

Craft of Research (CoR): Chapter 2 – Connecting with your Reader

The 10 salient sentence strings presented below are lifted from the chapter as is, without modification (except, perhaps, for a bit of punctuation here or there). They are presented in order of appearance in the chapter.

1. Research counts for little if few read it.
2. When you read a book or a scientific paper, you silently converse with its writers – and through them with everyone else they have read. In fact, every time you go to a written source for information, you join a conversation between writers and readers that began more than five thousand years ago. And when you report your own research, you add your voice and can hope that other voices will respond to you, so that you can in turn respond to them.
3. Of course, judgements go both ways: just as readers judge writers, so writers also judge readers, but they do so before they write.
4. In fact, writers can't avoid creating *some* role for themselves and their readers, planned or not. So those roles are worth thinking about from the beginning, before you write a word. If you ignore or miscast your readers, you'll leave so many traces of that mistake in your early drafts that you won't easily fix them in the final one.
5. Since few people read formal research papers for entertainment, you have to create a relationship that encourages them to see why it's in their interest to read yours. That's not easy.
6. When you do research, you learn something that others don't know. So when you report it, you must think of your reader as someone who doesn't know it *but needs to* and yourself as someone who will *give her reason to want to know it*.
7. Down the road, you'll be expected to find (or create) a community of readers who not only share an interest in your topic (or can be convinced to), but also have questions you can answer. But even if you don't have that audience right now, you must write as if you do.
8. You must present yourself as interested in, even enthusiastic about, wanting to share something new, because the interest you show in your work roughly predicts the interest your reader will take in it.
9. If you cast them in a role they won't accept, you're likely to lose them entirely. In this case, the old advice to "consider your audience" means that you must report your research in a way that motivates your readers to play the role you have imagined for them.
10. You are concerned with your *particular* community of readers, with *their* interests and expectations, with improving *their* understanding based on the evidence you can find.