

Rebooting Science Journalism in the Age of the Web, Ed Yong, Carl Zimmer (Discover, NYT), John Timmer (Ars Technica), and David Dobbs

Yong: Not bloggers vs journalists, 4 years too late for that debate, "Science Journalism isn't a job title to me, it's about values..." Good and bad science journalism in MSM, same with blogging. Started blogging because wasn't getting traction with pitches in MSM, Adapting to environment means adopting all sorts of media, bloggers miss out on editor feedback, matthew forbes on Y chromosome article linked to blog posts, lots of diversity in blogging

Timmer: we're here because of values, thinking science is important and communicating it is important, The Atlantic and NYTs reach people who aren't into science, How to get this in the online community where people are there b/c they are already interested in subject? ArsT is a hybrid of journalism and blogging. Works with graduate students. AT is a popular site, while nature is a more specialized site. People in tech community who don't believe climate change is real, engineering community and creationism, AT confronts these people with science.

Dobbs: (freelance journalist, 4-8k word articles) Reasons: 1. Intriguing ideas/experiments 2. Investigative reporting (Pharmaceuticals) 3. Science as culture. Long, thorough stories take money and time. They also need a venue for these stories to appear (fellowships, etc), Having success with these long stories online. Positive outlook on future. As things come together online need to demand sources, skepticism, and way to manage payments,

Zimmer: Lessons of Science Journalism from science of sexlives of ducks, took a video of duck sex that NYTs passed on and posted it to blog, different style, lots of views (like my photo of Elephant Clitoris), journalism moving to smaller niches with specialized content and large MSM with large audiences, hybrid culture

Conferencing:

How can bloggers behave more like professional journalists? Zimmer: Why you want to do that?

Answer: interest in writing well. Dobbs: read books on structuring a story. Study people who are getting a lot of traffic, how they start the story, build a middle. Timmer: If you tell enough people you're a journalist, you'll find they start treating you like one.

Sources of funding for journalism. Is the for-profit role of journalism in decline? Dobbs: Don't know. How to make money online. Supplemental ways of supporting writers. Fellowship, add a story feed... its going to be a mix.

Organization where journalists were offended by bloggers being invited to press room. Wong: It's a good idea to let bloggers in, but some bloggers have associations to institutions where they shouldn't have access to material ahead of time. Timmer: Some groups don't allow post-docs and grad students access to embargoed material.

What is your collective definition of science journalism? Dobbs: Have to define what journalism is, is it informed writing? Institutions that have made stupid decisions? Takes a broad definition that its good

writing about science. Zimmer: There's good and bad journalism, so it's writing about science. Timmer: Don't see the point in excluding bloggers. Zimmer: Look at the bloggers and how good they are. Wong: Case by case basis.

Andrew Sullivan "Disc Jockey for ideas", what can you do to get other people at conference get published? If the Loom is a "radio for ideas" then is it more important to get published at Zimmer than the NYTs? Zimmer: No. NYTs and Atlantic are cultural phenomenons. Sullivan went to Atlantic from blogging.

Quick rant: Read good books. People read my New Yorker articles because it's a general interest web site with good writing, they aren't looking for retroviruses. Zimmer: How do you keep the general interest site going? Response: Science is bigger than general interest stories. We need to be much more broad.

With Google Reader is the location really important anymore? Do we need generalist publications? With the web you have access to everything. Wong: Not everyone has access to the web or the technical know-how. This will lead to information inequality

The "big hit" piece is a "Top-40 Model" while a general publication is a best-of album model. Flying Trilobite: collaborations of artists, generalizing science in a different ways. Zimmer: general interest mags lead to stumbled-upon while online things go viral. Like glass virus sculptures, science tattoos, and parasitic wasps.

Logicomix, Charollette Observer, science pages, looking for science writers. Zimmer: National Association for Science Writers.

Newspapers dropping science coverage, but there's a bunch of local writers. Blog about local science. Gary Robbins, Orange County Register.

Wiki Question: Opinion of Futurity. Dobbs: Hasn't been to Futurity, but it's not journalism, it lacks transparency and objectivity, it's nothing but press releases, there is a motive and this should be declared. Commenter: Futurity articles are not checked by scientists. Timmer: Physorg and Eurekalert are similar, unfiltered content. Futurity Rep: Futurity has a disclaimer, and rewrites are not major, site does not get outside sources and reviews, articles are single-source Zimmer: "News" in title. Dobbs: Our concern is readers not being skeptical and accepting as objective journalism. Commenter: Journalists can't take pure word from University as truth as a professional standard. Commenter: As a scientist, I don't take press releases, articles, or bloggers seriously, I go to the paper. (Put a DOI link in post). New Yorker: We can't go to the original sources, its too time consuming and not always interesting. We need translators.

How will tablets change things? Zimmer: media choice, can't cut and paste articles from NYT into a tablet medium, as with move to web.

Bora: Push vs pull strategy. Push in places where “audience is already there and can’t escape” Rush Limbaugh vs PRI. Story of Ida, everyone knows it , but no one knows why it’s important. Science was cool meme, but not science understanding. It’s better than nothing.