

Disseminating publicly-funded science and technology research: challenges, issues and strategies

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Abstract

In 2004, the EC-DRG guide, 'European research: a guide to successful communications' made the demands on FP6 researchers explicit: "Dissemination of results is a contractual obligation of participation in research initiatives ... The specific aims ... are to promote knowledge sharing, greater public awareness, transparency, and education. ... to provide tangible proof that collaborative research ... pays dividends in terms of academic excellence, industrial competitiveness, employment opportunities, environmental improvements and enhanced quality of life for all." Yet current discussion and guidance often limits the view of research dissemination to 'dealing with the media'. It is often reduced to an issue of 'communication skills' or 'publicity', to be done after the intellectual work of research is over. This does not adequately prepare researchers for the interesting challenges of research dissemination, or the intellectual, interactive and practical work needed to achieve it well. From direct experience, and by using core insights from social studies of science and applied linguistics, this course will address the practical and intellectual challenges that we face when communicating scientific claims and research technologies to those who could use them. It has a practical focus: offering conceptual understanding and strategies for those working on publicly-funded research projects.

Course objectives

- To inform good practice in disseminating publicly-funded science and technology research.
- To address the challenges identified by participants, in addition to those prepared.
- To enable participants to apply insights and strategies to their own particular project.
- To identify why two-way interaction with potential users is essential to inform outputs.
- To address some dangers and concerns around the dissemination / popularisation of science, and offer ways to anticipate them in practice and retain the rigour of scientific claims.
- To address the complementarity of the key modes of communication: interactions, online/printed texts, visuals and video.
- To offer conceptual understanding to inform responsive strategies in practice, not a recipe.

Course level

Introductory-intermediate