Disseminating scientific research through alternative mediums: tips on developing and publishing a blog article



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By Joshua Barrett, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, and the RSA Blog Editor

It’s 2017. I recently graduated from my Master’s degree and entered the workforce. Despite my previous academic achievements, my current situation prevented me from pursuing traditional models of getting my scholarly work out to the world. My job did allow me to exercise online content creation, whether it’s in the form of blogs, social media, websites, or other platforms.

Flash forward to 2020. For the past two years, I have served as Blog Editor for the Regional Studies Association, (RSA) an international organization which works to promote regional research, development, and policy across the world. They host various conferences and networking opportunities, provide research funding and awards, publish a number of different journals, magazines, books, and other material, as well as host an online blog, which I manage.

Since joining the RSA, I've facilitated, edited, and posted between 60-80 blog articles. Some of these have proven to be widely successful; others, not so much. Below is a list of my top five points (in no particular order) when developing and publishing a blog article.

- **Catchy Title:** In a world where social media encourages bite-sized bits of learning, it's important to have a title that is easily digestible by non-academics, as well as something that others will find worth reading. If we take Tom Kemeny's recent blog article Superstar cities and left-behind places: Investigating the Causes of Interregional Income Inequality, the title provides an effective description of what will be discussed, and can spark your interest in the topic matter.

- **Timeliness and Relevant Material:** What's going on in society can affect the impact the reception your blog receives. Over the past few months, we've had a four part series on budgeting in the European Union, a relevant topic for Europeans and those around the world. For the case of Tom, his article was published the day he delivered a plenary talk at the RSA's North American Conference, coinciding with a great deal of online activity which was already in place. Your topic and the time in which you publish can lead to greater receptiveness of your blog, and get your information out further.

- **Use of Voice:** Time and time again, when talking with potential contributors, people continue to reference John Harrison's August 2018 blog article he shared with the RSA. The success of his article isn't due to a fundamental research finding he explored, but due to the opportunities and challenges he faces as a scholar. While using alternative mediums

such as a blog is an effective tool to disseminate your research, it can also be an opportunity for people to share other aspects about academia, and stimulate dialogue which may not exist otherwise.

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** Here comes the jargon: SEO. But it doesn't have to be complicated. SEO is, put simply, the process of getting traffic to your blog article for free. Practical ways of doing this is hyperlinking important words or phrases, similar to what I've done here. Adding in photos of yourself or your research area also allows search engines to pick up your content easier. As the Blog Editor, I always try to incorporate useful key words so that others may be able to find the blog via a simple search. It's effective, and it works.

- **Social Media:** The value of social media for disseminating your blog article cannot be understated. The RSA has an active Twitter Account which tweets out articles once they go live. Further, we tag people and organizations we think might find the blog material relevant, as well as utilizing the appropriate hashtags. If you're blogging for an organization like the RSA or LSE, their social media presence can significantly increase the viewership of your article.

Similar to publishing academically, writing and publishing blogs involves a certain degree of self-promotion. It's one thing to write a blog; it's another thing to ensure that the relevant people will see it. My experience as the RSA Blog editor has taught me that there is absolutely no shame in self-promotion; in fact, it's encouraged via blogging as well as many of our other publications. Consider implementing these tips the next time you blog.

On that note, if you're currently involved with regional research, policy, and development, and want to elaborate your ideas further, the RSA is now accepting articles for their online blog. First time blogging? We've hosted articles from many first time bloggers that have becoming widely successful. You can find a copy of our guidelines here. If you'd like further information, contact me at

RSABlog@regionalstudies.org.