Pimp my Profile and the *Researcher Profile Health Check*: Practical, individualised researcher support initiatives co-created by library and faculty.

Abstract

Recent literature on researcher profiles and social media tends to focus either on citation tools with profiling functionality, or the relationship between social media for scholarly communication and formal metrics. Less often does the literature put the researcher at the centre, and discuss the online researcher profile as an holistic persona, with the tools as enablers rather than drivers.

The *Pimp my Profile* initiative was developed by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Creative Industries Faculty Library Liaison Team in collaboration with the Research Leaders in the Creative Industries Faculty, and is focussed on supporting researchers to create their online academic persona, improve their online visibility and develop an individual and institutional 'brand'.

Introduction

Recent literature on researcher profiles and social media tends to focus either on citation tools with profiling functionality, or the relationship between the use of social media for scholarly communication and subsequent metrics. Less often does the literature put the researcher at the centre, and discuss the online researcher profile as an holistic persona, with the tools as enablers rather than drivers.

University research support activities often focus on the mechanics of profiling tools, with online guides presenting long lists of platforms, databases and metrics services. These guides do not encourage researchers to think in terms of their online persona in a coordinated, strategic way.

The *Pimp my Profile*¹ initiative was developed in September 2015 by the Creative Industries Faculty library liaison team (CI library liaison team) in collaboration with the Research Leaders in the Creative Industries Faculty (CI), and is aligned with the faculty's strategic vision for developing the online visibility of its researchers. The *Pimp my Profile* initiative led to the *Researcher Profile Health Check* service.

¹ A popular culture reference to the television show *Pimp my Ride*, with this particular meaning of the word 'pimp' being used in the vernacular since the 1990s (Thorne, 2014, p. 333).

The *Pimp my Profile* workshop takes researchers through a three step guide to creating an online presence; the *Researcher Profile Health Check*² service provides individualised feedback and practical suggestions on how researchers can maximise their online visibility. In both cases the persona of the researcher is at the centre.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, both for the approach and the outcomes. Faculty Research Leaders report that the relationship between the faculty and the library has grown closer over the previous twelve month. The library in general, and the CI library liaison team in particular are considered as part of the faculty, contributing positively to the faculty's research culture, and are seen as 'go to' partners in the research support space.

Faculty Background

The Creative Industries Faculty is a 'super faculty' incorporating sixteen disciplines grouped into two schools: Design; and Media, Entertainment and Creative Arts (MECA). It was one of the first such faculties in the world, and the first in Australia when founded in 2000. Degree programmes are offered across nineteen study areas, demonstrating the complexity and variety of the faculty.

² Developed independently from the Piirus *Digital Identity Health Check for Academics*: <u>https://www.piirus.ac.uk/benefits</u>

Creative Industries Discipline Areas

Design

- Architecture
- Fashion
- Industrial design
- Interaction and visual design
- Interior design
- Landscape
 architecture

Media, Entertainment and Creative Arts

- Creative writing and literary studies
- Dance
 - Drama
 - Acting
 - Technical production
- Entertainment
 industries

- Film, screen and animation
- Journalism, media and communication
- Music and sound
- Visual arts

The faculty is recognised for its research strengths in three priority areas: Digital media, communication and culture; Innovation in the performing and digital arts; and Sustainability and innovation in design. In 2012, it earned an ERA 4 in *Studies in Creative Arts and Writing* (FOR 19), and an ERA 5 in *Language, Communication and Culture* (FOR 20). The faculty also has a focus on studio pedagogies, practice-led research, and non-traditional research outputs (NTROs). The faculty is engaged in interdisciplinary and cross-faculty research – both within QUT and with other institutions in Australia - as well as emphasising industry partnerships and international collaboration.

Strategic research leadership for the faculty rests with the Assistant Dean - Research and International Engagement (RIE). Research strategy is further developed, communicated and operationalised via the Research Quality Director and the Research Leaders for the three focus areas of design; media and communication; and entertainment and creative Arts. It is with the Research Quality Director, the Research Leaders as well as the Heads of Discipline that the CI librarians work most closely to develop and operationalise research support services tailored to the needs of the faculty.

The Creative Industries Library Liaison Team

The CI library liaison team consists of two and half Liaison Librarians (CI librarians), one and a half Library Advisers (qualified librarians) and one Academic Skills Adviser. Liaison Librarians are responsible for outward-facing services to the faculty. They establish and maintain relationships with teaching, research and professional staff and offer services around learning and teaching, information resources and faculty-specific research support. Each has primary responsibility for a set of disciplines, as well as a coordinating role within the team in either learning and teaching, blended learning or research support.

CI Library Advisers support the CI librarians operationally, for example they are responsible for developing and maintaining the subject guides hosted by the LibGuide platform. They also provide direct support services to any undergraduate student, via the library's physical and virtual service points. The Academic Skills Adviser provides direct support to any undergraduate student via the library's Study Solutions service, via individual referrals for ongoing support and by working with unit coordinators of the Creative Industries Faculty.

From 'Publish or Perish' to 'Visible or Vanish'

Since John Lamp (2012) coined the phrase "visible or vanish" the most commonly held point of view emerging from the literature is that the modern researcher must embrace social media (Tregoning, 2016). It is virtually an obligation to disseminate research via social media (Sugimoto, 2016) and to create an academic online persona (Marshall, 2015). There are several drivers behind this.

Firstly, technology has disrupted the traditional mechanisms of scholarly communication (Dunleavy, 2015; Dunleavy & Gilson, 2012; Ensor, 2014; Lamp, 2012), and an academic who does not engage with some form of social media for dissemination is disengaged from their community (Ensor, 2014). Using social media platforms to disseminate research in plain language, as a story (Terras, 2012), enables research to reach the widest possible audience (Dunleavy, 2015). Burton, Farrelly and Papa (2015) refer to this as 'socialising' one's research.

Secondly, different social media platforms enable different types of conversations to take place, and alternative metric methods are attempting to capture the impact around these conversations (National Innovation and Science Agenda: Australian Research Council, 2016). However, one must acknowledge that it is a complex and contested field, with no way to accurately extrapolate measurements across discipline areas (Busch et al., 2015; Priem, 2016; Terras, 2012).

Thirdly, a researcher's CV is increasingly being replaced by various online profiles and the results of a Google search on their name (Bik & Goldstein, 2013; Terras, 2012; Tregoning, 2016). For instance, Professor Corey Bradshaw provocatively states that:

Pretty much every time I review a manuscript or a grant application, I google the researchers involved (at least the lead investigators). When I can't find their history, I get frustrated, generally become grumpy, and am probably less likely to give a positive review. And let's not even go there if you're looking for a job. Even with your CV and publications list in-hand, as a selection committee member, I will ALWAYS google you. When I find that you haven't even bothered to put yourself on the web, chances are you won't even make the interview list (Bradshaw, 2013).

The Researcher Profile as Online Persona

John Tregoning (2016) likens creating and maintaining an online researcher presence to creating a brand. In three phases, he exhorts the researcher to "Be the Brand, Develop the Brand, and Sell the Brand", and while not all activities he suggests are digital, being online underpins this strategy.

There is no one right way to use social media in academia. But its use in the scholarly context challenges the traditional value systems around dissemination of research

(Miah, 2014), how impact is measured (Más-Bleda & Aguillo, 2013) and how the persona of the academic is presented in the public sphere (Marshall, 2015; Stewart, 2016). Not all researchers and academics are comfortable with being as assertively online as advocated by Bradshaw (2013) and Tregoning (2016). Many academics and researchers are concerned that the use of social media is time consuming, is perceived as banal, becomes an added workload and they report feeling uncomfortable with what they see as self-aggrandisement (Cann, Dimitriou, & Hooley, 2011; Lupton, 2014; Smith, 2015; Thelwall & Kousha, 2015). However social media use in the scholarly context is becoming ubiquitous, and those value systems will continue to be challenged.

What Are Australian Universities Doing?

Every university in Australia provides some form of guidance and support around creating a researcher profile and using social media tools for dissemination and tracking of scholarship.

This is a fast changing landscape. A 2012 survey of library research support in Queensland universities did not investigate social media use specifically. However the report acknowledged that online profiles and social media optimisation were trending issues at that time (Richardson, Nolan-Brown, Loria, & Bradbury, 2012, p. 273).

Reproducing such a survey is not the intention of this paper. However a scan of Australian university websites gives an impression of how other universities are supporting researcher profiles. Most guidance emphasises the tools, while others provide guidance in terms of traditional end goals such as metrics. Only a few universities appear to be packaging the information so that it focusses on creating a persona, or provides the researcher with a framework or strategy to prioritise a variety of tools around their persona.

This is likely under-representing the support for the online academic persona, which is happening in workshops, seminars and other research events within universities. What can be seen are tool-centric, list-heavy guides published via library research support web pages. It appears that Australian university research support centres, libraries, and librarians are not formally publishing about support for the online academic persona.

QUT Library Support for the Online Academic Persona

Prior to the *Pimp my Profile* initiative there were existing seminars and workshops developed and delivered by both QUT library's centralised Research Support Team (open to any QUT staff member) and the CI librarians (offered to CI staff). These existing programmes tended to focus on impact tracking and strategic publishing from a fairly traditional approach. They did not emphasise the crafting of a research persona.

The focus of the 2015 QUT Senior Staff Leadership Group Conference was 'Backing the Brand' (Queensland University of Technology: University Academic Board, 2015). In response, CI Research Leaders are focusing on "how to maximise external and end user impact by better, more co-ordinated exploitation of stuff we already do" and how to "build our name recognition as individuals and at the centre/institution level" (Professor Brian McNair, Professor of Journalism and Research Leader: Media and Communication - personal communication with the authors).

Professor McNair speaks from the context of the creative industries, where traditional research communication channels and standard impact metrics are less useful, as compared with faculty areas with a more traditional publishing and profiling culture (Konkiel, 2016).

A strategy to achieve this was introduced by Professor Marcus Foth, then CI Research Leader for the School of Design and FoR³ Code 12. In an email communication with the authors, Professor Foth said:

Right now, I'm increasingly concerned that having a paper in conference proceedings or a journal does obviously not guarantee that it is being picked up and read, so we need to do more to get the message out there, and create a "web presence" for our work that links back to ePrints. This should include:

- Wikipedia (new entries, revise existing entries, add references and links to our work)
- YouTube / vimeo videos that showcase our research

³ <u>1297.0 Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification</u> (ANZSRC), 2008.

- Articles in *The Conversation*
- Press releases for the media
- Personal website for online CV and pubs list / portfolio

I've started to lobby [the University's corporate communications] people to include more info on the next iteration of QUT's business cards, and your help would be appreciated. I think we should include at least a LinkedIn short URL ... and Twitter username

Professor Foth also spoke in terms of researchers needing to ensure that their name become known, to create a brand which colleagues would associate with their work and their affiliated institution. He said, "We need to do more of this, and we need to do this better". Professor Foth and Professor McNair are implementing, at the faculty level, the 'Backing the Brand' vision of the university.

In response, CI librarians re-developed their existing support strategies, in collaboration with CI Research Leaders, to better align with faculty goals: The *Pimp my Profile* initiative was the result.

Operationalisation

The strategy has three components: the *Create your Researcher Profile* online guide⁴, the *Pimp my Profile* workshop, and the *Researcher Profile Health Check* service.

⁴ <u>http://libguides.library.qut.edu.au/researcher_profile</u>

The *Create Your Researcher Profile* online guide is a step-by-step framework which gives structure to the workshops and health checks, acts as a follow-up support resource, and functions as a stand-alone resource available to the whole university community.

The *Pimp My Profile* workshop was developed to address the gap between researchers learning about profile and social media platforms, and actually creating their online profile. The focus is hands on - getting things set up there and then.

The Researcher Profile Health Check service took a 'secret shopper' approach. Cl librarians tested how the researcher appeared online, to answer the question what do we find when we google you? Taking the workshop content and the Create Your Researcher Profile guide as the model, Cl librarians reported back to the academic with ideas on how to maximise their visibility and where to prioritise work on enhancing their online persona.

The Components in Detail

Create Your Researcher Profile guide

When developing the content of the <u>guide</u>, the needs of the researcher were the central focus. The tools and platforms are presented in a three-step approach - researchers can choose how much and how far to go with pimping their profile. The tools and platforms themselves do not drive the researcher's strategy – the personality and communication habits of the researcher determine the approach. The development

team considered *what do researchers most often do?* and *how can the available tools and platforms help make this activity as visible as possible?* This is in keeping with Professor McNair's comment about exploiting what they already do, and ensures that the researcher is at the centre of the strategy.

The guide is clean and uncluttered, and owes some of its text to the Researcher Profile guide from Utrecht University Library⁵. The content is divided into stages: the *Bronze* level suggests the essentials that all researchers should have; the *Silver* level builds on these basics, by enhancing the content in selected profiles and building a social media presence; 'going for *Gold*' highlights the tools and services suitable for researchers with wider experience, or those whose discipline areas lend themselves to particular platforms. There is no expectation that this staged progression should be strictly adhered to, and researchers are encouraged to pick and choose those options that best suit where they are in their career and their existing scholarly communication habits.

Bronze:

- *The QUT Staff Profile:* It rises to the top in Google results, is formally branded with the university logo, and presents authoritative information drawn from QUT systems. As the researcher's formal academic persona, it aligns with the static persona described by Marshall (2015).
- QUT ePrints: Open access articles give researchers something to tweet and blog about. The resultant traffic to this open access information may then be measured via views and download statistics (Terras, 2012).

⁵ <u>http://libguides.library.uu.nl/researchimpact//profiles</u>

- ORCID: QUT is implementing ORCID into its systems, and it is a university priority for all academic staff to have one. ORCID is institution neutral, so a researcher's profile exists independently of affiliation and employment status. It comes with profile functionality and researchers are encouraged to enhance that profile - no-one likes to follow a link to an empty profile page.
- *Email signature:* Every email a researcher sends should work hard for them, and make it as easy as possible for potential collaborators to link through to their work. It is another opportunity to drive traffic to other profiles and platforms which combine to create an holistic persona.

Silver:

The next stage emphasises participation in social media and networking to connect with collaborators and community. It suggests building content in existing and additional profiles that enable networking. Researchers are free to decide which tools suit their existing scholarly communication habits or to explore other suggested avenues, with links to succinct explanations of the platforms.

Gold:

Going for *Gold* is about maintenance and sustainability as well as communication, sharing and the mediatisation of the research persona.

 The Conversation: "Academic rigour with journalistic flair" is the by-line of The Conversation. The use of lay summaries and plain language enables nonscholars and scholars from other disciplines to quickly enter the researcher's world. Lay summaries are eminently tweetable. Platforms like The Conversation also provide author profiles and social media functionality.

- Kudos: Kudos assists researchers in translating their research into plain language. These lay summaries can be attached to the full papers, blogged, and added to QUT ePrints and tweeted. Easy to read summaries can drive traffic to the full papers.
- Expert Guide: The Expert Guide makes it easy for journalists to find reliable and expert sources for interviews, without needing to trawl individual university expert lists. The Expert Guide is a platform by which the researcher can develop their mediatised self (Marshall, 2015).
- Sharing data: Sharing data has been proven to boost citations, as well as increase collaboration opportunities (Piwowar, Day, & Fridsma, 2007).
- *Publons:* Publons contributes to a researcher's persona as 'expert'. The researcher volunteers their expertise to provide a scholarly service that is rarely rewarded or counted by existing metrics. Publons addresses this gap.

Pimp my Profile Workshop

The workshop sets the context for participants, and puts the strategy into practice – with the online guide functioning as both a help resource for participants and as a lesson plan for facilitators. All researchers leave the workshop having achieved most of the tasks indicated for *Bronze* and *Silver*, and they also develop a strategy for immediate follow up. Participants write a to-do list for themselves which CI librarians mail to them after two months, with an invitation for follow-up assistance.

Pimp my Profile Lite workshops are scheduled in discipline meeting time, supported by Research Leaders and Heads of Discipline. All researchers of a discipline create or review their essential profiles and research identifiers, and develop a strategy for sustainable maintenance and enhancement of their online persona. The specific research flavour of each discipline drives which tools, communication strategies and profile platforms are a 'fit' for each individual – some tools are appropriately 'one size fits all', while others are brought together in a mix and match approach, with the CI librarians advising on the fly.

A key point made in the workshops, is that any one tool has to work hard for the researcher. Each social media platform has its own culture (Cann, et al., 2011, p. 23; Goss, Suttor, & Edith Cowan University, 2013), which offers the advantages of achieving a wide reach, but also demands that the researcher suit their voice to the culture of the platform. For instance, one's presence on Twitter will have a different tone to one's presence on LinkedIn, which is why the emphasis is on creating a 'persona', not just profiles.

Researcher Profile Health Check service

The participants in the health checks are either self-selected, having heard of the initiative and wanting to be pimped, or are referred as priority people by the CI Research Leaders.

The CI librarians google each researcher as would a potential employer (Bradshaw, 2013), and identify what profiles and other sites are prominent or absent in the search results. From this, the librarians form an impression of how visible the researcher is and whether they have a strong persona across platforms.

The information found is also checked for currency and consistency. The online guide provides the framework and priorities for the feedback. A short 'report' is emailed to the researchers, accompanied by an invitation to make an appointment to work with their librarian on their various profiles.

Effectiveness of *Pimp my Profile* and the *Researcher Profile Health Check*

Is the *Pimp my Profile* initiative working? Given that it takes a little time to develop an online academic persona and generate follow-on activity, gathering of evaluation data will be delayed until a critical mass of CI researchers have taken part in the programme. Also, a review of the literature did not identify a methodology which would rigorously measure the effectiveness of an online persona comprised of multiple platforms and engagement practices.

However, feedback from participants, continued endorsement by the CI faculty and uptake of the initiatives amongst the wider university community are indicators that the strategy is considered worthwhile.

Re: Pimp my Profile

It was also noted that inclusion of ORCIDs on other forms of academic writing, such as pieces in *The Conversation*, has a significant impact on AltMetrics, and hence on both individual and institutional citation data. So the *Pimp My Profile* initiative ... needs to be revisited for 2016. With the revised definition of Active Researcher, there are a wider range of faculty stakeholders with an interest in scholarly profiles. *[Personal communication]*

Professor Terry Flew. Assistant Dean - Research and International Engagement. Creative Industries Faculty.

CI Research Leaders anecdotally report that they and other members of staff who have pimped their profiles are receiving increased traffic to their research outputs, contacts from international collaborators, invitations to present or be interviewed, and enquiries from potential students.

Re: Researcher Health Check

I actually thought that my digital profile and QUT staff profile were quite sophisticated and up-to-date. I asked for a profile 'health check' out of curiosity to double check I hadn't missed anything and I was genuinely surprised when I discovered how underdeveloped, how out-of-date, and how clunky my digital profile was. My online presence was missing important information, my biography was unnecessarily long and difficult to follow, key profiling tools were not talking to each other or were only partially set up, and a good portion of my publications were not available in ORCID or Academia.edu. Frankly I was quite embarrassed at how unrepresentative my staff profile was relative to how much work I've actually done and how much work was not being acknowledged. Since the Health Check, it feels as though I have had a lot more correspondence with both national and international scholars in the field.

[Personal communication]

Dr. Mark Ryan Research Leader: Entertainment and Creative Arts Senior Lecturer- Film, Screen and Animation.

In April 2016, *Pimp my Profile* workshops were delivered as part of QUT's Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice (GCAP). In May 2016, workshops and seminar presentations were delivered as part of the programme for the 2016 cohort of Early Career Academic Development (ECARD) Programme, whose participants are drawn from all faculty areas at QUT. This programme is run out of the Division of Research and Commercialisation, under the leadership of the Dean of Research & Research Training.

In May (and September 2016), a presentation version of the *Pimp my Profile* workshop was included in the regular authorship and publishing seminar coordinated by the university's Office of Research Integrity and Ethics (OREI). Based on this exposure, other faculties have enquired about the initiative and are making contact with their library liaison teams to implement their own faculty-specific versions of the initiative. The library's central Research Support Team re-badged the *Pimp my Profile* workshop as *Be Visible or Vanish*, and now offers it as an ongoing option, replacing the original *Using Social Media for your Research* programme which was in use up until late 2015. At this time, the *Create your Researcher Profile* guide was linked from the central research support pages on the library's website.

Outcomes for the Library

The CI library liaison team is known for its close and collegial relationship with the faculty, developed over many years. However, the faculty's Research Leaders acknowledged that even this established relationship has grown closer in the last 12 months, since the roll-out of the *Pimp my Profile* initiatives. Dr. Donna Hancox, Research Quality Director, describes the CI librarians as "part of the faculty" and contributing directly to the development of the faculty's research culture (personal communication with the authors).

As an immediate outcome, the CI librarians are further collaborating with the Research Leaders to progress the current initiatives and develop additional approaches, confident in the knowledge that these activities will be embedded into the existing research support strategies of the faculty. This endorsement of the library as an integral part of faculty research strategy dissolves any residual communication and awareness barriers and essentially gives the CI librarians an 'access all areas' pass into research support activities across all disciplines. The CI library liaison team is in an exceptional position to make a real difference to faculty's transformation of its scholarly communication culture.

The Next Phase

The *Pimp my Profile* initiative will continue during 2016, with *Pimp my Profile Lite* workshops delivered within existing discipline meetings, and *Researcher Profile Health Checks* being offered to prioritised researchers.

Sustainability will become a challenge, for both the faculty and the library. Researchers must feel that maintaining their online persona is achievable (Bik & Goldstein, 2013), so advising researchers how to strategise and prioritise will remain an important theme of research support activities. For the CI library liaison team, balancing the personalised service against a sustainable workload is an issue. If this tension is not planned for and the expectations of both faculty and library managed, the initiatives may lose momentum and credibility.

Faculty Research Leaders are interested in delving further behind the scenes of the tools – to find out how they work, in order to maximise their impact on researchers' visibility and association with 'quality'. For instance, in a conversation with the authors, Dr. Ryan said that the next phase would involve helping researchers to fully understand which metrics tools give best performance measures relative to a particular field, as well as implementing procedures which ensure that individual research outputs are as comprehensively indexed as possible, in the tools most appropriate for the discipline area. What is needed, he said, is 'more intel' into what is the best platform for each discipline. The tools which researchers are using now to pimp their profiles will not be

tools of choice in two years' time. Dr. Ryan sees a role for the CI library liaison team in investigating, strategising and communicating this intel in a way which supports researchers to make informed choices in order to maximise the visibility of their scholarly communications.

Dr. Hancox is focussing on the quality of scholarly communications, and the 'fit' of particular publishing avenues with the publishing and dissemination cultures of each of the disciplines. This is part of a top-level strategy to transform the publishing culture of the faculty; one in which the CI library liaison team, through its close collaborative relationship with the faculty Research Leaders, is able to play an impactful role.

Conclusion

University library guidance and support around research profiles tends to focus on metrics and profiling tools, rather than considering the researcher's profile as an holistic persona. The *Pimp my Profile* initiative was developed by the CI librarians in collaboration with the Research Leaders in the faculty, whose strategic vision was to develop the online visibility of the faculty's researchers and its research brand. The initiative is successful because it was collaboratively developed to meet the specific needs of the faculty, and was thus 'owned' by the faculty. The CI library liaison team leveraged its existing good relationship with the faculty to assume a position of partner in research support, and by so doing has enhanced its profile further, cemented its

reputation as a knowledgeable and useful resource, and is considered to be an integral part of the faculty's research culture.

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