

Knowledge mobilisation is a social process: Social media can support individuals and organisations in research dissemination

[LSE blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/10/11/phipps-knowledge-mobilisation-social-media/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/10/11/phipps-knowledge-mobilisation-social-media/)

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Already an active user of social media, **David Phipps** has recently been thinking about its potential as an academic tool. He concludes that knowledge mobilisation is continuing to evolve and that social media could grow into a powerful tool for dissemination, connect researchers with a common interest and support communities that share academic aims.



In a recent book chapter, 'Applying Social Sciences Research for Public Benefit using Knowledge Mobilisation and Social Media', my co-authors and I considered three books that present different perspectives on knowledge mobilisation:

1. Knowledge to Action cycle (Ian Graham)
2. Collaborative Entanglement (Bennet & Bennet)
3. Research Use (Sandra Nutley)

We didn't attempt to review the literature since this is a large body of work and has been done elsewhere but we considered each of these three perspectives to synthesize common lessons learned. We chose them because they each built on the other conceptually drawing the reader into deeper and more contextualized understandings of the subject. We concluded that there were three take away messages from these literature reviews:

- Knowledge mobilisation is a social process
- Efforts to enhance Knowledge mobilisation need to be interactive and focus on the relationships between researchers and decision makers
- Knowledge mobilisation happens at the level of the individual and is only beginning to emerge at the organization and the system/sectoral level

These three messages can be illustrated by citing the practices of [Institute for Work and Health](#) and [PREVNet](#), both of whom promote the use and uptake of research into policy and practice. In addition to these two Canadian networks these principles were illustrated by three international examples of university based knowledge mobilisation activities: [Community University Partnership Program](#) of the University of Brighton, [Research in Action](#) Project of the Institute for Health Policy at the University of Texas and the [Centre for Research in Families and Relationships](#) at the University of Edinburgh.

The chapter presents in detail the knowledge mobilisation services of York's Knowledge Mobilisation Unit. Drawing on our "recipe book" published in Scholarly & Research Communications in December 2011 we go further to present some success stories arising from our work: United Way York Region Strength Investments, Parkdale Activity & Recreation Centre Heat Registry, Green Economy Centre of South Simcoe and Evaluation of the Inclusivity Action Plan of the Regional Municipality of York.

The novel contribution of this chapter is in its presentation of the theory and practice of social media as it relates to knowledge mobilisation. While we have been active promoters, users and instructors on social media this is the first time we tried to think more deeply about our use, primarily of Twitter. Gary Myers did some analysis of the key words used in the profile of our Twitter followers, those we follow on twitter and a control group. He found that the average key word score of those we follow to be significantly higher than those who follow us and both were higher than a control group.

It's not rocket science but it is a start at thinking critically about our use of Twitter as a tool for knowledge mobilisation. We recognize that: more research is needed to understand how social media can be used to mobilise social science research; social media can be used to disseminate and exchange research and knowledge; and that social media, especially Twitter, can help to connect individuals sharing a common interest and thus support a community of practice.

Reflecting on the future we conclude that knowledge mobilisation will continue to evolve as an institutional capacity, that knowledge brokering will evolve as a profession and social media will evolve as tools for knowledge brokers working in institutional knowledge mobilisation units.

This chapter can be found in York's institutional [repository](#). Gary Myers, a community based researcher, has also blogged on this topic [here](#). Krista Jensen is continuing this critical inquiry of the role of social networking in knowledge intermediaries as part of her PhD in the Faculty of Education, York University.

Note: This article gives the views of the author(s), and not the position of the Impact of Social Sciences blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

About the author:

David is the Executive Director of Research & Innovation Services at York University where he manages all research grants and contracts including and knowledge and technology transfer. In this capacity he leads York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit that provides services to researchers, community organizations and government agencies who wish to use policy and practice related research to inform public policy and professional practice.

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