

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION COURSE PART 4

Format & Means – Where Am I Communicating?

The answer to the question “Where am I communicating?” does not necessarily have to be a physical or virtual place. Think about all the ways you could answer the question “Where do you communicate about your research project?” Here are a few examples:

At a conference, a seminar, on X, on Facebook, on the radio, on TV, in a newspaper, in a blog, at a science slam, at a public town hall meeting, etc.

As you can tell, different formats can be mentioned besides places and media. A good answer to the question “Where do I want to communicate?” will offer as much detailed information about the planned communication project as possible. For example, if you’re planning to give a presentation in the context of a lecture series, you should find out how big the room is, what kind of technical equipment is available, and how the acoustics are. At a conference, not only is the room important, but also whether or not it is a symposium with fellow experts as well as what kind of presentation you are supposed to give. Are you the keynote speaker or one of the many other speakers in a conference session?

When talking about mass media, the format is often more important than the actual medium. There is not a very big difference between a radio interview for a news program on NPR and a television interview for a news program on CNN. However, there would be a big difference between an interview on CNN Evening News and for CNN10 – a children’s news program.

TIP:

When you begin with your own communication project but are still uncertain about which format you should choose, you can look for some inspiration here – unfortunately not all of these sources are in English:

<https://www.wissenschaftskommunikation.de/formate/>

This website presents over 100 formats. There’s nothing alike available in English.

Each format, of course, greatly influences the other Ws and H: The target audience depends on the format, as well as the role you will play. The format is closely connected to the means of communication.

The Means of Communication

The chosen format often dictates the means with which you can communicate. You cannot use any charts on the radio and in the newspaper, you cannot play any original sound bites. Modern media, however, have become more flexible. For example, on Instagram you post not only pictures, but videos with sound. You can even use different means of communication in a classic presentation, you don't always have to use just PowerPoint, Prezi, or Keynote. Give classic chalkboards a try; they are magnetic and you can use magnets to pin printed charts on the board and move them around as you please. Some researchers also work with models or show real objects that they currently working with. Who wouldn't want to see the drilling core of permafrost soil that climate researchers are working with? And even experiments can be conducted in lecture halls.

You can communicate with text, images, emojis, GIFs, and audio clips on every social media platform. Switch up the means you use once in a while: Using too many GIFs can give an erratic impression, and too much text can become boring.

TIPS:

1. You can find all kinds of GIFs on www.giphy.com to use in your social media content.
2. Produce your own GIFs. You can use Scrabble letters or your kids' toys. You can even create original GIFs using Post-its. You can find apps in your Appstore that can help you out.
3. At [SAP Scenes](#), you can find a number of figures that can be used free of charge for your real or digital storyboards. I've used them in my presentation.
4. [Famelab](#) (a presentation competition by the British Council) and science slams can offer you some inspiration for a presentation without PowerPoint.

Besides means such as images, videos, audio recordings, and models, there are other design options: for example, at the end of your lecture series you can put on a quiz round and give out prizes. That would be a kind of mini-format within the format of a lecture series.

The means you can use in your scientific communication are virtually infinite. Creativity is the key here. Your target audience will thank you!

TASK:

1. Research online the following Science Communication formats:
 - Pecha Kucha
 - Science Slam
 - Soapbox Science
 - Scrollytelling
2. Choose a format for your own topic. It doesn't have to be one of the above. It could be a public talk or an Instagram page for example. Be realistic about your own resources and abilities. Put your ideas in writing.
3. Create a visualization for your topic by using simple things, that you can find in your household. It should be something that a live audience could actually touch. If you have chosen a format on a social media channel, you can take a picture of your creation.

TB-Communication with the help of Street Art:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9CH13x6MAc&t=1s>

Famelab Winner Tshiamo Legoale:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vjZxxUCh2E>