Writing Across Genres: Reflections On Communicating Research to Different Audiences

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From the beginning of my research journey, I have been interested not only in conducting research but also in how it can be communicated and shared more widely. My first academic publication emerged from a piece of research on the association between mild and unilateral hearing loss and academic achievement (Collier, 2025), undertaken before I began my PhD. From the outset, I developed this project with a clear intention to publish; I saw publication not simply as an incidental outcome of the project, but as central to its purpose. I wanted my work to be impactful, and sharing the findings felt essential to achieve that.

Seeing my research as a published article for the first time was a joyful and uplifting experience. There was a strong sense of achievement in contributing to the academic literature and making the work available to a wider academic audience. Publication felt like an important moment of transition from conducting research to sharing it formally.

Looking back, I realise that my sense of achievement extended beyond the publication itself. Seeing my work published represented a milestone in my development as a researcher and gave me a sense that I had begun to establish a place within the academic community. More than anything, I felt excited that the research was no longer confined to my computer but was available for others to read, critique and, I hoped, build on. Seeing the article in print therefore marked, not an end point, but the beginning of the research's wider journey. It also reinforced my motivation to communicate the findings as widely as possible, recognising that publication alone does not guarantee impact.

Following this initial publication, I wrote a British Educational Research Association (BERA) blog intended to communicate the research in a more accessible and publicly engaging form. In writing the blog, I was encouraged to think explicitly about the readers and to ensure that the piece was engaging, current, and relevant beyond an academic audience.

This introduced me to a different form of communication. Writing for a broader audience required a reconsideration of how the research might be of interest and meaningfully understood.

The positive responses to my writing have been one of the most rewarding aspects of developing as a research communicator and have reinforced my understanding that research can connect with audiences in many different ways. The journal article has been cited by other researchers, demonstrating engagement with the academic community. Sharing the work beyond academia also created opportunities for connection. A relevant charity responded positively to the work and confirmed that the article would be included in their monthly research briefings. Knowing that the findings would be shared with professionals interested in the topic was incredibly encouraging. The blog enabled a different type of engagement, with parents who recognised the relevance of the research to their own circumstances contacting me to discuss the findings and share their perspectives. These experiences have shown me that the value of research communication extends beyond traditional academic measures and that different forms of writing can enable different audiences to connect with research in meaningful ways.

A further stage in my writing development emerged through the production of a book chapter and a second blog, both of which reflected on my PhD journey to date. The book chapter began as an initial reflection that continues to be developed through an iterative editorial process informed by constructive feedback from the editors. During this writing period, I was also invited to write a data impact blog by the UK Data Service about my study. This piece was intended to demonstrate the value and applicability of the cohort dataset I am using as a foundation for my research, the Millennium Cohort Study (University College London, 2026). Although both pieces of writing drew upon the same broad experience of undertaking a PhD, they were shaped by distinct audiences and purposes. The blog prioritised my engagement with the data, emphasising how the dataset could support valuable research activity. By contrast, the book chapter, aimed at early career researchers, focused more explicitly on the experience of doctoral study itself. What became apparent to me was the extent to which audience and purpose shape not only style, but content itself. Although both publications described the same research journey, they constructed different versions of that experience, focusing on different priorities and interpretations according to the expectations of the intended audience.

My current writing focuses on the development of a journal article arising from a concept analysis study conducted as a foundational stage of my PhD journey. This work focuses on the definition and clarification of key terms that will underpin later stages of the project. The process has strengthened my appreciation of the importance of conceptual

clarity as a foundation to support later research. This work will inform the regression analyses that are central to my PhD, which will drive further journal articles and related outputs. Increasingly, I see these publications not as isolated products, but as connected contributions that share the story of my project.

Writing across different formats has made me increasingly aware that research communication is not a single, fixed practice. Different genres carry different expectations regarding purpose, audience and communication style (Tardy, 2016). A journal article, blog and book chapter may draw upon the same underlying research experience, but they serve different purposes and therefore require different decisions about content, structure and style (Ma, 2023). Although my book chapter and blog drew upon similar experiences of undertaking a PhD, each required decisions about what to emphasise and how best to communicate these ideas effectively. Through writing across diverse publication types, I have come to appreciate that communicating through different formats does not involve reducing the complexity or value of the research, but instead considering how best to present it for a particular purpose. This reflects wider discussions of academic blogging as an important form of research communication beyond traditional academic publications (Kirkup, 2010).

I have also realised that the audience is not a single, homogeneous group, but encompasses readers with different expectations, levels of prior knowledge and reasons for engaging with the research (McCarthy & Grant, 2025). This has influenced my approach to writing, as I have become more conscious of how the purpose of a piece shapes decisions about content, structure and style. Every reader deserves communication that is both respectful and meaningful. While academic readers may require methodological detail and engagement with theoretical debates, other audiences may be more interested in the implications of the findings and their relevance to practice or to wider society. Neither approach is more or less rigorous, but each reflects a different form of engagement with the research.

My understanding of accessible academic writing has also been shaped by authors who challenge the assumption that academic credibility depends on using complex language (Sword, 2012). Reading authors such as Gorard (2021) has particularly influenced my understanding of effective academic communication. His writing demonstrates that accessible writing is not a simplification of academic ideas, but a way of expressing complex arguments that enables more readers to engage meaningfully with them. Indeed, if a technically accurate piece of writing is not accessible, it cannot fully communicate its intended message (Gopen & Swan, 1990). For me, an engaging style involves understanding the purpose of the communication, recognising the needs of the intended

audience and presenting the study in a way that enables readers to see its meaning and relevance. This aligns with evidence that more accessible writing can improve reader understanding and confidence without compromising the underlying research message (Ryba et al., 2021).

Reflecting on my development as an author, I have come to understand writing as more than a technical skill. It represents an evolving aspect of researcher identity and reflects the ways in which we position ourselves in relation to knowledge, audiences and wider academic communities (Ivanič, 1998). Developing as a writer has therefore involved learning how to communicate research in ways that remain accurate, meaningful and appropriate for different contexts. This development has also involved recognising the practical challenges of balancing high-quality writing across multiple formats with other research responsibilities.

Each writing genre has its own strengths and possibilities, meaning that different forms of publication work together to maximise the reach of the research. Moving between journal articles, blogs, book chapters, and other forms of dissemination, such as posters and presentations, has created opportunities for me to engage with different audiences in meaningful ways. Rather than viewing publication as a final stage, I now see writing as an enjoyable and varied practice through which research is shared across different academic and public spaces. Whilst each genre may request specific structures and lengths, the underlying principle of communicating clearly and engaging readers remains constant. Different forms of publication serve different purposes. Together, they allow research to reach multiple audiences in complementary ways.

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