Developing a publication strategy in the Internet Age

Description

[This is work in progress]

What are my objectives?

I probably want to

- complete a PhD within a reasonable time frame
- get financial support during my study
- maximise career opportunities after the PhD
- be part of a network of scholars and/or industry contacts
- exert influence in my chosen sphere
- leverage peer reviewed publications
- make a significant contribution to knowledge.

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Should I publish (articles, conference papers, chapters) during my PhD study?

Most scholars say â??yes,â?• though hasty publication can be a distraction. Chances are youâ??ll have most success with informal or non-peer-reviewed publication outlets, and this can encourage lightweight effort rather than focussing on deep reading, gathering evidence and producing serious and credible results for your PhD. The advantage of rapid publication is that it stakes a claim, boosts your resumÃ©, builds networks and positions you in the field. You need to check your publishing ambitions with your supervisor. Also investigate authorship and co-authorship issues, particularly if working in a team.

What are the benefits of putting material online?

It can be available instantly. Your work will be easy to find via search engines. Itâ??s a way of getting feedback. You can direct other interested people to your online material. As well as delivering your â??elevator pitch,â?• if someone at a seminar, or while socialising, shows an interest in your research you can direct them to your website for more detail.

Will I be able to publish my PhD as a book?

A PhD is not a book. It is more specialised and detailed than a book. If your thesis goes into your university library and you allow it to be accessed publicly then itâ??s already â??published.â?• This may be enough for you. In any case some publishers will regard your thesis as already published. In some disciplines journal articles are valued more highly than books. So itâ??s worth concentrating on sourcing journal articles from your thesis. Journal articles are easier to deliver through open access and so get more exposure than books. Publishers donâ??t generally like PhDs. Itâ??s better to approach a

book publisher with a fresh proposal. Then you might **adapt the content of** your PhD as a book. In some humanities disciplines books are valued more highly than journal articles. In any case, books indicate an ability to sustain a long argument, they (still) sit proudly on library shelves, and people like to own them and pass them around. Note that some academic publishers are more thorough than others in subjecting books to peer review. E.g. Routledge generally send a synopsis, outline and sample chapter for review before accepting the book for publication. MIT Press generally want to see the whole book before agreeing to publish it. Note that academic books are in a different publishing category than â??tradeâ?• books, which are for a mass market, and generally designed to provide an income to the author. Academic books are generally distributed and sold in the hundreds rather than the thousands, but they can be searched and read in part online through Google Books, Amazon Kindle, etc. They are an excellent vehicle for exerting influence. Can I self publish? There are self-publishing services, or you can simply make a well-designed PDF of your thesis available online. However you publish, you can use blogging and other means to promote and supplement the main text.

What online media can I use apart from published articles and books?

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- Content: blogging, commenting, tweeting, ranking, social media, wikis, image libraries, self-publishing (restricted or open access)
- Profiling: academia.edu, researchgate, linkedin, mandalay, google scholar, social media, institutional (e.g. PURE)
- Note we are dealing here with academic content, which is different to high volume activity aimed at large audiences, and publishing for profit
- Thereâ??s another genre of academic blogging: sharing the trials and tribulations of being a researcher or PhD student, campaigning, engaging in academic gossip and politics. Polemical, provocative and journalistic writing can arouse more interest than academic writing, but does not necessarily garner the kind of responses that will benefit your research.

You are ready to break into the online world with your own ideas if you

- are confident and competent in your writing
- can generate writing in sufficient volume
- can generate output consistently
- have something to say
- have already produced a quantity of content that you can re-cycle, update, repackage
- have a potential audience, however small (students, collaborators, supervisors, others)
- deal in rich media: visuals, videos, sound, music
- have nothing to lose
- are sure that you want to say is not confidential, and you have necessary permissions from collaborators if needed.

Why do it?

- Encourages you to develop ideas in a disciplined manner (with the care that comes with thinking about an audience).

- Contributes to an ethos of open sharing. Itâ??s a public notepad.
- Develop a network
- Itâ??s good practice in making your ideas accessible
- Practice writing
- Test the influence of your ideas (by being quoted, linked and cited)
- Get noticed
- Stake a claim on your ideas
- Make it easier to direct people to your work
- Feedback
- Somewhere to put your course notes if you teach
- Be discovered by search enginesâ?? dynamic sites with content management (e.g. WordPress) seem to appear higher up in searches
- Thereâ??s no pressure to be successful in marketing terms (c.f. online advice on blogging for profit which counsels high volumes of traffic etc.)

Why not do it?

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- Giving away valuable material
- Can break the trust of collaborators
- Broadcasting material that is weak or not ready
- Advertising your weaknesses
- Blogs are fragmented. Not a good way of developing skills in producing a sustained argument.
- To get noticed they probably have to be accessible, which may go against the academic conventions and vocabulary of your discipline
- A distraction from other scholarship
- Induces â??blog stressâ?•
- Risks in the publishing world, including peer acceptance: â??youâ??ve already published this.â?•
- Disappointment: zero comments
- Obsession with metrics

How to do it

- Jump into the virtuous circle of reading and writing
- Connect with the new world of open access
- Develop a scheduling strategy: ad hoc, or regular
- Think of a plan: try it by starting small, start with commenting on other peopleâ??s blogs or a wiki, contribute to a group blog or start your own, think about an end point (say on your site that itâ??s a two year project, then sign it off and archive it; be prepared to delete if it doesnâ??t work out), think about repackaging blog posts as a stand alone publication â?? self publishing or through a formal publication; set up a blog in connection with some activity, such as a conference, workshop, or other event.

Styles

- Lone author; group; network; organisation; tweeting only (post these on a blog site automatically)

Goals

- To develop skills
- Exert influence
- Self promotion, reputation
- To Publish in mainstream peer reviewed outlets: book contracts (trade, best sellers, academic, specialist); journals (high status); conferences

How blogging can help you get published in peer reviewed outlets

- Practice at writing well and delivering ideas
- Evidence to give to a publisher
- Developing an audience

How blogging can help your PhD?

- Feedback
- Writing practice
- Solicit sources, ideas
- Subject of study in its own right; part of a method

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