Centre for Research on Families and Relationships

Communicating your research
Skills taster session
CRFR International Conference
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• Consortium research centre, based at Edinburgh University

• Key aim - to make research accessible

• Understanding evidence to action: build on the current research on how research gets used and ways of thinking about the evidence to action process
IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCES AND STAKEHOLDERS?
Bridging the gap??
Challenge of linking two worlds

- Divergent:
  - concerns, priorities, incentives, language
  - conceptions of knowledge; time-scales
  - Status and power

- Leading to:
  - communication difficulties
  - mismatch between supply & demand
  - rejection; implementation failure
But more than two worlds involved

University & college researchers

Research institutes and independent evaluators

Think tanks/knowledge brokers

Professional bodies

Lobbyists and advocacy groups

Government analysts

Audit, inspection & scrutiny regimes

The media

Politicians

Civil servants

Loc govt officers

Political advisors

Service providers

Service users

Wider community
Stakeholders in research

1. Community organisations and societies
2. Voluntary organisations and charities
3. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
4. Social enterprises
5. Cultural and leisure services
6. Local/Regional/National Government
7. Quangos and government agencies
8. Local authorities/Strategic bodies
9. Health and well-being agencies
10. Policy community
11. Public sector
12. International community
13. Business community
14. Community and 3rd sector
15. The public

Developing impact case studies for the REF
www.publicengagement.ac.uk
More than two worlds

Who might the stakeholders be for your research?
Tailoring your message

Your audiences may have different needs and expectations:

Policy makers:
- often not scientists
- move between subjects
- Want to know why it is important & what difference it will make

Practitioners:
- Seek current best practice
- Focus = client
- Want to know how it will improve their services & outcomes for people

Publics
- Want to relate to themselves
- Often have some specialist knowledge
COMMUNICATING RESEARCH
What is plain language?

- Writing in a way that is appropriate for your audience
- Clear and concise communication
- Easier and faster to read
- *Strategic aim of CRFR*

It *aint*:
- dumbing down
- changing the meaning
- getting rid of all long words
- as easy as you might think
Top tips…

1. Aim for shorter sentences
   • 15-20 words

2. Be active
   • Subject, verb, object: at the most basic

3. Don’t use nouns made from verbs
   • Avoid ‘isms’ & ‘isions’, eg: ‘We provide…’ instead of ‘managing the provision of…’

4. Think of the positive angle

5. Junk the jargon
   • Define technical terms and specialised words, if essential
5. Use lists and headings to structure information
   - Break up long passages of text
   - Signpost key points
   - One idea per paragraph

6. Use everyday language

7. What is the point?
   - Why is it important to a non-academic audience?
   - What do these results mean? Are you addressing the question asked?
Jargon

• What is Jargon?
  – technical words which are specific to your discipline
  – Words that are in common use but used with a specific meaning in your discipline
  – Words that are borrowed to describe or define a specific idea / object etc.

• What happens when you use jargon?
Jargon Busting

- Use simple definitions
  - **Persistent poverty**: means spending three or more years out of any four year period in poverty…

- Make the links between ideas and action obvious to avoid ambiguity

- Use more words if it helps people understand what you are saying.
At the same time, feminists are cognizant that fetishistic engagements with science and technology (for instance in calls to address environmental crises through technological fixes and in assumptions that solutions to world problems such as poverty will come from scientific 'discoveries' such as genetically modified foods) necessitate remembering the majority of humanity, whose poor material conditions demonstrate that techno-scientifically-driven 'progress' is unevenly distributed and can work to entrench existing inequities. These tensions necessarily engage long-standing philosophy of science debates concerning larger ontological and epistemological assumptions, to which feminist scholars have provided significant, timely and diverse inputs.
Some claim that technological advancements like genetically modified foods will eliminate poverty. However, feminists are aware that over reliance on technology or ‘discovery’ to address global problems like poverty may actually further entrench existing inequalities. What people call ‘progress’ is often unevenly distributed between different parts of society.
A Developmental Perspective on Underage Alcohol Use
From Alcohol Research and Health

Why do kids drink and what will it do to them
Writing clear language research summaries

- Titles: clear, self-explanatory, easily found in internet searches
- Bullet list key messages & recommendations
- Lead with findings, not detailed methodology
- Length: briefings 2300 words / reviews 6-8000 words
- Use images where relevant
- Keep boxes, tables etc. simple
- Cite references at the end
- Keep acknowledgements to a minimum
Communicating research

Feminist values and the governance of feminist organisations

Supporting Derek: Transferring Research into Practice

Perspectives on Outcomes of Early Stage Support for People with Dementia and their Carers

Poster

A series of research projects about health and social care for older people.

Twitter
Some useful resources

Communicating statistics with the media

Food Security Communications Toolkit: Writing effective reports
http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2195e/i2195e03.pdf

Claire’s Clear Writing Tips, by the European Commission

Plain English guide to writing in plain English
http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf

LSE Social Sciences Impact Blog
http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/