

14th International PCST meeting, Istanbul 26-28 April.

Instructions for submissions

Proposals should include a summary description (maximum 300 words) of the proposed paper or session and the conference theme or themes with which the proposal is associated.

- Panel sessions: statements and discussion with 3–4 contributors on a single theme, preferably with an international dimension and international participation. The panel participants should NOT submit their individual contributions separately.

Proposed theme for session is 'Trends in public communication of science and technology'

Proposed session (I'm open to suggestions)

Title: Research press offices as hubs of science communication: envisioning future roles

This panel session explores the roles, both current and potential, of press offices and science media centres in science communication. There is growing interest in the role that press offices and officers play in the way that research emerges from research and academic institutions. This panel explore the current activities of press offices and envisage how they could better serve the media, research institutions, and improve access to new research.

Dr Emma Weitkamp, The University of the West of England, Bristol, UK, discusses the largely unacknowledged gatekeeping role played by press offices in relation to media access to research and researchers. Similar to the gatekeeping role of journalists, press officers broker access to the media by selecting research stories, but also through their choice of researchers for media activities.

Rebecca Bruu Carver, Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway, argues that if a piece of research is likely to be of interest and/or importance to the general public, then it should be made public. However, simply writing a press release about the results of a single study is not enough; more effort should be made to put new research into the context of the topic as a whole.

Jamie Dorey, Open University, UK, argues that Press Offices play a crucial role in the mediation of scientific information. However, this process can create numerous tensions between scientists, PR Groups and the media. Jamie will use the CERN Press Office to demonstrate how these tensions can manifest themselves and their implications for the dissemination of scientific information.

Charlotte Autzen, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark, suggests that lack of reflection on roles among university press officers influences the science communication process in problematic ways. What and how information emerges depends on both professional backgrounds, which level in the organization the press officer is employed and how information flows are managed and negotiated internally.