

How far should we go? Public relations, mediatisation of science and science communication

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Abstract

Scientists around the world are under increasing pressure to publicise their work. Whether it is funding bodies demanding 'pathways to impact' or institutions looking to showcase their wares, few scientists can now escape the pressure to engage with the public. For many, the media seem an obvious route to tick the public engagement box. Add to this the availability (albeit sometimes very stretched) of media officers within most research institutions and this can seem an easy route to communicate science to a wider public. Concerns have been raised that this pressure to secure media coverage may be influencing the research process in some disciplines. At the same time, journalists are under pressure to produce more copy with fewer resources. This paper will explore these pressures and the ways that they may influence science coverage in the media, with a focus on news production. It asks what balance should be struck between scientists, media officers and journalists in media coverage of science.