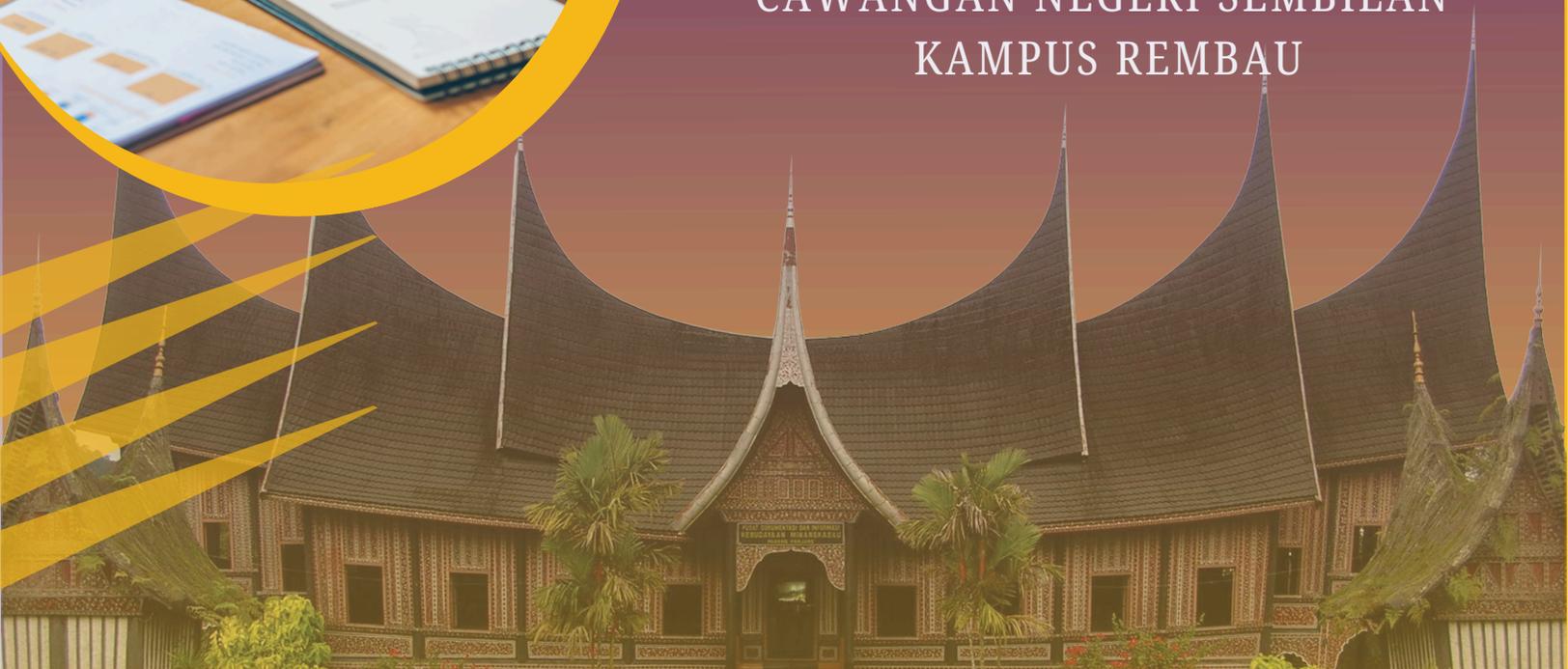


RONA TINTA

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DON'T LOCK YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS INSIDE ACADEMIC JOURNALS

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In pursuit of higher global rankings, many universities place great emphasis on publishing in high-impact academic journals. This is unsurprising, as most ranking systems rely heavily on indicators of research productivity and citation impact. Consequently, academics devote substantial effort to publishing in scholarly outlets rather than engaging with mass media such as newspapers.

Yet, writing is only as powerful as the audience it reaches. In today's fast-moving world, newspapers—whether in print or digital form—often exert greater influence than academic journals. While scholarly publications contribute to theoretical advancement and disciplinary debates, their readership is limited to a relatively small community of specialists. Newspapers, by contrast, possess the capacity to shape public opinion, mobilize emotions, and even influence government policy.

Academic journals are frequently locked behind paywalls, written in highly technical language, and accessible primarily to experts who already share the same disciplinary framework. An article published in a reputable journal may be read by only a handful of scholars. In comparison, a well-crafted newspaper article can reach millions, ensuring that ideas are disseminated to students, professionals, policymakers, and the general public alike.



Timeliness further differentiates newspapers from academic journals. The publication process in academia is notoriously protracted, with peer review and editorial procedures often taking months or even years. By the time an article is published, the issue at hand may have lost much of its immediacy. Newspapers, on the other hand, respond rapidly to unfolding events, offering analysis and commentary while debates remain active. This immediacy grants newspapers a distinct advantage in shaping contemporary discourse.

Moreover, governments and policymakers frequently respond not to findings buried in academic journals but to the urgency created by media reports. Investigative journalism has historically exposed corruption, precipitated leadership changes, and galvanized social movements. Academic research, while rigorous, rarely sparks such immediate and large-scale transformations. Its impact tends to diffuse gradually, filtered through policy reviews or educational channels, whereas newspapers can provoke swift and visible action.

Critics often point to peer review as the cornerstone of academic credibility. While this ensures methodological rigor, credibility does not necessarily equate to influence. A meticulously researched paper that is seldom read exerts less real-world impact than a widely circulated newspaper article that inspires change, even if the latter lacks extensive scholarly apparatus. Ultimately, impact derives from the ability to reach and engage audiences, not merely from the accuracy or sophistication of the knowledge produced.

While academic journals remain central to the creation of knowledge and the maintenance of university rankings, newspapers play a more significant role in shaping public discourse. Their accessibility, timeliness, and capacity to influence policy and opinion render them uniquely powerful instruments of change. If the overarching purpose of writing is to make a tangible difference, then greater emphasis should be placed on balancing scholarly publication with contributions to mass media.