

Zimmer

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1 Carl Zimmer Workshop

1.1 Audio and slides were recorded

- link to dropbox should be included in email later from Carl

1.2 outline

- assignment
- becoming public scientist
- when reporter calls
- how to break into the biz
- what IS the biz
- self published scientist
- more

1.3 reflexions on assignments

- **frank:** be willing to “kill your darlings”
 - drop things that arent working even if you LOVE it
- **other:** felt she repeated her self bc of the structure (intro up front stuff)
 - dont give away too many details in the intro
 - hard to find what will grab the reader but not **NEED** context to understand (so you dont have to get into the meat **twice**)
 - tap into reader’s existing curiosity/intrest **not** existing expertise (cause that == **ZERO**)
- make sure you are not writing more than one story at once
- what happens when the paper you choose has like 6 cool results and maybe a great method too
 - consider your assignment length
 - whats the **main** thing you think is interesting or the audience might
 - include caveats when needed that show there is more to the paper than what you are covering
 - its ok to leave somethings unexhausted

1.4 Life as a public scientist

- Brian Greene as example
- remember that this was the case back in the day

1.5 When reporters show up

- need to think about what you are going to say before the phone rings
- might feel like minimizing all contact (PhD comics example of sci-news cycle)
- problem is that this cycle will happen without you and you don't get to influence it if you don't participate
- most important steps are at the beginning
 - PRESS release (be obnoxious if it's not something you can stand behind)
 - * use the fact that it's your name on the line
 - reporters
 - * be ready with what you want the reporter to leave with
 - * think about that 600 word version of your paper and base the convo on that

1.6 breaking in: institutionally

- graduate programs
- internships
- AAAS mass media fellows [AAAS program](#)
- entry level staff positions
 - rarer and rarer

1.6.1 Rosie Mestel

- BS bio
- PhD UC Davis
- UC Santa Cruz: masters
- Discover assistant editor

1.6.2 Virginia Hughes

- BuzzFeed Science
- ex neuroscience Student
- science editor, *BuzzFeed*
- hiring eight staff writers
- 150 million views a month
- tease them about lists/cats/etc
 - trash pays for other stuff

1.7 State of (Science) Classic Journalism Sources

- its how you thought
 - bad
-

1.8 BuzzFeed types

- also Vox

1.9 Beyond the written word

- RadioLab
 - focuses on stories that have good sound potential (obvi)
 - podcast-based popularity

1.10 The self-published Scientist

- where do you get information on specific scientific issues slide:
 - christie wilcox
 - internet is main source of scientific information on specific issues
- A mesh not a pipeline:
 - comments

- own blog posts
 - * youre wrong
 - * that makes me thing of **this**
 - * etc
- facebook, twitter, g+ (ok maybe not that last one)

- **CONSISTENCY IS PARAMOUNT**

- you are building a community that goes away if you are silent

1.10.1 Tara Smith PhD

- Aetiology (science blogs network)
- both science content and editorializing stuff in the news
- measles etc

1.10.2 Vincent Racaniello

- columbia uni
- blog
- podcasts
- uses this as a platform for his views

1.10.3 Henry Reich

- Minute Physics
- now his actual **JOB**

1.10.4 CreatureCast

- [CreatureCast](#)
- from zoology class projects **now part of the New York Times** (sorta)
- short animated videos

1.11 Resources

- Pinker's *"The Sense of Style"*

- Cornelia Dean “*Am I making Myself Clear*”
 - how to talk to journalists/public
- Randy Olson “*Don't be Such a Scientist*”
 - former marine biologist, now filmmaker
 - how not to make many errors that scientists tend to when talking to *normal* people

1.12 Embrace Your Inner Chimera

1.13 Questions

1.13.1 about long vs short form

- Carl does not think that the shortification is a long term issue
- the Atlantic
- the Adivist(?)
 - 20K words
 - too long for mag
 - too short for book

1.13.2 Places to write sometimes but not your own second job like Blog

- op/ed
- but in order to get published even by these people you need to practice this skill, maybe a lot
- so why not blog it?

1.13.3 Advice for writing Journal articles that Carl would like to read

- **important:** lay out problem in the beginning in very clear way
 - abandon the right amount of expertise
 - remember that *hopefully* journalist may also be reading
- you can sort of diagnose problems likely to be in the rest of the paper by the quality of the introduction

- discussion:
 - reader should understand **why** one paragraph follows the last
 - even — **especially** — a non-specialist should be able to