Careers in Science Communication

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Life Sciences Careers Conference
Staffordshire University, 29 October 2014
1. What I do and why I’m speaking!
2. What is Science Communication?
3. What careers are available?
4. What qualifications do I need?
5. What can I do to gain experience?
6. What should I do next?
What do I do?

• **Day job**: Lecturer (Reader) in Chemistry and Forensic Science, Researcher in Chemistry.

• **Science Communication background**:
  – 20+ years of running the Chemistry programme for the British Science Festival.
  – This has involved working with both *science communicators* and *scientists who communicate* (different roles).
  – Skills are *generic* to Life Sciences.
What is Science Communication?

• **Science communication** generally refers to **public communication** presenting science-related topics to non-experts.

• This can involve professional scientists (outreach).

• It has also become a **professional field** in its own right. This can include science exhibitions, journalism, science policy and media production.
What careers are available?

- Outreach
- Teaching
- Medical Writing
- Science Policy
- Science Publishing
- Science Journalism

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• **Aim** – to enthuse the general public (often young people) about science and to make it accessible.

  – It can include *interactive* lectures and *hands-on-demos*:
Scientific Publishing

• **Skills needed:**
  – Written communications
  – Research
  – Listening
  – Attention to detail
  – Ability to meet tight deadlines

• **Possible careers:**
  – Journal editor
  – Journal production
  – Commission papers and articles
  – Licensing & sales
• **What would you do?**
  - Seek out news
  - Meet experts
  - Write!
  - Make podcasts/videos
  - Work to deadlines

• **Skills needed:**
  - Good written/verbal communication skills
  - Investigation and research
  - Ability to pitch science at the right level
  - Meet tight deadlines
• **What’s involved?**
  - Applying a combination of scientific knowledge and understanding of government and policy making.
  - Identify and transfer information between scientists and policy makers.

• **Skills needed:**
  - Written and verbal communication skills
  - An interest in science policy
  - Research and investigation
  - Meeting tight deadlines
• **What’s involved?**
  - Combining scientific knowledge with an understanding of how to present information at the right level for the intended audience:
    • Regulatory documents
    • Patient information leaflets
    • Clinical study reports
    • Conference proceedings
    • Manuscripts for publication
    • Promotional/marketing related material

• **Employers:**
  - Pharmaceutical companies
  - Contract research organisations
  - Communications agencies
  - Freelance work

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Qualifications needed

• In most cases, a degree in a relevant subject is needed.
• For teaching, a PGCE is required.
• It is possible to enter any of these careers with a PhD, although it is not usually required!
  – e.g. if you’re interested in scientific publishing, journal editors sometime have PhDs.
Gaining experience

• **Volunteer** to help at a science festival
  – e.g. [http://www.britishscienceassociation.org/](http://www.britishscienceassociation.org/)

• Look out for opportunities for outreach activities

• Start building a **network**
  – **Twitter** is useful here

• Start a **blog** and publicise your posts!

• Consider **internships**
What to do next?

- See ‘Next steps; options after a bioscience degree’ (in your conference bags), which has a resource list at the back, including a science communication section.
- You can contact me by e-mail or Twitter (see title slide).
- Another useful contact: Alexa Hime (Head of Education & Training, Biochemical Society)
  http://www.biochemistry.org/education
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