

The Role of the Popular Article in Astronomical Outreach

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I examine the history and typology of the popular article and emphasize the difference between news and feature articles. My conclusion is that feature articles tend to be written and published almost exclusively for astronomy buffs, and that it is mainly news articles that can truly claim to be popular, in the sense of successfully reaching a non-astronomical audience. The feature article is an excellent vehicle for reaching out to the non-astronomical public but needs to be angled in a way that is relevant to the interests of a wider readership. Writers of astronomy-based feature articles for the general public need to address the relationship of astronomy to history, literature, art, music and philosophy.