Chapter 9
Communicating Science in the Twenty-First Century

Abstract In this chapter, we discuss science communication in the twenty-first century. We explore the opportunities the internet offers us to expand our research network and share our knowledge with a wider audience. A first topic is blogging as a researcher. The different ways of contributing with blog posts, as well as the different platforms for blogging are discussed, i.e. a blog as a single author, a blog as a research group, or other collaborative efforts. We highlight the benefits of blogging. A second topic is the use of Twitter as a microblogging platform and source of information for researchers. We discuss how to engage with an audience on Twitter and start a scientific conversation, and how to join the Twitter conversation about higher education. A final topic is online branding for scientists. We first explore how searchable you are, and how you can manage the information that shows up when you google your name. We then look at additional profiles, such as LinkedIn, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, Instagram, Facebook, and Storify to share information and to manage the information that is available about you on the internet.

Keywords Online branding · Branding · Science communication · LinkedIn · Blogging · Twitter · Internet tools · Public outreach

9.1 Introduction and Learning Goals

From the traditional tools of communicating research in Chaps. 7 (writing) and 8 (technical presentations), we now move to new tools available for researchers in the internet age. In this chapter, you will learn about blogging as a scientist, microblogging through Twitter, and how to curate your image on the internet. As blogging and Twitter are the most common online platforms to share research insights, we will focus on these tools. Other tools, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Instagram, Storify etc will be discussed in a much shorter way.

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9.2 Blogging as a Researcher

9.2.1 Single-Author Blogs

Let's take our science into the twenty-first century. Besides the traditional means of sharing research, i.e. academic writing and giving technical presentations (see Chaps. 7 and 8), we will now explore the opportunities the internet offers us to expand our research network and share our knowledge with a wider audience and our peers. We've talked about how blogging is good practice for your writing in Chap. 7. In this chapter, our focus is on using internet tools to share your research and increase your visibility. The first way of sharing research online is through blogging. The most common form of blogging is through single-author blogs. Research [1] has shown that the most popular topics to blog about for academics (based on an analysis of 100 academic blogs) are academic cultural critique (41%) and research dissemination (40%). The most common writing style has a scholarly tone, but is more relaxed, suggesting that blogs are part of a continuum of academic identity and publishing. Most academic bloggers seem to be writing for themselves, or an audience of people like themselves.

If you are fully unfamiliar with academic blogging, I recommend that you check out some blogs about higher education, research strategies, and from scholars in your field. If you enjoy reading these blogs, you might feel the urge to start sharing your insights with the world as well [2]. You could consider starting a blog to have an online presence; this topic will be further discussed in the paragraph about online branding. Perhaps you want to use the internet as a space to document your PhD trajectory, and to reflect upon what you have learned along the journey. Regardless of the reason why you would want to start your own blog, here are some steps to set up your blog and make it known to the world (see Fig. 9.1):

1. **Blogging tools:** When you are ready to start your blog, you first need to create the actual blog. Before you do so, think about the following: where do you want your blog to go? Do you want to use a regular blogging platform like Wordpress or Blogger, or do you want to build your own website? Do you want to have your own domain? Do you want to spend money on the hosting of your blog? Once you've selected your tools, you need to choose a name for your blog. Do you want to blog under your own name on a website with your name, or do you want to give your blog a separate name? Do you want to publish your blog posts under your name, or are you going to write under a pseudonym? Once you have answered these questions, you can sign up and register your little spot on the world wide web. You've made one big step forward – from now on, all you need to do is write your blog posts, and perhaps tinker with the layout of your blog every now and then.
2. **Write weekly updates:** If you find it hard to think about a topic for your first post, you can plan to write weekly updates about your research. You can write these posts as part of your Friday afternoon routines, in which you evaluate your week. You can use this post to show pictures of what you have been doing in the

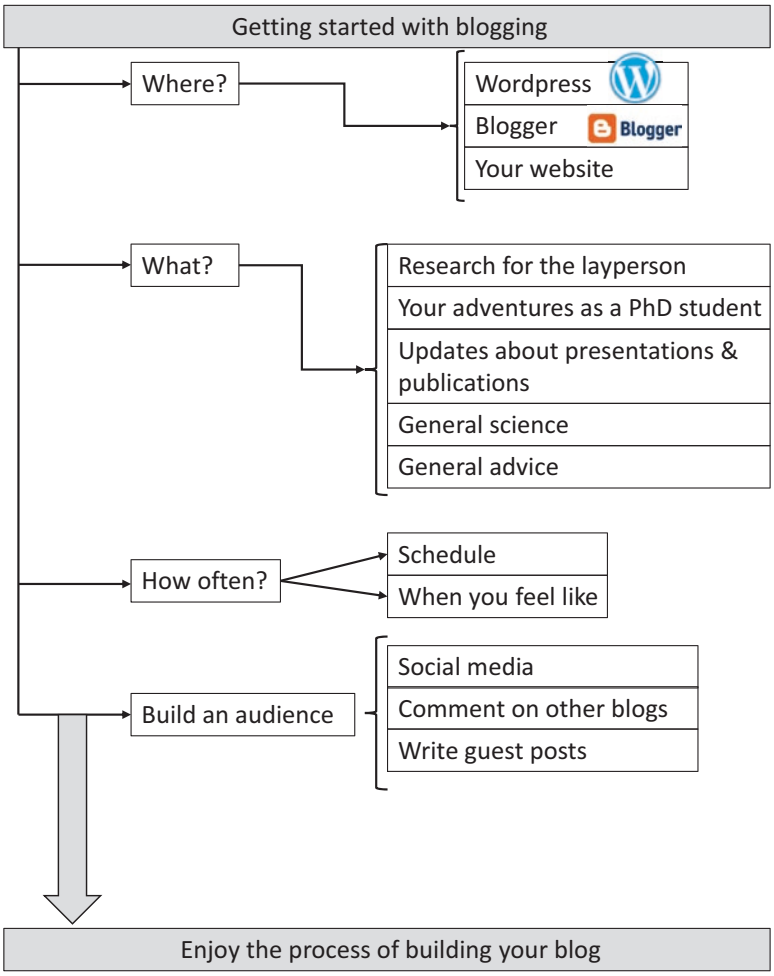

Fig. 9.1 Steps for building your blog

lab, share general musings about the progress of your research, and/or share links to interesting blog posts that you read during the week. You can add a paragraph with comments to these posts as well. At PhD Talk, I don't keep weekly updates, but I enjoy reading these updates from researchers whose blogs I follow.

3. **Share your publications and presentations:** Remember that in Chap. 8 we discussed uploading your presentation to Slideshare and then possibly embedding it in a blog post? You can use a recent presentation to discuss it in a blog post. You can add your slides, some information about the event where you presented, and the abstract of your talk. A similar type of post can work for letting your readers know that you recently published a paper. Of course, an entire blog

in which you only write about your recent presentations and publications may be a little too static and niche for your readers, and feels more like a shopping list of achievements rather than an online log of your adventures in science, so try to vary the type of posts that you publish.

4. **Explain your research:** Your blog can be the perfect training ground for learning how to communicate your science to the public. Imagine you are at a family event, and your family members would like to know what your research is about. You may find it hard to answer this question directly and in an understandable way. With a blog post, you can practice discussing your research topic free of jargon. You can share a series of photographs from your lab work, and talk about what you are doing, and why. You can share videos of your experiments online. The added bonus is that you can't share this information in traditional journal papers.
5. **Share what you learned:** In a journal paper, we usually report only the method that worked. If you are testing something new, developing the right test setup may be an iterative process. Sharing with the research community what you tried and why it did not work can be incredibly valuable for the future research generations. Science can become more open if we find the right platform to not only discuss our results, but also our tools. And perhaps, these tactics can work to eradicate publication bias (we'll discuss this topic more when we talk about the benefits of blogging). If you feel uncomfortable about sharing your experiences and trials and errors in the laboratory, start by sharing little hacks on your blog. Did you find a handy way to do something in the lab? Did you program a little routine that could serve others? As you start to see that the online community is grateful and encouraging, you may feel more comfortable, and ready to discuss the larger topics.
6. **Discuss a blog post:** When you read a post from a researcher in another field, or a general post about higher education, you can write a post with your commentary. You can write a short paragraph in the comments section of the original post, but if you feel that you have more to share, you can dedicate an entire post on your blog to the topic. In that case, you can use your blog to argument why general practices are different in your field, or to discuss how your field can learn from the observations of a scholar in another field. Even when you think a post is complete nonsense, always remain polite and show good scholarship. Stay away from commenting on clickbait, fake news/propaganda, and other trolling websites – those sources are a waste of your time, and should be ignored.
7. **Describe how you implemented a post:** Did you read a little hack from a different field on a scholar's blog? How did it work for you? The answer is something you can discuss in a blog post. You can focus on your experience in applying the hack, and if it was useful for you, or you can discuss the changes you had to make to apply it to your field. In terms of productivity tricks, you can read about the planning methods of other scholars, and try these out. After trying the method out for three weeks[1], you should be ready to write your own reflection on the

[1] Or any period of time after which it feels like you got used to the method.

topic. You may experience that some time management techniques are too strict for the creative nature of your research. If that's the case, you can discuss how you implemented the method, and how you learned to find space and time for creativity, or how you dealt with the messy reality of daily life.

8. **Curate content:** Did you film some of your experiments? Upload the video to YouTube, and write a post about what you were testing, why you were testing it, and what you learned from the test. Did you come across an interesting video online? Share it through your blog together with a discussion of how this video impacted you and what you learned from it. Did you have an interesting discussion on Twitter with fellow academics? Make a Storify[2] (more about Storify later in this chapter) and share this story on your blog.

If you do a quick search on the internet on "How to start a blog", you may find that you need to develop a business plan for your blog, a posting schedule, a mission statement, and that you already need to have a significant number of followers [3]. Of course, you are also advised to buy a domain, hire somebody to do the layout for your blog, and a coach to help you get started. If all this advice is true, I did everything wrong. In my opinion, this advice is valid if you want to develop an online business, which could come in the form of a blog. But if you just start blogging to share your research adventures, you don't need a business plan. You need to do the science, and write about it in an accessible way, and bit by bit like-minded nerds will find their way to your spot on the internet. If you're a scientist, don't expect blogging to be the gateway to a career switch – it's unlikely you'll ever make a lot of money as a blogging scientist – but the freebies here and there, free books for review, and occasional book store credit can be a nice little reward for sharing your work.

9.2.2 Guest Posting

If the idea of starting your own blog, and having to publish regularly gives you cold sweat, you can test the waters by writing a guest post for another blog. You might also decide to guest post every now and then if you are afraid you don't have enough time and material to have a blog of your own (tip: make time for blogging – it is an excellent way to invest in your writing skills). When you have an idea for a guest post for another blog, reach out to the editor of the blog, explain the topic you'd like to write about in the form of a short abstract, and how your post could benefit the readers of the blog you are reaching out to. A clear, concise e-mail could secure your little spot on the internet; just make sure you do your homework. Look for a blog that is suitable for the topic you want to write about. Typically, general lessons learnt will work better on general blogs about research strategies, whereas it may be more difficult to share a post about your experimental work on the blog of a researcher at another institution. If the editor of the blog you pitched your idea to

[2] Storify will go out of business mid-2018. Other options include Cyfe, Wakelet, Pearltrees.

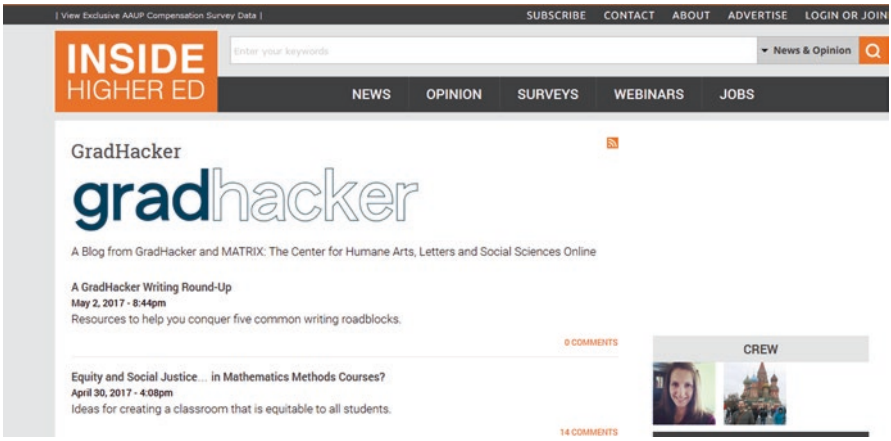

Fig. 9.2 Example of a multi-author blog

wants to invite you for writing a post, he/she will get back to you with some guidelines for posting on the blog. You can consider these guidelines as similar to the paper formatting guidelines for a publication. The editor can also give you some possible thoughts on how you can develop your topic further into a blog post, and perhaps indicate some posts on their blog that you can consider linking to in your post.

9.2.3 Multi-author Blogs

If you are in doubt about starting your own blog, you can always gather a group of friends to develop a blog together. A multi-author blog will require less commitment than a single-author blog, but still gives you the opportunity to write on a regular basis. You can join a shared blogging effort like GradHacker [4], see Fig. 9.2, or develop a collective blog for your research group or project. The benefit of starting a blog with your research group or project is that you can submit posts about recent publications and presentations, or share the processes you are using in the lab – topics that are usually more difficult to pitch to the editor of another blog. By sharing responsibilities your multi-author blog can grow without one person having to carry all the responsibilities. Some of your colleagues may be more into the layout of the website, whereas others prefer to focus on the actual writing. An even looser form of having a multi-author blog is when the blog of an institution decides to invite some of its scholars to share their views on a current hot topic.

9.2.4 *Benefits of Blogging*

Publication bias is a threat to scientific advancement [5]. In the medical field, negative results are not reported, or if they are reported, it is much harder to publish these results. As a result, money is spent on repeating the same trials that lead to more negative results, because researchers are unaware of what their colleagues in another lab tried that didn't work. In other fields, we don't know if applying a certain method or technique to our data won't work, because if somebody tried it and got negative results, he/she will not have been able to publish it. In all cases, a few weeks or months of work could be saved if we had a way to share our negative results publicly. One major benefit of blogging is that it could serve as a means to tackle publication bias. If you can't publish negative results in a journal, you can describe on your blog what you did, your negative results, and perhaps give some insight on why you think it didn't work. We need to have this discussion about failures and negative results if we want to move science forward. With that said, we need a system to catalogue these blog posts, otherwise it is still very difficult for your colleagues in another lab to learn about what did not work for you. Perhaps it is time for tighter and better linked networks of research blogs? Let's have this discussion, to see how the advancement of science can benefit from the currently available tools [6].

Besides the ways in which we can use scientific blogs to extend the tools we have to share our research, blogging also has a number of direct advantages [3, 7]. Here are some of the main advantages to blogging I've experienced over the past years for myself:

- **Visibility:** By using a blog to share conference abstracts and presentations, your research topic is visibly linked to your name (unless you decide the blog anonymously). If you start a blog, don't be surprised to receive e-mail messages from colleagues worldwide who are interested in your work, or ask you to share your recent publication with them. Conferences of course are a great way to meet researchers who work in your field, but not all scholars can travel everywhere. The internet can help us get in touch with those researchers you would generally not meet at conferences, and give an additional layer to the experience of knowledge exchange. If possible, add an extra tab to your blog in which you keep your publications listed, as well as an "About me" or "About the author" tab to introduce yourself to the world. You can also upload a recent version of your resume.
- **Learn about new topics:** As a guest author, I am sometimes asked to write an accessible piece about a research topic close to my field, but not exactly my field (for example, this post about sulfur concrete [8], which even ended up among my secondary documents in Scopus, as somebody cited it in a journal paper). For such posts, I need to do a short literature review. This practice helps me to quickly evaluate articles and take the information I need for writing a piece, a skill that immediately translates back to all academic writing.
- **Writing practice:** As we discussed at length in Chap. 7, writing requires practice and conscious effort. The more you write, the easier it becomes. Blogging is

one method to help you turn your thoughts into sentences faster. You'll also learn how to be less harsh on yourself. Blogging is a different writing style than dissertation writing. While you may have written the first paragraph of your thesis a few times, and erased it again, you will be less likely to erase your blog posts all the time, as there is less pressure to perform. Try to keep that attitude to your academic writing: avoid always deleting what you just wrote, keep it there, and revisit later for editing.

- **Find a community:** If you notice your blog posts are not getting noticed, do some Shameless Self-Promotion (it's not as bad as it sounds). Ask editors of larger blogs if you can write an article for them in exchange for having your byline with link to your blog with the article. Join the academic conversation on Twitter, and share your posts with fellow researchers. Blogs grow through interaction. Don't stay in your corner of the world, fiercely typing away the hours. Reach out and show what you are working on. Just do it all civilized – don't start spamming people with your posts.
- **Reflect on your progress:** A blog can be a great addition to your research journal. Your blog can be a place to reflect on your PhD trajectory. Whereas the details of your results and test setup are the typical contents of a journal paper, you can use your blog to reflect upon your adventures in the laboratory, and what you have learned from trying out certain planning or productivity techniques. Moreover, you'll be able to look back on your posts one or two years later and see how much progress you made. You may have completely dropped a certain approach, or you may have made tweaks and changes to your planning methods, for example. These reflections can form the basis of another post.

9.2.5 Barriers to Blogging

Blogging has many benefits, but many researchers feel certain barriers that prevent them from blogging. In general, the scientific community has not really embraced blogging. Instead, when I mention the potential of blogging, I'm often met with doubts and hesitation from my peers. There are as many forms of blogging as there are blogs (almost), so there can be a perfect fit out there for every single academic [9]. Let's have a closer look at the barriers to blogging that scare away some scholars, and how these can be avoided:

- **Privacy:** Online identity protection and safeguarding our privacy are a major concern for many scholars interested in blogging. However, as we will see later in the paragraph about online branding, you actually have more control over your online identity when you actively contribute contents than when you stay away from the internet. If you don't contribute with online content, your online image fully depends on others who may distribute contents that bear your name. If your main concern is related to sharing your personal data, then always think twice

when you fill out an online form that asks for your information. Remember that you should always think before you share anything personal online.

- **Imposter syndrome:** The fear for writing something "stupid", the little voice in your head that wonders: "Who am I to speak up" [10]… it's the imposter syndrome at work. Another related fear is when you write on the internet, your writing will grow up, have a life of its own, grow teeth, and return to bite you. How often is research misused for a sensational headline? Imagine the same happening to research results you share on your blog… So suppose that happens, wouldn't it be better that you use the internet as a practicing ground for making a mistake than having to retract a journal paper? Blogs are for starting discussions and sharing insights to advance the entire body of knowledge. If we don't share our thoughts out of fear for saying something stupid, then how are we supposed to solve the big questions of our days?
- **Too time-consuming**: Researchers have busy lives. If you combine research, teaching, administration, outreach, booking conference trips, and service commitments, you may wonder when you should be blogging. There are however a lot of blog posts that don't require much effort: posting a conference abstract with your slides, copy-pasting a reply you wrote to a fellow scholar or student with advice (just edit to protect the identity of the other person, unless you have their explicit permission to use their name), or typing a short discussion of interesting work you recently read. It's perfectly fine to write a blog post per month, or less. If you are still not sure, you can test the waters by writing a guest post for another blog.
- **Lack of ideas**: You don't have to wait until inspiration strikes before you start writing a blog post. There's enough low-hanging fruit that can be easily turned into a blog post, as mentioned above. As a PhD student, you can give a weekly/monthly update on your progress, which comes easy when you have the habit of writing down your goals, planning for them, and then evaluating them. Did you struggle figuring out how to do something (like getting a landscape table in a portrait page [11]), then write a quick tutorial – it can be helpful for yourself when you need to do the same thing again, as well as for others.

9.3 Twitter for Researchers

9.3.1 How to Engage with an Audience

Twitter is more than just the place where politicians go for uncensored ranting. For researchers, there is a wealth of information and possible contacts on Twitter [12]. Is Twitter beneficial for academics? A survey among 116 marine biologists seems to indicate that it is indeed beneficial [13]. The average marine biologist tweep had a 45% general public following and 55% scientific following, showing a good balance between niche and general outreach. Tweets referring to publications get retweeted 19% of the time, increasing research visibility.

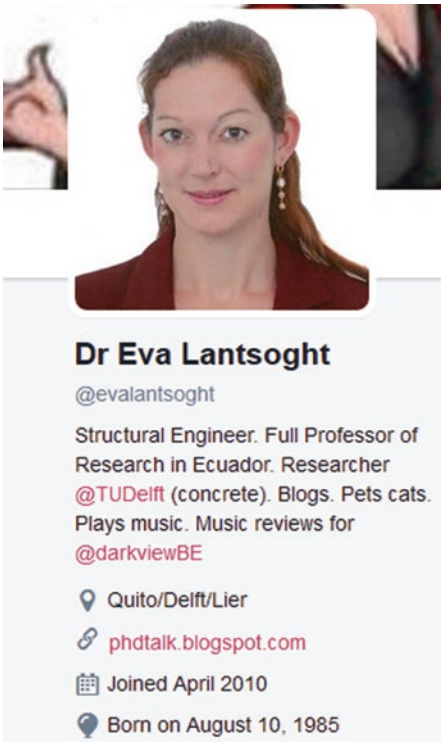

Fig. 9.3 My Twitter bio

Admittedly, finding your gang on Twitter can take time. While most people start by following news websites and perhaps their president or prime minister, the interaction with these accounts is different from the interaction with fellow academics. Actively search for peers on Twitter: fellow PhD students across disciplines, or scientists from your field at different stages of their careers. Let's take the whole process step by step. If you get confused about which button to push where, I'll refer you to the wealth of YouTube tutorials that talk you through these steps. Here, we will focus on how to use Twitter as an academic:

1. **Write a bio:** One of the first things you need to do when you sign up for Twitter, is to add your bio (maximum 140 words!). Your bio should at least mention your current position. Twitter is a lighter platform. There's no need to cite your recent publications in your Twitter bio. My bio includes "Blogs. Pets cats. Drinks tea.", see Fig. 9.3, which prepares my audience for the random tweets that are not directly related to concrete and higher education. Make your Twitter profile public instead of private if you are open for interaction: you want fellow scientists to be able to find and follow you. You can add the warning that Retweets are not Endorsements, although most of the Twitterverse is aware of this.

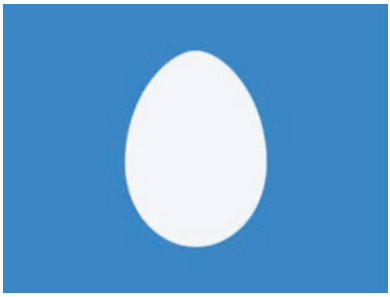

Fig. 9.4 Don't be an egg

2. **Profile picture:** Your standard profile picture is an egg, see Fig. 9.4. When I get followed by an egg, I won't take the effort to read the profile of this person, because his/her profile is not even finished with a profile picture. Since Twitter profile pictures look small, you should use a headshot. A full body picture will be reduced to the size of a stickman. Use a recent, clear, recognizable headshot, so that a fellow researcher can recognize you at a conference.
3. **Follow people:** Besides cat memes and news articles, Twitter can be a great place for reaching out to the scientific community, and I'm assuming that becoming part of this community is your first goal for joining Twitter[3]. There are different types of accounts that you can start following:

   (a) The accounts of your university and department: these accounts will also retweet tweets from fellow academics at your institute, who you can follow.
   (b) The accounts of universities and research groups worldwide you are interested in.
   (c) The accounts of academic publishers.
   (d) The accounts of news websites and blogs related to higher education, e.g. @insidehighered and @timeshighered.
   (e) Make a search for your field and/or a keyword of your research, and go through the profiles that show up.
   (f) Professional organizations in your field.
   (g) Main companies in your field.
   (h) Browse Twitter lists to see which lists in your field are curated, or in which lists researchers from your institution are featured.

   Keep in mind that growing a list of interesting people to follow, just like growing your own following, is something that happens over time. You'll see an interesting retweet, check out the profile of the original tweep, and perhaps decide to follow him/her. If you start following a lot of people in a short amount of time, Twitter will ban you from following more tweeps.
4. **Create content:** With a profile, profile picture, and some people to follow, you can start creating content. Remember to balance tweets you write yourself,

[3] I'm not judging you if the cat memes lured you in in the first place

@-replies, and retweets. You can tweet about your recent publications, retweet interesting tweets from the accounts you follow, and more. If you have more to say than 280 characters, create a tweetstorm, in which you make a thread of tweets by @-replying your first tweet. Here are some ideas for creating content:

(a) Tweet about the topic you will discuss in class.
(b) Tweet about the conference you will attend or are attending. Be careful not to tweet contents and pictures of presentations if you don't have the authorization of the presenter!
(c) Share your writing progress.
(d) Discuss a recent publication, and the ideas it gives you.
(e) Join the discussion about higher education policies.

5. **Join the discussion:** In real life you wouldn't simply barge into a group of people who are discussing a topic of your interest. On Twitter, however, there's nothing wrong with jumping into a discussion, because nobody on Twitter knows you are interested and reading along until you drop your two cents into the conversation. Comment to tweets of fellow scholars, ask for ideas and opinions, and interact. You can tag people in a post by adding their @account when you share an article and ask for their opinion. Don't be afraid, go ahead and join the online academic discussions.
6. **Using hashtags:** Those hashtags, like #selfie #socool #nomnomnom, that you see showing up all around social media? On Twitter, discussions center on certain hashtags. In the academic world, important hashtag to check out are #phdchat, #withaphd, #ecrchat (for early career researchers), #scholarsunday (on Sundays, to get ideas on who to follow), #acwri (for academic writing), #acwrimo (in November, the month in which academics pledge to move an important writing project forward and post daily word counts), and #goscholargo (to encourage fellow scholars). Some hashtags have a weekly time slot to chat, with the option to vote on the topic for the chat. Other hashtags are continuous sources of information. Check if your research field has its own hashtags. Listen in to the discussion first to get a feeling for the style of discussions, and then start contributing.
7. **Curating content:** Retweeting posts, sharing articles, pointing people to interesting discussions, and hosting people to write on your blog – all these activities are related to curating content and broadcasting it to your audience. You can go through newsletters from your field, and share interesting articles with your followers. Figure out which information you and your followers find relevant (i.e. content that receives feedback or retweets), and start distributing relevant contents.

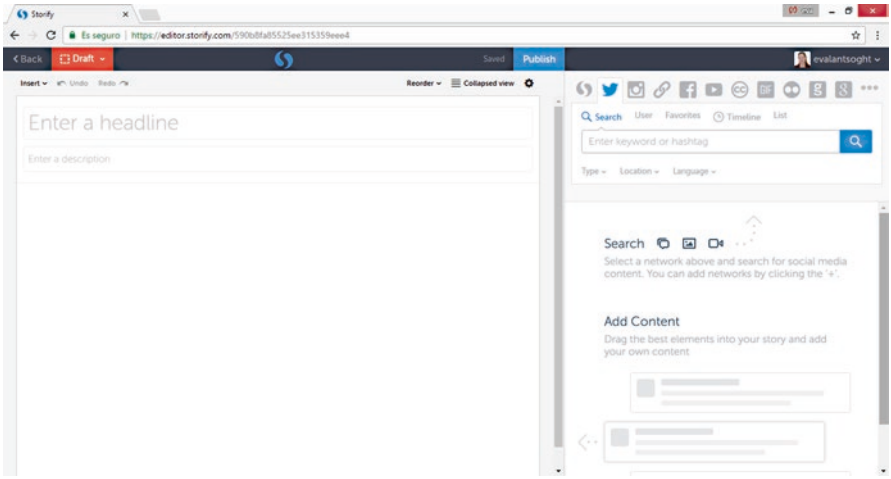

Fig. 9.5 Storify for building stories out of social media contents

9.3.2 Curating Content Through Storify

Storify[4], see Fig. 9.5, is an online tool you can use to turn interesting conversations from social media channels into a story that you save separately [14]. While Storify works for Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, and Google, we will focus here on the combination between Storify and Twitter. Does this sound like extra work for you? Don't be afraid – consider Storify as a place to archive conversations you would want to access later, just like you archive papers you read, and bookmark interesting web pages. Storify works as a news channel, and a number of major newspapers use it to generate articles. You can collect tweets of an interesting discussion, and add your commentary and reflections between the lines. You can also add the context and background of the discussion. As such, Storify is for information on the internet like scrapbooking is for your holiday pictures.

As mentioned before, a powerful function of Storify is its ability to create stories based on Twitter chats. As Twitter is a fast medium, information goes lost under the constant publication of new tweets. The oldest tweets in a discussion can already be difficult to find back. Storify has a quick function to sort tweets from the oldest to the most recent, so that you can read a discussion in the right order. To collect the information from Twitter for Storify, you can search based on the tweeps or hashtag used in a discussion. After selecting these tweets and dropping them into the Storify editor field, you can sort them and add text between the tweets.

Storify can be used to report on the commentary and discussions from a conference. You can collect the tweets based on the hashtag used for the conference, and add

[4] Service is planned to go out of business, and other companies are busy trying to fill up this vacuum Wakelet currently seems to be the best replacement.

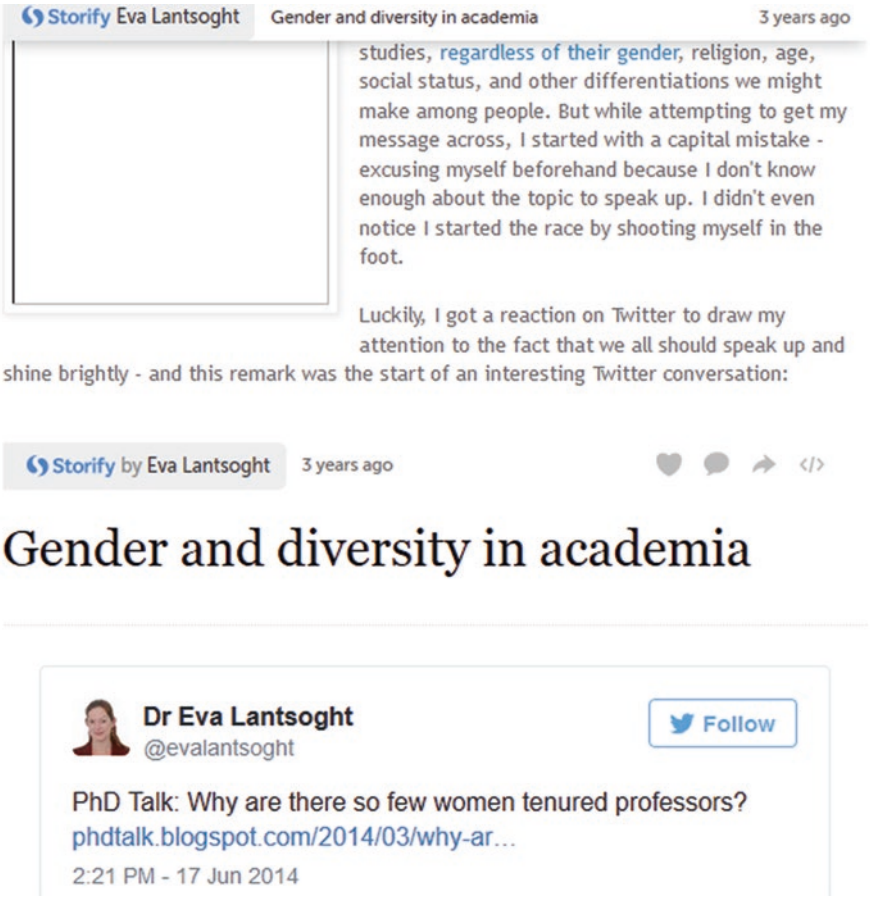

Fig. 9.6 Embedding Storify into blog posts

some of your own thoughts and comments about the day. You can find an example here [15]. Another typical use of Storify is to turn a Twitter discussion into a story. In this case, you will search for the @-accounts you interacted with to compile the story. You can find an example here [16]. Once you have developed a Storify, you can embed this story into a blog post by copying the html code of the embedded story and pasting it into the html editor of your blog, see for example Fig. 9.6.

9.4 Online Branding for Scientists

Besides your blog and Twitter account, all information that is available about you online is your digital business card. Online branding is in fact having control over the information available about you online [17]. When I mention online branding,

often researchers shoo away. Branding is for marketeers, they tell me, and I have no need to brand myself at all. I myself don't like the term "branding" that much (am I a "product"?). But let's be practical and call it branding, because that's the definition somebody gave it.

Let's focus on what online branding means: having an influence on what the internet shows the world about you. If you are not active online, or not conscious about your online activities, you depend on other people. If you do not manage your online profiles, perhaps only irrelevant information about you is available online, which can give people the wrong impression of you.

Let's start with an exercise. Go to your favorite search engine and type your name in the search field. What do you find? What are the ten first results that show up? My information is shown in Fig. 9.7.

If your search returns the fact that you won the lottery of your local baker, some emotional comment you once made on a news article, or random stuff you are trying to sell online, it is time to get some grip on your content. If future employers look you up online, you want the search engine to gently take them by the hand and bring them straight to your professional information.

If you have a unique name like me, you could think that it is easier. If your name is common, and you find only information about other people, redo the exercise with your name and your current institution, and see what shows up. If you have a very common name, it could be wise to use the first letters of your other first name(s), to distinguish yourself. If you decide to use the first letters of your other first names, do so consistently[5].

Let's now see what you can do to get grip on the content that is available about you online. Remember that once you start to take action, the irrelevant stuff will sink down to the bottom of the search results and your important information will be there at first glance. Here are several actions you can take to curate your online profile:

- **Twitter:** Here we go again with Twitter. Your Twitter profile will show up in a Google search[6] about your name, unless you used a nickname for your profile. Google search will only provide one entry from Twitter. However, possible employers will certainly feel like checking out your profile. So put a bit of time and effort into your profile (or, in other words: spend a bit of time working on your Twitter profile when you want to procrastinate in a productive way, and you may be surprised by the interesting professional results that follow). Follow the tips from the previous section.
- **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is your online resume. There's no discussion on whether or not you need a profile on LinkedIn – the answer is yes. If you don't have a LinkedIn account, carve out two to four hours some day to get this thing up and running. Take the summary from your resume, and add it to your LinkedIn summary. Use a recent photograph. Transport all the categories from your resume

[5] For all your publications, for all work occasions, and on all your online profiles.

[6] Or your favorite search engine. I currently use Ecosia.

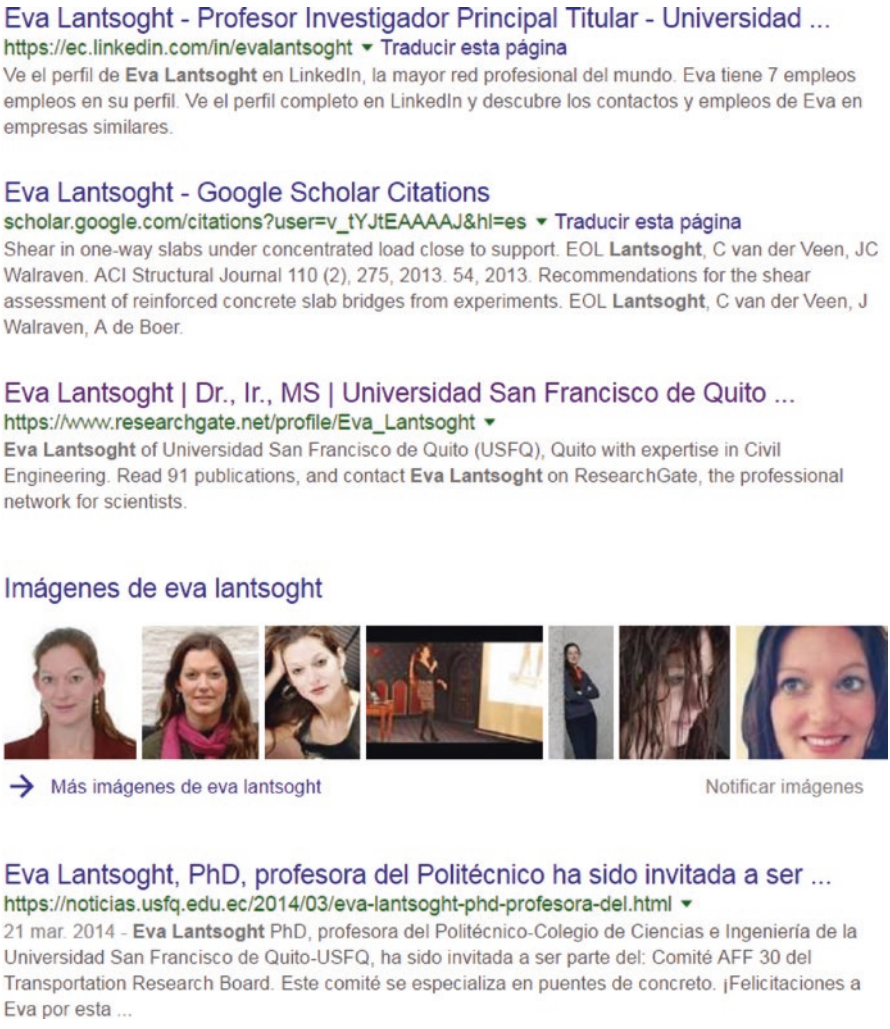

Fig. 9.7 Google your own name

into LinkedIn, and make sure your information is up to date. Then, start connecting with people you know. Typically, LinkedIn will suggest people you know to get started. If you have a profile, give it a serious look, pretending you are an outsider (say, somebody who would be interested in working with you). Do you like what you see? Is your information up to date? If not, it's time to clean ship and give your profile a makeover.

- **Your blog:** Blogging is an excellent way to control the information available about yourself online. If you prefer to guest post, make sure your byline has your name and information correctly, so that you are searchable.

- **Developing a brand:** While the word "brand" may give you visions of ketchup and makes of cars, you should keep in mind that a brand for a person links back to this person's core values. What is the most important thing you want others to see about yourself? The internet is not there to give people the impression that your life is perfect, and more and more, voices in social media and the internet world are asking for more authenticity online. Think about the impression you want to make. Do you want to focus fully on your work, or do you think it is fine to give a sarcastic remark about the state of affairs in the world every now and then?
- **Find your tribe:** Once you start using social media platforms to broadcast who you are, you can start to form bonds online. Through the blogging and Twitter community, I've been reaching out to fellow academics, and have gained numerous insights. I learned a lot of tips and tricks from fellow researchers during my PhD, and learned how to manage my time and plan accordingly. My tribe, as such, has been generally academic. Your tribe may be more specific to your field - whatever you are comfortable with, and whatever feels like developing meaningful connections. Reach out to others by leaving comments on their blogs, replying to tweets, and interacting in different ways. Once you have found your community, you will hopefully see the benefit of putting some time into your online profiles, and an online search will show information that you yourself provided to the internet.

9.5 Summary

In this chapter, we explored the possibilities of the internet to reach out to fellow researchers and the general public. We discussed how internet tools can be used to extend the traditional tools to disseminate research (writing and giving presentations). We focused on the use of blogs to share research insights, or general musing about the PhD trajectory. We also looked at the use of Twitter for academics, and the benefits Twitter brings for interaction with fellow scientists. Finally, we looked at the information that is available about you online, and how you can get a grip on this information to show the world your most important professional information when someone searches for you online.

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