

# Sage Research Methods

## Dissemination

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# Dissemination

## Introduction

This stage will:

- Explain the different ways you can disseminate your research
- Help you decide which method of dissemination is right for you
- Help you ensure that your research is discoverable and has measurable impact

Now that you've written up your research as a report, dissertation, or thesis, you should now turn your thoughts to how you will disseminate your research. You may have any one of a number of motivations for disseminating your research, and there are a number of ways to do so. However, it's important that you ensure that your research is usable by others.

## What Can I Do Next? How Do I Turn My Thesis Into Useable Research?

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### What Does “Useable” Mean?

Your research should be in a format which enables people (other than your supervisor(s), and your examiners) to have access to it and read it. Many [theses](#) are now made available

- online as e-books
- as abstracts entered into searchable databases.

Accessing theses is much easier than it used to be. But you will probably want to get your work “out there” in more conventional forms.

[Click here](#) to view the online version of the project planner for an optimal experience of its multimedia resources.

[MUSIC PLAYING] This is a question that I think points to very big debates within universities and outside universities in this country.

And these debates are about quality of research. And perhaps, no other area of research is more contested than social research. But at an individual researcher level, I think there are several ways of beginning to think about quality. Perhaps, the most straightforward is to think about quality as a judgement

that people make about particular items of research, of research processes, research outputs. And they make those judgements in a number of sites of assessment from decisions about publication, to decisions about funding, to awarding degrees including PhD degrees, to synthesizing research and choosing

particular pieces of research to be integrated into larger studies and so forth. And those decisions aren't made on the basis of prioritizing, so it's a negotiated standards and criteria that are specific to particular communities as well as to particular sites of assessment. Not to be slightly less abstracting,

but if you wanted to improve or think about the quality of your own research and defined quality as this form of judgement, what you need to do would be precisely to look into those sites and acquaint themselves their rules and their standards and their criteria and their ways of working and try to develop a working approximation in your head

of what should count as good research in your particular community of reference. But that's just one side of the story of how you want to begin to think about the quality of your own research. You might chose to think about quality in a slightly different way as well, which is quality has an attribute which

is intrinsic to certain kinds of research and to certain research outputs. Some research processes, some research outputs are in themselves, better quality in this than others. Ethical problems, misalignments of research questions, research

aims, research data, techniques and claims, methodological oversights, major and minor-- all those things are possible descriptors of poor quality in fields of research across all types of assessment. Now, if you think of quality in this way, one way of improving your-- let's call it-- critical

literacy would be to acquaint yourself with a whole range or a wide range of theories, methodologies, methods, philosophical assumptions that might be criss-crossing your field. And so to develop from these a working understanding of what should count as quality in relation

to each particular type of research. And on top of this, I think there is one more think that you need to be mindful of-- developing critical literacy in this process, it is important to engage with these different types of assessment and with these different types of research. But it is also important to practice.

Therefore, really taking advantage of opportunities that might come your way to do a peer review, to do engage in coaching, to be involved in research synthesis, it is really important to actually take advantage of those opportunities. And also, particularly at the early stages of your engagement with those, ask for feedback on your contribution

to these particular activities so that you can build your own learning

curve. It's very interesting that you said that some research conclusions are better in themselves, obviously suggesting that there are methodological criteria to help us say well, this is better or this is not so good. So what are those criteria?

How might I as a student understand how I might make those judgments? I think it is a very delicate judgement to make and you would be rather foolish, I think, to try and step outside any methodological assumptions and think of criteria that are sort of good and there once and for all.

But what you can do is to engage in critical reading of pieces in a range of methodological traditions and try and work out what should count as good research in each of them. And you will probably see as what others have seen through doing research on these issues,

you probably see that there are some generic common concerns. The further you move outside particular methodological frames, that they're more abstract and generic they become, and probably then more commonsensical they become as well-- things such as generic [INAUDIBLE]

of claims and of the research processes that people describe as having come behind the construction of those claims, things such as how virtuous-- and I'm using this word in full acknowledgement of its implications--

but how virtuous

the engagement of one particular individual was in research. That has ethical context and integrity in research, Independence in research. Thinking about the bias in certain way-- all those aspects are quite common across a number of methodological traditions. But they are rather commonsensical,

so you might need to start with that but actually really delve deep into each methodological tradition in order to understand what really should count and indicators criteria and definitions of what counts as good research should be constructed there. It's very interesting because you haven't mentioned those classic phrases like reliability and validity, which

if I asked the same question to some people those would be the terms that would come up. Why is that do you think? I think these terms have to come later with connotations that make them more connected to certain methodological traditions than to others. And people might have this reaction

to those terms that makes you think of methodological imperialism and methodological orthodoxy. And we don't actually want that. We want peo-

ple to engage with what counts as good research and with research quality on its own terms, rather than transforming it even more than it actually already is into a kind of political struggle.

And you'll hear a lot about paradigm words between quantitative and qualitative methodology. And I don't think that we have a need to go into that when we think about research quality. It's more about reflecting on your practice and developing your own critical literacy. That's great. And one thing that I hear a lot now from researchers

is this need to make research impact. What do we mean by impact and how can researchers have an impact with their research? Shall I start with the second part of your question, which is how could researchers think about ensuring or enabling

impact of their research. Now as you know, impact is a buzzword used in many public arenas, but it's also a very ambiguous term. As a PhD student, you are expected to comment on your potential contribution to knowledge and to academic practice in your own field.

And this a reasonable expectation and it can be defined as one form of academic impact. But the public story about impact goes way beyond that. It goes into issues of impact into the wider world, into enabling and

affecting change in particular social practices and social settings. And this is where the issue of impact

becomes more controversial, I should say. Now, we need to have both realism and vision, I think, in thinking about the impact. Short-term impact and a [INAUDIBLE] measurable impact, commercial impact-- they might not be within easy reach. And also, they might not necessarily

be the most important thing in relation to a particular field and particular types of research and of research projects. Therefore, impact might be best achieved over time and in teams rather than as an individual effort. But that does not mean that it is not important to actually engage in thinking critically about what

the point of your research is in the wider social context of your work. But it is really important to be thinking critically about what the point of your research is in wider social space, in the wider social world and allows meaningful ways of engaging with particular relevant communities of practiced professional communities that

might be connected to your field, such as health research and nursing, such as education and teaching. Now if I may, I will give a realistic long-winded example. If we think of professional practice, we can conceptual-

ize the ways in which it might touch a form of research

or it might be influenced by research in several ways. It is a multi-faceted kind of relationship. I'd like to give you just three examples. First of all, research is engaged in the business of constructing creating knowledge, but also providing facts, providing explanations,

providing demonstrations. And a practice can be conceptualized like some kind of consumer of that information in a rather contemplative, neutral way. And that is a perfectly legitimate way of thinking about how research might contribute to practice. But we can also think about practice, such as teaching,

such as nursing, but you can also think of practice in terms of a craft or the exercise of expertise, the exercise of skills. But if we think of it that way, then what practitioners do is try and draw upon whatever is available to them including research knowledge which might

be research outputs but also knowledge gained via engagement with researchers and in research processes. So they draw on everything that's available to them in order to gain increased control over the contingencies of their practice so that they become better at what they do. And that is, I think, a very straightforward way

of thinking about the roles that research can play in practice. But there is a question mark next to this, and that has to do with the ways in which very often this relationship is simplified in public discourses. To just define an example that is for the fields of education

and nursing particularly relevant is the whole idea of research being encouraged and invested in in order to provide access to works in times of questions in the public domain and emerging from practice. If you think of practice as an exercise of craft, then yes, it's a very legitimate way of thinking about it.

But if you think of practice in a very instrumental way, then it is very easy to see how this particular agenda might be high-jacked by a much narrower type of consideration. So you've got to be mindful of that. And onto that third example of a possible relationship between practice and research, and that

is thinking about professional practice as a form of social action in a public social space in which people, practitioners are exercising judgement based on very serious deliberation about the aims of what they do, about the values with which what they do is imbued, and about the consequences and the outcomes

of their actions. They engage in a constant process of making decisions based on such judgements, which is basically a process of ethical deliberation in the public space. Now if you think about practice in those terms, then the role of research is much more difficult to conceptualize but it does not mean that research does not contribute to that.

Practitioners draw upon implicit processes of deliberation. They draw upon tacit knowledge that is honed and refined to some degree through engagement with other worlds of research and other worlds of practice surrounding that particular field. So again, there is a very [INAUDIBLE] role for research to play there. Now to come back to your question, how to think about the impact of my own research-- perhaps as a PhD researcher-- well, there isn't much more-- there might be some projects, but in most projects, there isn't much point in thinking about exercising direct impact tomorrow.

But there is a great enough point, I would argue, in thinking about reflecting on those possible ways in which research and practice might come together and identifying ways to enable those connections to happen and therefore to enable co-construction of knowledge, mobilizing knowledge, developing knowledge together with other professional communities of

practice.

So we've come a long way from the Carl Marx dictum that the point isn't to understand the world, it's to change the world. Well, I suppose the point of advanced research in the wider social context is it really differs from one context to the other end, from one disciple to the other as well.

And just to give you an example, if you think for example of historical research, many historians would argue that the point of their research is pretty much to bear witness and that it shouldn't really be concerned with enacting change in the world in any different way. And then moving from that, you can

think about other fields of research in which the point of doing that research would be, for example, to change the language in which public issues are being couched in the public sphere. And again, that can be described as a very valuable form of impact. [MUSIC PLAYING]

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## What Practical Steps Can I Take?

### Advice from supervisors and examiners.

Take note of what your supervisors and your examiners tell you about how to pub-

lish material from your thesis. Supervisors have an obligation to do this and most examiners are more than willing to help.

Often the end of a successful viva takes the form of the examiners giving you advice on how and where to publish. They are experts and they have read your work, so their advice is generally very good. Take it.

### **Decide on a format.**

- **Book**

Theses need a deal of transformation to become good books. The purpose of a thesis is to demonstrate academic competence. The purpose of a book is to convey information to the reader. The difference here is between assessment and communication. Three things you can do include:

- To look at theses which have been turned into books which attracted attention, and looking at the associated books. Examples such as these can show you how this is done.
- UK publishers generally want a developed proposal. Their websites give clear instructions as to what they are looking for.
- It is generally a good idea to talk to academic publishers about book ideas. They regularly attend academic conferences. You can approach them there to pitch ideas and see if they are interested.

- **A series of articles**

You should be able to get more than one article out of a decent thesis. You might proceed as follows:

- Identify parts of your research which convey different aspects of the work.
- Identify journals (ideally more than one) to which each article might be submitted.
- Check what kinds of articles, particularly articles dealing with your topic, have been published in those journals. This will have been done to some extent in your literature review but update as necessary.
- Pay careful attention to “instructions to authors” and work in accordance with them.
- Check that your work meets all of the required specifications and submit.

### **Professional media.**

Work as you would with the features editor for a general newspaper or magazine.

- See what they publish.
- Check out the length and the style.
- Write it and send it in.

If you become a source, they will be back to you for more material in the future.

# What Is the Right Medium for Dissemination?

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## Books

### Benefits of writing a book.

- Writing a book allows you to say all that you wish to say.
- The emergence of e-books is making self-publishing easier.
- Publishers are generally efficient and straightforward to deal with.
- You may be able to publish a book more quickly than you would a journal article.
- Books are good for career development.

### Problems with writing a book.

- It can be hard to get research monographs published.
- Academic publishers usually require that your book is peer reviewed.
- In some subjects more notice is taken of journal articles than reviews.

### How do I get my book noticed?

- **Journals**

A journal review is worth having but journals review only a small proportion of things sent to them.

- **Social media**

If you have good social media contacts, these can help to push your book.

[Click here](#) to view the online version of the project planner for an optimal experience of its multimedia resources.

I'm Amy Mollett, and I'm a social media manager at the LSE. I've been involved in blogging projects for the last five years, helping academics and researchers think about how they use social media. My name is Cheryl Brumley, I'm an audio producer at The Economist, and also a research associate at the LSE.

I've been working on pod-casting for academics for about three and a half years now. I first got interested in social media probably about four or five years ago. We were working on some blogging projects at the LSE. The first one that we were working on was a British politics blog and also an impact blog.

So, thinking about how researchers can reach new audiences with their work. Cheryl and I were both working on editing some pieces that were coming in. And thinking about, OK, how can we make sure that these are reaching, not just policymakers and people across academia, but also NGOs and other people who might be interested in this work.

Twitter was the first platform that really got people's attention for how academic work can be shared online. And within a couple of months, we saw such a large number of academics, researchers, PhD students, Master's students all going online, all sharing their work on Twitter, and having these really great, dynamic conversations about how

they were citing new things, how they were using things in a different way. And that's when we realized, this is a new era, this is a new way of how academic communication is happening. And it's really quite exciting. These tools aren't new, but they also weren't being incorporated in the way that we thought they should be in academia.

And we became interested because we wanted to introduce a new generation of academics. We're writing a book for SAGE to come out next year on social media and also on multimedia. And it's about how they can incorporate social media and multimedia into their research lifecycle.

And rather than it being a burden to them, we want to show that it can actually be incorporated into their research lifecycle. So it doesn't feel like an extra thing they have to do. In this way, they'll be able to raise their own profile, alongside being able to share their research to wider publics.

So social media can be great for raising profiles online.

So if we think about how academics and researchers can be more visible, and be seen by others-- social media, having a Twitter account, for example, is a really great way to show what you're doing and to connect with others. Also, networking is really linked to that. If you're finding people at academic conferences, who

are using the same hashtag, if you're all in the same Facebook group, for example, you could really build those communities, find new people to speak at your events, find new people to work with, write with. And I also think that establishing yourself as an academic, raising your profile, linking to your own blog, and establishing yourself as a commentator on issues is another big plus.

Some academics have told us that's helped them, as well. I know that social media doesn't always come easy to some people, and it can feel quite daunting, especially when there's still the attitude out there that is quite a frivolous thing. But there are so many examples of it now being used across all sorts of disciplines.

It's really worth investigating. And that's why we're writing the book, really.

Well, what I think, if you're getting into academia, and especially if you're working on things across social issues and issues of health and science, what are you doing it for if you're not wanting to make wider impacts in the world?

Why are you an academic? And then these tools will help you reach people in ways that were never possible before. And I think that such a big opportunity that it's one that's hard to discount. Yeah, definitely. People go into academia because they want to make a difference, because they want to change something or address

an injustice. But I think the same passion is there, that's not changed, but social media is just a new way to build your profile, to try and make that difference. And what we really try and show in our book with SAGE is that it doesn't have to be a burden to you. It can actually help you in your research from the get-go.

You don't have to just think of it at the end as a dissemination tool. It's something that you can use during your research. One of the examples that we have in the book is if you're doing interviews anyways with people in the fields, and you can get the right clearance with your ethics commit-

tee, then why not

use those voices to make a podcast? Or why not find other academics, or find people to interview through social media? Yeah, or blog about your research before it goes into the journal. There are just so many possibilities. Whether you're a historian or a social scientist or working in physics research, there

are all sorts of opportunities out there across all those platforms. I think another thing is academia can sometimes be quite a lonely place, so when you're working on your PhD, for example, it can be a very alienating, and quite lonely experience sometimes. Social media, as well as fulfilling that networking and visibility role, it can also help you feel a little bit less

alone sometimes. And networking a bit more for the social side and a bit more for the support side, as well. It's often underestimated how much a PhD is, but, my gosh! I think social media could bring that more human side, and that more fun, supportive side, as well as the side when

we're thinking about impact, and the side when we're thinking about the difference that your research is going to make. And also, anyone doing

their PhD can hit what is called the trough of sorrows: when your research isn't quite what you thought it would be, and your data coming back isn't quite what you thought it would be.

Also, it's just a way to find other people and become reinvigorated by your topic again. I've seen a really thriving community of even paleontologists on Twitter. So it's just a way to be excited again about your subject when you reach that point, two or three years in, where

it becomes very difficult. I think the big blogs are really useful for academics and researchers. So not just the small looks run by one economist or by one historian, but the actual cross-university, multi-author blogs that are really popular.

So our example is the LSE blog. So we have a politics blog that looks at British politics, there's an American politics one, European politics. And they're great because you get to see who's writing about different things, who might want to connect with, network with, read about more, download their journal articles, that kind of thing. So it's just this first stepping stone.

Those big blogs that really great for that first stepping stone. And then

I think that you could also be sort of medium, or agnostic, as well, and think of academia out there on everything, from videos to podcasts. And, of course, I'm a podcast evangelist, so I'd say, if you look at different academics who

have started their own podcasts-- Nigel Warburton now has left academia to work on these things full-time time. There are two academics at Yale, who now have their own podcast on teaching, which is really fantastic. And then there's another podcast coming out of the States,

that is the only podcast that has a bibliography at the end. So, you can see now, that academics are thinking about these mediums differently, and about how they can get their research out there. So my advice to a new academic is to not just read journals articles.

Academia is on every medium now. That's true. If there's a press office, for example, check in with them, because they might be able to help you think about what is the most exciting for journalists, newspaper stories, that kind of thing. If there's a design team, they can help you things like info-graphics, things like videos, as well.

And just start meeting those experts around the university, as well as

the wider academic community. Make the most of the resources that are there.

[Click here](#) to view the online version of the project planner for an optimal experience of its multimedia resources.

I'm Amy Mollett. I'm the social media manager at the London School of Economics. I've been working on academic communication projects for about four or five years. Helping researchers think about how they can use blogs, and Twitter, and other social media platforms to share their research. I'm Cheryl Brumley. I work now at The Economist as an audio producer.

I'm also a research associate at the London School of Economics. I'm also writing a book with Amy on using social media and multimedia in your research. So I think, for students thinking about just getting into your research, you're just thinking about building a profiling,

and connecting with people. My immediate recommendation would be Twitter. Get your profile on there. And the way to do that would be to

search for people who are in your field. So if you're a PhD student in sociology, search for other PhD students who are in sociology. Connect with them. And sometimes that can feel very unnatural to sort of connect

with someone that you don't know digitally and sort of reach out. But everybody else is doing it and there's no reason why not to. So search for people who are on Twitter. Connect with people who are on Twitter. And start thinking about the ways that you can connect with these people in person as well. Look for events and for conferences that people are going to.

And just reach out that way. I think early on in your academic career you may feel as if, because there's somewhat of a hierarchy when you're just starting out, that you don't feel as if you're sort of an authority on a subject. I think social media has sort of changed that. And people, once they're on Twitter,

they have this community of other academics. And they also have people who aren't in academia following them, and they're following them as well. That sort of establishes you as a voice on your topic. And you can start doing that earlier now, rather than waiting until you're done with your

PhD and someone says that you are an authority on a topic.

You sort of make yourself an authority on a topic. That's true. And if you're particularly media minded or you know that your research is very current and the media will be very interested in that, whether it's conflict related or media related. Anything politics driven. This is the way that journalists are finding people.

A quick Google, a quick search on Twitter, to find those right people. And being interviewed for the BBC wont be on the top of every academics must do list. But for a lot of people thinking about funding, thinking about their impact, thinking about networking and where they want to go, and teach, and study after their PhD.

That's a great thing to have in you CV or in your impact file. And you never know who can find you. I mean the New York Times also has, I don't know if it's a team or it's one person, but they have someone devoted to finding sources for stories on Twitter now. That's how much, you know, it is a resource for people in the media, as well.

Another really great tool if you're working with data, and thinking about how you want to share that online, is to use one of the many free info-

graphics created tools. So I think Infogr.am is one. Also, think about if you have access to a design team at your university or your research Institute. There's some amazing infographics out there. Interactive ones or just plain JPEG ones.

And again that's a really exciting way of using-- that's a really exciting way of using new platforms and new forms of media to show your research. And then some sort of less obvious examples. Most people have smartphones now. There are recording apps on smartphones.

And I think sometimes you have conversations as an academic that you just-- Sometimes you have conversations with other academics or colleagues that you can record. And not just talking about using it for podcasting. But I think recording conversations is a great--

as long as you have permission, recording conversations is a great tool. And also I use my recording apps quite a lot to help me write, as well. And what I have heard referred to as a barf draft. So I'll record myself before I start writing and then I just write everything I say.

And then I revise them there. So record apps, I think, are sort of the unsung heroes for academics. So it can be, even for me as a Social Media

Manager, it can sometimes be tricky to think about, OK. What new platforms should the university be on? Or what new platforms can I recommend

to academics and researchers? Lots of people say look what 12-year-olds are using, and then think about how that might be applicable. Sometimes that example is dead on the money. So we think about the popularity Instagram that's really taken off in the last three or four years.

When that first came out people were just using it as very, very selfie lead platform, just to kind of share little snippets of their life. But now pretty much all universities are on it. Lots of research projects are also using it. So if you've got photography based say an ethnography project, for example. Or a community or social justice related research project.

Instagram, we've seen a few examples of that being these very nicely to share behind the scenes things of what's going on. Share some great profile shots of interviewees or various other people. I'm signed up to a few different email alerts. So things like TechRadar, Econsultancy, Social Media Week

is a great one. And they're also much more niche sites. So this one I fol-

low called Levo League or "Lee-vo" League, which has some great resources to do with social media and work. More specifically tailored to women and has this sort of gender angle. So there's a lot about fair pay, gender pay gap,

workplace culture, as well as building a profile on social media. So all these things are sort of part of the same issue. And there are lots of niche sites that you can get information from. You can use Twitter in the very, very beginning stages. You can even use Twitter in your literature review.

You can use it when you're gathering data. And then, later on in the research life cycle, you can use it again. Yes. There are lots of ways you can keep using social media throughout the whole life cycle of your research. So next after data gathering would be writing up your research. So you might want to keep a blog about that. You might want to blog for a large institutional blog

about that. Next would then be dissemination. So once you've got your final general articles, your final research projects, everything's tied up. You'll want to be showing that online through a blog, through social me-

dia. And we were saying earlier about making sure that people have a presence online. Once you've got that presence, this is exactly why you'll be wanting to use that presence

and make the most of it. Because then you'll have your network. You'll be able to share exactly what you've just published. And hopefully immediately get some great results from that. Going back to how these things first start out for quite trivial things.

And then they can sort of evolve into being about more serious things. And we've seen that, as you said, in the case of Instagram. First it's just being used to share selfies with your friends, and now it's being used for social justice causes. So I think when you see a new sort of app, or you see a new sort of social media platform,

I think it's easy to grow cynical about it. Especially if you're really over-worked. But people are using it in ways that are really unexpected. So I think sort of staying with that trajectory and not growing cynical about the means in which you can use it for your own research. I think is key. And it's always OK to be the best person on something.

Just because nobody else at your university is using Instagram for a re-

search project it doesn't mean it's not right for you. Have a look worldwide. Have a look, see what other people across the world are doing. Because the UK isn't always the first to do things. The US is a great example with podcasts. People kind of got on that first.

But look internationally, I think, is a great example.

- **Send copies to key people**

You may find it useful to send copies to key people in your field.

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## Journal Articles

### Benefits of writing journal articles.

- You will almost always get comments from reviewers if you submit a piece to a journal. Mostly these are useful.
- If a journal turns you down, use the useful comments and try submitting to another journal.
- If asked to revise and resubmit with substantial revisions, you should always do so.
- Journal articles are generally highly-ranked in relation to career develop-

ment.

- Journal articles should always be peer reviewed. There is something of a fetish about this! But it helps sustain the value of any knowledge claims you make.

### **Problems with writing journal articles.**

- Journal articles are necessarily shorter and can often deal with only one aspect of a research project. (But you may be able to publish several articles based on your research.)
- There is a lot of pressure on journals, particularly those with a high impact factor (lots of citations).
- Rejection rates are high.

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## **Reports**

Using the web helps to disseminate your [report](#). You can create a PDF version of your report and put it on your web page.

Think about the title carefully. That will influence the number of hits when people are using web searches.

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## **Press Coverage**

If you want your research to be covered in the press, you will need to prepare a

press release.

### **Problems with press coverage.**

- It is generally simplified and sketchy.
- It can be inaccurate.

### **Important preparations before arranging press coverage.**

- Never go with press coverage unless there is available a full report on the research on the web. People need to see what you really did say.
- Ideally, be able to point to peer-reviewed versions of your work.

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## **Professional Media Coverage**

Professional media is important and somewhat neglected by many disciplines. Field-based researchers are more clued up as the value of the professional media in disseminating their research.

### **Benefits of professional media coverage.**

- Professional magazines will often cover research in adequate detail.
- The journalists have enough expertise to make a decent job of this.
- Getting your work out to this sector can often lead to real impacts in terms of policy and practice.

Read more about [writing and publishing a book](#)

Read more about [writing and publishing a journal article](#)

Read more about [disseminating my research online](#)

## How Do I Write and Publish a Book?

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### Getting Started

There are some good guides to writing available, for example Wallace and Wray's *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*.

It is a good idea to begin by consulting one of these. You will probably already have developed a book proposal. If not, [here](#) is an excellent guide to writing one.

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### Looking at Examples

As with everything else, looking at examples of published books in your field will help you a lot. For example:

- Select five or six academic books you like and have found useful
- See how they are structured
- See if any of them has a structure which will work for you
- If not, compare those you have reviewed to work out how you will do things differently.

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## Create a Structure

An easy way to figure out how you might structure a book is to create a contents list and annotate it. You have then specified, at least in outline, what will be in each chapter. You may well have done this for your proposal so you can expand on your existing work here.

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## Set a Timetable

You should aim to have each chapter written up by a specific date. This may slip, but don't let it slip too much. Make sure that any amendments to the timetable are recorded against the original. This will enable you to keep a systematic check on your progress.

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## Working Through Your Material

It is usual to work through your book by writing chapters in the sequence they appear in your annotated contents list. This has the advantage of enabling you to connect what is said in each new chapter with what has gone before. This is not the only way to work, but it is the easiest—linearity is often appropriate.

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## Practicalities to Consider When Writing Your Book

### Find a way of working.

Choose a way of working that suits you and stick to it. This may be a matter of

writing a certain number of words every day, day after day. It may be a matter of writing in short, intensive bursts and taking breaks between them. If you do the latter, try to timetable in your periods of intensive work.

### **Set up a place to work.**

Choose a place to work that suits you. You will almost certainly be working on a computer. Set up an ergonomically efficient work station. Bad backs and Repetitive Strain Injury are not fun, so you should take advice from occupational health on how to ensure that your working area is safe. If you are an academic, you may well find it easier to work at home where there are fewer distractions.

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## **Editing Tips**

- It is easier to take out than to put in.
- Don't worry too much about length in your first draft.
- Get the words into electronic files (always backed up at least in triplicate).
- When you have a draft, cut to length.
- Cutting is first done by removing extraneous or duplicated elements in the text.
- Then go over what you have written, remembering always that shorter is better.
- Eliminate unnecessary adjectives and adverbs—the word “very” can be overused, for example. The end result will be punchier.
- As a crude rule, two-thirds is always better in terms of the relationship of

final draft to original draft.

## How Do I Publish a Journal Article?

Journal articles have very high status in academia. In the physical, biological, and biomedical sciences, peer-reviewed journal articles have the highest status when it comes to ranking, appointments, and promotions. In some social sciences they rank below research or scholarly monographs written as books, although in most disciplines there is still an expectation you will publish journals articles

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### Things to Remember When Writing a Journal Article

- Identify the journal(s) you are going to target with the piece.
- Make sure they will publish pieces of the length you intend to write. Most social science journals will publish pieces of up to around 8,000 words but some want shorter pieces and biomedical journals often want very short pieces.
- Read over the notes for contributors carefully and do what they tell you.
- Look over the membership of the editorial board of the journal. It is usual for at least one of the referees for any piece submitted to be a member of the board. It might be helpful to think of the following:
  - You can often work out which one(s) might get your submission.
  - Don't attempt to please them in any slavish fashion but do have a look at their work and think about their approach.
  - In an ideal world, somebody who is criticized in a piece will take it on

the chin and appreciate that this is how science works. But this does not always happen!

- Many journals have “lines” of some sort. So, for example, among the three leading UK Sociology journals:
  - The *British Journal of Sociology* tends to be more quantitative and to reflect the views of the more positivist end of the discipline.
  - *Sociology* and *Sociological Review* are more eclectic although the latter has a tendency toward qualitative work.
  - In some disciplines, Economics being an extreme case, journals often take a very hard methodological line but in most of the real social sciences, this is not the case.

However, don’t waste your time submitting work to a journal which is not likely to publish the kind of thing you have written. Look at what has been published in the journal to see what they do publish.

- Look for what else has been published in the journal dealing with the issues you are writing about. It is very likely that the author(s) of those pieces will be approached to referee your submission. As with members of the editorial board, do not pander to them, but do take note of what they have said and how they said it.
- In some disciplines and fields, journals are ranked, usually by citation indices but, in some cases, by the ratio of papers submitted to papers accepted. The rank of a journal may matter for research assessment processes and for appointments or promotions. It is now much less significant for bringing your piece to the notice of potential readers. People use web

searches: They will find anything published in almost all journals these days.

## How Do I Disseminate My Research Online?

The crucial thing here is to produce a document that can be made available online, usually in the form of a PDF. You can then use the following methods to disseminate your work online:

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### Email Lists

- **Academic and related lists**

These have a policy of not allowing attachments. But they are very happy to receive emails which summarize a piece of work and include a link to the full document. Usually you have to be signed up to a list to disseminate to it. But you can sign up for that purpose and then sign off if the list is not otherwise of interest to you.

- **Moderated public email lists**

There is a large range of public email lists which are run by moderators. Many of these straddle the academic/practice divide and you can submit to them on the same basis as to the academic lists.

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## Twitter

If you tweet, then do so about your work. You should think about using appropriate hashtags, so that your tweets are discoverable.

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## Blogging

If you blog, then blog about your work. If you follow bloggers who are likely to be interested in your work, then contact them, usually by their email, and send them a description and link. They will often comment on the piece and include a link to it.

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## Google Scholar

Google Scholar has a clear set of instructions about what you should do to get your work noticed by their search robots. Follow these and Scholar will find you.

# How Do I Present My Research at a Conference?

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## Why Should I Present at Conferences?

Academic conferences are the shop windows of the academy. You present so that:

- Your work gets out there. Other people know what you have to say.
- You get yourself known. Other people know who you are and what you do.
- You make contacts with people who work in the field and people who might publish your work.

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## Five Forms of Conference Presentation

- **Plenary sessions:** One or two of the well-known figures in a discipline or field get to have their say on a particular issue. If you are at the level where you are being invited to speak in these sessions, then you already know what you need to do to get noticed.
- **Panel discussions:** A set of three to five people talk about a topic. These can be very good and people do attend them. Often they are organized by sub-groups of the academic body organizing the event. You get invited to participate by being known to the organizers of that sub-group.
- **Thematically organized sessions for paper presentations:** Here you present a formal paper, often circulated in advance or available as a download or on a conference CD. These days you do not “read a paper.” Rather, you go through key themes, usually with the aid of PowerPoint presentation. As with panel discussions, these are often organized by sub-groups of the academic body. Most conference organizers will also request submissions for thematic sessions from members of the relevant organization. You can make a submission for a session or strand of sessions.
- **Open sessions for paper presentations:** These used to be the norm at academic conferences. Now they are essentially a residual category for papers within the general interests of the conference but which do not fit into thematic sessions.
- **Poster presentations:** Here you make a poster for a session where people can come and look at your poster and you tell them about your research. This is usually a form of presentation for postgraduate students.

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## How Do I Find Out About Conferences?

Conferences are announced through email lists and the websites of the organization holding the conference. There are now both national learned societies and international learned societies. For example, the British Sociological Association, the European Sociological Association, and the International Sociological Association all organize regular conferences and you might submit proposals for papers to any or all of them.

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## Why Should I Submit an Abstract to a Conference Organizer?

Abstracts matter because:

- Papers are selected by conference or theme organizers on the basis of them.
- Most conferences publish a list of abstracts both online and in the paper documentation.
- People choose which sessions to go to in part on the basis of the abstracts so this is one way to attract an audience.

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## How Do I Make the Most of Attending a Conference?

- **Attending sessions**

You can move between thematic strands at a conference or you can stick

with one thematic strand. The latter often works better. Not only do you get to know a set of people with similar interests, you also get people to sit with at meals and talk to in the bars. A good thematic strand is one in which an ongoing debate develops. This draws on the papers as they are presented and attempts some kind of synthesis based on all of them.

- **Coffee breaks**

Coffee breaks matter a lot, as they are often where you have the opportunity to “network.” Do not be afraid to approach people you want to talk to.

- **Meeting publishers**

Conferences are a great way to meet publishers. You can make appointments in advance, but do not be afraid to go up to a stand and say, “I would like to talk to you about a proposal—when would be convenient for you?” Publishers are always looking for material and you might be able to deliver just what they are looking for.

## **Tell Me More About Raising Public Awareness of My Research**

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### **Raising Awareness Through Books**

This is more difficult than it used to be some 50 years ago. In the past, mainstream

social science books, particularly in Sociology and Politics, sold to an audience among the informed public. That is no longer the case.

However, it is worth looking at how the physical and biological sciences have managed to raise awareness of research through the use of popular versions of their work. Many of these publications are written by science journalists. Science journalists are usually well informed and understand how science is done and how to deal with knowledge it produces.

Social scientists should be prepared to write popular books. Ethnographies used to sell very well. These were not only ethnographies of the strange and exotic, but ethnographies which spoke to people about how they and others live ordinary lives.

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## Raising Awareness Through Radio

There are radio programs in the UK and on US public radio which are capable of dealing with important issues, informed by social science. One very good way of raising public awareness is by making contacts with the producers of such programs when you think you have something to say which will be of interest to them.

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## Raising Awareness Through Learned Societies

In the UK, individual learned societies and the Academy of Social Sciences have a program of raising awareness about what social science does. Too often this takes the form of a rather crude assertion of the utility of social science for various

public ends. But there is scope for a critical voice to some extent. Make use of their machinery and of the public relations/press offices of your own university or other institutions.

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## Raising Awareness Through Local Press

Local press contacts arranged by your university's or institution's press office can actually be very helpful when it comes to getting local and regional material into the local press and discussed on local broadcast media. Again, radio is perhaps the most useful medium here, and local radio shows can be a very good way of getting something out to the public.

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## Raising Awareness Through National and International Press

Letters to the serious press on topics related to your research are a way of getting something out there. It also identifies you as someone who has something to say in that area. Journalists are then likely to contact you in the future about the issue. Mostly, you have to respond when an issue is current, but you can always challenge on the basis of your research and make it clear that this is what you are doing. New online news websites such as [The Conversation](#), where all articles are authored by academics, are another good option.

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## Raising Awareness Through Think Tanks

If you have something which is of interest to a “think tank,” then let them know about it. Think tanks exist at the interface of the academy and the media. They can be a good conduit for spreading the word.

## How Do I Disseminate My Research Through Blogs and Social Networks?

Blogs and social networks are increasingly important ways of getting your work noticed:

- If you blog yourself, talk about your work in your blog.
- Identify bloggers who regularly blog in relation to the area of your research. Send them something about it. For the big bloggers, you might send a copy of a book, although they sometimes like electronic copies better. Getting your work noticed and commented on by the people whose blogs on a topic are read by others is a really good way of getting things out there.
- If you use Facebook or Twitter, then make sure something about your work is on your page. Keep it updated and try to include visuals.
- Make sure you have something about your work on your university web page. Put in links to fuller versions.
- Don’t be shy about using relevant email lists. Send out an email summarizing your work with a link to a fuller version.

## How Do I Maximize the Impact of My Research?

To maximize the [impact](#) of your research, get your research noticed. Get it talked

about, blogged about, tweeted about, reviewed. There is so much information out there. On the other hand, it is also easier to find things than it has ever been before.

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## How Can I Maximize the Impact of My Book(s)?

### 1. Publishers' announcements

Publishers' marketing departments know their job. Work with them and do what they tell you to do. Paper catalogues are perhaps on their way out but web pages matter a great deal.

### 2. Reviews

Reviews in journals were the traditional way in which people found out what books were out there and got a view on them. They take a long time to come out and space in paper journals is limited. Not everything gets reviewed much, if at all. That said, reviews remain extant. People will find them later in literature searches and that will lead them to your work. Try to get your work reviewed by helping your publisher to target journals. Web reviews, particularly by bloggers, are increasingly important.

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## How Can I Maximize the Impact of My Journal Article(s)?

1. Special issues of journals work better than ordinary issues because people come to them for something else in your general area and then find your work as well.
2. Careful abstracts and carefully chosen keywords will draw people to you in

their web searches.

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## How Can I Maximize the Impact of My Research in Other Forms?

1. Remember, the web is key.
2. Publicize your work through your own web page, the web page of any research group and of your department.
3. Have good links to your work.

## How Can I Ensure That My Research Is Discoverable?

You want to help people to find out about your research. Think back to your own literature search. You wanted to be able to easily find relevant material; help others to do it now.

It is all about the web. You must learn how to make things “discoverable” on the web. Much of this relates to the metadata which describes and links to the written-up versions of your work. Get the metadata right and then web searches are more likely to turn up what you have done. [Here](#) is a good link on metadata.

## What Are Citations and Altmetrics?

One common measure of the impact of a piece of research is to see how many people have cited it in their work.

However, we can now add lots of other measures to that. Altmetrics refers to all possible ways in which we might be able to measure something about a piece of written work. For example, for e-journal pieces we can see how many views they have had. We can see how often things are referred to in Twitter, in blogs, in any form which is publicly accessible in an electronic form and connected to the web.

Academic careers are managed and they are increasingly managed by reference to data. People going for promotion or new jobs will find that their publications are looked up on something like [Publish or Perish](#), which draws on Google Scholar. Lots of citations always look good. Increasingly, other metrics are likely to be deployed as well.

## How Do I Use My Research Project as the Basis of Further Study?

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### Why Do Further Research?

No research project will ever give us complete knowledge of any issue. When we do research in messy reality, we always encounter new issues which require investigation. So unless we are going to retire or change careers and never do any social research ever again, then we will use this piece of research as a spring-board for more research.

When you write up your work as a dissertation, thesis, journal article, or book, your conclusion identifies “topics for further research.” If you haven’t already done this in that way, then do it now.

These are the key questions you have to ask about taking your research to the next level:

### **1. On what basis will I do this new research?**

- a. Students who have done a dissertation frequently move up to doing a research degree, usually a PhD. In this, they extend the work they have done at Bachelor’s or Master’s level.
- b. Students who have completed a doctoral thesis sometimes do post-doctoral research. This is becoming more common in the social sciences and is usually funded by a fellowship award.
- c. Alternatively, people who have obtained their first academic job can use their “scholarly and research time” in order to do the research, or seek funding for a research project. It is possible, and indeed sensible, to do both.
- d. You can seek funding for the research from an appropriate body. This could be a research council, a foundation, your own employing institution, or a charity or government body with an interest in the topic.

### **2. How can I develop a research proposal?**

This needs to:

- a. Draw on the work you have done

- b. Genuinely take it forward into a new area for investigation
- c. Investigate the topic/issue in a new way.

You should not attempt simply to replicate your original work. It is useful sometimes to carry out a very similar project but one located in a different context, or set of contexts. That can be the basis for very useful comparative work. Here you are treating the original project rather like a pilot.

You should draw on new work on the topic which informs your understanding. In simple terms, you have to update your literature search.

### **3. Will I do this work on my own?**

You may want to work on your own, or you may want to work with an existing team. You may want to seek new collaborative partners.

Often you will have identified other people who have done research of interest to you. It may be a good idea to develop a collaborative research proposal. You will plan to integrate your existing work with theirs and take things forward jointly; many funding bodies like this approach.

### **4. Am I interested and motivated enough to go on and do this new research?**

Quite often at the end of a large piece of research all you want to do is relax and never look at the issue again. If this attitude persists, so be it. However, after a break you often get a second wind. If you do, go with it.

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