

We know that public-interest advocacy, community organizing and the university environment often have a hard time mixing well, so we've put together a few recommendations from a wide range of academics and activists who have braved these waters. Through sharing knowledge with civil society actors, scholars can both play a vital role in influencing policy and social change, as well as see academic theory and methodology strengthened by these ties.

- ☞ **Relate.** Consider developing relationships with advocacy, organizing and community activist groups as “research partners,” collaborating on design, analysis and dissemination.¹
- ☞ **Engage.** Build into your research whenever possible the questions that advocacy/activist groups and policymakers need to have answered. (See “Research Needs” handout)
- ☞ **Localize.** Find out what media issues are of concern to the community where you live and work; seek opportunities for you, your school and your students to work with local community groups.
- ☞ **Facilitate.** Help organizers and community groups conduct their own investigations and analysis by providing tools and methods, advisory guidance and other resources for “action research.”
- ☞ **Empathize.** Advocates/activists often operate on shorter, more urgent time frames, and often with more limited resources. Recognize that for many practitioners, universities are associated with elite power structures that do not always respect the skills and knowledge base of community leaders.
- ☞ **Respect.** Understand that activists/advocates have experience, skills and coherent theories of social change that can complement your own. Their perspectives can enhance research design, raise important methodological questions and contribute to building sound theory.
- ☞ **Re-vision.** Don't just focus on critique of the system. Remember that to make real change we need longer-term strategies that embrace positive visions of alternatives.
- ☞ **Inspire.** Help practitioners see themselves in a larger social movement-building context. Provide evidence to support successful strategies that can be applied to contemporary media struggles.
- ☞ **Connect.** Help advocates/organizers build a broad movement by identifying areas of intersection and linkage between “media issues” and other social justice and human rights issues.
- ☞ **Convene.** Create spaces where academic researchers and practitioners can engage in dialogue and challenge each others' views. Invite media activists into your classroom as guest experts.
- ☞ **Translate.** Try writing shorter, “activist-friendly” versions of your findings and their implications.
- ☞ **Co-publish.** Promote and support journals that recognize the value of joint submissions from media scholars and advocates/practitioners. Co-author articles and presentations with activists.
- ☞ **Disseminate.** Get your research in the hands of the people that need it. If you don't have direct contacts with advocacy/activist groups, work with intermediaries such as university policy institutes, local journalists and NGOs that do. Share research findings through independent, ethnic and community publications, radio programs and websites, as well as activist and organizational newsletters.

¹SSRC's *Necessary Knowledge* collaborative research program provides grants for scholar/advocate collaboration, as well as technical support and networking opportunities for scholars interested to connect with advocacy/organizing. Visit www.mediaresearchhub.org to learn how this program can support your work.

Reading List: Strategies for Engaged Scholarship

In the U.S. "academy" (unlike Latin America, for example), public-interest research has often been isolated from civil society and advocacy work. Now many scholars and schools are seeking new ways to increase their real-world impact, to enable their knowledge to break free of the tower, to conduct engaged scholarship. For years, academic institutions have been partnering to support the interests of commercial industries. Now, with the future of policy, infrastructure and economics at stake, the media-change movement needs scholarship that is relevant, accessible and useful for civil society and the public interest. This is both opportunity and challenge—and pioneering scholars need support when their institutions are wary of engaged, public-interest praxis. Here are a few articles and books that present strategies for making it work:

- ☞ Araiza, Olivia E. Bridging Research And Education Organizing: Can We Strengthen Our Combined Power? Justice Matters Institute. October 2003. <http://www.justicematters.org/images/bridging.doc>
- ☞ Bowie, Nolan. "Parting Shots: An Expanded Agenda." *The Social Impact of Television, A Research Agenda for the 1980s*. Report from Aspen Institute conference, October 1980.
- ☞ Croteau, David, William Hoynes and Charlotte Ryan (eds). *Rhyming Hope and History: activists, academics, and social movement scholarship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- ☞ Halpern, S.C. "University-community projects: Reflections on the lessons learned" University and Community Schools, [AU: vol 2], 44-48. 1985
- ☞ Heins, Marjorie. "Report on the January 28, 2005 Media Scholars' Symposium, 'Democratic Principles in Media Policy for the 21st Century,' and Proposals for Future Research." April 2005. <http://www.fepproject.org/fepp/mediascholars.jan28report.html>
- ☞ Mason, D.E. "Bridging the Gap: Mutual benefits of scholar-practitioner cooperation" ARNOVA News, 25 (2), 1-3.
- ☞ Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere, Background Papers. Social Science Research Council, June 2005. <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/media/background>
- ☞ Prakash, Swati. "Power, Privilege and Participation: Meeting the challenge of equal research alliances" Race, Poverty and the Environment, Vol. XI, No 2, Winter 2004. <http://urbanhabitat.org/node/155>
- ☞ Rodriguez, Sergio. "Alternative media scholars and media organizations: what role can they play" OURMedia/NuestrosMedios. Paper presented at the "Our Media, Not Theirs II" IAMCR Pre-conference. July 20, 2002. Barcelona, Spain. <http://www.ourmedianet.org/papers/om2002/SRodriguez.English.om2002.pdf>
- ☞ Bartunek, Jean. Richard Daft and Sara Rynes. "Across the Great Divide: Knowledge Creation and Transfer Between Practitioners and Academics" Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 44, No. 2, April 2001. <http://www.si.umich.edu/ICOS/Rynes.pdf>
- ☞ Whelan, James. Keeping it real: University collaboration with community-based environmental advocates. Paper presented at the 2003 International "Inside Out" Conference. (includes a chart of recommended strategies for academics and activists) http://www.thechangeagency.org/dbase/upl/Keeping_it_Real_JWhelan.pdf

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