Storytelling & Comedy in SciComm

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My journey in informal SciComm

Science Showoff, February 2015. Photo by Robin Andrews
Dr Jiggs Bowson’s Charming Science Friends

Top row photos by Steve Cross; Bottom row photos by Ed Moore
Dr Jiggs Bowson’s Charming Science Friends

Photo by Steve Cross

Photo by Lucy Eckersley
Why use storytelling & comedy?
Figure 8.1 – science-related leisure or cultural activities people have undertaken

Q. Which, if any, of the these have you visited or attended in the last 12 months?

- Nature reserve (40%)
- Zoo or aquarium (39%)
- Laboratory (7%)
- Science museum (23%)
- Science and discovery centre (13%)
- Planetarium (6%)
- Science festival (3%)

Base: 1,749 UK adults aged 16+

Ipsos MORI Public Attitudes to Science survey 2014
How can we make SciComm more inclusive?

- 80% of ABs have undertaken a science-related activity in the past year, compared with 67% UK average. Among C2DEs, this drops to 55%.

- White people are also more likely than those from ethnic minorities to have done a science-related activity over this period (69% versus 51%).

Ipsos MORI Public Attitudes to Science survey 2014
We should use storytelling & comedy in SciComm because…

• We can reach new audiences, and inspire thought & change in existing audiences

• Intellectual intrigue-based humour = Good

• Emotional engagement with a subject = BETTER*

*IMO
But, lots of people really like traditional SciComm?

Yes, but – which people?

And…
Storytelling tips
Story structure

Stories need:
• A beginning
• A middle
• And an end

Stories also need:
• A protagonist
• A challenge, complication, or an antagonist
• Change/Conflict
• Resolution
Plot tropes as inspiration

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The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories – Christopher Booker

1. Overcoming The Monster
2. Rags To Riches
3. The Quest
4. Voyage & Return
5. Comedy
6. Tragedy
7. Rebirth
Storytelling & Comedy tips

- Find out who your audience will be
- Find out about your audience at the start of your gig
- Get your audience comfortable and ready to make noise
- Stand in the light 😊
Storytelling & Comedy tips

• Comedy is subjective
• Always “punch up”
• There are two parts to a joke – the setup and the payoff
• Strong opinions & attention to detail always makes the joke/story funnier
Can Anna break the land speed record?

LAND SPEED RACING

with Anna Ploszajski
HERE'S SOME STUFF I DO

COMEDY

Large Bodies of Water and P... WITH ALEX LATHBRIDGE

TALKS

BEATS NEURONS EPILEPSY
About Cerys

Cerys is a PhD student in the Crime and Security Science Department at UCL. They study the people who buy drugs on the internet and the efficacy of law enforcement attempts to stop them. In their spare time, they are a comedian, a podcast producer, editor and presenter, and freelance science communicator.

Photo credit: Alex Lethbridge

STAND-UP COMEDY  PODCASTING  TEACHING
Clams, snakes, and other dangerous aliens from @Rob0Sullivan at our last #BrightClub in Cork:

Rob O'Sullivan - Aliens
Rob O'Sullivan takes to the stage to talk clams, snakes, and other dangerous aliens at Bright Club Cork in The Poor Relation on 12th July 2017. Filmed and ed...

youtube.com
My self-summary

A Tardigrade looking for a TardiBABE 🔥 👌 I don't actually have a circulatory system so it's impossible to break my heart lol
STARTED FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE FOOD CHAIN NOW WE’RE HERE
In conclusion...

Storytelling & comedy are powerful tools for:

- Challenging the status quo
- Showing scientists as flawed, emotional, complex humans
- Reaching new audiences
Thank you 😊

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