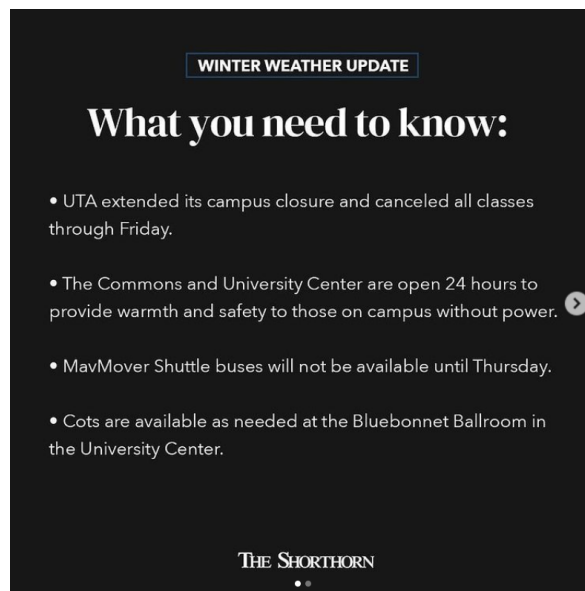
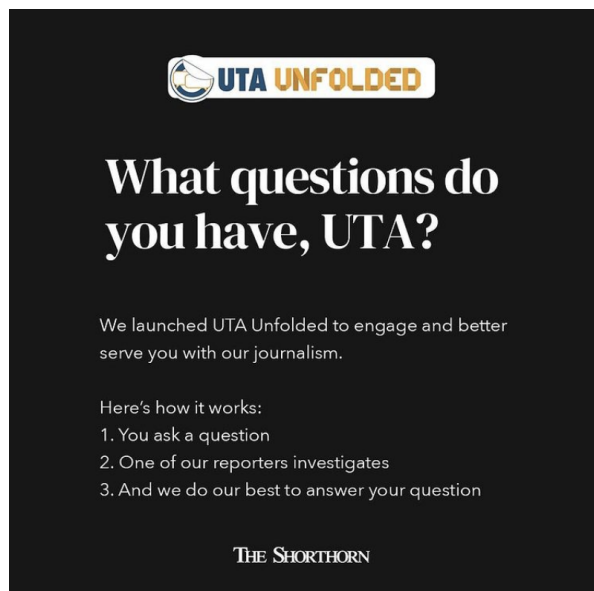
Please scroll down to see some examples of our work this year and read about our social media reporting strategy.

Instagram

In 2021, our newsroom experimented with Instagram stories and stand-alone informative posts on the grid. We still kept our “head on photo” design that allows for visually appealing content to grab our readers’ attention and helped distinguish our breaking news posts on Instagram, but changed it up when the storm hit.

The ‘What you need to know’ posts were updated daily with new or updated information. We also used the question function on Instagram to quickly answer student questions as information rolled in.

The question to the right is from a student who wanted to know where they could find free food since they didn’t have the resources to cook while the power was out.



Twitter

Through the pandemic and winter storm, our staff relied on internal communication in terms of social media reporting.

At the beginning of each semester, a newsroom-wide group message is created on Twitter so that staffers can share tweets and promote content.

This comes in handy during breaking news situations or when reporters are trying to gather hard-to-find sources. It also allows breaking news to be quickly spread to a wider audience.

To the right is an example of the group message and how we're able to make sure the community is informed in a timely manner.

Below are examples of staff tweets.



The Shorthorn Spring '21



The Shorthorn @UTAShorthorn · Feb 15

1/ Here are a few tips on how to conserve power during the winter storm and what actions to take if you've lost power. 🖱️

[Show this thread](#)



Tips on how to conserve power

RT tips to conserve power

Feb 15, 2021, 11:22 AM ✓



The Shorthorn @UTAShort... · Feb 15

Breaking: UTA will be closed through Wednesday due to the winter weather, and all classes are canceled.

[Show this thread](#)

**Important Winter Weather Update
Announcement - UTA Closed thru Feb. 17,
2021 & All Classes Cancelled**

Due to extreme winter weather conditions and widespread power outages, The University of Texas at Arlington is closed, effective immediately, through Wednesday, February 17, 2021.

All classes in all modalities are canceled, also effective immediately, through Feb. 17. Exams also are canceled.

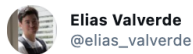
Essential personnel should continue to report to work. Employee remote work is suspended through Feb. 17. Employees should contact their supervisors with specific questions about their duties.

The University Center and the Commons will be open normal hours. Limited dining services remain available at both locations.



rt

The Shorthorn · Feb 15, 2021, 11:54 AM



Elias Valverde
@elias_valverde

On the 25th anniversary of Amber Hagerman's kidnapping, her mother Donna Williams along with Arlington Police renewed their pleas for information in the case. Amber's abduction led to the national Amber Alert system. @UTAShorthorn



City of Arlington and Arlington Police, TX



Peyton C. North
@peytonnorth

A group of Trump supporters carry flags and wave to cars passing the intersection of South Bowen and California Lane in Arlington. The group has rallied at this location every weekend since mid-September. @UTAShorthorn



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn

Breaking: Beginning Friday, UTA will no longer require masks on campus to align with Gov. Greg Abbott's recent executive order.

Story to come.

11:41 AM · May 20, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

26 Retweets 8 Quote Tweets 46 Likes



Cole Kembel
@ColeKembel

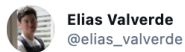
It's Election Night in Arlington! The races include the mayoral seat, as well as city council and AISD trustee positions.

Follow along for updates throughout the evening. Background on the mayor race 🗳️ @utashorthorn



Everything you need to know about the platforms of Arlington's 7 mayor...
With early voting for the May 1 general election already underway, each candidate has a different approach to improving the city.
🔗 theshorthorn.com

5:40 PM · May 1, 2021 · Twitter for Android



Elias Valverde
@elias_valverde

Finally had time to look through my drone footage from yesterday...

Fort Worth was hardly recognizable under near white-out conditions on Valentine's Day. @UTAShorthorn



The Shorthorn
@UTAShorthorn

Between the pandemic and the winter storm, we're doing our best to provide you with information.

Now, we want to hear from you. What do you want to know?

If you're unfamiliar with UTA Unfolded, here's how it works 📄



Facebook and Reddit

Over the past couple years, our newsroom got a better understanding of the different audiences on each social media platform. We have been able to note that readers on Instagram enjoy well-designed social cards and captivating images, our audience on Twitter likes to follow along as news breaks, and readers on Facebook and Reddit enjoy short captions that will tell them quick information.

Facebook groups have played a big part in social media reporting. While readers can find information on our main page, our staffers use their personal pages to inform readers in these community-specific groups.

