

Utilising Digital and Social Media

The University's [Press and Media Team](#) are your first port of call for advice on engaging with the media, whether you want to generate profile for your research or whether you've been approached to comment on a current news item or documentary. In addition, they offer two important services:

Experts Directory: if you aren't already, you can be included on the [list of Warwick experts](#). You just need to provide some key words or a list of topics on which you would be prepared to comment.

Media Training: the Press and Media team can organise media training for members of academic staff.

Developing a Media Strategy

Why develop a media strategy?

- Media opportunities may arise at short notice (for example, if you are asked to comment on current events). A good strategy will mean that you have prepared your messages and considered potential pitfalls.
- Helps you to build your profile over time.
- To communicate your research to a wider audience - the media is a conduit to the ultimate users of your research (policymakers, commercial organisations, non-profits and the general public).
- To influence public policy and practice
- To tap into additional resources and networks - it may make it easier to gather data and case studies for further research
- It can help focus your thinking and sharpen your research agenda

How to do it:

- Set objectives - what do you want to achieve and who do you want to reach?
- Develop a clear, succinct message that is accessible to a wider public.
- Identify the most appropriate channels.
- Link up dissemination activities - e.g., coordinate a book launch with press release/media engagement and a social media campaign.

- Identify a timeline- think about what other events are occurring which your research might be relevant to and avoid times you expect the media to be focussed on a big story.
- Consider the financial and human resources required - e.g., will you work with an external agency to develop pitches for TV or radio?
- Use media analytics to identify what is working and what could be improved, and adjust your plan accordingly

Creating Webpages

This section looks at how you can make the most of your University profile page or project websites to promote your research to different audiences.

A professional webpage or a project website helps you to ensure that anyone interested in your work can find it in one place. Many funders require that the projects they support have a life after the end of the funding, and a website provides a low-maintenance way of achieving this.

If you are editing pages on the University website, you can find guidance and information on training sessions [here](#).

University Profile Page

This will probably be the top Google search result for your name and is likely to be the first port of call for anyone looking to find out more about your research. It is crucial that they are able to find quickly and easily the relevant information on your research projects, their findings and your impact activities.

Although you are limited by the standard format of the University's web templates, there are a number of basic ways you can enhance your profile:

Keep it short: limit yourself to 1 paragraph for your biography and 1-2 short paragraphs for your research interests. You can go into more depth by creating sub-pages and linking to them from your main profile page.

Keep it simple: write as though you are explaining your work to another academic who is not in your discipline; summarise some projects that you've most recently worked on (or for which you're particularly well known).

Keep it clear: don't be afraid to use bullet points or bold text to highlight key words or achievements.

Make it attractive: Use pictures to break up the text - photos from impact events are ideal.

Link it up: create prominent links to your social media accounts, project websites, blogs, etc.

Project Webpage

The question of your project's web presence should be addressed at the outset and, where relevant, factored into your funding proposal. It is important to consider **what** kind of information you want to make available, **who** your intended audience(s) are, and **how** you want them to engage with your research.

If your aim is to provide basic information on the project for a primarily academic audience, then a webpage under your Department's or Centre's homepage is probably the most appropriate solution. This can be set up easily by contacting your Departmental Administrator or Secretary. The same guidelines as your individual webpage apply - keep it succinct, attractive and connected.

Setting up a **dedicated project website** can be helpful if:

- You intend to share a lot of information (e.g. uploading multiple documents and/or images)
- You want more flexibility in terms of design than a standard Sitebuilder page can offer
- You would like to do something more complicated than providing information
- You would like to encourage more interaction with a broader public/set of end users

There is no one-size-fits-all template, as each project will have unique information and audiences. You may also need to consider GDPR. Some examples of project pages or websites, from projects involving Warwick academics:

- [Mapping Women's Suffrage](#) - includes a map showing where suffragette campaigners lived in England.
- [Prisoners, Medical Care and Entitlement to Health in England and Ireland, 1850-2000](#) - includes blogs and pages for activities associated with the project.
- [British Black and Asian Shakespeare Database](#) - a database of performances from Black and Asian Shakespearean actors

Social Media

The University's Press and Media team offer some useful information on using social media, including the University's [Social Media Policy](#). If you have a question about using social media in a professional capacity, please contact: socialmedia@warwick.ac.uk.

X (formally X)

X offers you the opportunity to connect with audiences inside and out of the academy. It allows you to stay on top of news in your field, find new publications, get speaking and publishing opportunities, communicate research directly to the public, and – perhaps most importantly – find a sense of community around shared interests.

The Basics:

X is a social networking site that allows you to post short messages that are visible to the public. Tweets are limited to 280 characters and you can attach photos & links. You can share messages posted by others to share them with your followers. To get in touch with individuals, you can reply to their messages, mention them in your own message (by including their username, e.g. @warwickuni) and, if they are following you, you can send them a direct message or 'DM'. Unlike Facebook, it is normal on X to 'follow' people you don't know; don't be afraid to add a complete stranger - that's the whole point! You can connect your posts to wider debates using a hashtag, e.g. #culturalvalue. If that all sounds like a foreign language, X have put together a [handy glossary](#).

To tweet?

- X can create connections inside academia and out & allows you to find potential external partners
- It improves your ability to translate complex ideas into a form that the general public (and policymakers) can understand
- It increases your public profile
- It encourages two-way engagement between you and your followers
- The character limit means it's a quick way to communicate your thoughts

Or not to tweet?

- You need to post regularly (ideally least once a day) to retain followers
- If you (or your project team) are unlikely to have something to say regularly, it might be better to avoid X
- There is a risk of negative attention or abuse, particularly if your research is about a controversial or sensitive topic. Think about how likely your research is to generate this response, and how you'd feel if this did happen to you, before you begin using the platform.

Getting Started

Creating a X account is very easy and can be set up [here](#). There are a few things to bear in mind:

- **Choose the right username** - Try to keep it short to make it easier for people to reach you without using up all 280 characters!

- **Create a bio that captures you & your research** - include experience, research interests, university, and a link to your blog; add a few hashtags e.g. #dickens #19thcentury. Follow your colleagues' accounts for inspiration.
- **Upload a photo or image** that is easily identifiable. For personal accounts, a photo of yourself makes you easier to find by acquaintances; for projects, a captivating image of something obviously related to your research is best.
- **Find the right people to follow** - Search for colleagues and see who they are following. As a starter, you will probably want to follow: academic colleagues at Warwick and elsewhere (and their project accounts), major news outlets and journalists, subject associations, funding bodies, University, Faculty & Departmental accounts. You should then think about what groups you want to converse with. This might include: politicians, government departments, arts organisations, museums, NGOs, etc.
- **Tell your network you're on X** - Add your X username to your email signature, put a link on your University profile page, announce it on Facebook, include it in any slides, handouts at conferences.
- **Get using!** Or if you aren't comfortable with X yet, spend some time reading what other people are tweeting. This can help you get used to the style of writing and how it all works. You can begin retweeting what other people are saying about your topic, and then start adding your own thoughts.

Tips

- **Take part in conversations** - Look for discussions and hashtags about topics relevant to your research and add your expertise.
- **Provide links** - sharing links to relevant websites and articles (and tagging their authors in your tweet) helps to build your community by positioning you as a source of knowledge.
- **Shorten URLs to save characters** - Websites like bitly.com allow you to shorten long URLs to under 20 characters.
- **Make time to reply to messages and share others** - X is about conversation not broadcasting.
- **Get involved in live X discussions and conference feeds** - Most events and conferences will now have a hashtag for you to use when tweeting about papers and discussions. Using the hashtag allows you to converse with others at the event and may even lead to face-to-face meetings. When you're listening to a talk, summarise the main points for your followers, add your own commentary to the speaker's, and share related papers and websites. You can find tips on tweeting at conferences [here](#).
- **Think about the best time of day to post** - There's no point tweeting if no one is online to read it! [Research](#) shows that X is most active between 9am and 4pm on weekdays, peaking around 3pm. However, if you want to reach people outside of work then you could find posting outside these hours works best for you. Keep an eye on how your engagement varies with times. You can use a service like [Hootsuite](#) to schedule tweets.

- **Create a hashtag for your own events** - Keep it short and relevant, and include it in all promotional materials.
- **Remember that this is a public forum** - Think twice when you post anything controversial – this does not mean censoring your opinions but just making sure that you are happy for the world to know them and the way you have phrased them (nuance can get lost on X).

For more in-depth guidance on generating impact from X, have a look at [this article](#).

Capturing your Impact

Analysing your interactions on X can provide evidence of your reach and can also help you to use the platform more effectively.

- Use the X analytics dashboard to track your imprint (<https://analytics.X.com/>) and download the info at least once a term. X will provide you with information on the following which help you measure the amount of exposure you're receiving and others' interest in what you're tweeting, respectively.
 - impressions = the number of times your tweets appeared on someone's timelines
 - engagements = the number of times your tweets have been retweeted, clicked through, or clicked on to learn more information about what you shared.
 - You can also see the interests of your followers
- Use the data to improve your posts and tailor them to your audience - which subjects are most popular? Do your followers prefer links, opinions, or photos?
- Use [Wakelet](#) to create a collection of tweets. You can search for a user or hashtag and add Tweets from these feeds, or copy and paste links to tweets. You can also include links to websites in your collection. This can then be embedded on a website or downloaded as a PDF.

Facebook

Facebook is primarily used as a means of communicating with friends and family. However, there are contexts in which it may offer a useful platform for sharing ideas and news with non-academic partners.

Many academics are reluctant to use Facebook for professional purposes and there are very good reasons for that: it blurs the boundaries between personal and professional (do you want the top researcher in your field to see videos of you dancing at your friend's wedding?) and requires regular updates. However, a personal profile on Facebook can help to build your network on contacts (academic and non-academic) and provide another outlet for promoting your research. You could consider setting up a professional page for you as a researcher. If you do intend to use Facebook in a professional capacity, you might want to tailor your privacy settings to limit the information that your colleagues can see.

Project Profile

A project profile can be an effective way to communicate with your academic and non-academic partners, particularly if you want to encourage discussion. You can either set up a separate profile for the project, which has the advantage of enabling a team of researchers to manage the account, or you can create a group under your own profile, which makes it easier to keep track of any activity.

In general, project profiles and groups work best for projects that:

- involve intense engagement with smaller groups
- encourage communication between participants
- seek to share and gather information (photos, oral testimonies, links to documents and websites)

Remember, however, that Facebook is open to abuse and it is important to monitor and, where necessary, censor offensive posts aimed at others in the group. It is also important to ensure that participants are aware how their interactions with the group and the information they share will be used - for example as evidence in REF.