

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ACADEMICS

Digital, interactive, social media – or DISM – are revolutionising the academic landscape. Why is this, and what are the implications for you, the teacher, the researcher, the author of publications? Will you forever be playing catch-up to stay abreast of the latest technological advances in media and communications, and perhaps feeling outpaced by your students who are full members of the digital generation?

Graeme Addison, a trainer and assessor for the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, Johannesburg, will sketch the evolutionary paths that DISM appear to be taking in the academic environment. He will deal specifically with how to use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Blogs and Web2 to gain traction in the world of ideas and discoveries. He argues there are chiefly four factors shaping change in university teaching, research and publishing:

Intensification – as communities become more digitally connected and information more easily accessible, the speed and volume of communication accelerates but reliability suffers

Disintermediation – the removal of barriers between originators and users of media content disrupts the information supply chain, changing the rules of intellectual ownership and control of content

Glocalisation – The internet is both global and local in reach, internationalising access to information while drawing users into relationship clusters that reinforce their sense of identity

Technocracy – The democracy of the internet is under siege by technocratic elites who exercise power through politics, business and civil society with an accompanying ideology of specialisation

These factors all have both positive and negative effects on academic networking and collective progress. Not to attend to them is a mistake which will have dire consequences for both the individual and the institution. It is vital to develop and maintain DISM skills and to do so within an enabling framework that allows for exploration and experimentation.

Addison will suggest ways in which North West University – as a small tertiary institution in a developing country – can adapt and respond to the challenges of DISM for the benefit of students, staff and the reputation of the institution. His presentation & references will be put online.