

Closing the Culture Gap between Scientists and Science Communicators

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The effective public communication of scientific results requires a close partnership and symbiosis between astronomers and science communication specialists at universities and NASA/ESA centers. However there remains a vast cultural divide between the goals and desires of both groups. Astronomers often distrust the simplification and popularization of a research finding as pandering to the lowest common denominator. Science communicators and public affairs specialists face the increasingly daunting task of simply getting the attention of science writers, who are flooded with press releases, daily, and must compete for page space or airtime with issues that are much more relevant to their readers: war, economy, medical research, etc. How can scientists and public affairs experts better work together to share discoveries with the public? What are the boundaries between public information and hype? What are the criteria for successfully publicizing an important finding? Beyond simply ensuring accuracy, how can such information be made attention-getting, inspirational, colorful and exciting without being accused of glamorizing science. How important is it to wait and have science results first refereed? What are the future trends in science news coverage?