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Brief Reviews of Books and Products

Engage in Public Scholarship! A Guidebook on Feminist and Accessible Communication

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BRIEF REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND PRODUCTS

Book review: Ketchum, A.D. (2022). *Engage in Public Scholarship! A Guidebook on Feminist and Accessible Communication*. Concordia University Press. 357 pp. ISBN 9781988111353, 34.95 CAD (paperback); ISBN 9781988111360 (ebook).

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Accessible public scholarship aims to engage with audiences outside of the academy so that research can be part of broader conversations that include lots of different people. It makes research available through channels that flow beyond traditional forms of scholarly communication such as journal articles.

There are many reasons to do this work, which gives more people access to credible information and increases the potential for research to improve our lives. *Engage in Public Scholarship!* advocates for humanities and social science researchers to undertake public-facing scholarship.

The book begins by pointing out that, although it sounds inherently good, there is not enough discussion about what accessible public scholarship involves or how to participate in it. Universities and funders call for scholars to circulate their research more widely; however, this goal is easier said than done. *Engage in Public Scholarship!* is an effective guide to help researchers answer this call in responsible and accountable ways.

Alex Ketchum is a faculty lecturer of the Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at McGill University, as well as director of the Just Feminist Tech and Scholarship Lab. She is the organizer of Disrupting Disruptions: The Feminist and Accessible Publishing, Communications, and Tech Speaker and Workshop Series. Her scholarship takes many forms (e.g., exhibit, self-published booklet, report, peer-reviewed publication).

In this book, Ketchum describes public-facing scholarship as “vital and central to our work” (p. 312). It is not an add-on that applies after research but part of research itself. She clearly applies this approach to her own activities. *Engage in Public Scholarship!* presents theoretical and practical considerations about the social, economic, and environmental conditions that affect who creates and participates in different forms of scholarship.



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It also demonstrates accessible public scholarship in a way that other books on the topic do not. *The Oxford Handbook on Methods for Public Scholarship* (2019) and *Envisioning Public Scholarship for our Time: Models for Higher Education Researchers* (2018) are worth consulting, but Ketchum's book is essential reading for researchers, instructors, students, professionals, and administrators interested in engaging in or facilitating public scholarship. It is a concise introduction that contributes to existing discussions by centralizing issues associated with labor rights and technology.

Engage in Public Scholarship! approaches the topic through a feminist framework to examine the challenges of participating in public-facing work and functions as an example of how to do that work. It is an open-access book available in accessible portable document format (PDF) and hypertext markup language (HTML) formats. The author's prose is clear and approachable. She explicitly addresses her citational practices and actively centers the voices of scholars whose work is often overlooked. Ketchum cites from a variety of traditional and non-traditional forms and genres such as podcasts.

The book is easy to navigate, with succinct chapter titles and clear subheadings to guide readers who may choose to engage with specific sections of the text instead of going cover to cover. Brief footnotes add context without interrupting the reading experience. Two overarching objectives provide intuitive organizational structure to the guidebook. The first is to define feminist and accessible public scholarship. The second is to offer effective strategies for scholars to disseminate their research within a variety of communities.

Part 1 successfully meets the first overarching objective, which is to consider the definition, dynamics, and implications of accessible public scholarship from an intersectional feminist standpoint that places economic, social, and environmental considerations at the core. A central takeaway is that accessible public scholarship must change shape based on the scholar, research, public, and context.

People of color, women, sexual and gender minorities, and those who experience disabilities face more difficulties and take greater risks than scholars operating from nonmarginalized positions. The book focuses on university settings and does a good job of addressing its subject matter from the perspectives of scholars in tenured and non-tenured positions. Contract faculty have even less support to undertake work that is usually unpaid and time-consuming.

However, *Engage in Public Scholarship!* does not mention university staff who engage in research and experience different opportunities and challenges than faculty (e.g., writing consultants or educational developers). The omission is common. Staff positions do not have research requirements. However, individuals working in them can be researchers with advanced degrees who engage in scholarship. This overlooked group is worth mentioning

in a book that is interested in a more expansive understanding of scholarship and in the under-explored aspects of academic labor.

Part 2 meets the book's second overarching objective of offering practical strategies for how to do public scholarship well. It is extremely helpful that the book focuses on identifying goals, stakeholders, and audiences before considering which method of engagement to choose, especially when so many options are available. Social media, exhibits, lectures, and more are covered. Scholars need access to equipment and learning opportunities to engage in different forms of public scholarship.

Each chapter weaves together practical guidance and critical perspectives. For example, the author reminds readers that engaging in accessible public scholarship means working in solidarity with journalists and investigating publications' piece rates to avoid driving down the cost of work. A related part of this discussion that the book does not mention is services that charge substantial fees to have writers compose in-house magazine articles for public consumption but do not include those writers' names on their work (e.g., researchoutreach.org).

Importantly, Ketchum points out that the forms of scholarship she discusses are not static. Technologies change, pandemics happen. Unlike traditional forms of scholarship, which are slow to change, public-facing scholarship can be dynamic and require a lot of attention and ongoing skill development. It is vital, and it can be messy!

Engage in Public Scholarship! considers the complexities of sustainability, openness, and justice in accessible public scholarship without seeking to resolve any tensions within and between these concepts. Those who work in scholarly communication will find a nuanced approach to public scholarship that reaffirms the topic's importance and examines its complexity while also presenting practical strategies. The book is a solid primer with useful tools for reconsidering what it means to advocate for public scholarship and what it means to engage in feminist and accessible scholarly communication practices.

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