Adapting Your Research to Your Audience

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• Budgets are decreasing, competitive funding environments are increasing so we have to convince people with the money as well as scientific peers.
• Research is intertwined with social, philosophical, economic and political issues.
• A democratic society requires its citizens to be informed about the issues that confront them.
• Journalists
• Educated/interested general reader
• Unintended audiences (someone Googles prostate cancer and finds your reach website)
• Government/policy makers
• Patients
  • Low literacy
  • Expert patients

“I can’t write without a reader. It’s precisely like a kiss—you can’t do it alone.”
— John Cheever
Elements of Good Arguments =
Elements of Good Stories

It’s hard.....
Audience
  Diverse
  Critical
  Busy
Content is hard
  Complex subject
  Uncertainty and controversy
  Curse of knowledge
Format is constraining
Goals are complicated

Making it a little easier....

1. Make your audience care about your research significance (you have to have a good “plot”)
2. Give your story a structure your audience can follow
3. Engage your audience with compelling language
“A new generation’s tale of the struggles of light and dark, virtue and evil has begun with the death of Han Solo. In a Galaxy where First Order and the Resistance are fighting against each other in a war, the heroine, Rey, had the Force awaken within her.

What will happen to the galaxy when Rey and the only remaining Jedi knight, Luke Skywalker, meet? Kylo Ren has fallen to the Dark Side of the Force and killed his father, Han Solo. As a successor of his grandfather, Darth Vader, and a high ranking enforcer in the First Order, where will his ambition lead him to?

Furthermore, Kylo Ren’s mother, the leader of the Resistance, Leia, Poe, Finn, and BB-8, will embark on a new mission! The story has finally begun and it will lead to a mysterious climax!”

Image source: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2527336//
General Audiences
Appeal and Engagement

Appeals of wonder

Appeals of practicality
Typical Research Structure

Introduction
  Theoretical framework
  Previous work
  Research question
  Hypothesis

Methods
  Design
  Techniques

Results

Discussion
  Summary
  Interpretation
  Criticism
  Implications

1. Make your audience care
   (you have to have a good “plot”)
2. Give your story a structure
   your audience can follow
3. Engage your audience with
   compelling language
Story Structures

**Story Mountain**
- **Rising Action**: This includes the events leading up to the main problem or conflict.
- **Climax**: This is when the problem reaches a high point.
- **Falling Action**: This is when the characters work to solve the problem or conflict.
- **Resolution**: This is how things end up in the story.

**The Hero’s Journey**
- **Ordinary World**
  - 1. Ordinary World
  - 2. Call to Adventure
  - 3. Refusal of the Call
  - 4. Meeting the Mentor
  - 5. Crossing the Threshold
- **SPECIAL WORLD**
  - 6. Tests, Allies, Enemies
  - 7. Approach
  - 8. Ordeal, Death & Rebirth
  - 9. Reward, Seizing the Sword
  - 10. The Road Back
  - 11. Resurrection
  - 12. Return with Elixir

Image source: http://www.thewritersjourney.com/graphictwo.gif
Mini-Stories: Paragraphs

• Write coherent paragraphs with a strong topic sentence (or sentences)
• Maintain a constant perspective and/or shift perspective with linked sentences
• Types of paragraphs
  – List with constant subject
  – Story with linked subjects
Example of Linked Subjects

Best-selling novels are often described as “page turners.” Best-cited papers and best-funded proposals are the same. They draw readers in and lead them through the story – they flow. A break in that flow can derail a reader and abruptly change a piece from a “page turner” to a “re-turner” with a rejection letter attached.

Compelling Language

- Choose direct words that clearly convey your ideas (cut the jargon)

- Start with the familiar and move to the new/unfamiliar

1. Make your audience care (you have to have a good “plot”)
2. Give your story a structure your audience can follow
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Adapting Content for General Audiences

- Narration
  - Set the scene/give context
- Metaphors
  - Don’t mix
- Examples
  - Should logically support your point
- Definition
- Analysis
  - Use division to unpack complicated concept
- Comparison
- Graphics

“Offshore, the *Helicobacter* feast; having drawn the immune system into battle, the bacteria now loot the provisions.”
-- Excerpt from “Marshall’s Hunch” (Monmaney 1993)
Design

CRAP
(contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity)

• **Contrast** focuses our attention and should be used to highlight the most important points that the audience should take away (use of bold, font size, and so forth)

• **Repetition** ties objects or images together (1st level headings)

• **Alignment** indicates organization

• **Proximity** creates relationships between texts and graphics such as figures or tables
How can you make these audiences care about your research?

1. **In the LOI Example:** Find the plot and revise to make us care.
2. **In the LOI Example:** Give the story a structure your audience can follow. How would you improve the structure?
3. **In the Description Example:** Rewrite a few sentences using techniques to engage a more general audience (clear, limited jargon, definition, comparison).