

# With Google+ Hangouts, the Guardian's open model of journalism finds a new arena in which to thrive



## About the Guardian

- Newspaper launched 1821
- First online content 1995
- Headquartered in London, UK

## Background

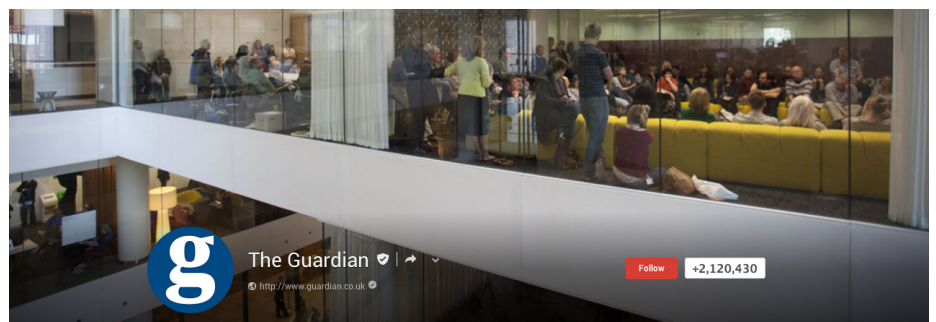
Having published its first newspaper on 5 May 1821, The Guardian today is known for its groundbreaking open journalism and multi-platform credentials. Because the way people consume news in the digital age has changed dramatically, the Guardian is committed to producing outstanding journalism and giving readers the whole picture, in whatever form they choose to receive it.

The Guardian's online readership has grown rapidly since it adopted its 'digital-first' strategy, which aims to ensure that readers around the world get news online as soon as it happens. The latest figures from comScore reveal that the Guardian website is the fifth most popular newspaper website globally, reaching over 36 million unique users in December 2012.

## Social media and the future of news

Social media plays a central role in this context. "It's about creating a conversation around the Guardian's content, both to help us reach new audiences, and to find out more about people who are interested in or connected to a story or issue," reveals Laura Oliver, Community Manager for guardian.co.uk. "We want to make connections with people who could add valuable insight to our journalism or take a story forward. Social media is very much a part of our open journalism strategy."

Google+ offers the opportunity for the Guardian to reach new potential readers as well as users of Guardian.co.uk. "We are looking to see who is viewing our content there, what conversations are started on Google+ around Guardian stories and how these differ from on other networks," Laura says.



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**- Laura Oliver, Community Manager, guardian.co.uk**

## Google+ content strategy and Ripples

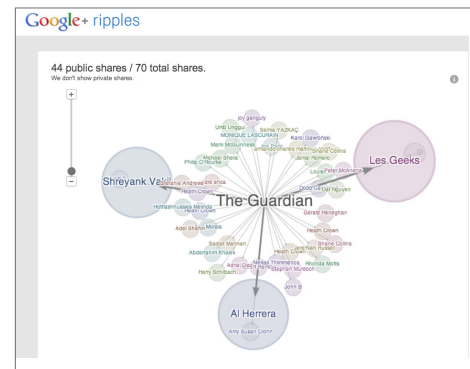
The Guardian's Google+ page launched in 2011, and since then the team has been working to understand what their Google+ audience responds to. "We've experimented with posting both different types of content (video, pictures, text, front pages) and items from different sections and specialities," Laura reports. "We post a few items each day and see particular interest from Google+ users in science and technology stories, though world news topics and hot political stories also go down well. We'll continue to track the activity on different types of posts as well as who is following our account."

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## The story so far

- Over 1.6 million followers on Google+
  - Most +1's on a post: 5,394
  - Most reshares on a post: 2, 052
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One Google+ feature makes the task of visualising content activity straightforward. “The Ripples tool is exceptionally useful for us as we try to understand why particular stories or posts on our page take off,” Laura says. “We use the information it gives us to get a sense of who the influential users are that we are in contact with and those that we are emerging on the radar of. It’s incredibly useful to be able to track the lifetime of a post in this way.”



## Simplifying sign-ins, driving conversions

The Guardian uses Google+ Sign-In to reduce the barriers for users wanting to sign into the site, which helps increase registration conversions. When Guardian readers sign in with their existing Google credentials, they enjoy a seamless experience between devices, and those with compatible Android devices can also download the free Guardian app. Using this feature has produced fantastic results for the Guardian. According to Tom Grinstead, Product Manager at the Guardian, “Google+ Sign-In is the most popular social sign-in method on our Android application, measuring 41% of our overall sign-in users.”

## Hosting Hangouts and stimulating change

In terms of fostering the open exchange of ideas, opinions and information that is so essential to the Guardian’s open journalism mission, the Hangouts functionality in Google+ has proved a perfect fit. The Guardian is making use of this high quality multi-user video chat feature in inventive ways. “For us one of the most interesting aspects of Google+ Hangouts is the ability to connect people from across the world in a live chat. We’re also exploring them as a way to allow our readers to pose questions and get even closer to the subjects of a story or discussion.”

The team actively promotes each Hangout to keep up momentum. For example, in the two weeks before its ‘Who controls the internet?’ Hangout hosted by journalist Jemima Kiss, the Guardian publicised the upcoming discussion on its +page and website. An interest form gave selected readers the opportunity to participate in the live session, and a Google+ Event invited users to tune in. The day before the Hangout, the Guardian posted an article written by Jemima about the topic. And when the Hangout featuring Jemima, four panelists and five readers kicked off, the Guardian embedded the live Hangout onto its website. Following the event, the Guardian also posted the video recording and highlights to its site and Google+ page so readers could revisit the discussion again at any time.



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## About Google+

Linking your site to your page unifies your +1's across, search, your Google+ page, and your homepage. Google+ pages let you share your content with new audiences and connect with them in more engaging ways. To learn more about Google+ pages, visit [www.google.com/+business](http://www.google.com/+business)

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So what might the future hold in this arena? “We’re interested to see how we could use Hangouts in the most inclusive way possible. For example, how can we manage them so as great a range as possible of our readers gets to pose a question in a debate? How do we make it appealing to non-Google+ users to watch the debate live or afterwards?” With the Guardian’s Google+ page currently engaging with over 1.6 million followers, the newspaper’s open model of journalism looks to have a bright future indeed.

