

Communicating New(sy) Science

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why science loves good media

What do effective communications do for science?

Improve the quality and quantity of science stories in print and on air

Were your research results ever misinterpreted or oversimplified by the press? Have you ever felt that a quote was taken out of context? Actively communicating your research gives you an opportunity to shape how the media tells your story.

Provide relevant information to decision makers

Water in the West, climate change, urban air pollution: your research helps inform the decision-making process.

Make the case for funding and support

Use the media to show off your latest results and underscore why the research you're doing is important for society.

Enhance public scientific literacy

"The most important single information source for the public about science and technology is the media." –
Communicating Science News – National Association of Science Writers

Attract top researchers and students to CIRES

News stories reach researchers from other disciplines, researchers who may not regularly read the science journals in which you publish. Think of the media as a way to promote interest in cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Make a name for CIRES as a world-renowned environmental science institute

What's in a name? Credibility, relevance to society, influence with decision makers, attractiveness to donors and collaborators. Name recognition is essential advertising.

"Communicating is the
doing of science."
— The Chicago Guide to
Communicating Science

dissecting the media process

A methodology for how science makes the news

Media today comes in all shapes: **newspaper articles and opinion pieces**, **magazines** and **journals**, **NPR** and **local news radio**, **national and local television**, **web sites**, **blogs**, **podcasts**.



Like any good research proposal, a news story looks for a fresh idea:

"No one has ever tried this before."
"This will benefit society..."

You can also make a news story out of an event, like CIRES' Ice Fest, out of a field campaign you're planning, or out of an award you've won.

At CIRES, we generally use **press releases** to publicize our work and accomplishments. A press release is our version of the ideal news article. It conveys key results and the significance of the research, while also providing journalists with information like quotes from the scientists and CIRES' contact information. Once the press release is sent to the media, it is considered live and can be copied from freely.

Even with a great research story, you may not make the news.

Many media organizations have gone through significant downsizing in the past few years, making the science beat journalist ever more rare. The few journalists who do cover science news exclusively are pressured for time and challenged with covering the full breadth of chemistry, space physics, climate, and much more.

What makes a story idea newsworthy?

A good story idea has one or more of the following elements:

- a new result or way of doing things
- relevance to the current news cycle, timeliness
- local interest
- human interest
- connection to an anniversary, the holidays, or the seasons
- controversy or surprise

Quick Tip: Be available for media interviews on the day your press release goes live. You'll also want to have a few prepared answers ready to go. Almost every journalist will start with the same prompt: tell me about your research. Can you sum it up in 2-3 sentences without using technical language?

results: media as an educational tool

CIRES scientists and bold research in the news

A new result or way of doing things – "For the first time, scientists have used a spaceborne instrument to track the origin and movements of water vapor throughout Earth's atmosphere, providing a new perspective on the dominant role Earth's water cycle plays in weather and climate." – PhysOrg.com, "Scientists track Earth's water with isotopes," Jan. 31, 2007.

Relevance to the current news cycle, timeliness – "The University of Colorado launched a four-day Ice Fest on Thursday to celebrate the International Polar Year." – Daily Camera, "CU's 'Ice Fest' celebrates polar year," Mar. 9, 2007.

Local interest – "A new project of the national Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration intended to more accurately assess the tsunami risk of the country's coasts has carefully examined two Alaskan communities: Dutch Harbor and Sand Point." – Anchorage Daily News, "Enhanced models aid Alaska tsunami forecasting," Oct. 23, 2006.

Connection to an anniversary, the holidays, or the seasons – "This season's El Niño was a typical one, 'moderate sized,' fatty vanilla, really," (Klaus) Wöller said. "But the impacts have been anything but normal in this hemisphere." – Denver Post, "Pacific weather pattern fooled winter forecasters," Feb. 7, 2007.

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information source for the
public about science and
technology is the media."
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Human interest – "... Maybe it's his aloof, Swiss-German demeanor and the fact that the guy (Ron Stenseth), with his furrowed brow and heavy beard, looks like he was born in a meat locker. Or maybe it's the stories his students told me about how this 54-year old scientist once spent time stranded on an ice floe in the Arctic Ocean and skinned a polar bear with a Swiss Army knife." – Adventure, "Greenland when it's hot," Nov. 2006.

Controversy or surprise – "When it comes to the ocean, apparently it doesn't take one to know one. Two local high school science teams will take on 15 others from Colorado and neighboring landlocked states in a regional ocean sciences bowl Saturday in Boulder." – Colorado Springs Gazette, "Aiming for a win, no ocean required," Feb. 20, 2007.