



A twitter chat and blog post led [Dr Sarah-Louise Quinnell](#) to be featured in the pages of the *Times Higher Education* and won her respect from colleagues who were previously sceptical of the values of academic blogs. Here, she explains how she created an impact and went from blogging to the holy grail of print.

I strongly believe in the academic value of blogging, as I discussed in my latest piece for [The Guardian Higher Education Network](#). I also believe that the blog functions in a different way to the more traditional methods of academic publishing. The purpose of the blog is to enable its author to make an instant contribution to a topical debate as the time taken to go from blog to live online is infinitely shorter than it is to go from text to published journal article. The blog is, in a way, the highlighter of academic publishing, it allows the authors to bring out the main points of an argument, to make comments and express opinions on issues instantly to a wider, more varied audience but it is possible for the blog to make the jump from online to traditional print media.

I have been a regular contributor to [The Thesis Whisperer](#) for a number of months now. I am the 'supervisory correspondent' focusing on issues relating to managing good student supervisor relations – no topic too controversial! During a brain storming discussion on Twitter about what I should write about next we hit upon the question of whether you can call the [student-supervisor relationship one of customer and provider](#). I discussed this with my own PhD Supervisor (Dr. Debby Potts) and subsequently went on to write the blog. I sent it for review and moved on to the next thing I was working on.

The piece went live on 23rd August 2011, a couple of weeks after I had initially written it. Although The Thesis Whisperer is a truly international blog, the post went live in the Editor's ([Dr Inger Mewburn](#)) home country hours before I woke up. When I took my first look at Twitter for the day over my morning cup of tea, (yes, I am one of those adults who checks their social media accounts over breakfast, while watching the news) I was amazed at the flurry of tweets and retweets generated by the post. My post received 370 site views and 220 syndicated views and has had 1329 views in total, to date. Not too bad, I thought! In fact I was very happy to spend my morning discussing the issue with anyone who tweeted me. The debate was lively but good natured, and illustrated exactly how social media applications can work together to create impact and, due to the different backgrounds of the people I was tweeting with, it also illustrated how social media can engage academics with wider audiences.

During the flurry of twitter messages the blog was tweeted out by the [Times Higher Education](#) (THE). Initially I was impressed to have been noticed by them, but I was even more so when I was told that the post would be the subject of the following week's '[Scholarly Web](#)' column both online and in the print edition.

When the print version was published, I was congratulated by a number of my colleagues who were very impressed by the feature and who, prompted by the piece in the THE, had read both The Thesis Whisperer and Networked Researcher blogs.

These were people who initially had not been particularly impressed by or interested in blogging and the impact it could have. It was as if my blog's appearance in the THE had given the blog more authority and credibility because it was a printed publication, something everyone made a great fuss about. Alongside this, if just one sceptical, non-blog reader made the effort to view The Thesis Whisperer on the basis of that THE feature and found an informative resource they enjoyed, then we are one step closer to accepting the value of such blogs within academia.

I was thrilled to be featured in the THE and chalk this up as a big achievement. It also cements in my mind the importance of blogging within academia and how it can raise your profile as a researcher.

*Browse through our lists of academics on twitter [here](#).*

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