

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Doing Public Scholarship: A Practical Guide to Media Engagement

By Christopher Schneider, PhD



Why this research is important

Public scholarship as media engagement has arguably never been more important than it is today. From news media to interactive formats, media have a more formative place in our lives and culture than at any previous time. To be social is to be mediated. Media are an essential part of the human condition, ranging from broadcast media to social media like Facebook or TikTok. Media formats have prompted responses to global pandemics, impacted election outcomes, and have influenced the recognition of equity and diversity.

A major concern in our mediated condition is the flattening of scientific expertise, which evidence suggests

What you need to know

Public scholarship generally concerns making academic ideas available and accessible to publics. Media engagement is a necessary component of any form of public scholarship. Media formats play a fundamental and interactive role in how people come to view and understand the world around us. The question then is not whether scholars should engage with media but *how* to do so. *Doing Public Scholarship* outlines a practical, easy-to-follow approach to engaging in various forms of public scholarship across media formats.

has worsened since even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As asserted by the Pew Research Center, truth claims are no longer dictated by authority figures like scientists or scholars but, rather, are networked by peers. For every scientific fact, there is an “alternative fact,” and making sense of it all can be confusing for people. It is incumbent then on scholars to combat fictitious anti-scientific statements, partisan-inspired lies, etc., as the consequences have proven harmful and even deadly. Consider deaths due to COVID-19 denial or erroneous beliefs about the efficacy of vaccines that caused some to consume bleach and ivermectin, a livestock dewormer.

How the research was conducted

This manuscript is the culmination of fifteen years of thinking about, writing about, and doing public scholarship. *Doing Public Scholarship* draws from hundreds of hours of experience that include more than 600 news interviews, dozens of published opinion pieces, and the use of social media for public engagement. The strategy I outline utilizes a mediated order approach to both concept (public scholarship) and method (media engagement) with the goal of achieving a fully mediated version of public scholarship.

What the researcher found

Chapter One outlines how a media-centered and -focused research agenda can help boost efforts in public-facing scholarship. The idea is to survey the media landscape and craft a postjournalism research agenda, or a research topic that is itself also a product of news media, which can lead to interview requests. The following chapter focuses on engagement with journalists, identifies some lessons learned, and provides advice for novice scholars unfamiliar with news media interviews. Chapter Three discusses the publication of opinion essays as forms of public engagement. Navigating some of the negative consequences that can result from public engagement is the focus of Chapter Four. The final substantive chapter explores public engagement online, including the strategic use of hashtags. The findings detail how the public presentation of research can be a rewarding way to stimulate debate on topical issues.

How this research can be used

Readers familiar with the turn toward public scholarship, no matter their discipline, can find parallels with key points made throughout the book.

The disciplinary content (e.g., sociology, chemistry, etc.) may change, but the form (e.g., length of radio interviews, the placement of opinion pieces, engaging publics on social media, or crafting research agendas geared to media formats, etc.) will remain the same. The book outlines tips and suggestions related to career advancement and offers strategies to avoid negative experiences that can come with doing public scholarship.

About the researcher

Christopher J. Schneider is an award-winning professor of sociology at Brandon University. He has published six books and over 100 scholarly papers, opinion pieces, reviews, and essays. His work has appeared in more than 600 news segments and reports, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Schneiderc@brandonu.ca

Keywords

Public scholarship; media engagement

Publication based on this research

Schneider, C. J. (in press). *Doing public scholarship: A practical guide to media engagement*. Routledge.

Acknowledgements

Research Connection is a periodical publication intended to provide information about the impact of Brandon University's academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice. This summary is supported by the Office of Research Services; the Centre for Applied Research and Education in Indigenous, Rural, and Remote Settings; and the federally funded Research Support Fund.

Editor: Christiane Ramsey Ramseyc@brandonu.ca

<http://www.brandonu.ca/research-connection>

BRANDON UNIVERSITY

Brandon University, founded in 1899, promotes excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship, and educates students so that they can make a meaningful difference as engaged citizens and leaders. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Thank you to ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche (researchimpact.ca) for their permission to adapt the ResearchSnapshot clear language research summary format.

