

Innovating with Digital Media: Looking Towards the Future of Academia

Author(s): Anthony Salamone

*Digital media are becoming an increasingly integral element of the academic environment, writes **Anthony Salamone**. He argues that different forms of digital engagement bring their own research and professional benefits and that, in the long run, innovating with digital media can be a strong advantage in an academic career.*

Advances in technology over the past few decades have had a significant impact on academic life. From the advent of email (and the high volume of messages we receive) to the mass availability of publications and resources in searchable databases and online, changes in our environment have inevitably played a role in shaping how we work. At the same time, the widening and deepening of new technologies are progressively redefining the expectations placed upon academics by universities, government, funders and the public.

The days of researchers having only limited engagement with digital media and getting by with a minimal digital footprint are nearing their end. Journalists seek experts and colleagues find collaborators from online research profiles. Funding proposals increasingly require (or look favourably upon) commitments to use blogs and social media to disseminate work. The public looks for and deserves insight and analysis informed by (publicly-funded and other) research in openly available videos, articles and interactive resources.

Impetus to make use of digital media will continue to grow stronger over time. Some may perceive this shift as a burden. However, the transformation of how we communicate our ideas provides a source of opportunity – if we are willing to embrace it. Different facets of the digital world each offer their own advantages to the researcher.

One of the most prominent forms of digital media is the academic blog. Writing for a blog can bring a variety of benefits. It allows us to share our research and insight with a wider audience, thereby diffusing knowledge across a greater space. As a distinct form of writing, it challenges us to explain ourselves in a way which is both accessible and informative, which in turn enables us to better understand our own work and how to communicate it.

In the audiovisual sphere, videos and podcasts are essential means of distributing information. Their applications can range from broadcasting a topical discussion to showcasing research or a course. They offer us the chance to appeal directly to a specific audience through more dynamic avenues than simple text. The presentation and spoken skills that they require are invaluable for communicating our ideas effectively. Smaller

audiovisual projects, such as those within a university context, can be ideal preparation for more formal media engagements.

Online courses, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), bring together elements of both writing and audiovisual media. Free and open, these courses allow us to make use of our expertise to provide a foundational overview for people who have an interest in the topic. They offer the chance to design a digital curriculum, which can provide experience in utilising digital resources, such as videos and websites, in the teaching context. More broadly, they allow us to engage with members of the public, which can be beneficial on both sides.

New modes of publishing collections can also bring their own benefits. In particular, e-books can be an innovative means of sharing research and insight. By virtue of their digital form, their size and shape can be quite flexible. They can also be published in-house, making it easier and faster to distribute directly. Digital collections can provide useful experience in editing and curating knowledge.

Many other varieties of digital media abound. Nearly all are united by their increased reach and ease of access. Increasingly, they also enable us to take charge of the design of what we create – from books and courses to videos and websites. We have more opportunities to innovate in how we present our ideas. It is clear that digital media will become an ever more essential part of the academic career.

By embracing new technologies early on, we can learn from them as they develop and make the most of their potential. Those who innovate with digital media will be strongly placed to succeed in an academic environment increasingly shaped by technology.

Author Information:

Anthony Salamone
University of Edinburgh

Anthony Salamone is PhD Candidate in Politics at the University of Edinburgh and Managing Editor of [European Futures](#). He is a Committee Member of the UACES Student Forum and Co-Editor of *Crossroads Europe*.

Publication License:

Creative Commons (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International)

Additional Information:

Please note that this article represents the views of the author(s) and not those of the UACES Student Forum or UACES.