

Broadcasting & Tweeting a Black Studies Conference

by Howard Rambsy II | www.siueblackstudies.com

What was especially notable about the Black Thought 2.0 gathering was its live ustream broadcast and live-tweets with the hashtag #BT2Duke. The in-room audience for the panels included 60 or so people, but the online viewers increased the audience to nearly 1,000 during the course of the day.

The twitter activity taking place was dynamic and offered a way of reading what observers were taking away from the panelists' comments and how folks on twitter were receiving what was tweeted. Someone on the panel would make a point; someone in the room or watching on ustream would quote or paraphrase the quotation and post it on twitter; then others would re-tweet or comment. It was an engaging interplay, social media in action.

In a way, it was an odd experience to see so many people using their mobile devices and typing on computers in a conference setting. Often, people sit and listen as speakers present ideas. However, in this context and in the age of quick social media, audience members are free to multi-task, packaging and distributing information as soon as they receive it. (There are limits and new possibilities with this approach, which might be worth further exploration at some point).

To the extent that conferences are often closed off for those who cannot afford the costs of traveling to a distant place and staying in a somewhat pricey hotel, the broadcasting and twitter features of the conference were important steps for new ways of presenting and sharing. The setup offered broad and diverse audiences (from various locations) access to the people and ideas being presented.

Moving forward, Black Thought 2.0 will stand as a model for what's possible when it comes to making conference proceedings more easily and widely accessible.