

## [How To ... Present Yourself Professionally \(on a budget\) Part I](#)

Blog Post published by Kara Hisatake on Tuesday, July 18, 2017

### How To ... Present Yourself Professionally (on a budget)

By Kara Hisatake and Katie Trostel

*(H-Net is receiving no compensation for reviewing the tools and platforms featured in the blogpost below).*

As graduate students, we are often asked to think about the topic of professionalization. How do we start to communicate and disseminate our research and scholarship to a wider community before graduation? How do we begin to build the types of networks and webs of connections that will serve us well during future job searches - both in the sphere of academia, but also as we increasingly look “beyond” the confines of the traditional tenure track appointment?

Kara and Katie have spent a lot of time trying to build up our online profiles, and have each experimented with different digital platforms and tools: WordPress, Twitter, Instagram, Academia.edu, LinkedIn, headshots, business cards ... Since the summer is often a good time to start tackling these “extra” projects, we wanted to share a few ideas with you.

#### Part 1

Cultivating your professional image: Business cards, headshots, and email signatures

With many graduate programs facing budget cuts (and many graduate students living off of very modest stipends) finding the resources for “extras” such as business cards or headshots can be tricky. Here are some of our tips and tricks:

#### Business Cards:

Katie had her own business cards printed for a modest amount of money on Moo.com. (There are lots of alternative online services, too.) The ability to design her own cards allowed her more flexibility and customization than the standard pack allotted to her by her graduate program. For example, she was able to include a more permanent email address (students are often cut off from their institutional addresses when they graduate). This also gave her the opportunity to highlight the URL to her professional website. If you’re someone who is

interested in public scholarship, you might also include your Twitter handle, or the address to your scholarly blog. Katie was able to use this tool to bridge the gap between academic and non-academic opportunities (i.e. the customized business cards “translated” better beyond the academy.)

Below are two examples of business cards - one for personal use, and one that was designed to highlight the work of a research collective - both designed on Moo.com.

### [katiebusinesscardexamples.png](#)



Headshots:

A really important way to distinguish yourself and professionalize your image is to have a professional headshot.

If you have access to a professional photographer (on a budget) or a friend with a fancy camera, then get dressed up and ask them for a photo. The higher the resolution, the better (you'll probably want several versions, a larger one with higher res and a smaller one with

lower res). If you don't, find a friend with the new iPhone that has the "portrait" mode on their camera. It creates a nice depth/portrait effect, and should do well enough for most profile images.

You can use this headshot for multiple things. It is a good photo if you ever need to give an institution your image for a profile or an invited talk for promotional purposes. But, especially if you're early in your academic career, it also serves as a good profile picture for your web presence.

Your web presence is important and the image you use can be really useful for "branding" yourself. While this sounds like a very corporate thing, "branding" is important in a variety of professional settings and unfortunately, is just something that is useful to do in a competitive job market. Branding sets you up as professional and with a clear and consistent message, that you are who you are, and you do XYZ. It's up to you whether or not you do this kind of branding, or if you even want to consider this branding, but it is, at some level, a consistent image of who you are. Besides companies and logos, artists, for instance, do this kind of messaging all the time (if you like, think of your headshot and profile image as consistently advertising your work).

Here are some other examples of folks talking about academic branding:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/branding-yourself-not-painful-you-think>

<https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1681-branding-yourself-as-an-academic>

Whatever you do, make sure your headshot is simple, professional-looking, but also uniquely you (i.e., not awkward photos of yourself).

Email Signatures:

One *very* simple way to highlight your work is to include an email signature at the bottom of each correspondence you send. You never know who is looking! You might consider highlighting the URL to your LinkedIn, Academia.edu, or personal website so that if someone becomes interested in your work, they have an easy way of finding out more. Here is an example of the email signature that Katie used throughout her graduate career.

[\*\*katieemailsignatureexample.png\*\*](#)

Recipients

Subject

--

PhD candidate in Literature; University of California, Santa Cruz  
Coordinator of the Venice Ghetto Research Project  
[katharinegrostel.com](http://katharinegrostel.com)

Sans Serif ▾



We will have more on building your professional image soon, but you can definitely start with finding a good headshot, business cards, and email signatures! Do you have other suggestions on how to professionalize?

Email us, ([editorial-grad@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:editorial-grad@mail.h-net.msu.edu)) or join in the conversation on Twitter ([hgradlist](#)).

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