The adage “Publish or Perish” is often heard in scientific circles, and communicating your work effectively can be extremely daunting to the graduate student. However, the traditional methods, such as peer-reviewed journals and conference presentations, are not the only routes through which you can communicate your findings. In fact, there are now more channels than ever before, which allows you, as a graduate student, to hone your craft and perfect your written and oral presentation skills. Practice makes perfect and simply by stepping up in front of people to talk about your work, you can:

a. Eliminate nerves.
b. Get your timing right.
c. Identify what aspects of your work are challenging for the listener to understand.
d. Identify what parts of your work are really interesting.

Don’t forget that your work is not just important to the scientific community, but often to stakeholders such as farmers, policymakers, and the general public as well. These people may not necessarily read your peer-reviewed paper, but it is just as important that they know about your work as your peers do. The responsibility is on you as a researcher to find ways to reach this audience.

In-house Seminars, Publications

Many universities and research centers host in-house seminar series, in which researchers at all levels present their work. These are a great opportunity to practice your oral presentation skills in front of an informed audience, without the “intimidation factor” that may come with presenting on a large stage. These people are your co-workers, and so there is no need to be nervous. If your research center does not have a seminar series, all that is needed to set one up is an available room and a suitable meeting time!

Similarly, most universities and many research facilities publish in-house magazines. These may feature excerpts from your published work, interviews, overviews, and news snippets. It’s a way to make your peers aware of what you’re doing and generate discussion.

Popular Press

Newspapers typically have a science correspondent. Have you ever thought about talking to them about your work? There are also specialist papers and magazines covering farming, machinery, geology, horticulture… the list goes on. So consider submitting articles to these also. Remember, these publications are not for a “scientific” audience, so your challenge is to strip away the jargon, excessive detail, and minutiae and communicate what is critically important and interesting.

Radio can provide an excellent opportunity to access people. Many stations run science shows that welcome guest speakers from all branches of science. Many stations are looking for interesting people to discuss their work, so this is a great opportunity to reach new audiences. Remember, effective communication doesn’t just depend on getting a message out, but also ensuring that it is understood by the receiver. Therefore, make sure your language is appropriate and engaging.

Students

Communicating Your Research—There’s More than One Route

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