

# Impact Round-Up 7th December: Academic blogging under threat, statistical literacy, and sexism in science communication.

**LSE** [blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/12/07/impact-round-up-7th-december/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/12/07/impact-round-up-7th-december/)

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Managing Editor **Sierra Williams** presents a round up of popular stories from around the web on higher education, academic impact, and trends in scholarly communication.

Earlier this week Chris Tyler and colleagues from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology ([who have recently launched a new Social Science Section](#)) put together a list of the [top tips scientists need to know about policy-making](#), as a supplement to the [Nature article](#) providing tips for politicians and other non-scientists involved in interpreting scientific claims. There is still much work to be done on the side of politicians and scientists to encourage wider adoption of evidence-informed policy, but interesting developments are afoot. Tyler writes:

*We live in exciting times for policy making. Various initiatives for better governance are under way, including ones for opening up the policy making process, and others for building evaluation into policy implementation. The new [What Works Centres](#) are roughly based on Nice (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the healthcare body that recommends which treatments the NHS should use), but instead it will consider how to reduce crime, stimulate local economic growth, promote better ageing and use early intervention better. Research evidence, particularly from the social sciences, will play a key role. In another innovation, the Cabinet Office is set to establish a [Policy Lab](#).*

The Guardian Higher Education Network featured Pat Thomson ([@ThomsonPat](#)) and Inger Mewburn ([@ThesisWhisperer](#)) who [presented some fascinating findings](#) on the landscape of the academic blogosphere from their [research paper](#). They also provide a preliminary look into how higher education institutions are responding to the growing online engagement. While the reflection of their data certainly seems to match what we cover here on the Impact blog, perhaps more worrying for the academic community are the insights and identified trends for how blogging will be monitored and controlled in years to come.

*By analysing and categorising the content of these blogs, we determined that 41% largely focused on what we call academic cultural critique: comments and reflections on funding, [higher education](#) policy, office politics and academic life. Another 40% largely focused on communication and commentary about research. The remainder covered a diverse range, from academic practice, information and self-help advice to technical, teaching and career advice...*

*Interestingly, given the rhetoric around blogging, 73% of the content we analysed was geared for*



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*other academics, while 38% was designed for interested professional readers...There are signs that the kinds of freedoms brought by publishing, and enjoyed by bloggers, may be under threat. Some universities, particular those in the UK, are keen to harness bloggers to their marketing drives and the impact agenda. They want bloggers to use official platforms and confine their discussions to research and nice posts about academic life.*

In a related story, prominent copyright blogger Eoin O'Dell has decided to shut down his own blog after [Trinity College Dublin's Law School Head Says Blogging "Not Academic Work"](#).

But on a lighter note, here are some fun [Headlines from a mathematically literate world](#) in which Ben Orlin (@BenOrlin) pokes fun at inaccurately reported statistics found in daily news stories (featured alongside amusing whiteboard drawings).

***Our World:*** *Gas Prices Hit Record High (Unadjusted for Inflation)*

***Mathematically Literate World:*** *Gas Prices Hit Record High (In a Vacuous, Meaningless Sense)*

Our final recommendation comes in video form from science communicator Emily Graslie, the Chief Curiosity Correspondent at the Field Museum who is responsible for the excellent and entertaining YouTube channel, [The Brain Scoop](#). In this video she addresses the more disheartening aspects of her job – namely, online abuse, sexism and the wider lack of support for women in science.

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