Reading the Story

Andrew Lawler
Space Studies Board Workshop
November 10, 2010
“Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light.”

--Joseph Pulitzer
Not Rocket Science

‘Journalism consists in buying white paper at two cents a pound and selling it at ten cents a pound.’

--Charles Anderson Dana
“The public have an insatiable curiosity to know everything. Except what is worth knowing. Journalism, conscious of this and having tradesman-like habits, supplies their demands.”

--Oscar Wilde
We journalists make it a point to know very little about an extremely wide variety of topics; this is how we stay objective.”

--Dave Barry

“Dealing with the media is more difficult than bathing a leper.”

--Mother Teresa
The Great Change 2008

Where Do You Get Most of Your National and International News?

- 74 in 2001
- 82 in 2002
- 80 in 2003
- 74 in 2004
- 73 in 2005
- 74 in 2006
- 74 in 2007
- 70 Television

- 45 in 2001
- 42 in 2002
- 50 in 2003
- 46 in 2004
- 36 in 2005
- 37 in 2006
- 34 in 2007
- 40 Internet

- 35 Newspaper

The changing news landscape

Percent of people who read a newspaper yesterday

- 58 in '93
- 50 in '96
- 48 in '98
- 47 in '00
- 41 in '02
- 42 in '04
- 40 in '06
- 34 in '08

Percent who read news online, three or more days a week

- NA in '93
- 2 in '96
- 13 in '98
- 23 in '00
- 25 in '02
- 29 in '04
- 31 in '06
- 37 in '08

Percent who read or saw no news yesterday

1998
- 14% total
- By age
  - 25%
  - 17%
  - 15%
  - 14%
  - 14%
  - 6%

2008
- 19% total
- By age
  - 34%
  - 21%
  - 22%
  - 17%
  - 14%
  - 13%

Source: Pew Research Center for People and the Press
Is Print Still Relevant?

"Due to the big losses we've suffered, the Daily Planet is being sold to Lex Luthor... and he's laying off everyone but Jimmy Olsen."

Lois! I've got to save the newspaper industry! Oh, just give it up, Clark, and start a blog.
It Is the Message, Not The Medium

- Online news services
- Blogs
- Twitter
- YouTube

“I had my own blog for a while, but I decided to go back to just pointless, incessant barking.”
Journalists Now Jack of All Trades

- Online stories rewritten for print, then print stories updated for online. Blogs turn into print stories, then online stories.

- Past: a reporter reports, a photographer photographs, an editor edits, then the public gets to see it.

- Present: Reporters report, write, blog, film, edit, update, respond to readers who watch that process—all in a day’s work.

- Opinionated and personalized views increasingly welcomed and expected.
“That isn’t dark matter, sir—you just forgot to take off the lens cap.”
The Journalist’s Job is NOT

- to publicize your research, enhance your career, or tear down your critics.
- to hide your warts.
- to be your obedient graduate student.
- to promise you page one, right column.
The Journalist’s Job IS

- to get it right.
- to ask sometimes foolish, embarrassing, or uncomfortable questions.
- to write a compelling story which will pull readers in.
- to correct what they get wrong as soon as and publicly as possible.
Building Relationships

- Are you after a one-night stand, or a long-term relationship?
- If you treat journalists as your enemy, it will be hard for them to become your friends.
- Like any relationship, you get to set your own boundaries.
- Don’t stew in resentment about a story; call the reporter and talk to him or her.
How Does U.S. Space Science Fare?

Washington Metrics

- NASA Earth and science budget: $4.5 billion
- National Science Foundation: $6.9 billion
- National Institute of Health: $31 billion
- Department of Energy/science: $4.9 billion
How Does Space Science Fare?

**Science Online: 2006-2010**

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What Makes Space Science Different from Other Disciplines?
Space Science’s ‘Special Relationship’

Patrons are essential—whatever the political or religious system
Astronomy, Astrology, And Power
Voltaire: “Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy: the mad daughter of a wise mother.”

“I don't believe in astrology; I'm a Sagittarius and we're skeptical.”

~Arthur C. Clarke
But Before Galileo, Intertwined

- Annual Solar Calendar
- Lunar Calendar
- Planetary Movement
- Eclipse Prediction
- Asteroid/Comet Detection
Along with Proximity to Power, the Eternal Lure of the Heavens

“Mortal as I am, I know that I am born for a day. But when I follow at my pleasure the serried multitude of the stars in their circular course, my feet no longer touch the earth.”

- Ptolemy, c. 150 AD
Modern Space Science’s Edge

- Deeply impractical
- Removed from Earth and the day to day
- Access to remote, mythological, but concrete places—Mars, Jupiter, Saturn
- Targets are beyond any congressional jurisdiction or national border
- The power of the heavens exceeds the pull of the depths, Cousteau notwithstanding
Crisis? $7 Billion in Potato Chips
Forget Spin-Offs; Think The Big Questions

Where does the universe come from?

What does the universe look like?

Are we alone?

What happens in the end?
NASA ASKS THE QUESTION:
IS THERE EVIDENCE MARS ONCE HAD WATER?
Dealing with Dinosaurs

- It is a jungle out there. FoxNews, MSNBC, celebrity Twitters, paid interviews, sensational breaking news-Who to trust?

- ‘Traditional’ print still offers length, depth, and a needed filter amid the noise of today’s media.
A Never-ending Story
With Never-ending Appeal

COSMOLOGY MARCHES ON

Where did it all come from?

Where did it all come from?
Thank You