

# 10 ways to use social media to get your research noticed

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*In this blog, Amy Mollett, Cheryl Brumley, Chris Gilson and Sierra Williams – authors of [Communicating Your Research with Social Media: A Practical Guide to Using Blogs, Podcasts, Data Visualisations and Video](#) – offer 10 tips that can help you to utilise social media to ensure your research reaches a wider audience.*

## **Recognise your social and digital media efforts as part of the research process**

We are aware that social media can often feel like an additional burden to academics' already busy workload. To avoid social media burnout, find out where these tools might fit more systematically in the wider network of interactions informing and communicating your research. Research has always been a social process and there are bound to be many opportunities for you to explore these social aspects further. Our book aims to provide a framework to help you explore different ways of employing social media throughout the research lifecycle.

### **You don't have to go it alone**

There are a lot of successful single-author academic blogs out there. But there are a good deal more that haven't been successful. If you're only just starting out, you don't have to set out your own blogging stall. Internet search engines can tell you about blog collectives in your subject area which can provide a forum for your work as well as advice and encouragement. Get in touch with the editor and let them know you're interested in writing for them.

Failing that, put your work up on [Medium](#). It's easy to do, and easy to share. The same applies for other types of social media. Many research organisations provide resources, training and support for media production such as podcasts and video. A conversation with a like-minded colleague might lead to a partnership where you share the burden of learning and applying a new skill, keep up motivation and hold each other to account.

### **Blogs: write about what you know and what you've learned**

Starting to blog can be very daunting at any career stage, so where do you begin? What do you write about? The easiest way to get going with blogging is simply to write about what you know already – summarising your research, aims and interests so far, as well as the background to how you got to where you are today. It's also very helpful to write "Today I Learned" (TIL) posts, discussing what you've been reading recently, and any new theories, techniques or methods you've discovered that others may also be interested in.

### **Blogs: define and know your audience**

Your cumulative experience and expertise will no doubt lead to many different directions for readers to explore further and apply. Central to this, is also having a clear idea of your audience and who you are trying to reach. Very rarely does pitching your research to "the general public" ever lead to clear messages and engagement. Think carefully about who you are trying to reach, what your take-home message to this group is, and what tangible thing they can do. Having a clear understanding of action - and communicating this concisely - will guide your audience to further participation. Equally, you may find this a useful exercise if you've been bogged down with analyses for weeks!

### **Blogs: know what's going on and plan**

One of the hallmarks of academic blogs that are most read and are best regarded is their knowledge and engagement with their topics. So find out who's blogging and writing in your space already; follow them on Twitter and add them to your RSS feed reader. Knowing what others are saying can help inspire you to write. Being aware of what's going on in the wider world also helps you to be responsive. Are there major policy discussions going on that are relevant to your research and work? Then write a short piece summarising what's going on, why your work is relevant, and what some next steps might be.

### **Share the many different “voices” of your research**

Plot a narrative arc for your research leading to your results, and hone in on specific events that illustrate your findings. Who or what are the protagonists of your research and how can you portray these voices, situate common (mis)understanding or conflicting viewpoints on the topic and bring these perspectives to life? Podcasts are a versatile format for packaging these stories. Communicating through this medium can add a level of sensory richness to cold, hard facts.

### **Eye-catching and clear data visualisations and infographics**

Students, researchers and academics from all disciplines are increasingly sharing data visualisations and infographics in their blogs and social media to better tell the stories in their data and enhance audience understanding. Think about what data you have access to, what story you want to tell, what you want to achieve, and who your target audience might be. At the design stage consider working with professional graphic designers at your university who can make sure that the style and message of your work is clear and that your data aren't distorted.

### **Extend the life of your events by using video**

Rather than only having one public event about your new research project – over and done with in the space of two hours and limited to perhaps only a few dozen attendees – use photos and videos on social media to record the lecture, meaning your work has the potential to be found by a larger audience over a longer period of time. The London School of Economics public events [programme](#) often records videos of lectures that get thousands of views, and galleries such as Nottingham Contemporary emphasise the value of disseminating the ideas of their artists through video tours and interviews for international audiences.

### **Provide a link to an open-access version of the primary research**

It can be incredibly frustrating for scientists and non-scientists alike to come across fascinating research findings through social media only to find the full research behind a paywall. Luckily there are plenty of open access options available for researchers. Publish in an open access journal or provide a copy of your research in a disciplinary specific or institutional repository. Make sure to link to the full research when sharing and discussing online. Also, share your data if you can! (Disclaimer: one of the authors of this piece works for an open access publisher).

### **Finally, social media might not be the best option for everyone**

The adoption of social media in research settings is already widespread. Our book is full of examples of how using new formats to communicate research has been done well and with significant results. But we also recognise that this kind of engagement is not for everyone and, indeed, does involve considerable more risks for some than others. The research community is increasingly recognising the social potential for research and social media offers new options for researchers to act in more social ways.

But this isn't a one-way process: the application of social media technologies, like the technologies that came before it, is also shaping research in positive and negative ways. We need to be alert to how these dynamics are affecting researchers and the research environment. There is still plenty more work to be done by institutions to recognise and value these kinds of activities as well, so speak to your administrators and research managers about how such practices can be better supported and rewarded. Research has a powerful role to play in society and it is time we started asking how the media we use to communicate our research is helping us achieve our aims.

**Amy Mollett is social media manager at the London School of Economics. Cheryl Brumley is senior producer at *The Economist*, where she produces daily podcasts on economics, politics and science. Chris Gilson is managing editor of [USAPP](#) – American Politics and Policy, the blog of the LSE's United States Centre. Sierra Williams is community manager at PeerJ, the peer-reviewed open access publisher of research in the life sciences. [Communicating Your Research with Social Media](#) is out now.**