

Beyond the elevator:

How to pitch your story and other useful writing skills for an open knowledge future

Have you ever tried to pitch a story about your research to a newspaper or popular journal to only be met with silence? Or have you never even attempted such a thing because you weren't sure how to go about it?

Mostly we are passive in our engagements with the media, being contacted by journalists and being interviewed with questions that they pose. But what if you wrote the story about your research yourself? What if you posed the questions! And what if that story was told in a major newspaper or international popular journal, and not just in the more obscure academic journals in your field?

There is a global shift in higher education towards open access, expectations of engagement between researchers and society and addressing the needs of users of scholarship. Valorisation is increasingly becoming part of our job as researchers, yet we cannot all be expected to have the skills in writing for a general audience without training. This does not only refer to PhD students writing valorisation statements, but to scientists across all levels of seniority and experience at UM.

In the second week of April 2018 we have been lucky to secure the services of an international expert who specialises in how to write for a broader audience: Simon Clews. Simon Clews is the Director of the Melbourne Engagement Lab at the University of Melbourne, Australia and has run an extensive repertoire of workshops across the Asia-Pacific and in North America (see <http://simonclews.com/workshop-program>).

In Maastricht, from the 9th – 11th April 2018, Simon Clews will run two one-day workshops for FASoS and one for the Maastricht Young Academy. The possibilities of what he can offer are manifold. The workshops will be tailored to the interests of participants, but in general, their goal will be to inspire, and equip participants with better skills for writing for the public (e.g. writing about research for non-academic audiences, generating a profile of interest to a broader public, writing short pieces for online and print media).

These workshops will not only provide guidance in making first or further steps into a broader public audience, but will also help train transferable skills in pitching, storytelling and simplifying a research message which could have impact in other aspects of your work from grant writing to letters to editors to job applications. More broadly, these writing workshops will help UM staff to better configure themselves as accessible brokers of knowledge, and to engage more effectively with the challenges of a transformation towards a more open knowledge future.

For further details, please contact Anna Harris: a.harris@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

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