

Workbook 2024

Beyond the Goldfish Bowl: communicating research creatively.



University
of Exeter

Digital workbook accompanying the ‘Beyond the Goldfish Bowl’ workshop series. April 2024 to July 2024

Nothing in science has any value to society if it is not communicated.

ANNE ROE

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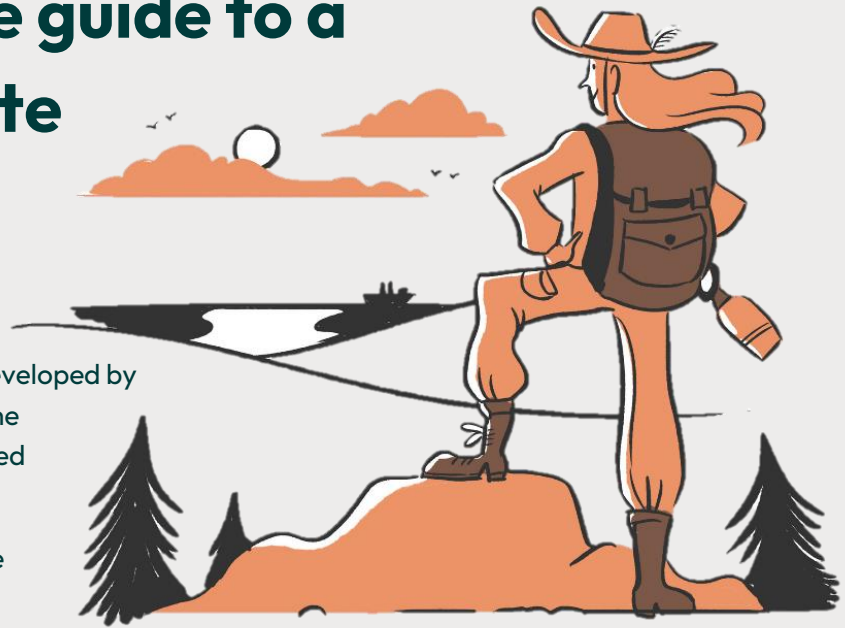
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This is a simple guide to a world of infinite possibility.



This workbook is part of the Beyond the Goldfish Bowl project developed by Harriet Hunt in Spring 2024 under the University of Exeter's Researcher-Led Initiatives.

The aim of this project was to create resources for people who are interested in using creative approaches but don't know where to begin, or for anyone who would simply like to learn more. This project's aims were to:

- explain how communicating your research creatively can help you understand your findings more deeply,
- inspire with insights and practical advice from professionals,
- encourage with step-by-step guidance and illustrations of costs and resources involved, and
- involve wider communities with activities to broaden research influence and impact.

A linked series of three online workshops were held. The foundation of these workshops is simplicity.

Working creatively with research can feel overwhelming with so many options, approaches, and budgets available. One huge benefit often overlooked is how focusing on creative communication helps to shape understanding within the team as well as beyond the standard boundaries of academic outputs. Working with professionals who can support a research team to clearly articulate the goals, purpose, audience, and approach

allows the team to develop clarity of purpose and messaging and crystallise ideas.

The reality is that in academic research, we often leave research communication to the end of a project. This squeezes funds, time, and – crucially – creativity.

The people at the coalface of dissemination are often non-tenured researchers on time limited contracts. Without the luxury of continuity, contingency and budgets for ongoing activities, understanding benefits, options and what can be achieved within deadlines are valuable competencies.

These skills contribute strongly to developing an engaged research culture through deeper understanding of the research being produced, strong leadership within the team, communication both within and beyond projects, and wellbeing through working across boundaries using creative outlets.

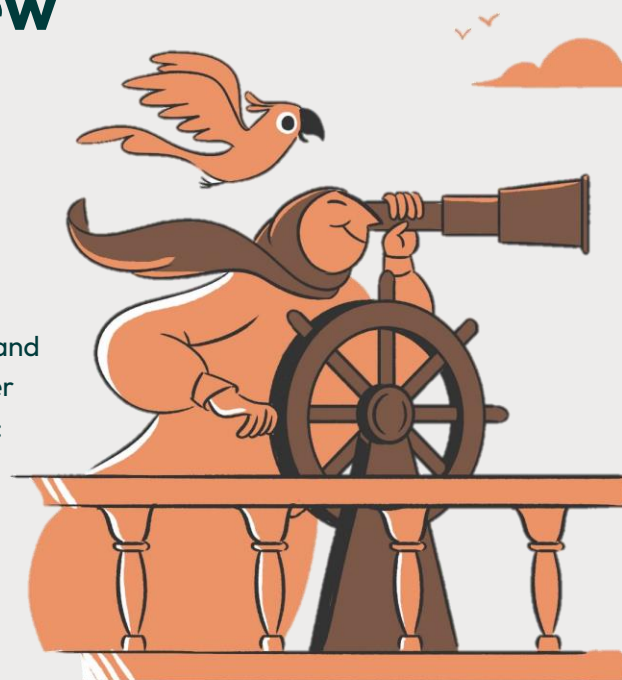


This activity is a Researcher-led Initiative that has been funded by the University of Exeter Researcher Development and Research Culture team.

Workshop #1: The view from the bridge

What was this workshop about?

In workshop #1 attendees heard from Dr Noreen Orr and Dr Harriet Hunt, researchers at the University of Exeter Medical School. The recording of the workshop is here: <https://www.ecehh.org/impact/influencing-national-policy-on-natural-environment-and-health/beyond-the-goldfish-bowl/> The perspective in workshop 1 was from the hands-on ground level. The two presenters speak from the viewpoint of Research Fellows employed on research funding-limited contracts.



Some practical insights

Dr Noreen Orr presented three projects she has led to illustrate a range of approaches for different purposes. See the video of workshop #1 for more detail. **Pet Therapy** and **Robopets** were two mixed methods systematic reviews on how animals and robotic pets impact the health and wellbeing of care home residents. Noreen produced two newspaper-style briefings – Woofington Post & The Daily Mews a– short, easy-to-read and visually appealing that could be read by staff on their breaks. The team applied for further funding which enabled them to work with a Devon-based artist to create the Pet Purrsuit board game shown in Image 1.

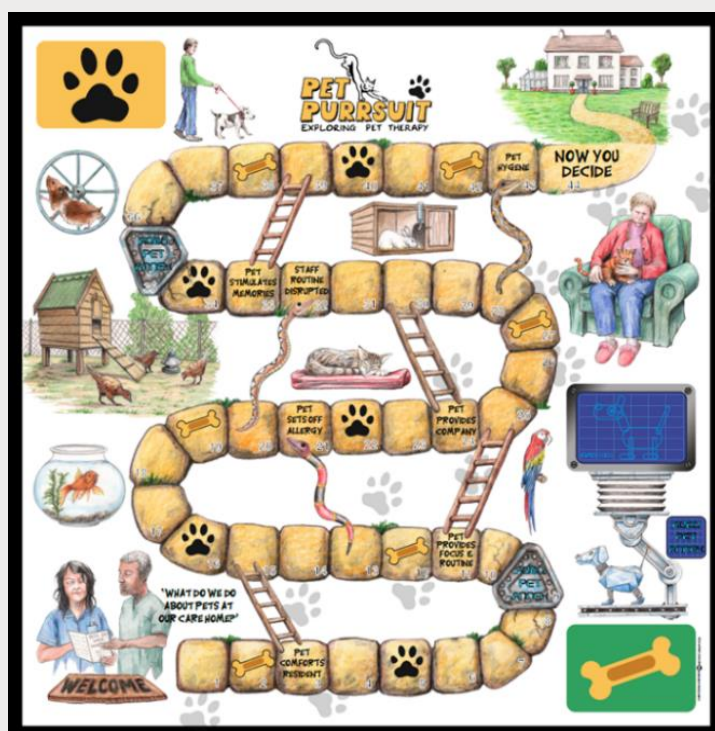


Image 1. Pet Purrsuits board game

Dr Harriet Hunt talked about two different projects: **The Parent Project** was a systematic review exploring the evidence for parent-to-parent peer support for parents with babies in neonatal care, funded by NIHR. We partnered with a local Exeter charity, SNUG, and a Parent Advisory Group of parents with direct experience of care for a baby on a neonatal unit who helped produce the infographic shown in **Error! Reference source not found.. A Handbook for Nature on Prescription to Promote Mental Health** was created in 2021, funded by UKRI and NIHR. The Handbook is free to download from

<https://www.ecehh.org/research/nature-prescription-handbook/>, and a key infographic is shown in Image 2.



Image 3. The PARENT project infographic



Image 2. Nature on Prescription infographic

Workshop #2: In the crow's nest

What was this workshop about?

In workshop #2 attendees heard from Harriet Hunt and Jo Thompson-Coon, Professor of Evidence Synthesis and Health Policy at the University of Exeter Medical School. The recording of the workshop is here:

<https://www.ecehh.org/impact/influencing-national-policy-on-natural-environment-and-health/beyond-the-goldfish-bowl/>

The perspective in workshop 2 was from the tenured senior academic viewpoint, drawing on Jo's experiences as budget holder and Principal Investigator.

This 1.5 hr workshop included examples from recent projects, interactive sessions, reflections on relevance to academic frameworks such as the Research Evaluation Framework (REF), and literature such as the paper "Bursting out of our bubble: using creative techniques to communicate within the systematic review



process and beyond" – see Image 4 for one of the images from this paper.

Jo also talked about her **Caring About Care project**, working with care home staff and non-academic dementia experts to improve the experience of care for people with dementia in hospital. Further links and resources can be found in the References section of this workbook.

Prompt: what's important when planning creative outputs for your research?

Take an example research project of your own. What factors would be important to consider when planning creative research outputs?

Consider: What factors make a difference?

- Time, budget, buy-in, team expertise, funder requirements.
- Who can help make those decisions?
- Talk to the research team and research partners.
- What does your funder say?
- What are your key messages – do you have a clear vision?
- Look for examples outside of your space.

Using

CREATIVE TECHNIQUES



to

COMMUNICATE

Systematic Reviews

Most people do not have the time to invest in reading large and complex documents. Creative communication tools can be useful mechanism to share research with the diverse range of people who could benefit from the findings and extend dissemination beyond traditional academic mechanisms. At the heart of our work is a desire to communicate complex messages in easily accessible formats to foster enthusiasm and ultimately action.

Illustration

PROS

- Create a shared narrative across different audiences
- Convey complex and/or emotional information in an engaging and accessible format
- May help to improve understanding of difficult issues across the whole team

CONS

- Can be time consuming and resource intensive to produce
- Require multiple iterations between the audience, the artist and the research team
- Personal style preferences may discourage engagement



Podcasts

PROS

- Provide a connection between evidence users and the research team through a non-visual medium
- Allow the consumption of information on the move and away from a computer screen
- Quick and easy to prepare with minimal resources
- Conversational tone can offer new insight for listeners
- Opportunity for patients and clinicians to make a practical contribution to dissemination

CONS

- Require careful preparation to ensure that all speakers have clear instructions and the necessary technology
- Promoting podcasts to potential listeners can be challenging beyond an established platform

Infographics

PROS

- Condense complex information into a simple visual image
- Easy to share key points quickly
- Good for sharing on social media
- Eye catching way to draw the reader in and encourage them to find out more

CONS

- Can be time consuming to prepare
- Because of the limited space there is a potential for misinterpretation
- Tempting to include too much detail

JUST KEEP SCROLLING



PROS

- Can be used to engage with the audience at any stage of a review
- Provide an easily accessible summary of findings or updates on progress
- Content can be adapted for and easily shared with multiple different audiences
- Quick and easy to prepare
- Including different perspectives can give patients and clinicians an opportunity to make a practical contribution to dissemination

CONS

- Can be challenging to build up a regular readership for systematic review teams working on a wide variety of different topics
- Written form may not be accessible to all
- Blogs are usually shared electronically which may limit the audience for some topics

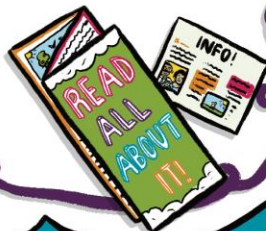
Briefing Papers

PROS

- Easy to share both electronically and in hard copy format
- Provide a useful tool for communicating a summary of the project to non-researchers
- Can be used as a first step before embarking on more creative communication methods
- Create clarity within the team about the nature of important messages and their implications

CONS

- Can be easily overlooked amongst the volume of written information we are exposed to on a daily basis



Board Games

PROS

- Fun way of learning and can encourage players to think, engage and apply the research findings to their own context
- The process of developing a game could be used as a communication tool during the review

CONS

- Resource and time intensive
- Requires in depth consultation with the target audience
- May require a professional artist
- People may not consider a game to be 'serious' enough



Workshop #3: Into the wild

In **workshop #3**, the third and final workshop, we heard from **Dan Porter, co-founder of Scriberia** and visual thinking specialist. The recording of the workshop is here:

<https://www.ecehh.org/impact/influencing-national-policy-on-natural-environment-and-health/beyond-the-goldfish-bowl/>



Dan introduced himself, the work of Scriberia, and discussed what he's learned about the relationship between drawing and knowledge over the last 15 years. A brief introduction to Scriberia is shown in Image 5.

With Dan, workshop attendees took part in three exercises to explore creativity and decision making.

WELCOME TO SCRIBERIA

Arranging information in a non-linear way allows new ideas to happen.

Drawing is an amazing thinking tool - it forces prioritisation.

A bad drawing is good if it communicates an idea.

Simplicity takes conscious effort, complexity doesn't!

A cartoon illustration of two people, a man and a woman, holding a large pencil. The man is on the left, wearing glasses and a striped shirt. The woman is on the right, wearing a white shirt. The pencil is very large, with the letters 'S' and 'C' on it. They are standing in front of a red background.

Pictures enable people to retain more information.

There's no such thing as 'unsexy' subject matter.

If an artwork is too polished it shuts down the conversation.

'A cliché is a bankrupt idea that needs reinvestment.'

Being an outsider is your superpower.

Image 5. A brief introduction to Scriberia

In exercise 1, we were shown an image (in this case, Exeter Cathedral) and did timed drawings with decreasing amounts of time allowed for the exercise. Dan presented a showcase of research projects that Scriberia had worked on, including Nature on Prescription led by Harriet Hunt (see References for project detail, and Image 2). We then reflected on the key reasons to visualise research, and how academic research can have real world impact (see Image 6).



Image 6. How can academic research have real world impact?

Exercise 2 involved 'forced metaphors', where attendees were shown a small range of pictures, asked to choose one and use it as a metaphor for their own research. There were some excellent examples of creative thinking from attendees on the day.

Finally, we discussed the value of sketch noting, drawing, and using creative techniques beyond producing academic outputs.

In closing, Dan gave a quick guide to getting the best out of working with creatives (see Image 7).

Maximum meaning,
minimum means
ABRAM GAMES

WORKING WITH CREATIVES

Factor in creative work at the start of the project

The creative process is iterative. Don't panic if the first attempt isn't working.

Share metaphors, comparisons and stories you use in conversation to bring your content to life.

Don't be afraid to share your own doodles

Assume the creative knows nothing about your subject

Your work isn't linear - try mapping the key concepts spatially

Make sure you're part of the process - you don't want a surprise at the end!

Image 7. Working with creatives

References

Workshop 1

PenARC project page on Robopets: <https://arc-swp.nihr.ac.uk/research/projects/impact-of-robot-pets-on-health-and-wellbeing/>

My Nature: PenARC project page:

<https://arc-swp.nihr.ac.uk/research/projects/my-nature/>

Sensory Trust <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/>

Moving Stories: Video link

<https://vimeo.com/43182928>

Blog on the theatre piece <https://blogs.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/2014/12/08/creative-ways-to-disseminate-research-findings-moving-stories-moving-on/>

The Parent Project: PenARC project page: <https://arc-swp.nihr.ac.uk/research/projects/parent-to-parent-support/>

Hunt. H., Abbott. R., Boddy. K., Whear. R., Wakely. L., Bethel, A., Morris. C., Prosser. S., Collinson. A., Kurinczuk. J., Thompson-Coon. J. (2018) "They've walked the walk": A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative evidence for parent-to-parent support for parents of babies in neonatal care. Journal of Neonatal Nursing DOI: 10.1016/j.jnn.2019.03.011



Workshop 2

Evidently Cochrane blog: <https://www.evidentlycochrane.net/>

Coon JT, Orr N, Shaw L, Hunt H, Garside R, Nunns M, Gröppel-Wegener A, Whear B. Bursting out of our bubble: using creative techniques to communicate within the systematic review process and beyond. Systematic Reviews. 2022 Apr 4;11(1):56. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-022-01935-2>

Workshop 3

Oxford Sparks & Alzheimer's Research UK - Discovering Life Changing Dementia Treatments: <https://vimeo.com/289641988>

ebook Little Red Riding Hood and the Secrets of Visual Communication: <https://info.scriberia.com/red-riding-hood-landing>

Sketchnotes: <https://www.scriberia.com/sketchnotes>

Animations: <https://www.scriberia.com/animation>

Vision mapping: <https://www.scriberia.com/vision-maps>

Infographics: <https://www.scriberia.com/infographics>

Illustration: <https://www.scriberia.com/illustration>

Resources

Professionals

Visual Thinking agencies and individuals

Scriberia <https://www.scriberia.com/>

Hannah Mumby <https://hannahmumby.co.uk/>

Public Engagement professionals

Agile Rabbit <https://www.agile-rabbit.com/>

Planning for Impact

REF2029. <https://www.ref.ac.uk/>

<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/ref2021/casestudies/>

Overton website for monitoring impact (University of Exeter has free access via your institutional log in): <https://www.overton.io/>

Creative websites

Adaptation Scotland – supporting climate change resilience:

<https://www.adaptationscotland.org.uk/climatereadyplaces/uplands>

Public-facing reports

Here's an example from NIHR of **a public-facing review** produced at Keele University

<https://evidence.nihr.ac.uk/themedreview/moving-forward-a-guide-for-the-public/> and read more **here** about the process of producing it <https://movingforward-project.com/moving-forward-the-public-version/>

How can we share our research with everyone?

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/blog/getting-the-message-across-how-can-we-share-our-research-with-everyone/32616>

Case Studies

Nature on Prescription Handbook

A Handbook for Nature on Prescription to promote mental health: [free to download here]:

<https://www.ecehh.org/research/nature-prescription-handbook/>

Scriberia case study: <https://news.scriberia.com/nature-on-prescription-exeter-university-shows-the-world-how>

Parent Project (Parent to parent support for parents of babies in neonatal care)

NIHR PenARC project page: <https://arc-swp.nihr.ac.uk/research/projects/parent-to-parent-support/>



Hunt, H., Abbott, R., Boddy, K., Whear, R., Wakely, L., Bethel, A., Morris, C., Prosser, S., Collinson, A., Kurinczuk, J. and Thompson-Coon, J., 2019. **“They’ve walked the walk”: A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative evidence for parent-to-parent support for parents of babies in neonatal care.** *Journal of Neonatal Nursing*, 25(4), pp.166-176.

Hunt HA, Prosser S, Collinson A, Boddy K, Thompson Coon J, Whear R. **Peer support in neonatal care: a collaborative approach.** *Infant* 2021; 17(5): 218-21.

https://www.infantjournal.co.uk/journal_article.html?id=7246

Creating a communication plan

Developing a Communication Plan for your Research – University of Reading:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/discover/-/media/discover/files/pdfs/9435290e50904cc9b8e623d5ddb13602.pdf>

For clinical trials: <https://communications4clintrials.org/developing-a-strategic-communications-plan/>

How to write a comms plan by the Australian Prevention Partnership Centre:

<https://preventioncentre.org.au/resources/how-to-write-a-communications-plan/>

Creating a communications plan – University of Sussex:

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/communications/internal/communications/issues/plan>

Knowledge mobilisation

Some toolkits that might be helpful:

The Canadian Knowledge Mobilisation toolkit– This site has many tools to help researchers plan, carry out and evaluate knowledge mobilisation activities.

The ESRC impact toolkit– Although for social science research, this site is very good on how to collaborate and influence policymakers. 50 case studies are available.

The Health Foundation communication toolkit – Excellent resource for understanding communications strategies in general, and the communications strategy template is particularly good.

The Fast Track toolkit- Includes lots of templates, podcasts, blogs and tools for a variety of impact-related activities.

Impact Literacy toolkit – Focuses on the first step as identifying the problem in collaboration with research users.

Introductory resources for Knowledge Mobilisation and planning your pathway to impact – a list of relevant, but not exclusive, knowledge mobilisation and implementation literature.

Academics and creative communication

Articles about creative communication of research

The Power Of Storytellers To Shape Our World – Carmine Gallo; Forbes 03 03 2024:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carminegallo/2024/03/17/the-power-of-storytellers-to-shape-our-world>

Marc J. Metzger, Rose Keller, Veronica Lo, Anna Filyushkina, Franziska Komossa, Maria D. López-Rodríguez, Christiane Valluri, Aster De Vries Lentsch, **'Bonkers but good!' Using illustration-based interview methods to understand land management and conservation visions** *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Volume 239, 2023, 104862, ISSN 0169-2046, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2023.104862>.

Beschloss, Stephen (2022) What's the story? Creative ways to communicate your research. Times Higher Education Campus publication: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/whats-story-creative-ways-communicate-your-research>

Katy Jordan (2023) Academics' perceptions of research impact and engagement through interactions on social media platforms, *Learning, Media and Technology*, 48:3, 415-428, DOI: 10.1080/17439884.2022.2065298 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2022.2065298>

Cowley, P. (2023). Academics and the Media: A View from Politics. *Available at* https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4371905 .



Art that works, not works of art

SCRIBERIA



Thank you!

If you've enjoyed this workbook or found it useful, do share it with friends and colleagues.

I'd love to hear how you've used this workbook, or if you have any suggestions for more resources.

You can fill in this simple form here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/FEEhZ4QhNP>

