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# **Book Review**

**Disseminating your Action Research: A Practical Guide to Sharing the Results of Practitioner Research (2024)**

**Craig A. Mertler (Routledge)**

**Reviewer: Alison Talmage**

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*Disseminating your Research Practice* (Mertler, 2024) has been a useful resource while planning dissemination strategies for my current music therapy doctoral action research. Although the intended audience is educational action researchers, the book’s tips for presenting and writing in diverse formats suggest broader relevance, including music therapy advocacy through reports of professional practice and practice-based research. The Introduction frames dissemination within action researchers’ aspirations to “change the world” (p. 3) – a value that chimes with the transformational hopes of music therapy practice and research. For most music therapists, writing projects are unpaid and secondary to the priority tasks of securing work and developing a practice. This book provides practical information that may support music therapists hoping to carve out a little time to share their work through presentations, written publications, and online media.

Following the Introduction, the book contains ten chapters grouped in four sections. Each chapter concludes with a helpful summary which I tended to read first to orient myself to each new topic. Section I provides an overview of action research (Chapter 1) and practical guidelines for action researchers (Chapter 2). These chapters provide a useful starting point for anyone considering action research, which has been recognised as an accessible methodology for music therapy (Stige & McFerran, 2016).

The remaining sections and chapters focus on the practicalities of dissemination to diverse audiences. Section II suggests “products” (formats) to reach a wider readership. Chapter 3’s discussion of written reports includes academic writing conventions, a generic structure for articles or other reports, and practical suggestions for the writing process. Oral and poster presentations are addressed in Chapter 4, with further guidelines about posters and infographics in Chapter 5. I valued the author’s advice about considering the audience, constructing titles and descriptions (abstracts), and presenting solutions to problems. Section III focuses on strategies for submissions to peer reviewed journals (Chapter 6), in-person and online presentations (Chapter 7), social media (Chapter 8), and other digital media (Chapter 9). I would have preferred greater integration of these sections, rather than the separation of formats (Section II) and strategies (Section III), but the clear chapter headings were easy to navigate.

Section IV (Chapter 10) builds on the Introduction, offering further encouragement to present and publish. The author is realistic about time constraints, encouraging administrators and employers to value and support this important work. He also frames practice-based research – and I would extend this to practice-based reports – as “*customizable professional growth and learning*” (p. 166). In music therapy, practitioners and participants experience challenges and engage in practical problem-solving. Whether we approach these through reflective and reflexive practice or through small-scale research projects, our processes and novel conclusions are often valuable beyond the immediate context – worth sharing with others and adding to the ever-growing evidential foundations of music therapy practice.

A disappointing aspect of this book is the quality of the images – all greyscale, sometimes blurred, and some with small text. One example of a poster presentation seems dated, resembling a school science-fair display (p. 63), while further examples are predominantly text-based with few visuals (pp. 64 & 74). The style seems a little bland for readers used to visual communication, apps such as Canva, and emerging AI tools. I hope that a future edition would provide more visually stimulating examples – perhaps through online supplementary resources, a common contemporary publishing convention.

For music therapists, advocacy is a constant necessity as we work towards greater professional recognition and increased public access to services. Proposed funding changes for disability services in Australia show that evidence is sometimes ignored or misunderstood (Australian Music Therapy Association, 2024). In Aotearoa too, we have received confusing and contradictory messages about changes in individualised funding, and government agencies have shown an inadequate understanding of music therapy practice as an allied health service, rather than a recreational and respite activity (Ministry of Social Development, 2024). Collective advocacy requires all concerned individuals to speak up and to write about the value of music therapy. This book provides a helpful introduction to different forms of dissemination. I recommend it to all music therapists, particularly novice presenters and authors, as well as to tertiary educators supporting emerging practitioners and writers.

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