

Thesis proposals, preparation and presentations: online resources have proliferated.

Dr Jens J. Hansen, 12th June, 2011

Because there's been a proliferation of resources for thesis candidates and for thesis supervisors, it's entirely appropriate for me to bring some of them to your attention. For a number of years, we've championed our Woodhill Park website as a useful repository for people undertaking research and we continue to promote our site as one where candidates and researchers can access a range of resources for free. Just spend a minute or three traversing some of the available pages and you'll see what I mean. There are a series of gratis items on understanding and designing research, on writing elements of reports and theses, on ethics, on evaluation and even on the use of software.

But there are other sites too and I want to share some of the ones which are especially germane for thesis writers and supervisors with you. "Why the ones on supervision?" I can sense some people asking. "Isn't supervision for the supervisor?"

Yes, it is for the supervisor but just how well a supervisor works is, for obvious reasons, terribly important for a candidate. In my view, candidature and supervision go hand-in-hand just as surely as day follows night (provided you're on a spinning globe that's shone upon by a sun or its equivalent). When I began my doctoral candidature at the University of New England, I noticed that a series of workshops were being offered to staff who were supervising. Even though I was a candidate, and not at that point a faculty member, I went along because I figured that if I learned about best practices in supervision, then I'd better understand what was expected of me as a candidate.

It was an inspired decision – I learnt a lot about the rules, a little about the doctoral process and something about what was expected of candidates and supervisors. Participation prompted me to begin to marinate myself in what has become a long-lasting passion for making sure that the thesis supervision process is facilitated so that it's as good as it can possibly be.

So it's very pleasing indeed to discover a range of sites which, like our site, provide resources for free. I've commented on four of them below in no particular order:

http://www.postgrad_resources.btinternet.co.uk/index.htm

This site from the UK is simple to navigate and uncluttered in appearance but at the same time it's very comprehensive indeed and hence it deserves more than a passing glimpse. As site owner Professor Pat Cryer states:

Everyone involved in postgraduate research, should find something of interest throughout this site.

I fully agree and I suggest that anyone who is in the business of conducting or supervising postgraduate research will gain much from their perusal of the site. Indeed, I think that candidates should spend time looking at the materials for supervisors and vice-versa, supervisors should become more than just a little acquainted with those resources which have been developed for students.

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<http://thethesiswhisperer.wordpress.com/>

This Australian site is brilliant as is the title. It's also available as a face-book page and very impressively, provides links to a range of useful sites which researchers can access. Dr Inger Mewburn who runs the site seems to me to be very prolific indeed. Her use of Prezi (which offers a far more sexy Audio-visual delivery platform than PowerPoint) enables her to share a wide range of highly relevant materials with considerable panache.

Here are just some of the domains Inger writes about:

- *How to write 1000 words a day (and not go bat shit crazy);*
- *Why you should keep a PhD notebook; and*
- *5 ways to fail your PhD.*

She also recruits guest contributors who promote thinking about, for instance, knowing when to stop your literature review, and even what to do about forgetful supervisors!

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<http://supervisorsfriend.wordpress.com/>

I discovered this site whilst exploring The Thesis Whisperer and I like it because it traverses a range of topics which are critical for the beginning candidate. It does so in a highly practical manner. Furthermore, this site is also visually attractive and is easy to navigate.

Once again, it's a site for both candidates and supervisors – candidates should read the materials because they will undoubtedly benefit from doing so and supervisors should read those moguls of advice so that they can work effectively and collaboratively with their students. Geoff Hill is a careful crafter of good guidance and I commend his site to you.

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<http://www.phd2published.com/about/>

Wow. And Wow again! I've found this site care of The Thesis Whisperer and because I'm really impressed, I've edited the blog I'd initially prepared to add this one to the list. What caught my eye was a guest blog that had been penned on *How to Divorce your Supervisor* which, regrettably, is a call that I hear far too often from thesis candidates.

The site comprises a series of blogs which have either been scribed by Dr Sarah-Louise Quinnell who began her site because she wanted to develop *open source* resources for thesis candidates, or by others whom she has asked to submit *guest blogs*. Her site, therefore, not only offers a host of worthy print materials penned by a number of very competent contributors, but also provides a range of video (you-

tube) clips. Usefully, some of the resources are presented episodically so that as a series, the parts form a coherent whole.

I particularly like the *tag cloud* that appears to the right of the webpages. A tag cloud involves a series of frequently encountered items becoming alphabetically listed – and the more frequently an item is tagged, the larger it appears in size. Each of the tags provided are hyperlinked within the site which means drilling down to gain more information can be accomplished with a quick click. WOW!

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Just to conclude, I want to add to this array, two other tools I've discovered. Each has to do with writing and each more or less sets out to achieve the same thing – the creation of tight writing with minimum words, maximum meaning and beautiful readability.

<http://www.writersdiet.ac.nz/>

Helen Sword has put this site together and it enables readers/users to undertake a waist-line test to determine what shape their writing has assumed. Your writing could resemble heart attack material, or it may be flabby; it may be fit and trim or it may even be lean. The book that accompanies this tool is inexpensive and the tool is just magnificent.

<http://www.grammarly.com/?gclid=CP6EieP6sakCFRQRHAodXTkaLQ>

Last but probably not least, I've included this "Instant Grammar Checker" site. I've not really explored it but it is, I suspect, potentially useful. Why don't you have a play with it and tell me how you found it?

Just as a by-the-by, if you want to download a copy of this blog as a PDF, click [here](#).

Happy progress,

Jens