Zimmer

Gus Dunn

# Carl Zimmer Workshop

## Audio and slides were recorded

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

## outline

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

## 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 curiousity/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

## Life as a public scientist

* Brian Greene as example
* remmeber that this was the case back in the day

## 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 dont get to influence it if you dont participate
* most important steps are at the beginning
  + PRESS release (be obnoxious if its not something you can stand behind)
    - use the fact that its 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

## breaking in: institutionally

* graduate programs
* interships
* AAAS mass media fellows [AAAS program](aaas.org/programs/education/MassMedia)
* entry level staf positions
  + rarer and rarer

### Rosie Mestel

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

### Virginia Hughes

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

## State of (Science) Classic Journalism Sources

* its how you thought
  + bad

## BuzFeed types

* also Vox

## Beyond the written word

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

## 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

### Tara Smith PhD

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

### Vincent Racaniello

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

### Henry Reich

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

### CreatureCast

* [CreatureCast](http://creaturecast.org)
* from zoology class projects **now part of the New York Times** (sorta)
* short animated videos

## 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 may errors that scientists tent to when talking to *normal* people

## Embrace Your Inner Chimera

## Questions

### 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

### Places tio 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?

### 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 pf 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