

Effective Research

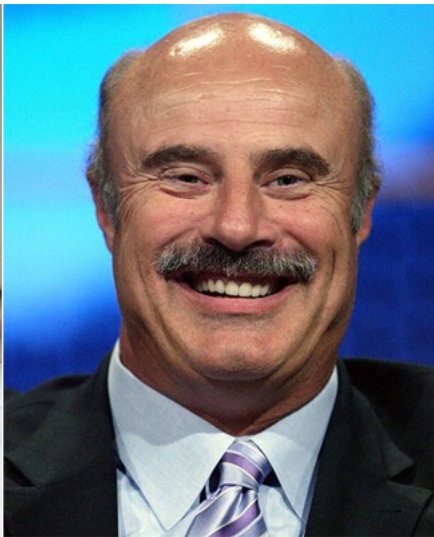
NVMO Utrecht April 29th 2011

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May 2, 2011

Disclaimer

- ▶ I am not a perfect researcher.



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 - ▶ How much do you publish?
- ▶ Impact
 - ▶ Where published/presented?
 - ▶ How often referred to (h-index?)
 - ▶ Invited speaker/board member/frequent reviewer?

- ▶ Impact
- ▶ Productive writing

Jorge Hirsch

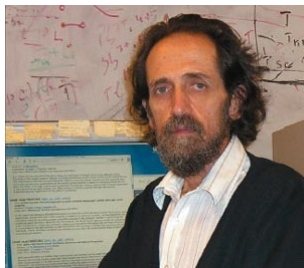


Figure:

conf.ncku.edu.tw/research/commentary/e/20080815/1.html

- ▶ Physicist at University of California, San Diego
- ▶ Developed the h-index in 2005
- ▶ Hirsch's h-index was then 49

H-index

- H-index of 39 means the author has published 39 articles that have at least 39 citations each.

This researcher has a H-index of 5

Papers	Number of citations
1	15
2	11
3	9
4	7
5	5
6	2
7	1

Figure: taken from: <http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/rqf/hindex.html>

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- ▶ Do popular work.
- ▶ Make yourself and your work visible.

Get cited

- ▶ Make sure people **hear** about your work.
 - ▶ Give seminars and attend conferences
 - ▶ Network
 - ▶ Get a clear profile
- ▶ Make sure people **can find** your work.
 - ▶ Internal seminars or national meetings are *not* sufficient
 - ▶ Homepage!
- ▶ Make sure people **know** you.
 - ▶ Meet relevant people
 - ▶ Ask good questions. (Prepare for this!)

“Research Outreach”

- ▶ Participate in the conversation about your topic
- ▶ Your work too important to allow shyness to interfere
- ▶ Important for publishing as well.

Networking on the Network: Phil Agre (1994)

1. Choose someone
2. Study their work
3. Make sure it relates to your work in some substantial way
4. Mail this person your article
5. Include an email saying something intelligent about their work
6. Include a concise statement of how your work overlaps with theirs
7. Project ordinary self-confidence
8. Refrain from praising, self-deprecation or cuteness
9. Don't make it sound like you're presupposing or demanding that you'll get a response.

Phil Agre on Conferences

Go ahead and attend the research presentations, especially the ones that specifically seem likely to be valuable to you. But spend most of your time tracking people down and talking to them.

Barriers to writing productivity

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Barriers to writing productivity

- ▶ Three main barriers to writing
 1. Not knowing what to write
 2. Not knowing how to structure or revise writing to make it publishable, unfamiliarity with the publication process
 3. Motivational issues
 - ▶ Many intelligent, creative researchers just can't seem to get research written up and published
 - ▶ Cause: Underdeveloped writing strategies and habits

Research is hard!

- ▶ Problems are open-ended, unclearly defined, intimidating
- ▶ Nature of work encourages procrastination
- ▶ We give/get little (professional or informal) training in the process of planning, writing, revising, networking
- ▶ Already established ineffective habits or misconceptions about research prevent progress
- ▶ Humans are naturally lazy

Bottleneck

- ▶ For most people, writing up results is the hardest.

Your personal situation

- ▶ What other demands are there on your time?
- ▶ How much experience do you have in completing writing projects?
- ▶ Writing Task Type? An experiment vs. arm-chair linguistics
 - ▶ Is writing part of the research process?
- ▶ What are your current habits? (Do you even know?) Are they working well for you?

How does publishing work in your field?

- ▶ Journals? Conferences? Books?
- ▶ Finished research or work in progress?
- ▶ Time from submission to publication?
- ▶ Length and breadth of publishable unit?
 - ▶ When is a rejection real?
 - ▶ How to deal with rejection
 - ▶ How to deal with reviewers

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 - ▶ How to deal with reviewers
- ▶ Even knowing all of this won't help if you have trouble writing

“Advising isn’t something you get. It’s something you take. ”

Gunnel Kallgren

Why do people say they don't get things published?

1. Time constraints
2. "Writer's block"
3. Confusion and lack of focus



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(Silvia, 2007: 12)

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- ▶ ‘Auto-pilot schedule’ (Cal Newport:Study Hacks blog)

Professors as Writers

Boice

- ▶ most listed reason for not writing
 - ▶ lack of time...
- ▶ traditional surveys of professors
 - ▶ typical work week 60-80 hours

Professors as Writers

Boice

- ▶ Observational studies
 - ▶ even professors with heavy teaching loads have several 20-30 minute blocks available

Experts: Regular writing in short bursts

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- ▶ Productive because:
 - ▶ Regular writing means less warm-up time
 - ▶ 30 minutes a day = 10 hours in a month

Writing models

- ▶ **Binge model**
 - ▶ Writing is major, time consuming activity
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▶ Process model

- ▶ Writing has identifiable steps
- ▶ Morss & Murray (2001: 49): writers get stuck because of
 - ▶ misconceptions about task scale
 - ▶ poor goals because of inability to identify steps
- ▶ articulating small, doable writing goals helps

Group	Average number of pages	modal number of days between creative ideas
Forced	3.2	1
Spontaneous	0.9	2
Abstinent	0.2	5

Table: Boice: Productivity difference between forced and spontaneous writing

Write your dissertation in 15 minutes a day

Bolker

Write your dissertation in 15 minutes a day

Bolker

- ▶ Daily writing goal:
 - ▶ the “inspiration” method, most common method for unsuccessful writers
 - ▶ the “sit there” method: write for a fixed amount of time
 - ▶ the “many pages” method

Write your dissertation in 15 minutes a day

Bolker

- ▶ Daily writing goal:
 - ▶ the “inspiration” method, most common method for unsuccessful writers
 - ▶ the “sit there” method: write for a fixed amount of time
 - ▶ the “many pages” method
- ▶ “This (many pages) method rewards learning to write faster, and from what I’ve seen, fast writing produces no worse results than slow writing does. This method also produces a large volume of writing, and at least *some* of it is likely to be useful.” (page 45)

Make writing contingent

- ▶ No shower, email, phone, breakfast, coffee ...before writing
- ▶ Make yourself accountable
 - ▶ 'prewritten check to a hated organization'
 - ▶ "Very few checks get mailed. These writers learn to write regularly regardless of initial mood".
 - ▶ Stick-K

Write First

- ▶ Pay yourself first.

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- ▶ What do you want to have finished?
- ▶ Do that first.
- ▶ MIT: most important task

Positive Procrastination

- ▶ Neglect Project X with impending deadline and devote time to Project Y
- ▶ Two projects are better than one (some evidence of this)

Ph.D's, post-docs, professors: different constraints

- ▶ Phd students (and post-docs) often **do not** have the time limitations of teaching academics
- ▶ writing habits established during the Phd don't work later on
- ▶ **Practice !**
 - ▶ a “15-minute project”
 - ▶ a fake deadline

Types of formal support

- ▶ McGrail et al. (2006).
 - ▶ writing courses
 - ▶ writing support groups (agraphia groups)
 - ▶ writing coaches

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- ▶ Do they help?

McGrail et al. (2006)

- ▶ writing support groups best
- ▶ short term (1-2 day), didactic writing courses have little impact on publication
- ▶ Lawrence Folcik, 1996 (see also Baldwin Chandler, 2002)
 - ▶ same material presented in 8 weeks *did* increase productivity
- ▶ Ph.d students separated from staff may be more effective
- ▶ Interdisciplinary group has advantages
 - ▶ plus: less intimidating for some members
 - ▶ minus: feedback, comments less useful

When have you become more effective?

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Morss & Murray (2001)

- ▶ 'Hard' outcomes
 - ▶ journal publications
 - ▶ conference papers and presentations
- ▶ 'Soft' outcomes
 - ▶ increased confidence
 - ▶ increased motivation
 - ▶ improved strategies for productive writing
 - ▶ increased self-knowledge through reflection

Self confidence

- ▶ Hemmings and Kay (2007): Writing self-confidence strongest predictor of publication output
 - ▶ sample of academics from one Australian university

Help yourself

- ▶ Team up with a writing buddy
- ▶ Announce your goals
 - ▶ Turn a solo project into a co-authored one
 - ▶ A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- ▶ Start your own writing support group (info in Silvia)
 - ▶ 24-hour buddies
- ▶ Join an online writing group (often listed as ABD groups):
 - ▶ www.phinished.org/ Online dissertation writing group
 - ▶ www.academicladder.com/ (free newsletter, 4 wks: 50 Euros)
 - ▶ www.abdsurvivalguide.com/ (groups, newsletter)

Very productive people

- ▶ Mayrath (2007), Educational Psychologists (also Kiewra, 1994):
 - ▶ Collaboration

Very productive people

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 - ▶ Collaboration
 - ▶ mentoring received
 - ▶ mentoring given
 - ▶ collaboration with colleagues
 - ▶ collaboration as feedback in the writing process

Research! Yeah!





Tips to get started writing

- ▶ Be ready
 - ▶ dress the part
 - ▶ announce the plan
 - ▶ make sure you at least looks like you are writing!
- ▶ Get at content!
 - ▶ write an email explaining it to someone
 - ▶ enlist the help of a friend
 - ▶ write aloud with a hand held recorder



- ▶ Pomodoro technique
- ▶ change your location
- ▶ change your word processing program, pen, paper (lined, spaced, small notebook, big paper), mode, font, language(?)
- ▶ start working on the presentation, rather than the article
- ▶ make it a race/ a game
 - ▶ can you produce 200 words in 15 minutes? Test yourself

The Craft of Scientific Writing **Alley, 1987**

*In my own writing I average about five pages a day.
Unfortunately, they are all the same page.*

It just doesn't seem to be "there" yet. Maybe try to revise it once more. –Mats Wiren

Tips to get revising

- ▶ Outline
 - ▶ Revision strategy: reverse outline
 - ▶ (Re-)outline with post-its then write a paragraph for each idea
 - ▶ Ask someone else to reverse outline it....
- ▶ Read, start new document, rewrite, compare versions
- ▶ start writing a to-do list of what has to be done, and slowly expand on it
- ▶ read it aloud
 - ▶ let your wordprocessor read it aloud
 - ▶ let someone else read it aloud

Increasing clarity of thought

- ▶ Coffee, Ginseng, Gingko?
- ▶ Aromatherapy?
- ▶ Self-hypnosis ?
- ▶ Meditation
- ▶ Breathing exercises

- ▶ Special 'work music'

- ▶ iMusic

- ▶ white noise

- ▶ music for accelerated learning

- ▶ Minimal music

- ▶ Simeon ten Holt

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- ▶ Careful not to turn these tips into another way to procrastinate.

Track your progress and reward yourself





Success.



Effective Research

- ▶ Researchers are judged on their productivity and impact, no matter the field
- ▶ Motivational barriers to productivity can be overcome
 - ▶ You can train yourself to have the habits that give you control over your success
 - ▶ You can create an environment where your research success is supported!

Recommended reading

- ▶ Paul Silvia: How to write a lot.
- ▶ Wendy Laura Belcher: Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success (Especially for humanities)
- ▶ Michael Alley: The Craft of Scientific Writing
- ▶ Abby Day: How to get research published in journals
- ▶ Robert Boice: Professors as writers
- ▶ Bolker: Write your dissertation in 15 minutes a day

Selected References

- ▶ McGrail, Matthew R. , Rickard, Claire M. and Jones, Rebecca(2006) 'Publish or perish: a systematic review of interventions to increase academic publication rates', Higher Education Research Development, 25: 1, 19 35
- ▶ Hemmings, Brian and Kay, Russell(2010) 'University lecturer publication output: qualifications, time and confidence count', Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 32: 2, 185 197