

Leadership in Action Summer Report:
Environmental Journalism, Nuclear Energy

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My Leadership-in-Action (LiA) project aimed to spread awareness regarding the subject of nuclear energy through a collaboration with an environmental news platform non-governmental organization, Earth.Org. The initiative was designed to incorporate my past summer's research regarding nuclear energy in a foreign international context. Moreover, compiling a journalistic resource guide for any writers who wish to discuss the subject of nuclear energy without foreknowledge was a part of the project to create a lasting impact. The initiative was aimed to apply leadership skills in an unfamiliar environment through independent work.

Project Goals

The objective of this project was to spread awareness regarding the topic of nuclear energy. Although nuclear energy has become one of the most important renewable resources amid global climate crisis, the discourse tended to rely on a single perspective depending on national policies rather than considering various aspects. Earth.Org is an environmental news platform based on Hong Kong but with international outreach through writing in English and getting volunteer writers from various countries. Despite the numerous articles discussing a variety of environmental topics that ranged from renewable resources to pollution and policy decisions, nuclear energy was one of the subjects with only few coverages.

Upon communication with the organization's editor, I learned that the complexity of the subject of nuclear energy prevented writers to further investigate the issue beyond surface level analysis. While there were articles that explained nuclear energy, and its pros and cons, it lacked further considerations such as nuclear waste, social impacts, and unspoken issues.

During my research about South Korea's nuclear energy policies last summer, I made an unexpected finding regarding the importance of intersectionality. Despite the public's perception of nuclear energy as a scientific subject, social impacts and influences were crucial in its operation. Even a visceral reaction to the nuclear energy industry not only impacts political decisions but also has great weight that should not be disregarded for being 'non-scientific'. Thus, I aimed to spread awareness around the aspect of nuclear energy that general discussion did not often shed light onto. To achieve this goal, I planned to write two extensive articles, each specializing in the intersectionality of nuclear energy policies and nuclear waste. Moreover, I also wrote a nuclear energy journalism resource guide for a greater coverage on the topic of nuclear energy from diverse perspectives within the organization.

Work and Responsibility

My main responsibility relied on researching for articles and the resource guide. For instance, my first article focused on a comparative case between Germany and South Korea's nuclear energy policies to shed light on the importance of policies and cultural factors. I visited

local libraries in Berlin, Germany for access to research articles and books about Germany's nuclear energy policies and its intersectionality with social factors. However, the lack of coverage in Earth.Org regarding nuclear energy prompted me to start off with a general explanation about nuclear energy to highlight the debate and its unpopular discourse. The writing process required multiple correspondences with my editor to narrow the scope within the limited pages of the article, ensuring organized coherency. Although I had conducted research in the libraries, I was required to further investigate online for verifiable resources to back up the claims within the article itself. The process was necessary for the general readers to understand the nuclear energy policies better without requiring great professional knowledge about the subject.

My second article, on the other hand, centered around an interview with a scholar. I aimed to discuss the topic of nuclear waste. While nuclear energy is touted as one of the most efficient renewable resources to replace fossil fuels, the unsolved problem of nuclear wastes was often disregarded from the public discourse. While many experts continue to investigate the issue for a permanent solution, nuclear wastes remain a conundrum for the nuclear energy industry. I was responsible of searching for a possible interviewee, who would be open to impartially discuss both the pros and cons of nuclear energy while discussing the constant conundrums of nuclear waste. After various struggles in seeking a possible interviewee, I was able to interview Dr Davide Orsini, a historian and an anthropologist, a Marie Sklodowska Curie Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at Munich, Germany. The interview highlighted the importance of public awareness regarding the nuclear energy industry for a safer approach. Unfortunately, the articles were unpublished due to unforeseen circumstances.

Lastly, my nuclear energy journalism resource guide centred around literary analysis for possible primary and secondary resources to gain basic understandings of the industry. I summarized the resources for utilization while organizing them to various sections to ensure these resources can be picked out based on the writer's interests rather than necessitating them to know every possible aspect of nuclear energy before starting their writing process. With the intention to create a guide where the writers will feel comfortable to create a baseline for themselves upon approaching the subject of nuclear energy, the resources included both extensive books and shorter scholarly research journals. The compilation aimed to add further details on journalistic approaches for the nuclear energy industry, but I have finally decided to only focus on the resources as I lack journalistic expertise to add advice.

Lessons Learned

The project required a high amount of adaptability, communication, and collaboration. Firstly, researching in a foreign environment within the unfamiliar setup of journalistic writing required adaptation. I have faced many setbacks that often required me to restart a certain process or rewrite a draft as my work would end up being different from my own expectations or

my editor's expectations. Through the mental repercussions of these setbacks, the quality of adaptability was crucial for me to continue the project.

Secondly, communication was a crucial aspect in various ways. I was required to communicate with my editor and my Laidlaw program advisors throughout the process to sort out difficulties and to improve my work. Unlike my expectations in the importance of straightforward communication, my LiA project taught me the level of nuances required for communication. For example, I initially believed that patience is a key quality for a successful communication because it would prevent social frictions and allow a greater working capacity. However, I realized that, sometimes, patience should not be prioritized neither for myself nor others. I found myself pushing through the turmoil to finish the project rather than allowing the time for recuperation or when the patience in communication extended unexpectedly. The project taught me the thin line between patience and prompt communication within a professional setting.

Lastly, I learned that collaboration could come in different forms beyond teamwork. This LiA project was mostly an independent initiative. However, I received unexpected help from a foreign scholar to change my paradigm in approaching my project. I also acquired an interview from a non-German scholar, who was a part of a German institution that shared my outreach email to all related divisions for possible interest. Moreover, I received help from the Laidlaw program advisors regarding unexpected circumstances as the project came to its finale. When I started the project in May, I expected collaboration only from my partnered NGO. However, the project showed me the ways in which collaboration comes from unexpected individuals and groups as unexpected circumstances arise. Such collaboration was crucial to my project throughout the weeks despite the level of individual effort required.

Conclusion

The Leadership-in-Action project was a great opportunity for me to put in efforts to raise awareness regarding the nuclear energy industry's unspoken social influences. Through collaboration and communication, I was able to overcome struggles throughout the weeks while learning new lessons regarding leadership. I relearned the importance of adaptability, communication, and collaboration through hands-on professional experiences. Overall, the project demonstrated the importance of leadership and social relationships to foster personal and professional growth.