

Connecting Your Research with the Media

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What, dear Lord, is the
“media”?

Know who you are talking to.

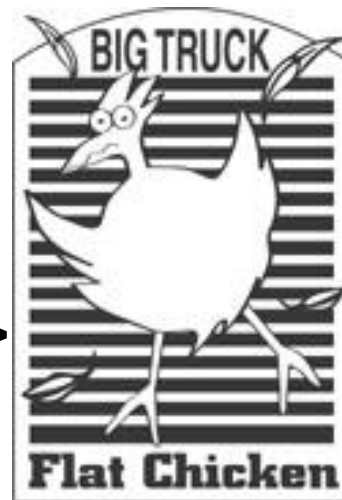
- Hostile Fox TV interview to local science columnist to book writer to specialized blogger--it's a big kettle of fish.

And the media can be you.

- Increasingly universities and organizations are “going direct” to the public.
- Podcasts, blogs, social media, science cafés

Why would you ever talk with a reporter?

You---->



It's that democracy thing.

- Public interest.
- A stake in the story.
- Attract attention, support, perhaps funding.
- Reality therapy.
- Build a relationship.
- You speak for the trees.

When NOT to speak with a reporter...



Don't talk to reporters when:

- You don't know what you're talking about
- You're not prepared
- They want you to comment on news you haven't followed
- They want you to speak off the record

The Natural History of Reporters

- 1. They will broadcast your lies.
- 2. They are in a hurry.
- 3. They know more and less than you.
- 4. They eat Limburger not Velveeta.
- 5. They are under the tyranny of news.

The Tyranny of News

- How is the world different today?
- Is it arresting?
- Why not tomorrow?
- Pass the MEGO test?

When should you approach a reporter?

You've got news when:

- You've got a peer-review publication forthcoming
- Presentation to a scientific conference
- Your data confirms/contrasts w/ news
- You're going somewhere really cool and a reporter can come along
- You can identify a new trend

What most news outlets don't
care about is exactly what
your dean or director cares
about most.

Snooze:

- Grant received.
- Annual events.
- Promotions, new jobs, equipment.
- Hoped-for outcomes.
- Incremental discoveries.

News:

- Timely
- Significant
- Either unique or trend-leading
- Everybody or only weirdos
- Unexpected
- Bleeds, oozes, outrages, makes you laugh, Wow!

How to talk with a reporter:

- Be yourself
- Never lie
- Interview them too
- Have a message--repeat often
- Give them a take-home message
- Promote other people
- Arboreal ecosystem processes...

How about...

..life in the forest?

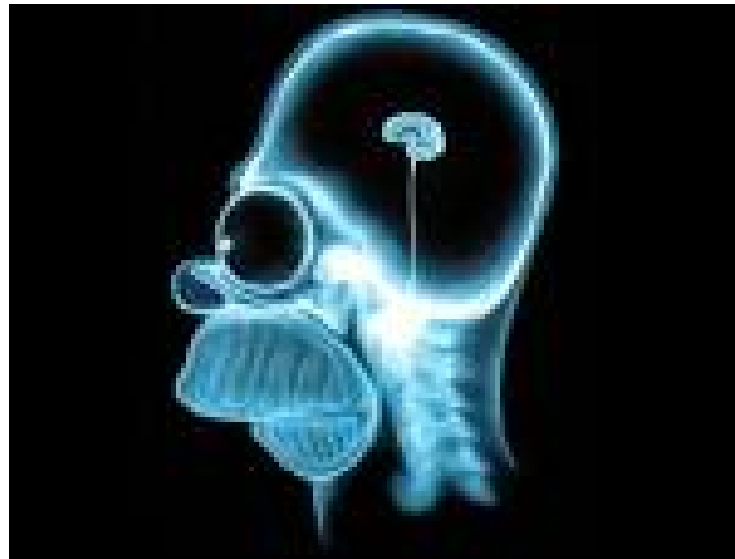
For every PhD...

- ...there is an equal and opposite PhD.
- Focus on what is successful and positive about your approach
- Be willing to confess your mistakes, but don't promote them!

What reporters often miss:

- Correlation vs causation
- Error bars
- The larger trend behind a finding
- The specific advance within a trend

Inside the Reporter's Brain:



How science news is framed:

- A story/metaphor/scene
- The bottom line (aka the “nut graf”)
- Cautions and the “other side”
- What’s next?
- Sources