

Dr. Kirsten Ellison



Tell us about your role at Humber.

I am a Research Associate in Knowledge Mobilization at Humber's Research Institute where I oversee the production of a wide range of research-based knowledge products. Essentially, I find ways to translate the work that we do at the Institute into content that is accessible and meaningful to a range of audiences and stakeholders. The goal of my work is to ensure that the research we do has wide-reaching and long-lasting impact.

Tell us about your academic journey.

Prior to my graduate studies, I worked as an account coordinator at a healthcare public relations agency. I became fascinated with the storytelling aspect of my work and the impact stories can have on how we make sense of our health and wellbeing. It was this fascination that drove me to pursue an academic career as a critical communications scholar. I graduated from York University in 2011 with a Master of Arts degree in Communication and Culture and went on to complete my PhD in the same area at the University of Calgary in 2019. As a doctoral candidate, I looked at popular representations of developments in the field of anti-aging science and medicine. I focused on the use of image and metaphor to translate the complex world of molecular life into something that is as sensible and familiar as an unravelling shoelace or a broken-down car. I am still fascinated by the topic and continue to ask critical questions about the kinds of stories we tell to make sense of our own biological makeup.

How has your academic journey contributed to your professional growth?

After completing my degrees, I went on to hold two postdoctoral positions – one in the area of Digital Culture and Quantified Aging and the other in Food Marketing and Children's Health. Although I continued to love the research, I soon found myself searching for other ways to contribute to the field, which led me to my work in knowledge mobilization. It is in my role as knowledge mobilization lead that I am able to apply my research skills and expertise in a way that is both meaningful and impactful to a broader, non-academic audience. I feel in many ways that I have come full circle to when I began in public relations as an account coordinator, except this time, I get to be both knowledge producer and storyteller – it does not get much better than that.

What advice do you have for those furthering their academics while maintaining a full-time career?

My advice to those considering pursuing a PhD, choose a topic that keeps you up at night. For me, a PhD is so much more than a means to an end. It is a vocation. It is that drive that will sustain you through all the hurdles that come with it.