ESTABLISHING YOURSELF AS AN EXPERT THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
Graduate Pathways to Success – Oct 3 2018
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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

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
SOME CAVEATS

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

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

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

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
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!

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

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
**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

**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

**OTHER FORMATS**

Ever-evolving, but

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