Examples of Abstracts

Here are examples of a good abstract that appeared in a recent issue of the Society for Ecological Restoration's publication, Restoration Ecology. The second example (not from a SER publication) is unacceptable for the reasons discussed.

Example A – Acceptable abstract

> Establishing restoration feasibility is a multifaceted process that requires consideration of the ecological, social, and economic conditions of a given site. Examining completed restoration projects that report successes and failures may enhance this complex decision-making process. We describe five completed wetland restoration projects and identify commonalities among them to inform the process of establishing feasibility for proposed restoration projects. Most of the case studies identified the need to gather preexisting and historical information, develop scenarios through hydrologic modeling, study the restoration materials, use best professional judgment for unanswered questions, establish multigroup collaboration, gain public support from stakeholders, and monitor postrestoration. We applied these lessons to a study that evaluated the feasibility of restoring Dyke Marsh Preserve, a tidal freshwater marsh in Virginia that the National Park Service is mandated to preserve. We found that the use of case studies substantially increased confidence in the decision-making process by focusing discussions on the most important ecological, social, and economic aspects of a potential restoration.

Example B – Unacceptable abstract

Note in this abstract the redundant initial phrase, "In this paper", verbose language that makes the abstract hard to follow, the excessive reference to other works, the inclusion of a foot note, and excessive length of sentences. The abstract also contains spelling and grammar errors. Simple direct sentences with complete thoughts and relevant facts will result in a much more readable and interesting abstract.

> In this paper, we reflect on our efforts to undertake qualitative research in our investigations of the geographies of Aboriginal people and of rural communities across Canada. In particular, we consider the ecological metaphor to describe the nature of power relations between researched and researcher in the production of situated knowledge's. Gillian Rose, in her influential 1997 article, 'Situating knowledges: Positionality, reflexivity and other tactics', suggested that these relations might be conceptualized as ecological, characterized by fluid connections among researcher, researched and text, marked by fragmented understandings and uncertainty throughout research and distribution practices. Although not fully developed as a metaphor in her work, Rose sees the relationship as potentially risky for the researcher and for the research subjects and thereby draws a fairly pessimistic conclusion about the outcomes of the research relationship. We have been inspired by this notion and seek to develop the ecological metaphor in this article by drawing on contemporary systems ecology that emphasises the

uncertainty[1] and surprise inherent in ecological-social systems. In contrast to Rose's pessimism, we suggest that research practices can be designed to embrace the uncertainty and partiality of knowledge creation as well as the dynamism of the research process by methods that are adaptive and resilient. We suggest that such a position has implications for four elements of our research: preparing for surprise, how we involve research participants, how we consider our roles as researchers, and how we define research success. We interrogate our own research experiences to develop this framework and to identify challenges of putting it into practice.

[1] Maureen G. Reed and Evelyn J. Peters 2004. Using an Ecological Metaphor to Build Adaptive and Resilient Research Practices 19