THE CONVERSATION

Impact Through Media Collaboration

May 2013

State of the media

- Business model imploding:
- Dumbed down
- Infomania
- Senior + specialist journalists leaving →
- Trust eroded

GONE...

Adam Cresswell, health editor The Australian

Leigh Dayton, science writer The Australian

Deborah Smith, science editor SMH

Mark Metherell, health correspondent SMH, The Age

Julie Robotham, medical editor SMH

Found! The last untapped goldmine

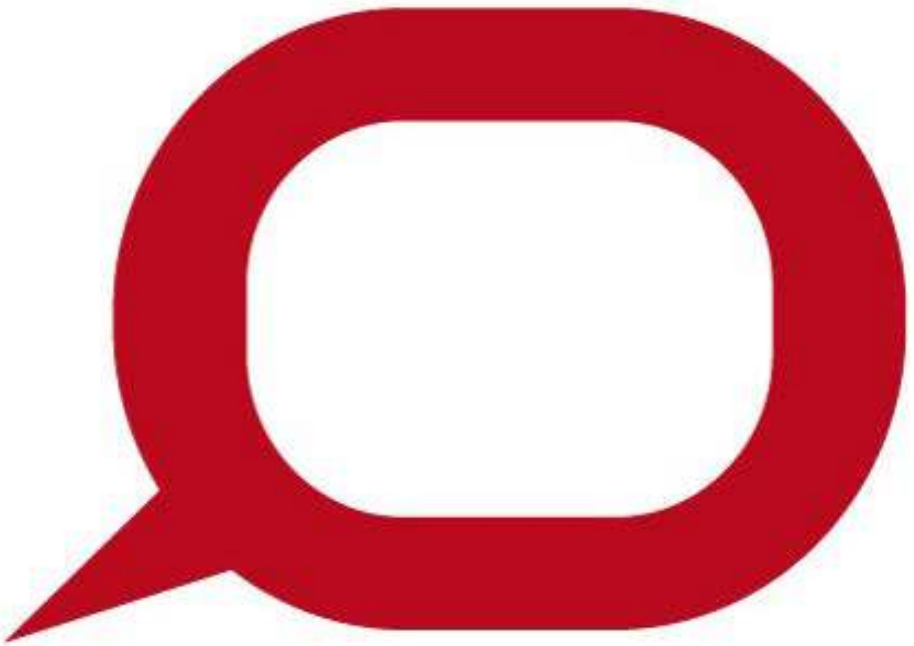
- Credible and independent info and experts
- Thousands of specialists
- Turn the university into a Giant Newsroom!

The Conversation Charter

- **Unlock the knowledge** and expertise of researchers and academics to provide the public with clarity and insight into society's biggest problems

- Give experts a **greater voice** in shaping scientific, cultural and intellectual agendas by providing a trusted platform that values and promotes new thinking and evidence-based research

- Provide **a fact-based and editorially-independent** forum, free of commercial or political bias



Pipeline of information direct to the public

- 15 commissioning editors
- Global university networks
- State of the art site: direct to the public
- Editorial Board: senior academics, bound by a charter

Experienced and passionate editors











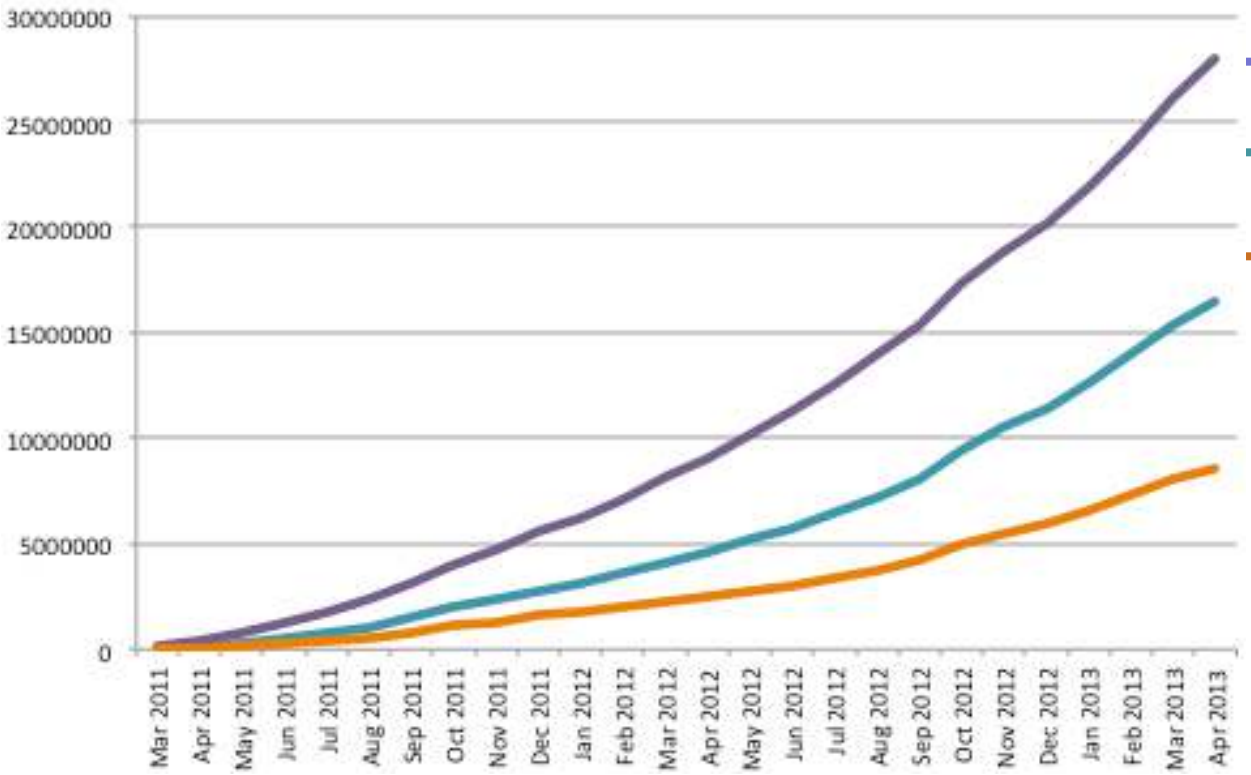



The Conversation
Newsroom

Academics into journalists

- Engaged in the news cycle
- Relevant, timely, and independent
- Publish 7.00am and 2.30pm and whenever we get the good stuff
- Accessible free via highly useable, interactive website

How we're doing – KPIs



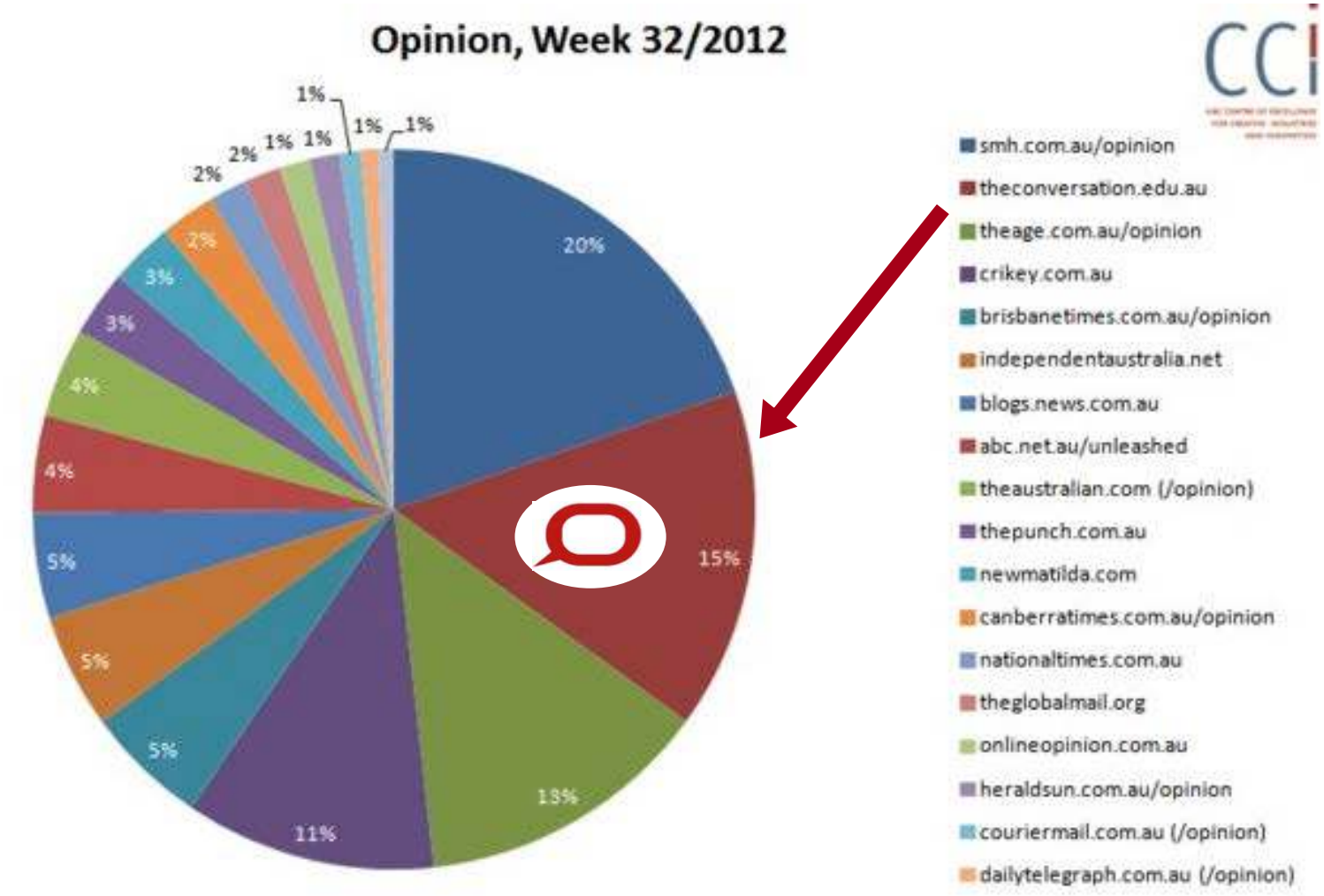
- **Traffic and reach**
  - 23.9m page views
  - 13.9m visits
  - 7.2m unique visitors (35% international)

Engagement

- 5,300 authors
- 289 institutions
- 10,000 articles
- 125k+ comments
- 5K+ republications

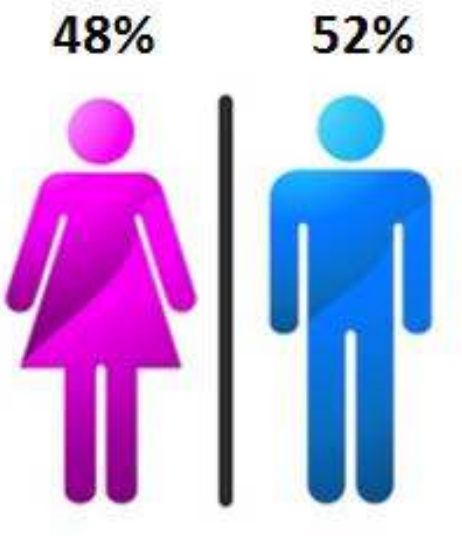
Source: Google analytics.
Last Updated: 1 May 2013

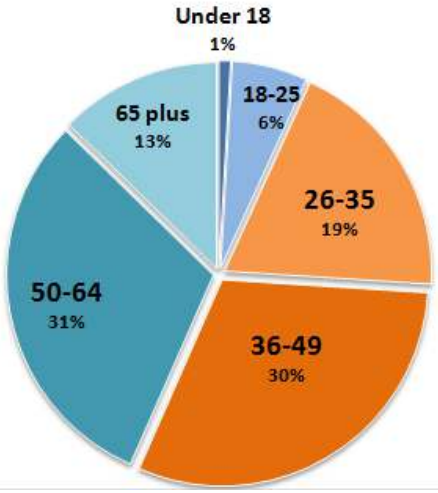
Most Tweeted Oz Opinion sites



Source: Australian Twitter News Circulation Index

Smart, engaged community





90% have an undergraduate degree or higher

47% hold a postgraduate degree

80% are employed

70% are not academics

62% have household income over $100,000

30% live in a household that owns a business

Source: TC reader & author survey, March 2012

Seeding the media

- 58% of articles republished
- 43% of authors contacted by media

Google news

factiva Dow Jones & Reuters

SBS

Flipboard

redd

Alltop BEST OF THE BEST

Australian Doctor.

HUFFPOST SCIENCE

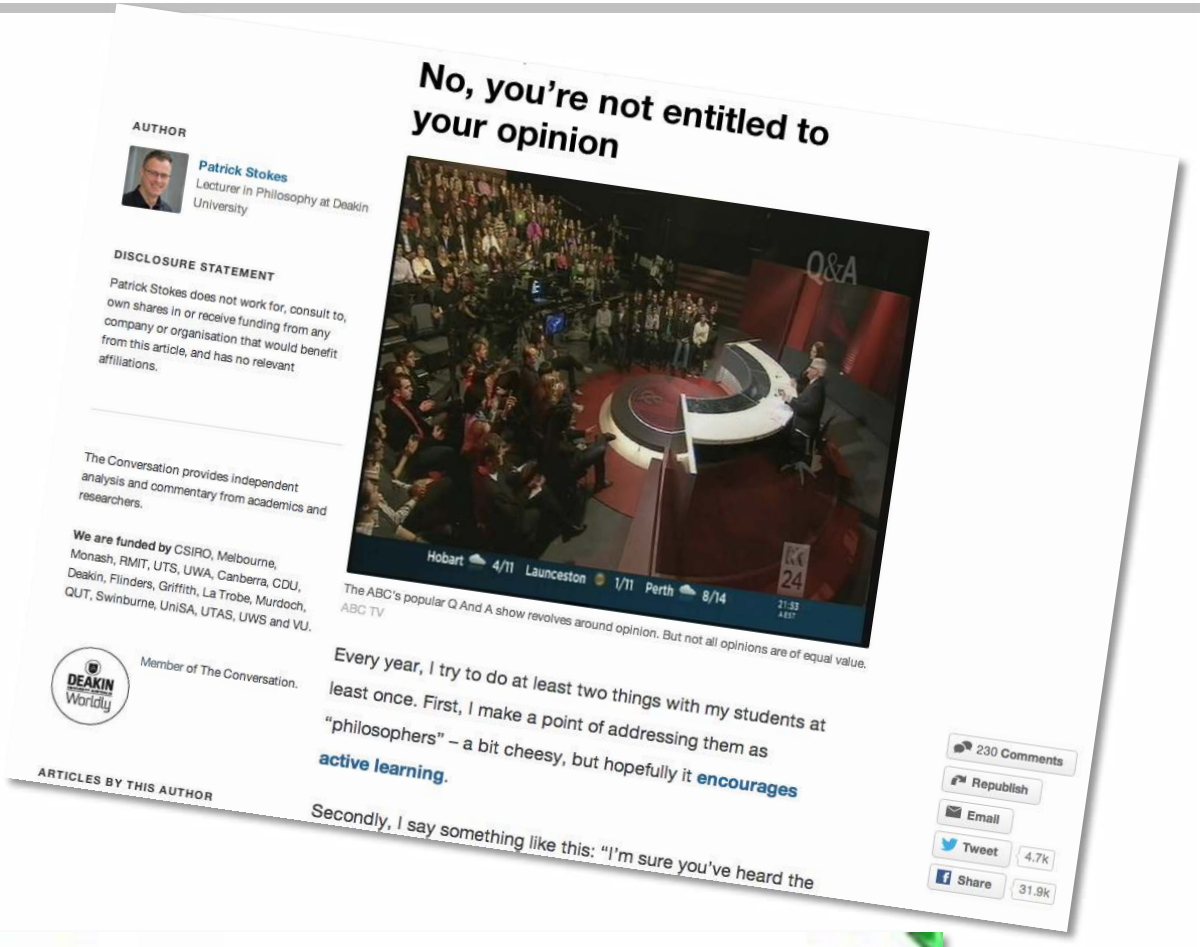
Case studies: Policy development

- Future of Higher Ed: panel of TC authors in discussion with Minister Evans. Opportunity to shape policy debate
- Author call out, 120+ submissions
- Series 50K readers; 2K comments, FB and Twitter interactions
- 5 panelists presenting to room of 50, with 4K in live-stream and a Twitter debate that trended.

Trendsmap Melbourne @TrendsMelbourne
#futurehighered is now trending in #Melbourne
trendsmap.com/au/melbourne
Expand

Case studies: Viral international pick up

- 250K views, 32K on facebook
- Most widely-read article
- Re-tweeted by: Richard Dawkins, Ricky Gervais, Tim Minchin & others



No, you're not entitled to your opinion

AUTHOR

Patrick Stokes
Lecturer in Philosophy at Deakin University

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Patrick Stokes does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations.

The Conversation provides independent analysis and commentary from academics and researchers.

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Member of The Conversation.

ARTICLES BY THIS AUTHOR

Q&A

Hobart 4/11 Launceston 1/11 Perth 8/14

The ABC's popular Q And A show revolves around opinion. But not all opinions are of equal value.
ABC TV

Every year, I try to do at least two things with my students at least once. First, I make a point of addressing them as "philosophers" – a bit cheesy, but hopefully it **encourages active learning**.

Secondly, I say something like this: "I'm sure you've heard the

230 Comments
Republish
Email
Tweet 4.7k
Share 31.9k

THE MAGIC OF REALITY

Richard Dawkins @RichardDawkins 7 Oct

No you're not entitled to your opinion. Or you're not entitled to have it taken seriously unless you have evidence. bit.ly/OaLtxI

Expand

Seeding mainstream media

43% of our authors have received media requests as a result of writing for The Conversation (Source: 2012 Annual Survey)

"The Conversation is the next generation of crowd-sourcing – better focus, better crowd! I have done two radio interviews, from Brisbane and WA on the back of stuff I've published. If the University is looking for opportunities for exposure, this is up there."

-James AJ Heathers, PhD candidate, University of Sydney

"Thanks very much for publicity in The Conversation, it led to 5 interviews yesterday. I did two interviews with ABC that arose from the piece and was interviewed for Channel 10 and for The Age."

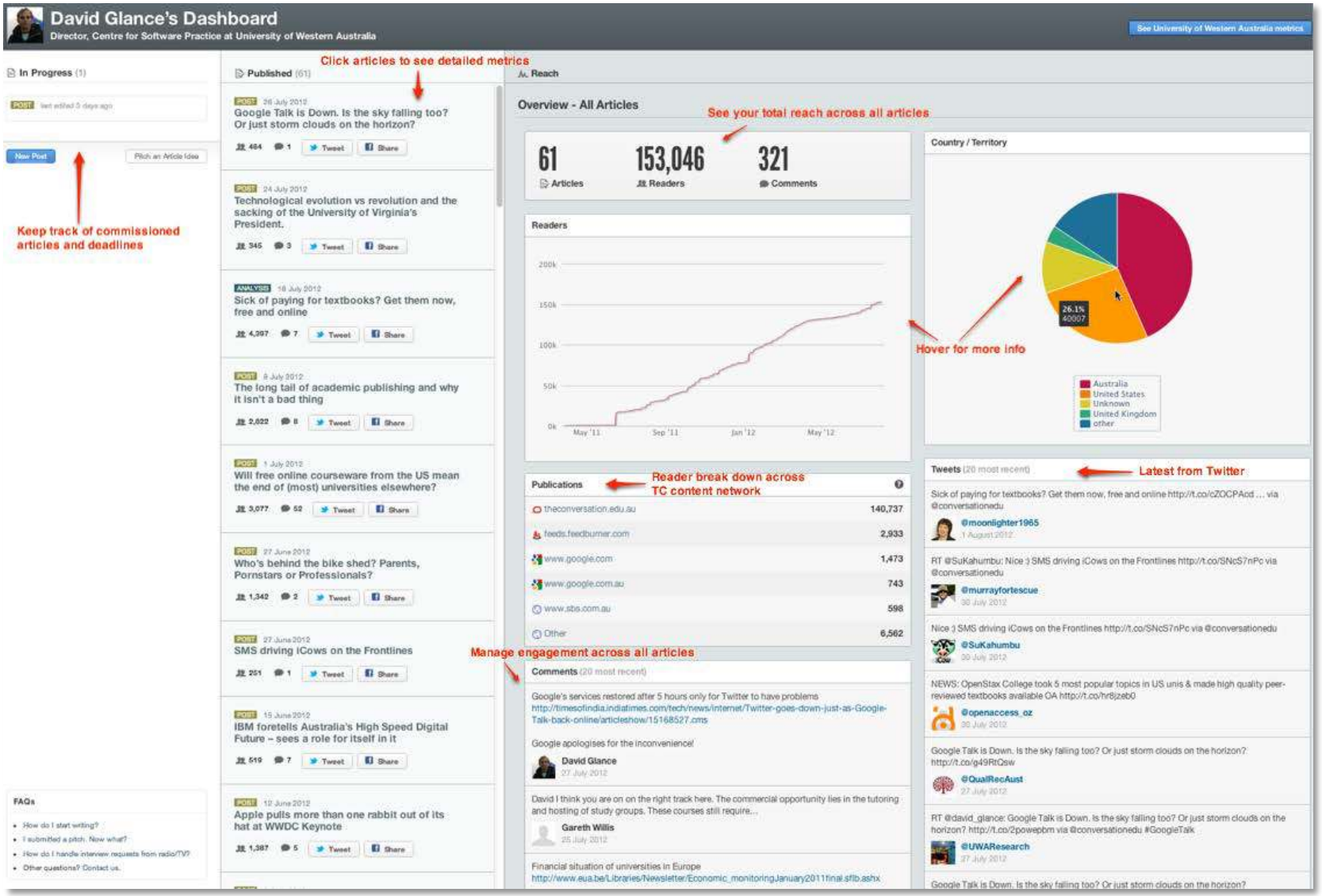
- Clive Phillips, Professor, School of Animal Welfare and Ethics, UQ

"The last piece went quite well and I hope this one doesn't go quite as well, as I have some marking to do."*

- John Hadley, Research Lecturer, University of Western Sydney

** More than 25 media outlets picked up Hadley's April 12 article on biodiversity loss*

Every author gets a rich control centre



A cautionary tale

- Catherine Fowler, a Professor from the University of Technology in Sydney, gave a talk about raising infants
- It included a video of what a child would experience in a shopping mall in a forward facing pram
- Told a journalist about her research

A cautionary tale

A cautionary tale

Inward-facing prams cost "10 times more"
Outward-facing prams "terrifying"
"More important they are loved, fed"

PARENTS who push their children in outward-facing prams are cruel and selfish, a leading Australian child health academic says.

But the controversial claims, made by Professor Cathrine Fowler from the University of Technology Sydney, have been shot down by the country's best-known midwife, *Baby Love* author Robin Barker.

Ms Barker says, as long as babies are loved and fed, the direction they face when in a pram is irrelevant.

Professor Fowler, who will give a lecture on raising babies at UTS on Tuesday, said strollers that point children in the direction of travel are isolating, stressful and terrifying.

"Imagine if you were strapped to someone's chest with your legs and arms flailing, heading with no control, in a busy shopping centre. It would be terrifying. It is the same for our children," Professor Fowler, a mother of two, said.

A cautionary tale

- "I emphasised the need to be sensitive with the story as my intent was not to make parents feel guilty."
- "Much of what I had said was taken out of context."
- "I felt that I'd been set-up by the journalist."

A cautionary tale

25 August 2011, 6.35am AEST

Misquoted: how an innocent interview about raising babies led to hate mail

AUTHOR

Cathrine Fowler

Professor & Tresillian Chair in Child & Family Health, Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Health at University of Technology, Sydney

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Cathrine Fowler receives funding from the ARC.

The University of Technology, Sydney is a Founding Partner of The Conversation.

Our goal is to ensure the content is not compromised in any way. We therefore ask all authors to disclose any potential

TAGS

Childhood development

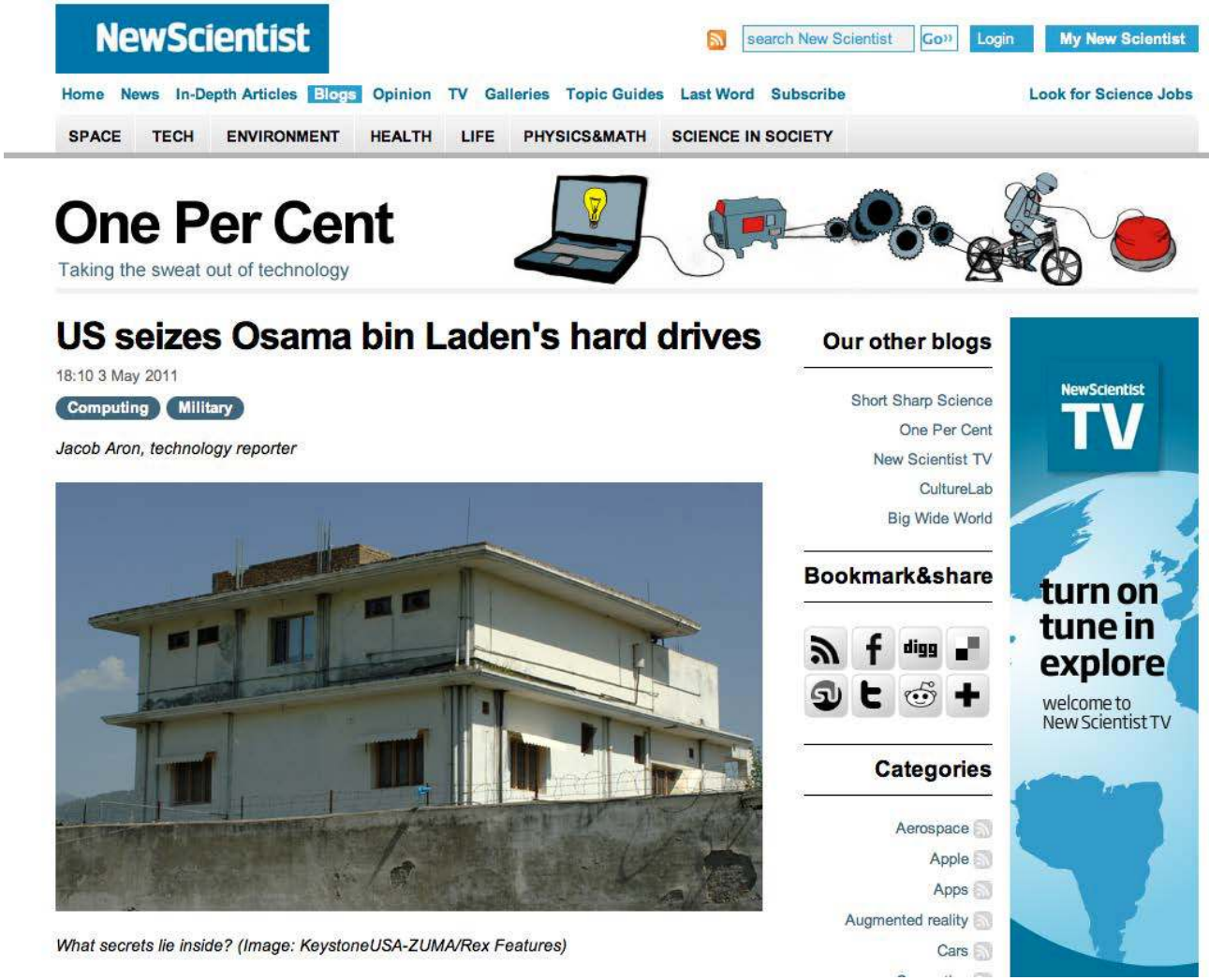
A cautionary tale

- Journalists have an agenda
- But academics can't withdraw – they've a vital role in informing public discussion
- The Conversation aims to provide a solution via a safe publishing environment

The new media ecosystem – The Conversation

- Hear directly from real experts on issues of the day
- Use the Conversation to dip your toe in the water and build profile
- Safe publishing environment
- Arguments based on evidence
- Engagement

Story selection



- Saw story online
- "What will the US government do with the hard drives?"
- "If they are encrypted, what then?"
- Let's find an encryption expert

Tracking down an expert

- Consult our expert database
- Google search (e.g. “encryption university Australia”)
- Contact university media offices

Prof. Jennifer Seberry – University of Wollongong

- Been working in computer security for 30 years
- Involved at design stage of AES-256 encryption scheme (which bin Laden may have utilised)

Making contact

- Initial phone call to Prof. Seberry to discuss the story idea
- Agreed to write a story for us by the following morning
- Wrote her a "brief" …

Briefing the expert

Hi Jennifer,

Thanks again for having a chat just now. I appreciate your time and interest in helping out with this piece.

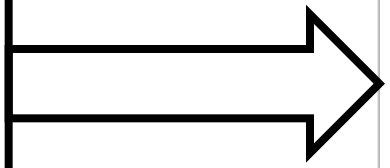
As I mentioned, the site I work for is called The Conversation (http://theconversation.edu.au) and we're a new online publication working with the research sector to foster a more informed public debate.

In the Science/Tech section we're looking at the news that the US has seized Osama bin Laden's hard drives (http://www.newscientist.com/blogs/onepercent/2011/05/us-seizes-osama-bin-ladens-har.html), trying to put the news into a bit of context for our readers and explaining the difficulty of decrypting data encrypted with the AES-256 encryption scheme.

As I mentioned, we'd be looking for something quite short (~400 words) written quite conversationally and even off the top of your head. Our audience is a general, interested and reasonably well educated one, but without any specific training in computer science.

Here's what it would be great for the piece to touch on:

- What the AES-256 encryption is and where it's come from
- Why it's impossible to crack
- Why rumours of "backdoor" decryption methods are completely ridiculous



"This is what we'd like from the piece"

Ideally, from our point of view, we'd be looking for as quick a turnaround on this piece as possible so if you could get back to me ASAP (either way) that would be great, just so that I can track down someone else if you can't write the piece for us.

Thanks again for your time Jennifer and I hope to speak with you again soon.

Regards,

Matt de Neef
Assistant Section Editor, The Conversation

The next morning …

Jennifer got back to us at 10.50am the following morning with a (very) short piece:

It has been reported that Osama bib Laden's hard drives have been seized.
These are said to be encrypted with AES256. What is that?
The US Department of Commerce in 1997 called for cryptologists around the world to submit candidates for the Advanced Encrytion Standard (AES).
Our research group submitted an entry, LOKI, but it was quickly removed from contention in the open, world wide competition that ensued.
There were a number of international conferences and the final winner was chosen by the cryptographic world community. The winner was Rjindael, invented by two Belgian cryptologists, Joan Daemon and Vincent Rijmen.
Since so many exxperts have analysed, taught the algorithm and because of the openness of the process to choose the AES standard I do not believee ther aree any "backdoors". The only way I see to break the encryption is to use a complete search on hundreds of thousands of specially built machines.
This I believe is not feasible.

159 words! ☹

A bit more … ?

- We were looking for more than 150 words, so:

It has been reported that Osama bib Laden's hard drives have been seized, hard drives that could conceivably contain …

These are said to be encrypted with AES256. What is that? (Can you put this into context for us – roughly speaking, how does encryption work and how does this particular scheme work? How much better than the competition is it? Who uses it? Eg. US government, banks, Wikileaks?)

(Can you spell out that this code is uncrackable and explain why? Will this be the case even in the future, as technology improves?)

The US Department of Commerce in 1997 called for cryptologists around the world to submit candidates for the Advanced Encrytion Standard (AES). In my capacity as … I was part of a research group that submitted an entry, LOKI (Can you touch on what this is?), but it was quickly removed from contention in the open, world wide competition that ensued. (Why was your entry removed from the competition?)

There were a number of international conferences and the final winner was chosen (when was this?) by the cryptographic world community. The winner was Rjindael (Is this the name of the algorithm that AES uses? It would be great if you could explain this a little further), invented by two Belgian cryptologists, Joan Daemon and Vincent Rijmen. (Which went on to AES256????)

There have been suggestions that the US government was involved in the creation of this encryption scheme, and engineering a 'backdoor', allowing them to decrypt any data encrypted using this method.

I personally don't believe such a "backdoor" exists for the following reasons:

1.
2.
3.

Text in red = "please give us more information!"

Since so many experts have analysed, taught the algorithm and because of the openness of the process to choose the AES standard I do not believee ther aree any "backdoors".

The only way I see to break the encryption is to use a complete search (Can you spell out what this is and what it would involve?) on hundreds of thousands of specially built machines. (Do such machines exist and if so, how long would it take, theoretically, given the potential value of the information in this case? Is it likely that resources would be pushed in this direction?)

This I believe is not feasible.

(We need something to finish such as… What does this mean for the information on bin Laden's hard drives? In fact, what might this information be? We may never know?)

Take-two …

At 12.50pm Jennifer sent through a revised version incorporating our suggestions:

It has been reported that Osama bin Laden's hard drives have been seized, hard drives that could conceivably contain information regarding the membership, funding and future plans of El Quaeda. Knowledge of this information would enormously help anti terrorism.
These hard drives are said to be encrypted with AES256. The AES is the current world "Advanced Data Standard".

Computer encryption works by taking data in binary form, that is written with ones and zeros, i.e.bits, breaking it into blocks of length 256 bits and then inputting in into an algorithm, which is like a black box, which causes as much confusion as possible using a "secret key" which is also 256 bits of binary data. Knowing this key means that the data can be unencrypted and so returned to it's original form. That is why it is kept secret. Data encryption using the AES is ubiquitous. It is used by banks, business, governments, and on your own computer to protect network links.
A look at the animated version of how the AES algorithm works written by Enrique Zabala from Paragray
thttp://www.cs.bc.edu/~straubin/cs381-05/blockciphers/rijndael_ingles2004.swf or
http://blog.ultrassecreto.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/projetofinal.html
gives an idea of the complication of the AES encryption process.

The US Department of Commerce in 1997 called for cryptologists around the world to submit candidates for the Advanced Encrytion Standard (AES). As Director of the Centre for Computer Security Research at the University of Wollongong, I was part of a research group that submitted an entry, LOKI , a symmetric encryption algorithm based on our research. LOKI was quickly removed from contention in the open, world wide competition that ensued as other researchers found ways to make it easier to decrypt than AES.

Part of the five year standardization process included a number of international conferences,
many research articles and computer testing by international researchers. The final winner was chosen by the cryptographic world community and announced by the US Government as its Federal standard on 26th May 2002. The winner was a symmetric encryption algorithm called Rjindael invented by two Belgian cryptologists whose native language is Flemish, Joan Daemon and Vincent Rijmen. The name Rjindal was chosen as a combination of the authors' names as a gentle poke at the fact that no one can pronoune names in Flemish (the other Belgian national languages is French). It was the Rjinael version that uses 256 bits that is the Advanced Encrypttion Standard (AES256) used today.
There have been suggestions that the US government was involved in the creation of this encryption scheme, and engineering a 'backdoor', allowing them to decrypt any data encrypted using this method.

I personally don't believe such a "backdoor" exists for the following reasons:

1. the open process by which candidates were submitted and analysed by the world cryptographic community;

2. The fact that it has been widely accepted by all other governments (and apparently bin Laden)

3. The process used in the encryption process which is both "state or the art" and "best practice".

The only way I see to break the encryption is to use a complete search , that is to try all possible keys,on hundreds of thousands of specially built machines. Such machines do not exist and if they did they would take many, many times the length of time this universe will exist to carry out such a search. This I believe is not feasible.

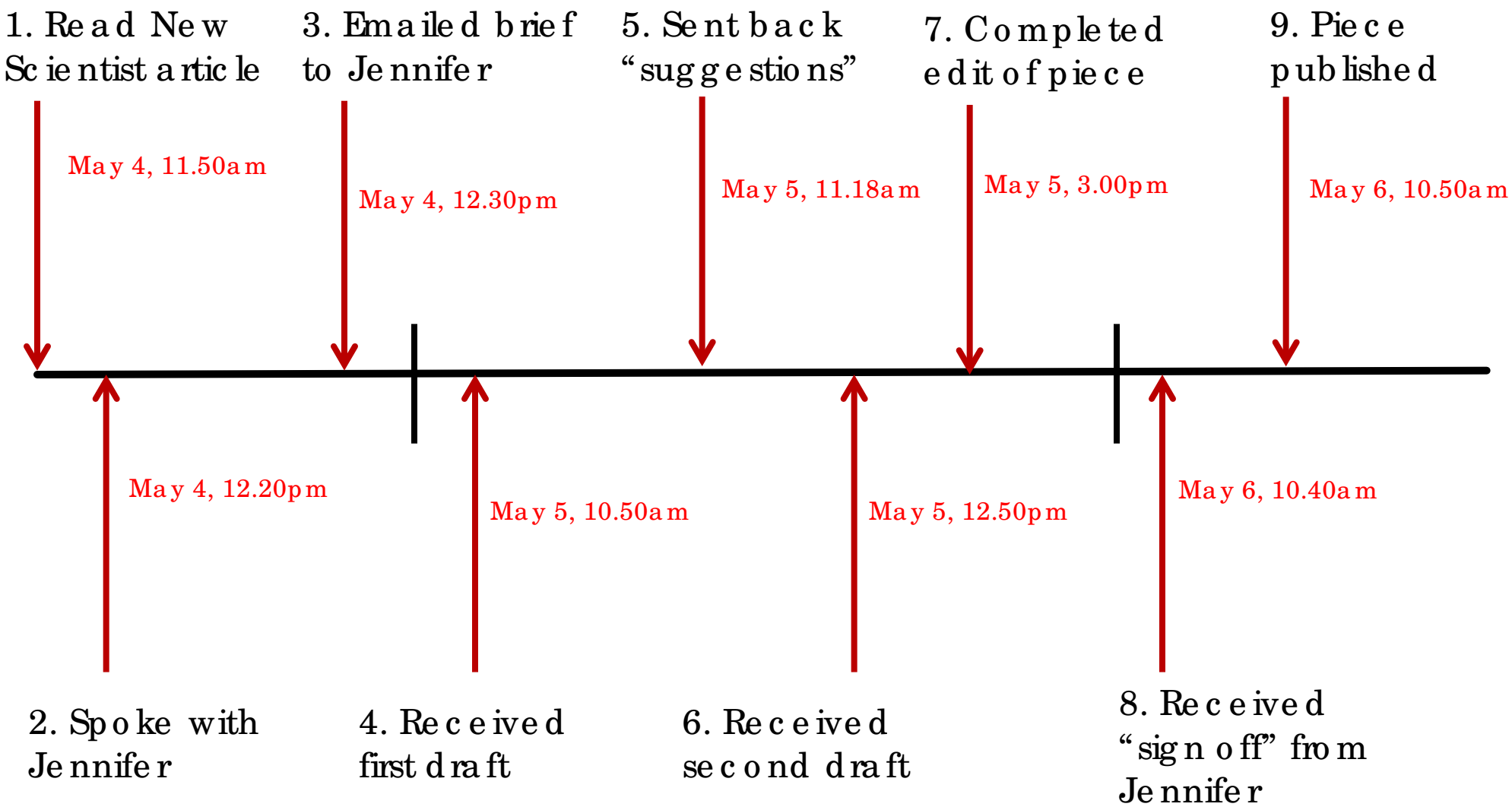
This means we will not be able to crack thee encryption algorithm or find the key used by bin Laden. So we will have to rely on other kinds of information to find out El Quaeda's future plans

598 words ☺

The ball's back in our court …

- Spent some time editing the piece
- Sent it back to her for final sign off

Publication timeline



Here's one I prepared earlier…

Published: May 6, 2011

Cracking bin Laden's computer code: unlikely

AUTHOR

Jennifer Seberry
Professor of Computer Security at University of Wollongong

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Jennifer Seberry receives funding from the ARC.

Our goal is to ensure the content is not compromised in any way. We therefore ask all authors to disclose any potential conflicts of interest before publication.

Recovering information from Osama's hard drives may be impossible. wokka/Flickr

It has been reported that Osama bin Laden's hard drives have been seized, hard drives that could conceivably contain information regarding the membership, funding and future plans of al-Qaeda.

Information of this type would help anti-terrorism agencies enormously.

The hard drives were recovered from bin Laden's compound in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad and are said to be encrypted with a encryption method known as AES-256.

AES-256 is the current world standard for data encryption and is used by the likes of Wikileaks and the US Government to encrypt sensitive information.

RELATED ARTICLES

The death of bin Laden doesn't mean the terror threat is over

Frustration to salvation: a code to end computer crashes

Why assassination seems to be the hardest word

Killing Osama: the exception that proves the rule

Eichmann was tried in Jerusalem – bin Laden should've faced court too

TAGS

Osama bin Laden

Why engage? Because it will help you

- Join the public conversation
- Raise your profile
- Raises profile for your dept, univ
- Helps raise research funds
- Can attract students
- Can lead to speaker/conf invitations
- Can lead to consultancy work
- Opens up possibility of new collaboration

*** Academic writing opportunities**

* Public feedback * Student collaboration/critical analysis *** Potential students**

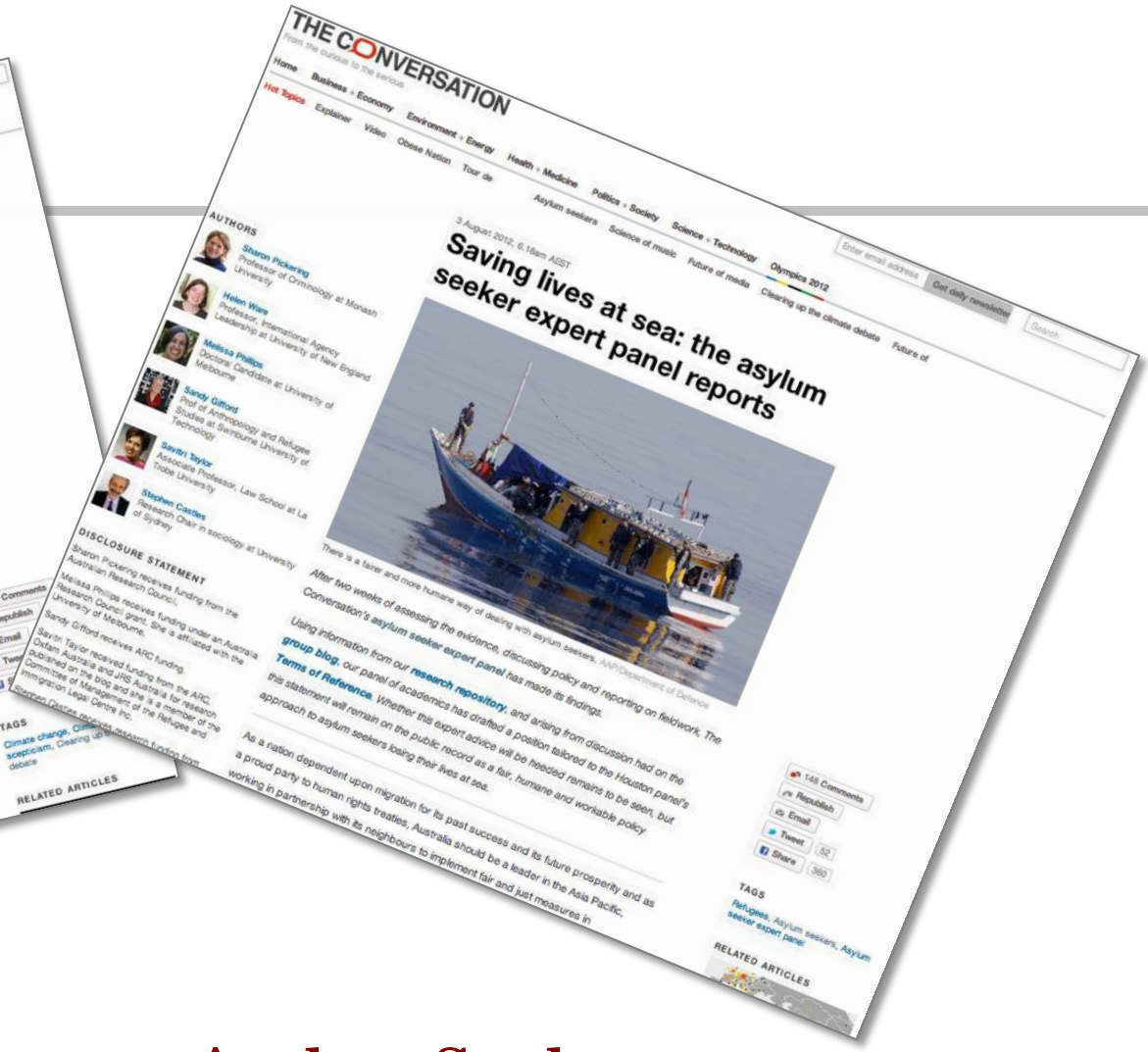
* Real-world outcomes * Peer comment

*** Industry contact** * Media comment

* Speaking invitations * [illegible]

Dr. Sean Rintel
Lecturer in Strategic Communication
School of Journalism & Communication
The University of Queensland

18 articles
45k readers



Climate Change

- 350+ articles, including:
  - 14-part series on the real "debate"
  - Monckton Watch
  - 1,000s of comments

Asylum Seekers

- Expert panel
- Research repository
- Data visualisation of refugees flows
- Findings tailored to Houston Panel

If, as a society,
we value academic
engagement, then
how do we recognise
and reward it?

Why Engage: The triple helix, be warned!

- Government funders want value for money
- Already measuring teaching and research
- Will measure engagement or "impact"
- A consideration in funding
- UK and US are already measuring
- Go8 and ATN univs working new measures

Get involved!

- Create a profile
- Pitch to our editors