Shared under a CC BY 4.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en).
The presentation is the work of Kate Bredbenner (https://www.simplebiologist.com/).

Communicating your research using social media

May 14, 2025

@SimpleBiologist

Kate Bredbenner, PhD
Queens, NY
Kate@simplebiologist.com

SimpleBiologist

>100,000

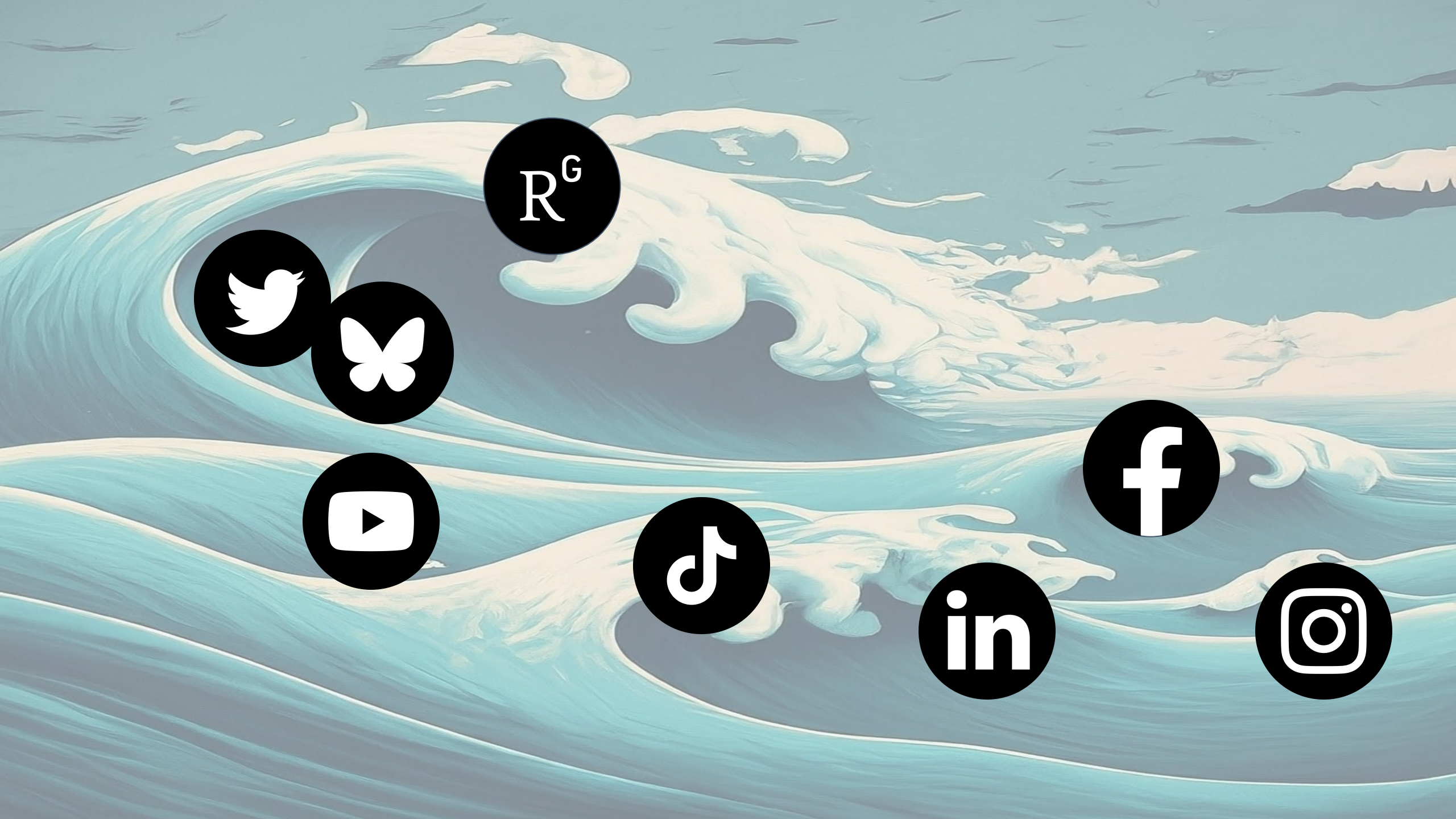
Followers across platforms

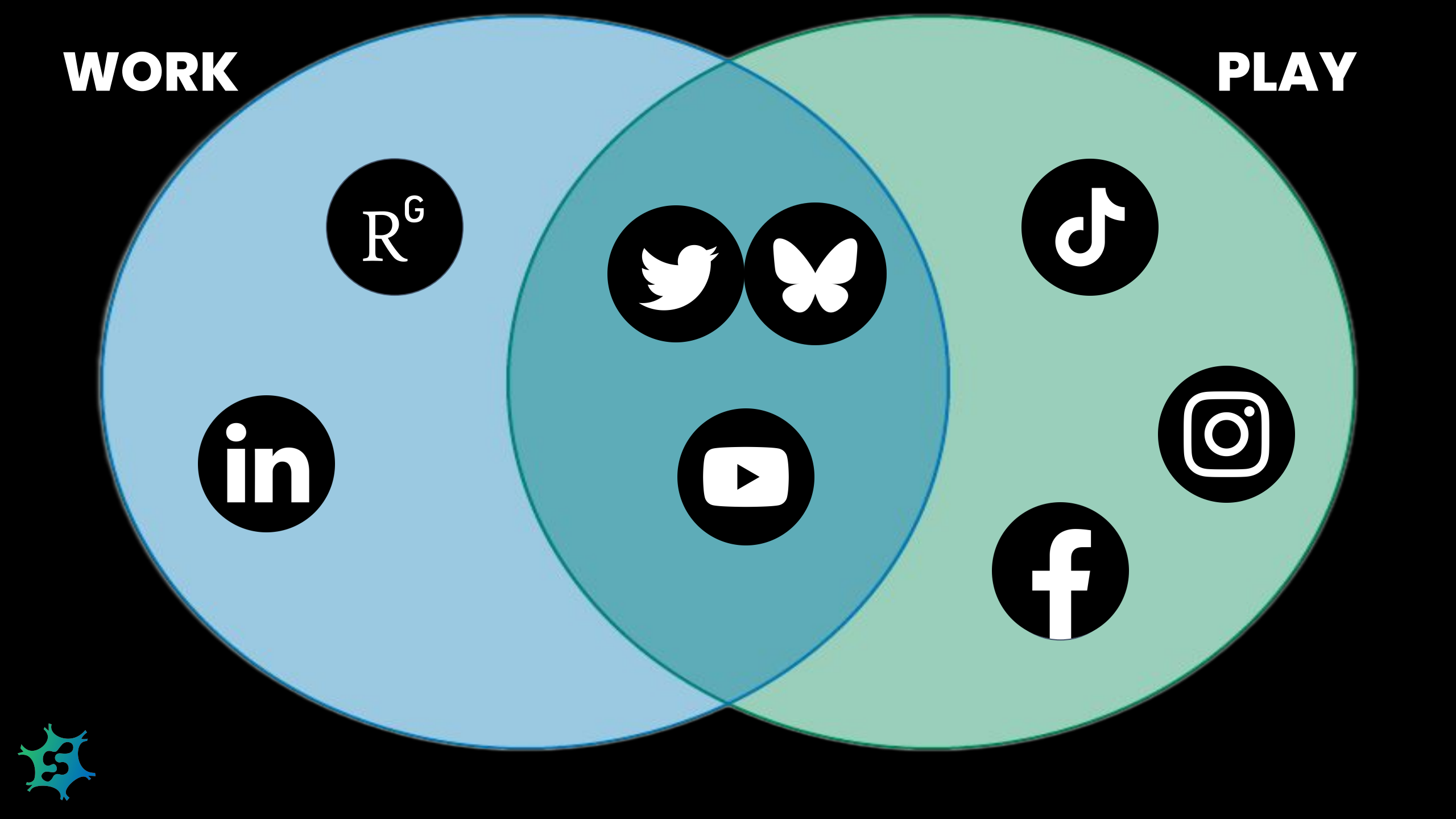
18%

Engagement Rate

1.6M

Likes




WORK
PLAY

ResearchGate	• Authors • Readers • Researchers	• "Here are the papers I have written, where are the ones you have?"
LinkedIn	• Recruiters • Job Seekers • "Professionals"	• "I have a job posting or I'm looking for one." • "I'm a thought leader and/or cool stuff has happened lately that I want to share."
Twitter/X/ Bluesky	• Companies • General Public	• "Here's my hot take, let's argue about it." • "I have an update about something I've done that I want to share and chat about."
YouTube	• Companies • Content Creators • General Public	• "Want a high-quality video tutorial, an hour-long video about speed running, or an unboxing of the newest phone? It's here!"
TikTok	• Companies • Content Creators • General Public	• "Want to watch short videos from literally anyone on literally anything? They're already playing."
Instagram	• Companies • Content Creators • General Public	• "Here's an attractive mix of pretty photos, videos, and lots of ads in an endless scroll."
Facebook	• Companies • Communities • General Public	• "Here are some pictures of my children for my friends and family." • "I have a table and chairs to give away and/or I'm looking for people that love weaving fruit baskets."

WHY BOTHER?

Keep your network informed

Collaborators, people in your field, doctors or patients, new students, funders and universities, editors and societies

Find new collaborators

You can come up in web searches globally with exactly what you work on. A history of sharing is an asset!

Share your work outside your circle

Science is for everyone! Get new people excited about your field

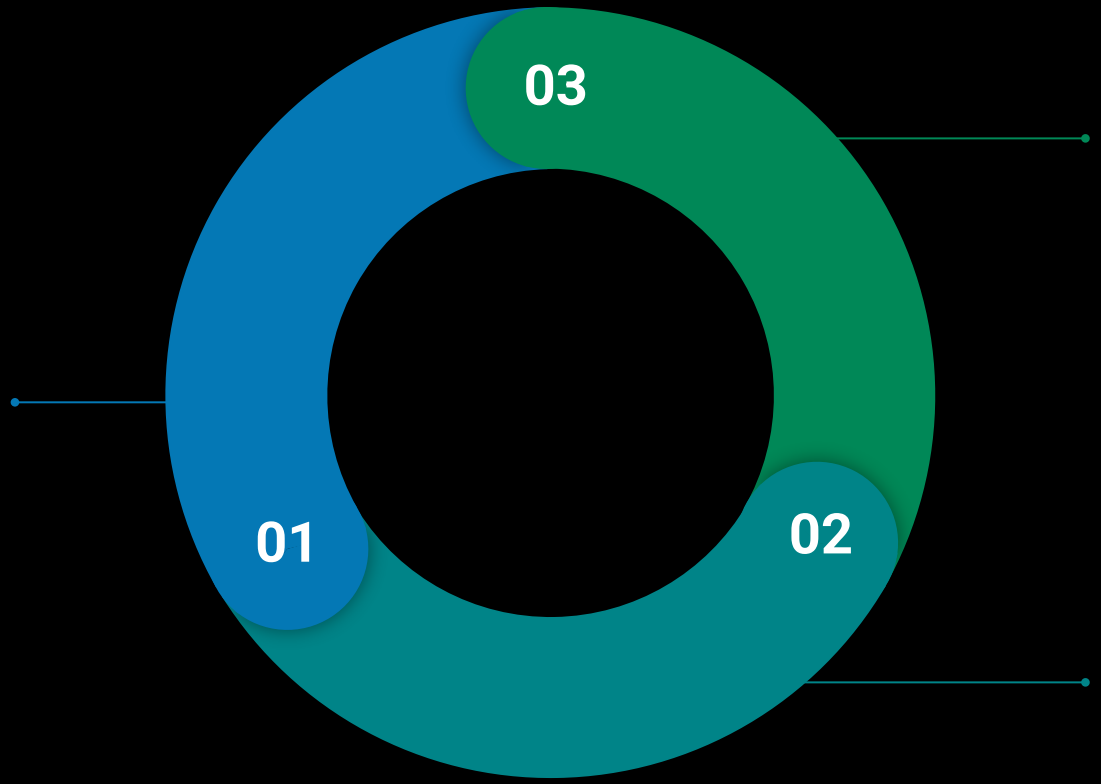
Social Media is Global

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Ask the hard questions

What do I want to say?

A new update? A setback? Looking for something? Did you publish? Did you read a great paper? Were you inspired at a conference?



Why do they want to listen?

What's in it for them? A fun fact to share with friends? A new job? A great paper to cite and work off of?

Who do I want to say it to?

New students? Patients? Science fans? Your network? Journal editors?

I've published a new paper!

I want to tell everyone about it!

I just want to be congratulated

I want the community to make changes

I want to be cited. A lot.

I want tenure and a promotion

I want new post-docs or students

I want new collaborators to take this research forward

PLOS ONE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Video abstracts and plain language summaries are more effective than graphical abstracts and published abstracts

Kate Bredbenner*, Sanford M. Simon

Lab of Cellular Biophysics, Rockefeller University, New York, New York, United States of America

* kate.bredbenner@gmail.com

Check for updates

OPEN ACCESS

Citation: Bredbenner K, Simon SM (2019) Video abstracts and plain language summaries are more effective than graphical abstracts and published abstracts. PLoS ONE 14(11): e0224697. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224697

Editor: David Orrego-Carmona, Aston University School of Languages and Social Sciences, UNITED KINGDOM

Received: June 14, 2019

Accepted: October 18, 2019

Published: November 19, 2019

Peer Review History: PLOS recognizes the benefits of transparency in the peer review process; therefore, we enable the publication of all of the content of peer review and author responses alongside final, published articles. The editorial history of this article is available here: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224697

Copyright: © 2019 Bredbenner, Simon. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the manuscript and its Supporting Information files.

Abstract

Background

Journals are trying to make their papers more accessible by creating a variety of research summaries including graphical abstracts, video abstracts, and plain language summaries. It is unknown if individuals with science, science-related, or non-science careers prefer different summaries, which approach is most effective, or even what criteria should be used for judging which approach is most effective. A survey was created to address this gap in our knowledge. Two papers from Nature on similar research topics were chosen, and different kinds of research summaries were created for each one. Questions to measure comprehension of the research, as well as self-evaluation of enjoyment of the summary, perceived understanding after viewing the summary, and the desire for more updates of that summary type were asked to determine the relative merits of each of the summaries.

Results

Participants (n = 538) were randomly assigned to one of the summary types. The response of adults with science, science-related, and non-science careers were slightly different, but they show similar trends. All groups performed well on a post-summary test, but participants reported higher perceived understanding when presented with a video or plain language summary ($p<0.0025$). All groups enjoyed video abstracts the most followed by plain language summaries, and then graphical abstracts and published abstracts. The reported preference for different summary types was generally not correlated to the comprehension of the summaries. Here we show that original abstracts and graphical abstracts are not as successful as video abstracts and plain language summaries at producing comprehension, a feeling of understanding, and enjoyment. Our results indicate the value of relaxing the word counts in the abstract to allow for more plain language or including a plain language summary section along with the abstract.

I've published a new paper!

I want new collaborators to take this research forward

PLOS ONE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Video abstracts and plain language summaries are more effective than graphical abstracts and published abstracts

Kate Bredbenner*, Sanford M. Simon

Lab of Cellular Biophysics, Rockefeller University, New York, New York, United States of America

* kate.bredbenner@gmail.com

Check for updates

OPEN ACCESS

Citation: Bredbenner K, Simon SM (2019) Video abstracts and plain language summaries are more effective than graphical abstracts and published abstracts. PLoS ONE 14(11): e0224697. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224697

Editor: David Orrego-Carmona, Aston University School of Languages and Social Sciences, UNITED KINGDOM

Received: June 14, 2019

Accepted: October 18, 2019

Published: November 19, 2019

Peer Review History: PLOS recognizes the benefits of transparency in the peer review process; therefore, we enable the publication of all of the content of peer review and author responses alongside final, published articles. The editorial history of this article is available here: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0224697

Copyright: © 2019 Bredbenner, Simon. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the manuscript and its Supporting Information files.

Abstract

Background

Journals are trying to make their papers more accessible by creating a variety of research summaries including graphical abstracts, video abstracts, and plain language summaries. It is unknown if individuals with science, science-related, or non-science careers prefer different summaries, which approach is most effective, or even what criteria should be used for judging which approach is most effective. A survey was created to address this gap in our knowledge. Two papers from Nature on similar research topics were chosen, and different kinds of research summaries were created for each one. Questions to measure comprehension of the research, as well as self-evaluation of enjoyment of the summary, perceived understanding after viewing the summary, and the desire for more updates of that summary type were asked to determine the relative merits of each of the summaries.

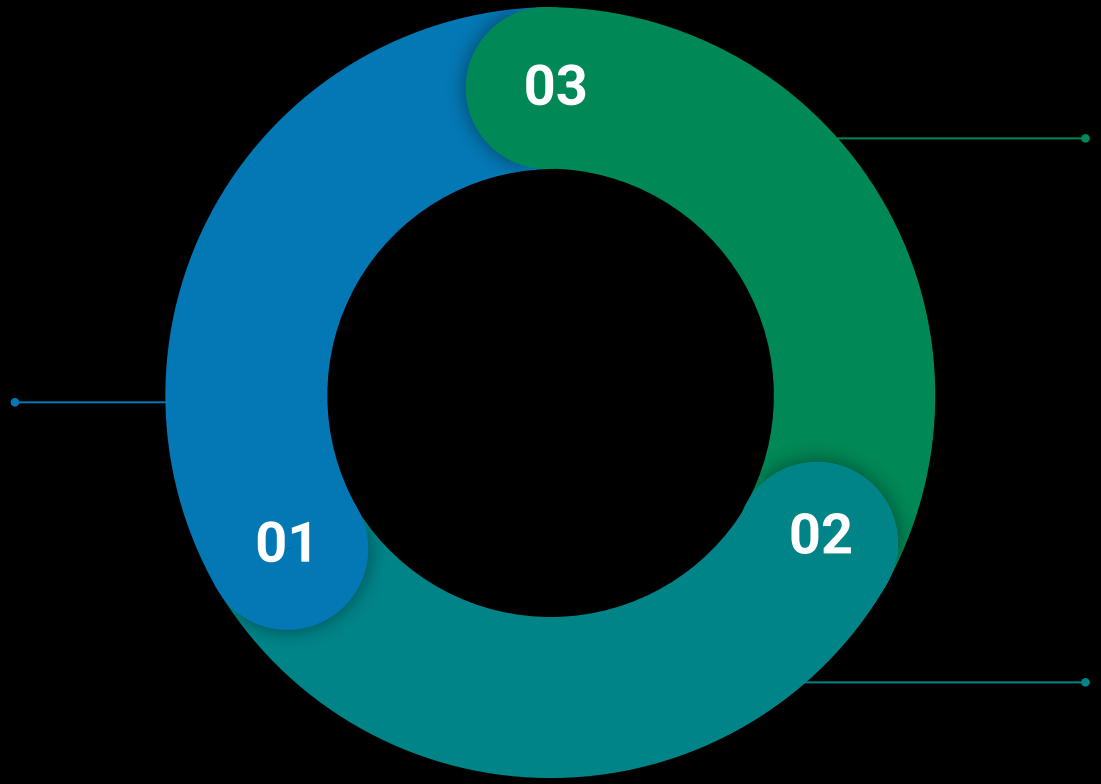
Results

Participants (n = 538) were randomly assigned to one of the summary types. The response of adults with science, science-related, and non-science careers were slightly different, but they show similar trends. All groups performed well on a post-summary test, but participants reported higher perceived understanding when presented with a video or plain language summary ($p<0.0025$). All groups enjoyed video abstracts the most followed by plain language summaries, and then graphical abstracts and published abstracts. The reported preference for different summary types was generally not correlated to the comprehension of the summaries. Here we show that original abstracts and graphical abstracts are not as successful as video abstracts and plain language summaries at producing comprehension, a feeling of understanding, and enjoyment. Our results indicate the value of relaxing the word counts in the abstract to allow for more plain language or including a plain language summary section along with the abstract.

I’ve published a new paper!

What do I want to say?

I’ve done the preliminary work here, but I need collaborators to test this further. Are you interested?



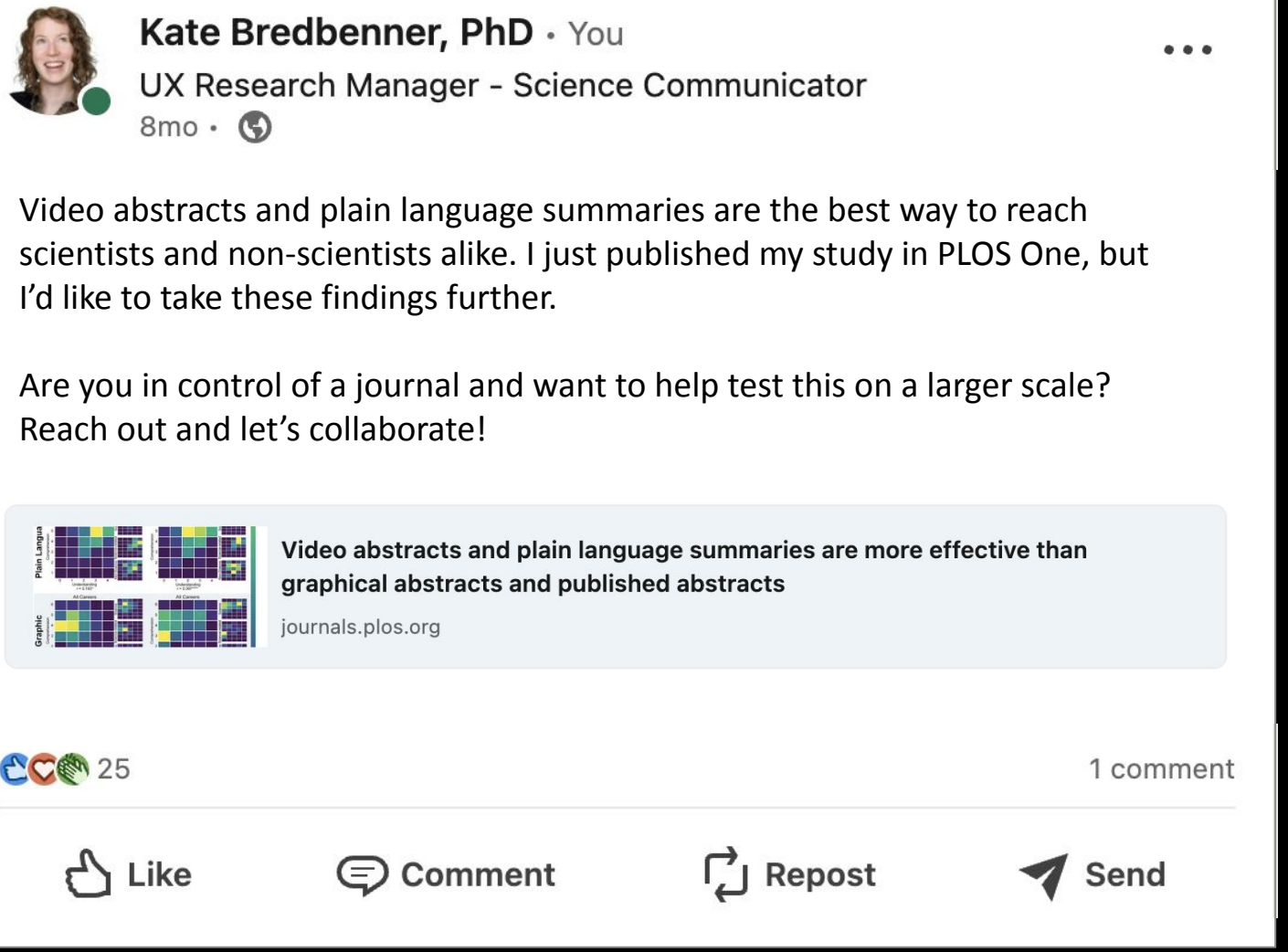
Why do they want to listen?

Testing out something new could get more people interested in the journal or society. More publicity!

Who do I want to say it to?

Journal editors, societies, people in a position to run a pilot on some journals.

ResearchGate	• Authors • Readers • Researchers	• "Here are the papers I have written, where are the ones you have?"
LinkedIn	• Recruiters • Job Seekers • "Professionals"	• "I have a job posting or I'm looking for one." • "I'm a thought leader and/or cool stuff has happened lately that I want to share."
Twitter/X/ Bluesky	• Companies • General Public	• "Here's my hot take, let's argue about it." • "I have an update about something I've done that I want to share and chat about."
YouTube	• Companies • Content Creators • General Public	• "Want a high-quality video tutorial, an hour-long video about speed running, or an unboxing of the newest phone? It's here!"
TikTok	• Companies • Content Creators • General Public	• "Want to watch short videos from literally anyone on literally anything? They're already playing."
Instagram	• Companies • Content Creators • General Public	• "Here's an attractive mix of pretty photos, videos, and lots of ads in an endless scroll."
Facebook	• Companies • Communities • General Public	• "Here are some pictures of my children for my friends and family." • "I have a table and chairs to give away and/or I'm looking for people that love weaving fruit baskets."



- Ask your network to share/repost
- Follow up with comments
- Check for direct messages

Once isn't usually enough

Build a community

Engagement

People want to connect with you and start a conversation. Be sure to respond to comments and questions.

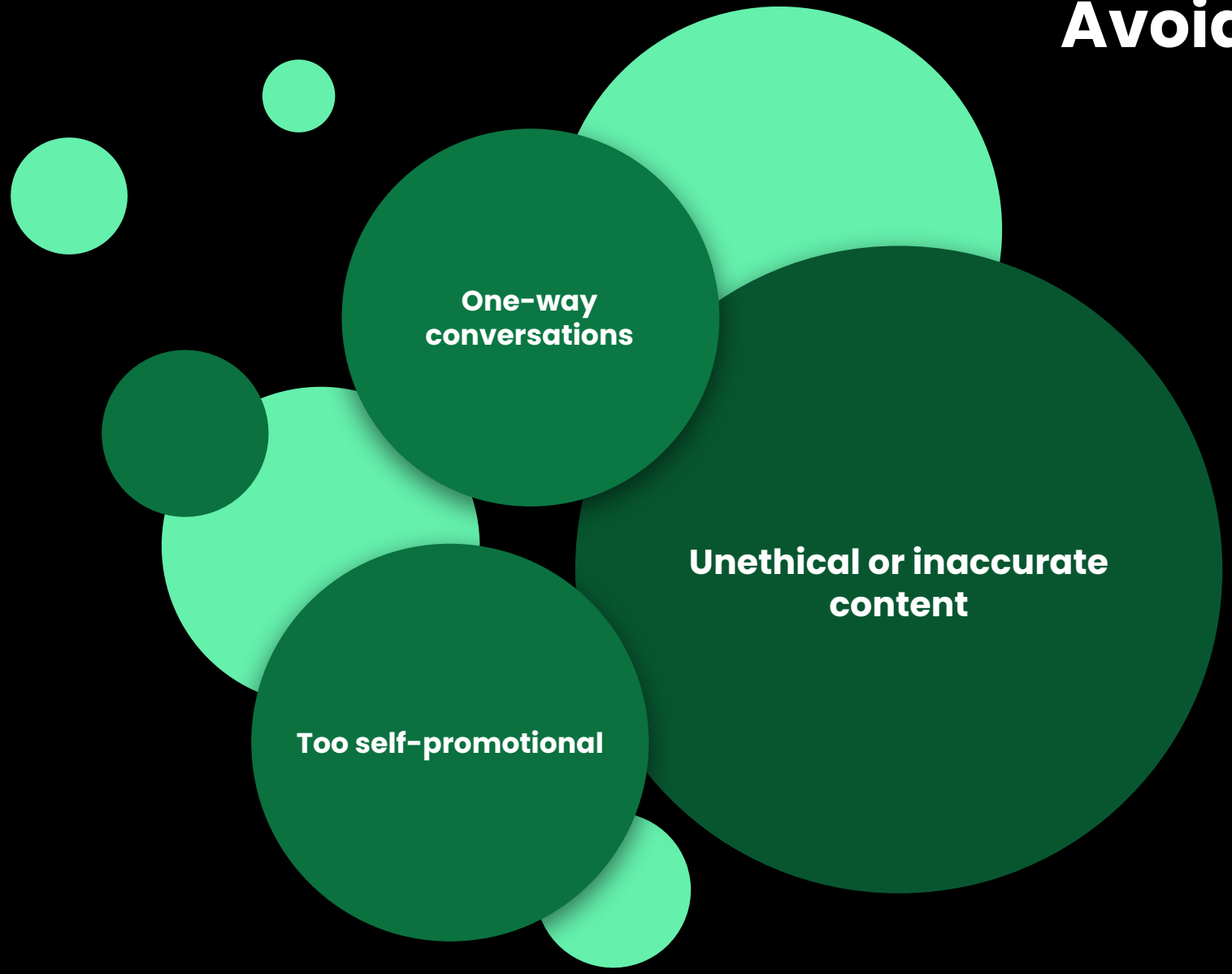
Authenticity

Be who you are, not who you think you need to be. It's obvious when you're not being authentic.

Consistency

It's hard to remember someone you met one time very briefly. You need to show up often.

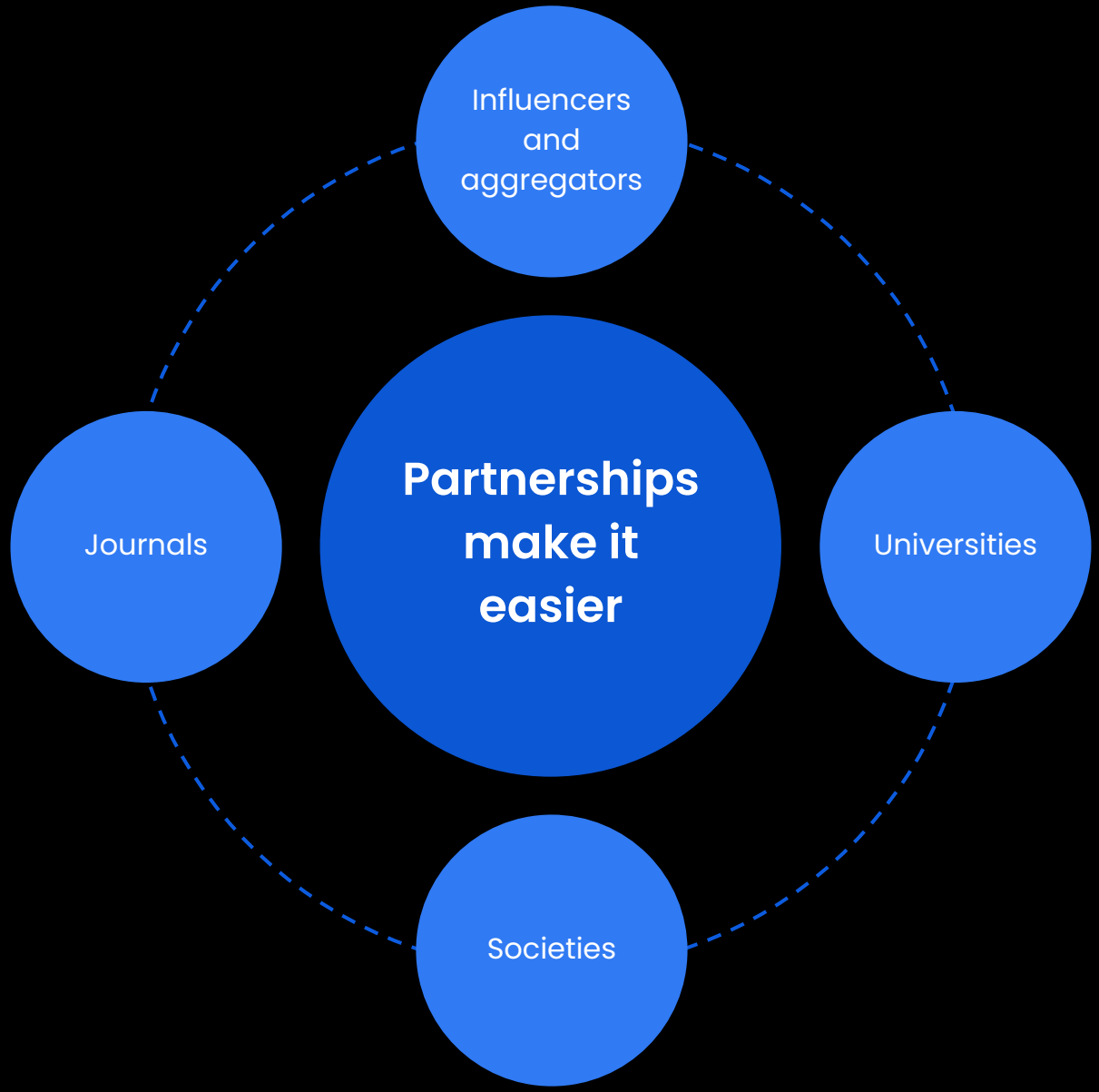
Avoid pitfalls



This seems like a lot...

You don’t have to do it alone!

- Talk to your university press release department
- Talk to editors or journal/society social media groups - tag the journal when you post!
- Search on the social media site you think is the best for you - look for people and reach out
- Who do you follow? Reach out and make friends! Ask if they can boost your message.



Questions?

@SimpleBiologist

Kate Bredbenner, PhD
Queens, NY
Kate@simplebiologist.com