



3.1.1 Creating a profile

From the time you are a PhD student, you are building a profile through word of mouth, publications, presentations and a web presence. Early on, it can be hard to imagine just how this will happen since the process is slow and incremental as Trudi explains:

The way you perceive yourself and the way other people perceive you are obviously two different things, because I would say ...I'm still an apprentice, but clearly, when you look on paper at everything that I'm doing ...every month, we've got to make sure our [web] profile's up-to-date ...and I look at it now and I think ...wow, actually, I have done a lot ...I think, at the time, you don't realise that you're laying the [initial] paving stones ...and it just feels like nothing's happening ...but actually, what you're doing is laying the groundwork, and then, all of a sudden, stuff kind of takes off. (Trudi)

'Taking off' can take various forms. Catherine, for instance, became well recognized during her PhD studies for a highly-cited review paper. Later work led to her being recognized nationally for her particular expertise, and she was then invited to speak internationally which was personally rewarding.

[The invitation] had a big impact ...It really felt rather special, being invited to this thing. There were only two Europeans there. It was very interesting in terms of getting an idea of what the movers and shakers in [North America] were thinking ...So...that felt good. (Catherine)

For SA and TDB, publishing was central to their sense of validation as researchers. SA, for instance, describes how his first publication increased his confidence in his work, while for TDB, being cited meant that he was contributing to the field.

I think [publication]...gave me a huge confidence boost because it ...said to me ...your work is actually good enough to go through a peer review process, it's good enough for your peers to accept it as good work and worthy of publication. Prior to this ...I'd had a paper ...rejected two or three times from different journals, and it was becoming very, very disheartening, and I was going through a phase of questioning my competency as a researcher or as an academic, and then to have this paper accepted was amazing because it was very, very affirming that your work is good enough. (SA)



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I suppose one of the nice things about academia is the – the best bit isn't publishing a paper, it's getting a citation. That's really satisfying, that you've actually done something which is useful...it validates what you've done, it validates your work...(TDB)

Different approaches to creating a profile

Developing a profile can be achieved in a range of ways, not just through publishing and getting grants – though these are important. Here are some things to consider.

Web presence

You should create an authentic web presence, one that represents what you have done that is a scholarly contribution; it might include both research and educational aspects since your web presence can be a way to attract students as well as academics. Once you have created your profile, you need to be diligent in maintaining it (note Trudi's comment above about monthly updating), in the first instance, on your institutional site as well as any other web presence you have created.

Many researchers today use social media alternative methods of reputation management by communicating about their work to a range of people, finding collaborators, and keeping up with research trends. Caution is needed here though as we lack an empirical, more nuanced understanding of the potential challenges as well as opportunities of social media. For instance, many individuals are not fully aware of the long-term impact of what they post on how they are seen. As well, oversight of use of social media is increasingly of interest to institutions in enhancing their reputations and some are already putting constraints on where and how researchers use social media. Further, how such practices will be rewarded institutionally is often still unclear.

Service to your scholarly community

In contrast to service to your university, service to your scholarly community can often be a useful way to build your profile nationally and internationally. Such work can include:

- reviewing conference presentations and papers: it is a good strategy to contact conference organizers and editors to be placed on their list of reviewers
- acting as an editorial board member
- acting as a conference organizer
- organizing one-off conferences, symposia or workshops where you invite well-known speakers

CM did the last and was strategic in her purposes – raising her own profile, raising the profile of her group in the university, and ensuring some sort of publication emerged:

I thought [organizing the conference] was a good idea for us as a group to position us better in the university ...and if you want to raise your profile to show that you're doing something important, you need to use other strategies, and this is one of the



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ways you manage it, to ...think ...very hard about having a conference with an impact ...something that would have a policy brief, special issue or a book come out of it ...I also wanted my name to be somehow related to it. (CM)

Service to the community

Community involvement ... is really important in terms of feeling like an academic. If you're not talking to people who aren't in the university then I think you lose a perspective that is necessary to be in the university. (Regina)

Like Regina, many of you may wish to engage socially as a researcher. Whether or not this is your case, researchers are increasingly being expected by research funding bodies to demonstrate their commitment to the social uses of their research through concrete plans and later evidence of impact. The potential for social engagement and impact is quite broad and will, of course, be influenced by your field and your research. Some common ideas include:

- engaging in action-oriented research where the research is driven not only by you but the community you are researching
- including external advisors on your educational and research steering committees
- organizing 'mini-conferences' for lay people to demonstrate how your research has social value
- creating web resources that draw on your research findings

Some writing URLs

There is a growing discussion as well as body of research examining the writing practices of academics. Examples include:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/writingcrossboundaries/writingonwriting/>: experienced social scientists writing about writing

<https://medium.com/@Write4Research>: posts by academic writers about a range of issues

<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/science/>: writing in the sciences

For English as another language writers

<http://www.ease.org.uk/publications/author-guidelines>: for scholars using English as an additional language

<http://arts.uottawa.ca/writingcentre/en/hypergrammar>: outline of English grammar usage (Oxford dictionary); lessons followed by interactive reviews



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