

2nd UK Conference of Science Journalists



Monday 25th June 2012 – The Royal Society, London
Organised by the Association of British Science Writers

Time	Session		
9:00 – 9.30	Registration and Coffee (Room: CoL)		
9.30 – 10.30	Keynote Speaker: Jay Rosen – Covering wicked problems (Room: WTLH)		
10:35 – 11.35	Contemporary Issues: The BBC Trust Review one year on Room: WTLH	Essential Skills: Offbeat science stories Room: KC	Professional Development: Computer assisted reporting and data visualisation Room: LER
11:35 – 12:00	Coffee Break (Room: CoL/MH)		
12:00 – 13:00	Contemporary Issues: Blurring the lines - The future of PR and journalism Room: WTLH	Essential Skills: Dragons' Den Room: KC	Professional Development: Narrative in science writing Room: LER
13:00 – 14:15	Lunch (Room: CoL/MH)		
14:15 – 15:15	Contemporary Issues: The Leveson Inquiry – what does it mean for science journalism? Room: WTLH	Essential Skills: What can journalists do to uncover scientific misconduct? Room: KC	Professional Development: How I did that Room: LER
15:20 – 16:20	Contemporary Issues: Science does not punch its weight in the newsroom Room: WTLH	Essential skills: Brain hacks Room: LER	Professional Development: So you want to write a book? Room: KC
16:20 – 16:50	Tea Break (Room CoL/MH)		
16:50 – 17:50	Plenary: Is science journalism special? (Room: WTLH)		

For more speakers and further details see over...

Room Key:

WTLH – Welcome Trust Lecture Hall (Ground Floor – rear left)

KC – Kohn Centre (Ground Floor – rear right)

LER – Library Events Room (First floor – up marble stairs rear right)

CoL – City of London Rooms (Ground Floor - rear left adjoining WTLH)

MH – Marble Hall (Ground Floor – central outside KC)

Toilets and Cloakroom: (Downstairs, staircase next to delegate registration)

WiFi: Network: RSnetwork Password: Newton+apple



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Session Details including Speakers:

09:30 – 10:30

Key Note Address: Covering Wicked Problems

Jay Rosen, media critic, writer, and professor of journalism at New York University

Chair: Connie St Louis, President ABSW and Director MA Science Journalism, City University.

10:35 – 11:35

The BBC Trust Review one year on

Speakers: David Shukman, Science Editor, BBC. Steve Jones, Geneticist and Independent Assessor of BBC Trust review of impartiality and accuracy of the BBC's coverage of science. Felicity Mellor, Course Leader, MSc Science Communication, Imperial College. Mary Hockaday, Head of the BBC newsroom. Chair: Connie St Louis, President of the ABSW and Director MA in Science Journalism

Producers: Connie St Louis, President of the ABSW and Director MA in Science Journalism, City University London. Fiona Fox, Director, Science Media Centre

Last year the BBC Trust published its long awaited review of the impartiality and accuracy of BBC science coverage, a report written by the media friendly geneticist Steve Jones. While praising much of the BBC's output the Trust called for some big changes – including a much more intelligent approach to the 'balancing' of science stories, greater collaboration between different parts of the BBC covering science and much more original reporting and investigation. The BBC's management's response to the Trust Review was to announce the creation of a new post within BBC news of Science Editor – putting science on a par with politics, economics and foreign affairs. Was this just a cynical ploy to 'be seen to be doing something' or a genuine commitment to raising the status of science across the BBC? And one year on from the Review what has really changed in the BBC? In particular can the BBC really wean itself off its addiction to 'balanced reporting' and should it do so?

Off beat science stories

Speakers: Andrew Jack, Pharmaceuticals Correspondent, Financial Times. Lisa Jardine, Chair of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. Mark Henderson, Head of Communications, The Wellcome Trust, former Science Editor, The Times. Chair: James Randerson, Environment and Science News Editor, The Guardian

Producers: Mark Henderson, Head of Communications, The Wellcome Trust, former Science Editor, The Times. Alice Lighton, Masters Student in Science Journalism, City University

Science journalists have been accused of suffering from Big Paper of the Week Syndrome, and even when our stories aren't based on papers, they're more often than not founded on the findings of research. In this session, we'll explore how best to look beyond the lab to report the wider context in which science takes place – its politics, its links with business, and its history.

Mark Henderson, former Science Editor of The Times and author of The Geek Manifesto, will discuss reporting on the politics of science, sharing tips on finding stories and spotting trends. Andrew Jack, the Pharmaceuticals Correspondent of the FT, will discuss covering the interface between science and business. And Lisa Jardine, Professor of Renaissance Studies at Queen Mary, University of London, will talk about stories that emerge from the history of science, with particular reference to the rediscovery in 2006 of a lost manuscript from the papers of Robert Hooke – a story that many science reporters missed.

Computer assisted reporting and data visualisation

Producer/Speaker/Trainer: Peter Aldhous, San Francisco Bureau Chief, New Scientist. Chair: Sallie Robins, Director UKCSJ

We'll look at some of the tools available for data journalism, and how they can be applied to reporting on science, and helping to tell your stories. We'll also explore how to avoid potential pitfalls, from "dirty" data to inappropriate statistical analyses.

Bottom line: science provides fertile ground for data journalism that we should be well placed to cultivate. Many of the tools are free and easy to use, as we'll see with some live demos.

12:00 – 13:00

Blurring the Lines – the future of PR and journalism?

Speakers: Martin Moore, Director, Media Standards Trust. Ruth Francis, Head of Press, Nature Publishing Group. Andy Williams, Lecturer, Cardiff University. Chair: Toby Murcott, Producer/Lecturer/Science writer

Producers: Connie St Louis, President of the ABSW and Director of City's Science Journalism MA. Helen Jamison, Deputy Director, Science Media Centre & Stempra Committee. Tom Sheldon, Senior Press Officer, Science Media Centre.

With many press officers now creating their own content and calling themselves news editors, the lines are blurring between PR and journalism. But is this changing PR a help or a threat? Recent figures suggest press officers outnumber journalists by about six-to-one, so will this trend for news output direct from press officers ever pose a threat to the mass media audience for science? If science press officers take the place of science journalists, will this create a nirvana of balanced accurate science reporting or a dystopia of uncritical PR?

Dragon's Den - pitching to editors

Producer: Rebecca Hill, freelance science writer and genetics editor at Progress Educational Trust. Chair: Timandra Harkness, freelance science communicator

Three aspiring science journalists pitch their ideas to science editors for critique.

Dragons: Ehsan Masood, Editor, Research Fortnight and Helen Pearson, Chief Features Editor, Nature. James Randerson, Environment and Science News Editor, The Guardian

Supported by: Research Fortnight

Narrative in science writing

Producers: Ed Yong, Freelance Science Writer, Alok Jha, Science Correspondent, the Guardian

Speakers: Tom Levenson, Professor of Science Writing, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Richard Fisher, feature editor, New Scientist. Manjit Kumar, journalist, editor and author (most recently of "Quantum"). Chair: Alok Jha, Science Correspondent, the Guardian

We will explore the ways that a good story becomes a compelling one, an ordinary story becomes an addictive read. The panel will provide practical tips to make your writing sing and we hope to share the experiences of the members of the audience too. In this session, you will learn how the best writers structure longform articles to make readers get to the end; the pitfalls that lie in the way of people moving from writing short news stories to longer features; and how everyone (however good they are) feels the angst of a blank page.

14:15 - 13:15

The Leveson Inquiry - what does it mean for science journalism?

Speakers: Fiona Fox, Director, Science Media Centre. David Derbyshire, freelance environment and science journalist. Bob Satchwell, Executive Director, Society of Editors. Chair: James Randerson, Environment and Science News Editor, The Guardian

Producer: Bob Ward, Policy and Communications Director, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment

The Prime Minister announced on 13 July 2011 that there would be an inquiry into issues arising from alleged phone hacking by journalists. The wide-ranging Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practice and ethics of the Press could have profound and fundamental consequences for UK newspapers. But how might science journalists be affected by the outcomes of the Inquiry? Will it make high-quality science journalism harder or easier? Will science journalists be subject to better or worse regulations? The potential impacts of the Inquiry will be debated in this session by key figures with different perspectives on the role of science journalists, particularly in UK national newspapers. More information about the Inquiry can be accessed at: <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/>.

What can journalists do to uncover scientific misconduct?

Speakers: Ginny Barbour, Chair of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics). Peter Aldhous, San Francisco Bureau Chief, New Scientist. Steve Yentis, Editor in Chief, Anaesthesia. Chair: David Nicholson, VP and Journals Publishing Director, Life Sciences, Wiley

Producers: Sallie Robins, Director UKCSJ, Science Publicist. Connie St Louis, President of the ABSW and Director of City's Science Journalism MA

Research misconduct is important as it wastes resources, damages the credibility of science and can cause harm. Editors, journals, institutions and publishers each have a key role in identifying, investigating and addressing research misconduct and in ensuring retractions are dealt with transparently. The session will provide a forum for journalists to discuss their own responsibility to investigate and report on misconduct and the consequences of any retraction on previous coverage. It will consider the interplay between the different perspectives and roles played by COPE, editors, journal publishers and journalists in uncovering research misconduct in the UK and how such misconduct and retractions should be addressed.

Session programmed with and supported by Wiley

Expert Practitioners talk about 'How I did That'

Speakers: Christine Ottery, Freelance journalist. Dave Mosher, Science Journalist (via Skype). Laura Wheeler, Communities Coordinator, nature.com. Chair: Ed Yong, Freelance Science Writer

Producer: Lou Woodley, Communities Specialist for nature.com

Making the most of online tools and apps for science journalism

15:20 – 16:20

Science does not punch its weight in the newsroom

Speakers: Kenny Campbell, Editor of Metro. Ian Katz, Deputy Editor, The Guardian. Martin Fewell, Deputy Editor, Channel 4 News. Chair: Fiona Fox, Director of the Science Media Centre

Producers: Fiona Fox, Director of the Science Media Centre. James Randerson, Environment and Science News Editor, the Guardian

It is now common to hear scientists complaining about the way our newsrooms are dominated by arts and humanities graduates who don't understand the way science works. The BBC Trust Review identified it as a major issue and most submissions to Leveson from the scientific community suggest that most problems could be fixed by general news reporters and editors deferring to their specialists more.

This session will investigate the status of science in the newsroom. At a time when the Guardian is now employing science specialists as News Editors and even sub editors, will others follow suit? Does the appointment of two new Science Editors for the BBC and Channel 4 news reflect a new recognition that the lack of science at a senior level was a problem?

Brain hacks – why reporting on neuroscience matters and how to excel at it

Speakers: Vaughan Bell, Clinical and Research Psychologist, Institute of Psychiatry. Sophie Scott, Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience. Kerri Smith, Journalist and Editor, Nature. Chair: Colin Blakemore, Professor of Neuroscience, University of Oxford and President of the ABSW

Producers: Ed Yong, Freelance Science Writer. Helen Pearson, Chief Features Editor, Nature

Neuroscience is fascinating, attention-grabbing and reported frequently. But is it reported well? On this panel, a group of neuroscientists who write, and journalists who cover neuroscience, will discuss the perils and pitfalls of covering this complicated field, and how reporters can up their game.

Session independently programmed by UKCSJ Producers and supported by the Medical Research Council

So you want to write a science book?

Speakers: Peter Tallack, Founder, The Science Factory. Carl Zimmer, Science Author and Journalist (by Video Link from USA), Richard Lea, writer and editor Guardian Books. Chair: Anjana Ahuja, Freelance science writer

Producer: Sallie Robins, Director UKCSJ, Freelance Science publicist

Most journalists have at some time considered writing a book. Writing and getting a book published was formerly a fairly standard process with the gatekeepers being literary agents and publishers but the digital world has changed this. What are the new options for publishing and where should the aspiring author start?

16:50 – 17:50

'Is science journalism special?'

Speakers: Evan Davis, Today Programme, BBC Radio 4. Connie St Louis, President of the ABSW and Director MA Science Journalism. William Cullerne Bown, Chairman and Founder of Research Fortnight and Research Europe. Jay Rosen, Professor of Journalism at New York University. Chair and Producer: Alok Jha, Science Correspondent, the Guardian

Is science journalism special? Should the reporting of science, health, technology or the environment set itself apart from the rest of journalism and be allowed to bend or break the standard rules?

Some think yes. Scientists should be allowed to check journalists' articles before publication, some argue, because science is self-correcting and, therefore, categorically different to other subjects that journalists might cover. Others suggest that the discussion and analysis of science should be left to scientists themselves, with journalists merely playing a supporting role in helping to edit their text. Many disagree. Copy-checking, which is rare in most other fields of journalism, is evidence that science journalists and scientists have become too close. Journalists have become cheerleaders for science rather than applying the appropriate standards of scrutiny. Perhaps it comes down to the question of who are science journalists meant to serve? Science (and scientists) or their readers?

These issues and many more (including whether unpublished research be reported or whether embargoes help or hinder accurate science reporting) will be discussed by an expert panel of journalists (science specialists and otherwise) and people framing the future of how journalism is changing. Be prepared to have your views, and your working practices as a science journalist, questioned.

If you have any feedback on the Conference please do contact the Conference Director:

Sallie Robins sr@srpr.net

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