

ESTABLISHING YOURSELF AS AN EXPERT THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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WHAT YOU MIGHT TAKE AWAY TODAY


- Inspiration
- Pointers on how to get started in establishing yourself
- Strategic intent in communicating

WHO ARE YOU?

- MA/PHD?
- Just starting <-> almost finished
- Social science, humanities, medicine, engineering, natural sciences, professional schools?
- How many blog?
- How many on Twitter or other microblogging site?


INHERENT DESIRE TO SHARE YOUR RESULTS

- You are becoming a producer of knowledge
- Results are for humanity
- You like to share your results
- If there is interest in your research topic, how will they find you?
 - Other academics
 - Journalists
 - Policy-makers
 - Public



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PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Clearly, the world (academic, public) is networked
 - Some lessons from sociology
 - Mark Granovetter "The Strength of Weak Ties"
 - Ron Burt "Structural Holes"
 - Talk at Sauder on Friday "The Big Effects of Small Talk in the Workplace"
 - Information is the coin of the academic network realm
 - Join informal academic networks as an expert
 - Evidence and portfolios in selections
 - Some of the information that travels through networks
 - Project/collaboration ideas
 - Conference invitations
 - Upcoming job searches
 - Citations
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SOME CAVEATS



- “First discovery”-based research
- Impostor syndrome
- Time commitment
- Your supervisor/committee and perceptions by other researchers

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COMMUNICATIONS AS A FUNNEL: FROM RESEARCH TO PUBLICS



- Greater audience, less space/depth
- Big audiences to recruit potential listeners
- Guide audiences from initial curiosity to substantial research
- Integrate different levels of communication
- Strategy = gravity
- Media that are appropriate to your expertise

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1ST STEP: CONSUME RESEARCH

Do what academics do, i.e. know your field!

- What is your field?
- Be an active searcher and reader
- Reflect on your search strategies and behaviour as reader
- Seek out different media
- Identify platforms/outlets that you want to target
- Follow those outlets even more carefully
- Replicate academic principles of quality



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2ND STEP: START COMMUNICATING



- Practice, reflect, practice, reflect, share, reflect...
- Face impostor syndrome head-on
- Content? Depends on stage of research
 - Project ideas
 - Observations about other research
 - Thinking out loud about methodological choices
 - Describe dead-ends
 - What would a “smoking gun” be?
 - (Puzzles from) preliminary results
 - Results, presented in different ways
 - Abstracts for the public
 - 300-word-thesis
 - Policy implications

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3RD STEP: COMMUNICATE ON DIFFERENT PLATFORMS

With communications funnel in mind, be active on different kinds of platforms

- The more focused on academic expertise you are, the more academic the platforms
- Develop a plan as to your expectations of different platforms
- Understand what markers of expertise/merit/quality specific platforms might employ



ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

You know what to do, or you need to attend a different workshop...

But, these form the backbone of your expertise claims!



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QUASI-ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

- Editors, not peer-review
- Fast publication schedule
- Short format
- (Seeking) broader audiences
- Where to look?
 - Department/program website, UBC publications
 - Academic & professional association newsletters, listservs
 - "Near" academia, i.e. foundations, large advocacy
 - Fields/topics that matter to public but are not/no longer mirrored by academic disciplines
 - Specialized projects, e.g. theconversation.com/ca
 - Consulting



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BLOGS

- Full editorial control
 - Terminology/categorization for placement
 - Edit/delete earlier posts
 - Can migrate with you
- Chronologically organized
- Less formal = more personality
- Opportunity for reflection
- Variable length and detail, multimedia
- Collective projects possible
- Format might help overcome writers' block
- Built around links, including different levels in funnel
- Opportunities for debate



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STARTING TO BLOG

- Start writing for yourself, reflect
- Build up “back-library”
- Short posts can be considered carefully, but written quickly
- Go public
- Don't expect, but imagine an audience (initially)
- Write regularly, beware of over-ambitious publication schedule
- Look at your blog, compare it to others, develop strategies appropriate to audience
- Focus on establishing substantive expertise
- All communications in academic and quasi-academic outlets, including drafts discarded, are potential blog material
- Interlink posts
- Comment on other blogs
- Submit guest posts to other blogs



IDEAS FROM MY EXPERIENCE

- blogs.ubc.ca/Mongolia
- Mongolia as “obscure” subject matter
- 7+ years of blogging
- Over 500 posts, no less than one per month
- What go-to information can you provide? Eg listing of non-Mongolian mining companies or Mongolia Scorecard
- Monitor: Google Analytics
- Integrate with news cycle: spikes of attention driven by elections



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MICROBLOGS

Twitter, Facebook, Weibo, etc.

- Potential for/risk of “viral” posts
- Direct and targeted engagement of gatekeepers
- Easily integrated with other platforms
- (Increasingly) professional, research tool for journalists, headhunters, etc.

START MICROBLOGGING

- Understand technology, underlying structure
- Engage
- Note successes
- Easily monitored: Twitter Analytics



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OTHER FORMATS

Ever-evolving, but

- Podcasts
- Visually-based social networks
- 3MT
- Academic social networks
 - LinkedIn
 - Academia.Edu
 - ResearchGate
 - Google Scholar Profile



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REMINDERS

- You are transitioning from consumer to producer of expertise
- Be professional
- Be aware and think strategically
- Recall that your expertise is built around your research



ASK QUESTIONS AND GET TO IT!!!

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