

research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



Clear Language Summaries Are Tools for Research Outreach and Knowledge Mobilization

What is this research about?

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) uses a number of tools and services to connect academic research to non-academic research stakeholders from the public, private and community sectors. Clear language research summaries are a central component to York University's KMb strategy. These summaries allow for university research to engage with research stakeholders like community organizations, policymakers and other non-academic interest groups. This study demonstrates how York University developed clear language research summaries as part of institutional KMb services.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers created a Steering Committee, with academic and non-academic research users. This committee reviewed research summary formats from leading KMb organizations in Canada and the UK. They were reviewed according to their: branding, length, adherence to clear language design and overall appeal. Students were also trained in clear language writing and design. University researchers were engaged with clear language by submitting their work to be published, and approving the final research summary. Feedback on the research summary format was received by researchers, community groups and provincial policymakers through surveys and semi-structured interviews.

What you need to know:

Research summaries employing clear language writing and design principles are able to engage a wider audience in university research. This allows for university research and research expertise to be accessible to community and government partners. Social media is also an important tool to attract non-academic readers online. These efforts create the potential for future research collaboration.

Finally, the clear language research summaries were shared in a variety of ways. This included sharing at conferences, and social media spaces like Twitter and a KMb blog.

What did the researchers find?

Through the steering committee, the researcher found the following recommendations on clear language summaries:

- The length should be no more than two pages, while the font should be easily read at Arial font, size 12.
- Clear language headings should be included, such as: *What is this research about? What did the researchers do? What did the researchers find? How can you use this research?*

- An abstract summary (*What you need to know*) should be added, as well as the keywords and citation of the original research.

The feedback received showed that a majority of those surveyed and interviewed found the clear language summaries useful. A database for York University's research summaries, ResearchSnapshots, received over 19800 hits between July 2008 and January 2011 (www.researchimpact.ca/researchsearch). The researcher also found social media to be crucial for engaging university research with a non-academic audience. Strategies like using the platform of Twitter, with daily "tweets" of "Today's ResearchSnapshot" tripled the number of hits on the York database. Google analytics revealed that more users gained access to these ResearchSnapshots through Twitter than any other way. Social media also served as a tool for the audience to interact with the ResearchSnapshots, and provide feedback.

How can you use this research?

This research may hold a variety of uses for both research creators and research stakeholders. For university, research and community institutions, it offers insight on strategies to engage a non-academic audience with new research findings. This includes presenting research to key decision makers and stakeholders in community and government roles. It may also offer ideas on making research expertise and research findings more accessible. This research may also advise those in the field of KMB and Knowledge Transfer and Exchange and Research Communications who seek to promote and present research findings in a variety of ways to stakeholders.

About the Researchers

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Keywords

Knowledge Mobilization, Clear language summaries, University research, Community and government partners, Social media

Knowledge Mobilization at York

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