a. Plant geneticist—use a librarian example—books are categorized by topics, and traits are categorized in a similar manner…

b. Intercropping—many people diversify their retirement portfolios. One benefit of intercropping is increased biodiversity as well as the potential for different income streams. Stocks and bonds, anyone?

c. Riparian buffer strips—ask if they use a home water filter or furnace filter.

4. Cat videos are uplifting. Yes, some of our work has bad news, but you could emphasize the positive, e.g., “My work is important because we might be able to prevent or lessen this problem.” The way you deliver your message will also help bring an uplifting edge to your conversation. If you are part of a team working to “feed the world” as the ASA tagline says, that’s uplifting! Or, if you are an SSSA member, mention that “soils sustain life,” and then explain the part of life that your work sustains. There is an uplifting message to tell.

5. Cat videos are funny. This is a tough one. But, truly, we can be much more lighthearted in our communications. When the movie, The Martian, came out, a group of CSSA members working on the International Year of Pulses (beans) worked with science communications to develop a news release promoting beans as an alternative to the potatoes Matt Damon’s character was living on: www.crops.org/news/media-inquiries/releases/2015/0929/704. CSSA Past President Mike Grusak even went on public radio for an interview about beans, with a rallying cry, “send Mark Watney some beans.” Many scientists are successfully bringing their science into bars with a platform called Nerd Night. Check here if there is a group in your area: https://nerdnite.com.

Opportunity to Hone Your Skills in Tampa

I think there is a place in this world for (limited) mindless entertainment like cat videos. If you disagree, why not look up this video that has more than 54 million views: https://youtu.be/5dsGWM5XGdg.

It’s distractions like cat videos that make it even more important for science researchers and practitioners to hone their communication skills, get out to the public, and inform them! At the Annual Meeting in Tampa, the headquarters Public and Science Communications staff offers two sessions of “Relatable Science – Communicating in 2017” (see http://bit.ly/2t7FF33). We also offer workshops in photography as a communication tool (“Generation Image: Photography 101 for Science and Research”): see http://bit.ly/2xv0ZS4 (advanced registration required for the Photo 101 workshop).

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