

## Facebook adds trending topics to site (Update)

January 16 2014, by Barbara Ortutay

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Facebook began weaving hot topics into profile pages as it ramped up its challenge to Twitter as an online forum for tuning into current events

In a move that echoes Twitter, Facebook is adding a feature to its service that lets users know the topics of discussion that are trending among the site's 1.2 billion users, whether it's the death of a world leader or the Oscars.

Users in the U.S., U.K., India, Canada and Australia will begin seeing a list of trending topics on the right side of their Facebook pages in coming weeks. It will be available in more countries later on.

Trending topics won't be available on the mobile version of Facebook, but the company said it is testing the feature in its app for smartphones and tablet computers.

Facebook, which signaled last year that it would introduce trending topics at some point, said Thursday that the topics people see will be tailored to the user's interests and location. On Thursday afternoon, two users saw topics that included the Academy Awards, American Idol and Republican Sen. David Vitter from Louisiana.

Unlike Twitter, which simply lists topics, Facebook's trending section explains why a particular topic is trending. In this case, the 2014 Academy Award nominations were announced, American Idol named new judges and promised a new attitude and Vitter introduced a bill that would require people show photo IDs to make purchases with food stamps.

Chris Stuhar, a software engineer at Facebook who works on the site's news feed, said the feature is designed to uncover the most interesting content across the site and fits into the company's broader effort to make Facebook "your personal newspaper."

Facebook is already seen as a place where users go to find out what their friends and family are up to. Stuhar said learning that a friend got married or discovering what his friends are doing on a Friday night is "certainly news," but Facebook has a "much broader vision of where we want news feed to go in the future."

Facebook's new feature represents another move onto Twitter's turf.

Right now, Twitter is seen as the place people go to have public conversations about events as they happen, whether that's live TV, sports or news. Mirroring Twitter, Instagram and other services, Facebook in June introduced hashtags, the number signs that identify topics being discussed and that allow users to search for them.

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